

Appendix 1

Northfield Primary Schools Feasibility Study June 2023

Summary of Findings

Introduction

A feasibility study was carried out between March and June 2023, and focused on reviewing each existing primary school site within the Northfield Associated Schools Group (ASG), to gather data on each school's circumstances, including building layout, condition, accessibility, overall size of the site, and how spaces are currently being used. This information was used to help identify the viability of sites to accommodate additional pupils, to allow the number of schools in the ASG to be reduced.

Reducing the number of operational primary schools within an ASG would inevitably require at least one school to be closed. Pupils displaced by the closure of a school building would then require to be provided with places in an alternative school building.

It is acknowledged that closing a school and requiring pupils to move to a different school is likely to be unsettling, for pupils and also staff, and would require to be managed carefully and sensitively. It would be important to minimise any undue stress, disruption and anxiety created by the changes being proposed.

For this reason, and in response to feedback received from stakeholders (outlined below), the options for school closures considered within the feasibility study were limited to those which would allow a whole school community to move together to the same alternative building, rather than being split across more than one of the remaining school buildings, to help maintain existing community cohesion and ensure that existing pupils' friendship groups were not separated.

The options considered also focused on schools being merged together to form a new school, with a new school name, in one of the existing buildings (or in a new building on one of the existing sites), rather than pupils from the closed school simply being expected to integrate into an existing alternative school.

Where individual school sites were identified as having the potential to accommodate a merged school, consideration was then given to which other school(s) would be most suited to being merged on that site (and therefore could potentially be closed). The first consideration here was proximity – schools to be merged together would need to be adjacent to one another, to ensure that pupils continue to live within a reasonable walking distance of their school, and to allow catchment areas to be altered appropriately to create a new catchment area for the newly merged school.

For each of the schools adjacent to an identified site, consideration was then given to whether it would be appropriate to propose closing that school, whether the identified site could accommodate the forecast pupil numbers from that school, and whether such a merger would bring about educational benefits.

Stakeholder Feedback

In tandem with the feasibility study, a stakeholder engagement exercise was undertaken, in which parents, pupils, staff and the wider communities associated with the schools in the ASG were invited to review the brief for the feasibility study, and to provide their comments and feedback on the proposal to consider reducing the number of schools in the ASG. Key messages from the feedback received include:

- Concerns about the impact on children and their families, if any of the primary schools in Northfield were to be closed
- The value of the existing schools' sense of community, and the need to avoid breaking up communities if a school was to be closed
- The need to maintain reasonable and safe walking distances from home to school, if the number of schools were to be reduced
- The need to avoid the remaining schools becoming overcrowded, if a school was to be closed
- The importance of maintaining additional space in schools for children with additional support needs
- The need for all pupils to continue to have access to good quality school facilities.

In response to the feedback received from stakeholders and the concerns raised about the possible loss of space as a result of schools being merged together, all options assessed in the feasibility study which involved using existing buildings to accommodate merged schools, included a consideration of what adjustments would be required to these buildings to ensure there would be sufficient space to accommodate additional pupils. An assessment of any adjustments required to provide appropriate space for additional support needs provision was also carried out. It was assumed from an early stage in the feasibility study that merging schools together into one building and making no adjustments to the building, would not be a desirable option.

School Sites – Potential Options

The feasibility study and feedback from stakeholders helped to identify which of the existing school buildings or sites could potentially accommodate additional pupils, either by reconfiguring the existing building to create additional classroom space if required (whilst also maintaining sufficient space for children with additional support needs), or replacing the building with a new, larger building. This provided options for these particular schools to be merged with an adjacent school, which could then subsequently be closed.

Some options were quickly discounted at the feasibility stage, where it was immediately clear that these were unlikely to be viable, due to lack of space in the building or on site for example, or where moving additional pupils to that building was unlikely to bring about any educational benefit.

