School Estate Plan Stakeholder Engagement

Dear Parent and Carers

Every September the Council updates the School Estate Plan so we can plan our spending based on the latest pupil numbers and required improvements to buildings. This yearly check helps make sure resources are used wisely and where they're needed most.

The current School Estate Plan sets a number of short, medium and long term priorities that guide how the Council will invest resources.

Priorities for Investing in our Existing School Estate

School / Area	Identified Priorities	Progress to date	Committed Capital Funding
St Peter's RC School	Improvements required to the condition and suitability of the St Peter's RC School Building	Enabling works on site under way – completion expected in Autumn 2026	£26.6m
Ferryhill School	Ensure there is sufficient dining capacity, appropriate Early Learning & Childcare facilities, and that the layout of the building is suitable	Construction of a new Nursery building was completed in Summer 2025, and construction work for the refurbishment and extension of the main school building is now under way.	£17.9m
Harlaw Academy	Improvements required to the suitability of the Harlaw Academy building and ensure the school will have sufficient capacity for the future	Construction work for the extension of the Harlaw Academy building is under way.	£7.5m
Victorian School Buildings	Ensure sufficient school places are available and improve the suitability of Victorian school buildings	Fifteen-year programme of improvements to remaining Victorian school buildings to be launched in 2025/26	£TBC
Bucksburn Academy	Ensure there is sufficient capacity at Bucksburn Academy in the medium term	Progress with design work for new 300 pupil place extension to the school	£21.2m

In addition to investing in current buildings, the School Estate Plan also highlights the need for any new buildings. Recent major capital projects include:

Investment in New Buildings: Approved Projects



Replacement Riverbank School

- Completed Spring 2025
- **Cost: £36m**



Replacement Hazlehead Academy

- In progress - completion expected Winter / Spring 2028
- **Estimated Cost: £127m**

In some cases, the Council can apply for some funding to help meet a proportion (around 40%) of these costs. The remaining cost has to be paid for through your Council tax and our allocation of resources for the provision of education from Scottish Government. You'll appreciate that investment in new buildings means that resources cannot be invested elsewhere, so it is important to ensure that money is spent on the right things and at the right time given the high costs involved.

There has been some debate around the school estate in the last year in the local press. We would welcome your views to help inform the next review of the Plan in September 2026.

Factors to Consider

- **Building Condition**

  Investment in the school estate aims to keep buildings in 'A - Good' or 'B - Satisfactory' condition. Beyond major replacement and refurbishment projects, the Council maintains and updates schools through its Condition and Suitability Programme, funding repairs like boiler replacements, new windows, and roof upgrades. The estate includes buildings from the mid-1800s to the recently completed Riverbank School, resulting in varied building conditions and maintenance costs.

- **Building Suitability**

  Regarding the suitability of our facilities, 38 schools—representing 62% of the estate—are currently rated as either 'A – Good' or 'B – Satisfactory'. Ferryhill School, Harlaw Academy, and Hazlehead Academy are presently classified as 'D – Bad' for suitability; however, each is anticipated to receive an 'A – Good' rating upon completion of the capital projects outlined previously.

  The remaining buildings are graded as 'C – Poor'. Many of these facilities are among the oldest within our estate, including several Victorian structures. To enhance their suitability, significant design work and investment will be necessary in the future.

- **Building Capacity**

  Aberdeen's schools generally meet pupil place demand, but shifting city demographics mean some schools have too few pupils while others are overcrowded. Forecasts show this pattern will continue. The School Estate Plan prioritises creating capacity where needed and reducing excess places.

- **Building Efficiency**

  The Council aims for net-zero carbon emissions across all assets and operations by 2045, which means school buildings must become more efficient and sustainable. The priorities in the School Estate Plan reflect this goal.

- **Roman Catholic Primary Schools**

  Denominational primary education in Aberdeen City is currently provided at St Peter's RC School, St Joseph's RC School and Holy Family RC School. These three schools jointly provide places to pupils across the city, and also to children living in Aberdeenshire, as each of the schools' catchment areas extend beyond the City boundary and cover areas of Aberdeenshire.

Following completion of the planned refurbishment of St Peter's School detailed above, the denominational primary school estate will have a combined capacity of 1085 places. However, the pupil population across the three schools in 2024 was only 766, and forecast pupil numbers are expected to reduce to just over 700 by 2032. It is anticipated that the newly refurbished St Peter's School may lead to an increase in the school roll once the work is complete, although it is difficult to accurately predict at this stage.

The School Estate Plan therefore highlights a need to continue to monitor the pupil numbers at these faith schools until the St Peter's School refurbishment is completed, after which there may be a requirement to consider what further action may be needed to reduce any excess unused capacity.

- **Additional Support Needs**

  There are currently nine specialist provisions across Aberdeen, providing support for children with Additional Support Needs (ASN). These are listed below:

Setting	Places	Provision
Orchard Brae Nursery / Ashgrove	52	Early Learning & Childcare
Aberdeen School for the Deaf	11	Primary
Mile End School ASN Wing	78	Primary
Kaimhill School Enhanced Provision	7	Primary
Glashieburn School Enhanced Provision	7	Primary
Bridge of Don Academy Enhanced Provision	7	Secondary
Cults Academy Enhanced Provision	7	Secondary
Bucksburn Academy ASN Wing	96	Secondary
Orchard Brae School	119	Primary & Secondary

Orchard Brae School is an all through free standing special school for pupils aged 3-18 with profound, multiple and complex needs, and currently supports 119 children and young people. Three of the school's nursery classes are based within Ashgrove Children's Centre.

Mile End ASN provision and Bucksburn Wing are specialist city wide provisions located within mainstream schools. This model ensures that children and young people can benefit from greater opportunities to be included with their mainstream peers where appropriate.

Aberdeen School For the Deaf is a bilingual (Spoken English and British Sign Language/Sign Supported English) primary school in Aberdeen City supporting Deaf children from Nursery through to Primary 7. Aberdeen's Enhanced Provisions (ASN classes within mainstream schools) were opened in August 2021. Each class supports 7 learners.

In addition to the above provisions, in all of our mainstream schools, space is used flexibly and creatively to provide a range of environments to support children and young people with additional support needs. Such spaces can include ASN hubs, sensory rooms, nurture spaces and breakout areas. These are used for small group work, or for working with children on a one-to-one basis, to meet the needs of individual learners within the school.

Over time, these needs can often change, and as new children arrive in schools with new support needs, this requires the spaces used for ASN to be adapted and developed, so that those needs can be met.

So in addition to the major priorities for investment outlined above, we continue to work across the whole of the school estate to review the adequacy of the spaces available for supporting the needs of children and young people, and to make changes and adaptations where necessary.

Your Views

In Summary, the current key priorities for investing in the School Estate are:



St Peter's School

- Refurbishment & Extension



Ferryhill School

- Refurbishment & Extension



Harlaw Academy

- Refurbishment



Victorian Schools Programme

- Refurbishment & Extension



Bucksburn Academy

- Extension



Hazlehead Academy

- New Building

We would like to know your views about these priorities. Do you agree that these are the right priorities, or do you think the Council should be focusing on other areas?

Please answer our short survey to give us your views. Click here to access the survey.