

20 April 2016

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The Highland Council  
Drummuie

*Dear Mr Northedge*

### **The Future of Primary Schools in the North West Sutherland**

The case for closure of Achfary is understood. As is pointed out children from Achfary (while "moth balled") have been going to Scourie. There is a recognition that closing the school in Achfary has benefits for the Achfary residents in the use of the school building for other purposes, and it is not suggested that closure will give children any major problems.

The question of importance is whether children should be re-routed to Scourie or Kinlochbervie. In considering this, future demands and developments in the whole area should be considered. Such a decision over schools now will affect future planning.

Generally speaking, the Achfary catchment links in with Scourie - as well as being slightly closer than it is to Kinlochbervie. This should not be ignored especially where the youngest children are concerned.

Some consideration should be given to the future and any possible new or existing developments. School provision can be an important factor where future investment possibilities are being considered. In Scourie Loch Duart

(Fish Farm) is an important employer with a significant number of employees built up over time. It is also expected to build the new Geo Park Centre in Scourie (land has just been acquired for this development) which will provide facilities for the internationally known Shelley Collection. This will be of educational benefit to the area, as well as bringing more people to Scourie.

The hotel expansion at Kylesku and linked activities is also bringing increased activity to the south of Scourie and further from Kinlochbervie.

At present there will be a fall in pupils in August 2016 from 16 to 9, in Kinlochbervie from 24 to 23. Forward figures suggest the numbers in both primary schools will become similar. Both schools have adequate accommodation for expanded use above current low points. (It should be noted that the population living in the school catchment area of Scourie increased by 4% and in the same period (2001/2011) Kinlochbervie reduced by 6%.) This suggests that though with fluctuations inevitable in schools in scattered areas, a reasonable long term stability of numbers in Scourie without considering new development particularly if the Achfary potential is added.

It would therefore seem sensible to direct the Achfary catchment to Scourie.

1. There are shorter travel links.
2. More family links.
3. There are proposed developments at Scourie which will effect school populations of the future. It is therefore important to maintain the school and its proper development, during the current period in which the Achfary catchment can help.

Such a decision will allow all existing schools to continue as at present.