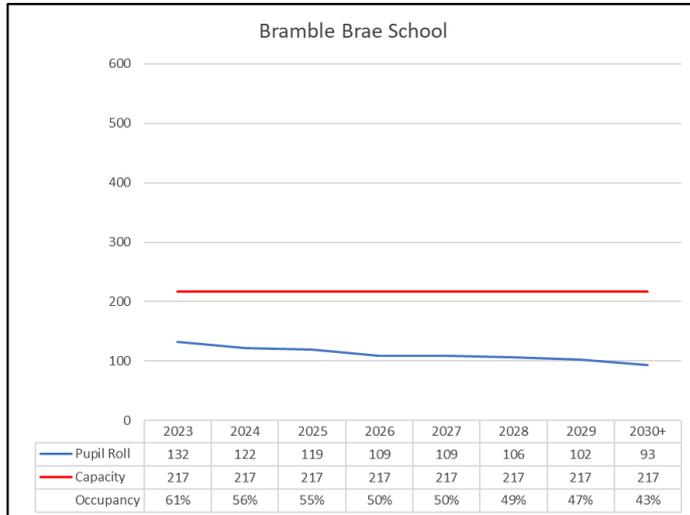
The options which were discounted early during the feasibility study, and those which were deemed likely to be viable and therefore requiring further detailed exploration within a business case, are set out below.

Annual running cost figures in the tables below include energy and utility costs, grounds and building maintenance, waste disposal and business rates. The required maintenance figures represent an estimation of the investment which is likely to be required at each site over the next five years, to fully resolve all elements of the building which have been identified for repair or replacement within the most recent condition survey.

School roll forecast figures used in this document were taken from the most recent draft school roll forecast, which was completed in Summer 2023. Figures shown for the pupil roll in 2023 are actual figures.

Bramble Brae School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	7
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	6
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	4

Building Condition Rating:	B
Building Suitability Rating:	B
Annual Running Cost:	£200,000
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	£475,000

Site Features / Challenges (highlighted within feasibility study)

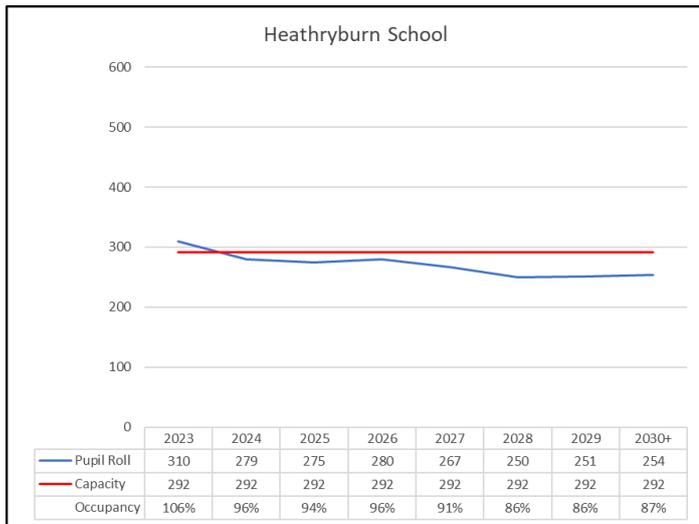
- Limited classroom spaces in existing building
- The school has only one hall for assembly / gym
- Dining space within the building is severely limited
- One classroom space is in use by counselling services
- Space on site for a larger building is very limited
- Sloping site - would make extension or building replacement challenging

Conclusion

Due to the above site limitations, there were no potentially viable options identified to allow a merged school to be accommodated on the Bramble Brae site.

Heathryburn School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	10
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	13
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	9

Building Condition Rating:	A
Building Suitability Rating:	A
Annual Running Cost:	£1.1m*
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	N/A**

***As a 3Rs school, annual running costs include the unitary charge payment which covers the cost of construction of the building.**

****The 3Rs contract requires the school to be maintained at a Condition A rating and maintenance costs are included within the contract.**

Site Features / Challenges (highlighted within feasibility study)

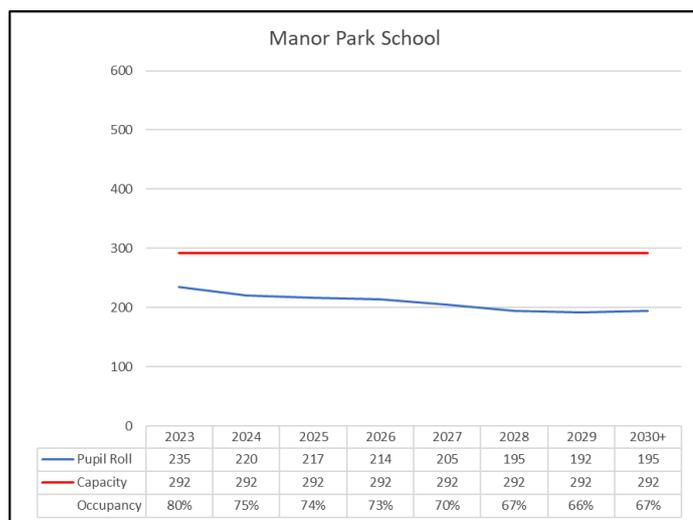
- 3Rs school - modern well maintained building
- School currently over capacity
- Cloakroom and GP spaces have been temporarily repurposed to provide additional class space
- Site benefits from two halls and an all-weather pitch
- 3Rs contract would make extending or replacing the building complex and costly

Conclusion

Due to limited available spare capacity at this school, there were no potentially viable options identified to allow a merged school to be accommodated on the Heathryburn site.

Manor Park School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	10
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	10
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	7

Building Condition Rating:	A
Building Suitability Rating:	A
Annual Running Cost:	£1.1m*
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	N/A**

***As a 3Rs school, annual running costs include the unitary charge payment which covers the cost of construction of the building.**

****The 3Rs contract requires the school to be maintained at a Condition A rating and maintenance costs are included within the contract.**

Site Features / Challenges (highlighted within feasibility study)

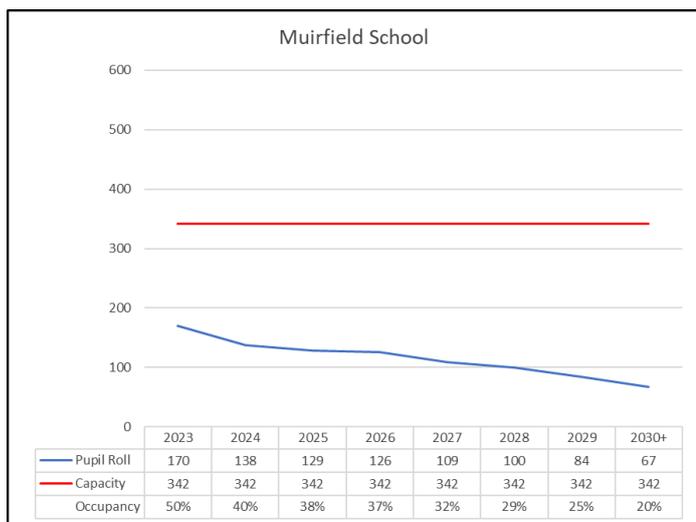
- 3Rs school - modern well maintained building
- Site benefits from two halls and an all-weather pitch
- Layout of building including generous cloakroom spaces provide opportunities to create additional class spaces
- 3Rs contract would make extending or replacing the building complex and costly

Conclusion

Given that there is some spare capacity within this building, it may be possible to merge Manor Park School with another school, to be accommodated on the Manor Park School site. The two schools within the Northfield ASG which are adjacent to Manor Park School are Heathryburn School and Bramble Brae School, and the viability of merging Manor Park with either one of these schools should be set out within an outline business case.

Muirfield School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	12
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	7
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	3

Building Condition Rating:	B
Building Suitability Rating:	B
Annual Running Cost:	£225,000
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	£47,000

Site Features / Challenges (highlighted within feasibility study)

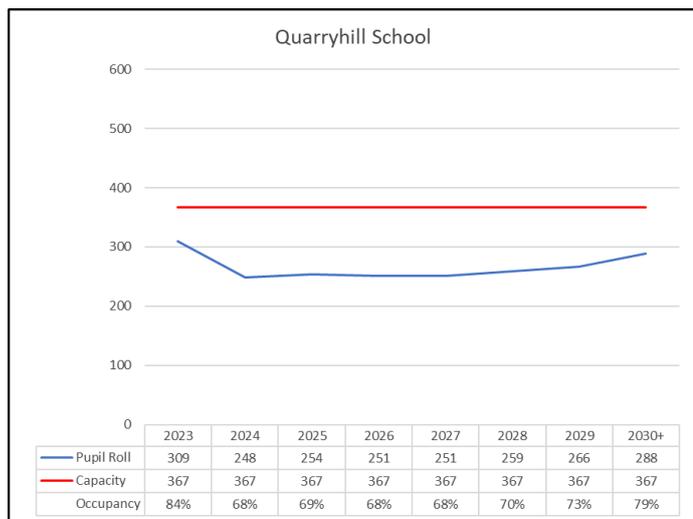
- School roll well below capacity and forecast to continue to fall
- Some classroom spaces in use by Music Service, and others used for other purposes including after school club, nurture space, support for learning – these could be reinstated as classrooms to accommodate pupils from another school
- Two halls available

Summary

Given that there is significant spare capacity within this building, merging Muirfield School with another school to be accommodated on the Muirfield site, may be viable. The two schools within the Northfield ASG which are adjacent to Muirfield School are Westpark School and Quarryhill School, and the viability of merging Muirfield with either one of these schools should be explored within an outline business case.

Quarryhill School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	13
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	12
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	10

Building Condition Rating:	B
Building Suitability Rating:	C
Annual Running Cost:	£193,000
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	£154,000

Site Features / Challenges (highlighted within feasibility study)

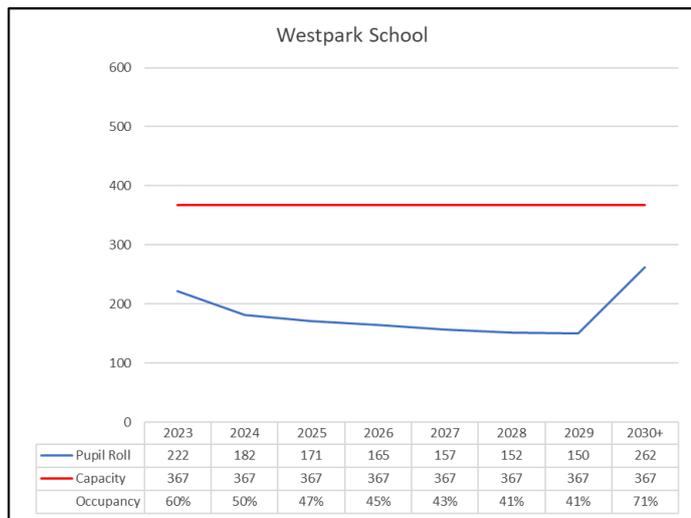
- Some spaces in the school not currently used as classrooms could be repurposed to create additional classroom spaces
- Only one hall for assembly / gym / dining
- Building condition is rated as 'C' (Poor)
- Building not fully accessible due to changes in floor level throughout the building
- The nursery at the school was recently refurbished

Conclusion

The findings of the feasibility study suggest that there could be capacity within the Quarryhill School building to accommodate a merged school on the Quarryhill site. The three schools within the Northfield ASG which are adjacent to Quarryhill School are Bramble Brae School, Westpark School and Muirfield School, and the viability of merging Quarryhill with any one of these schools should be explored within an outline business case.

Westpark School Site

School Roll / Capacity Forecast



Available Class Spaces:	11
Number of Operational Classes in 2022/23:	10
Operational Class Spaces Required in 2030:	9

Building Condition Rating:	B
Building Suitability Rating:	B
Annual Running Cost:	£342,000
Required Maintenance (next 5 years):	£224,000

The forecast pupil roll and required operational class spaces above include the expected increase in demand for places at Westpark School which will be generated by the planned housing development at Greenferns, which falls largely within the school's catchment area.

It is likely that the school will require to be extended in the future, to accommodate the anticipated increases in pupil numbers due to the planned additional housing. Consequently, it is not considered viable to merge Westpark School with any other schools, as this would limit the school's capacity to accommodate the new development.

Conclusion

For the reasons outlined above, no viable options were identified for using the Westpark School site to accommodate a merged school.