



## Learning Estate Strategy 2022-2032

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## 1. Foreword

In March 2020 Moray Council agreed the [Developing a Strategic Approach to the Learning Estate](#) paper, which set out the steps we needed to take to develop a long-term strategy for our learning estate. This included the creation of a Learning Estates Team within the Education Resources & Communities Service. This strategy document follows on from the above document and sets out how Moray Council will work over the next 10 years to optimise its investment of resources in its Learning Estate in a prioritised manner to meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and teaching.

The Moray Council Learning Estate Strategy will support the overall vision and priorities within the National Improvement Framework (NIF) with a focus on excellence and equity for all our children and young people.

The Learning Estate Strategy also aligns with the local priorities set out within the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP) and the Moray Council Corporate Plan, with the Council's vision for developing its learning estate summarised as delivery of a

*'Learning Estate that is flexible and inspirational, that supports excellence and equity for all in Moray, building a better future for our children and young people, providing life-long learning opportunities and providing the foundations for a growing and diverse sustainable economy'.*

## 2. National Outcomes

### **Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning**

The Scottish Government and COSLA have shown their commitment to invest in the learning estate through their strategy [“Scotland's Learning Estate Strategy: Connecting People, Places and Learning”](#).

This national strategy recognises the importance of the learning estate in supporting outcomes that are necessary for a more successful Scotland. This vision is for: **“A learning estate which supports excellence and equity for all”**

The National Learning Estate Strategy is aligned to the education policy aims, set out in the National Improvement Framework (NIF) of achieving excellence and equity for all children and young people and closing the poverty related attainment gap.

The strategy details the specific national outcomes to which it primarily relates:

- We grow up loved, safe and respected;
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society;
- We are healthy and active;
- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered resilient and safe;
- We have thriving and innovative businesses with quality jobs and fair work for everyone; and
- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

Our learning estate should support the three key national education and skills priorities:

- Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)
- Curriculum for Excellence
- Developing the Young Workforce (DYW)

The National Strategy sets out ten guiding principles as follows:

- Learning environments should support and facilitate excellent joined up learning and teaching to meet the needs of all learners;
- Learning environments should support the wellbeing of all learners, meet varying needs to support inclusion and support transitions for all learners;
- The learning estate should be well-managed and maintained, making the best of existing resources, maximising occupancy and representing and delivering best value;

- The condition and suitability of learning environments should support and enhance their function;
- Learning environments should serve the wider community and where appropriate be integrated with the delivery of other public services in line with the place principle;
- Learning environments should be greener, more sustainable, allow safe and accessible routes and be digitally enabled;
- Outdoor learning and the use of outdoor learning environments should be maximised;
- Good consultation about learning environments, direct engagement with learners and communities about their needs and experiences, and an involvement in decision making processes should lead to better outcomes for all;
- Collaboration across the learning estate, and collaboration with partners in localities, should support maximising its full potential; and
- Investment in Moray's learning estate should contribute towards improving learning outcomes and support sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

### 3. Moray Learning Estate Strategic Aspirations and Key Drivers

The National Guiding Principles form the basis of the Moray Council Learning Estate Strategy and approach.

Within Moray the learning estate strategic aspirations and key drivers are:

#### **Excellence**

- All learners to be educated in high quality buildings (aiming for minimum level B for condition and suitability).
- All learners to have access to high quality outdoor learning environments.

#### **Inclusion**

- The learning estate must be accessible to all.
- The learning estate must support achievement for all, including non traditional learner pathways.
- The learning estate should support the health and wellbeing of all users.

#### **Place**

- Our learning estate should be for the local community, with flexible and extended use outside of normal nursery/school operating hours.

- Shared use of buildings to be explored with partners to enhance and enable effective delivery of services within our communities.

## Sustainability

- We will aim for school occupancy levels of at least 80% of functional capacity.
- The learning estate must meet national and local net zero carbon targets.
- The learning estate must be able to support high quality digitally enabled learning and community access to digital.
- We must achieve and evidence best value from our investments.

## 4. Moray Council Position

### 4.1 The Moray Learning Estate

As of Apr 2022, the Learning Estate in Moray consists of:

8	Secondary Schools
46	Primary Schools
17	Additional Support Needs Enhanced Provisions within Secondary and Primary Schools
29	Early Learning and Childcare Centres co-located with Primary Schools
6	Standalone Early Learning and Childcare Centres

### 4.2 The Moray Approach to Planning

When considering the management of, and investment, in our learning estate we will take account of the following factors:

- Pre-School/[School roll trends and projections](#) (reviewed every 6 months)
  - Analysis of out of zone placement request patterns
  - Sensitivity analysis on longer-term projections
- Additional Support Needs (ASN) requirements, including future projections of need and building accessibility.
- Early Learning Centre/School/Enhanced Provision capacities
  - Primary school capacities are determined according to the Scottish Government's 2014 guidance paper '[Determining Primary School Capacity](#)'
  - There is no equivalent guidance for secondary schools. The Learning Estate Team, in collaboration with Northern Alliance and national partners, will adopt or develop updated guidance to inform future capacity calculations for our secondary schools.
  - Early Learning Centre capacities are determined according to the Scottish Government's 2017 publication '[Space to Grow](#)'.

- There is no national guidance for Enhanced Provision capacities for children and young people with additional support needs (ASN). The Learning Estate Team will work with the Moray Council ASN teams to develop agreed capacities to better inform investment planning.
- Building Condition (building fabric, safety and security)
  - Full condition surveys in line with the Scottish Government Core Facts assessments, with regular interim building inspections.
  - Analysis of ongoing maintenance costs to support the achievement of minimum B/B standard for condition and suitability as defined by the Scottish Core Facts guidance.
- Building Suitability (how the internal space and layout supports learning and teaching).
  - Assessment of long-term viability of the building to support the achievement of equity and excellence.
- Educational Factors
  - Opportunities to deliver a modern/flexible curriculum
  - Opportunities for pupil choice and flexibility
  - Opportunities to deliver digital enabled learning
  - Opportunities to offer high quality outdoor learning
  - Quality assurance data, including attainment levels
- Community Benefit Factors
  - Opportunities to support community access and lifelong learning
- Partnership Opportunities
  - Opportunities to align building investment across local public service providers to improve service delivery within our local communities through a place-based approach.
  - Opportunities to consider new points of delivery for third sector and private partners, providing revenue generation possibilities for the Council.
- Net Zero Carbon targets
  - Moray Council to become carbon neutral by 2030
  - Scotland to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2045.

Learning Estate assessments will take account of the national guiding principles, the Moray aspirations and key drivers, and the above factors and will consider how best to achieve the Learning Estate Strategy aims with the funding available to us.

Assessments may result in one of the following recommendations:

1. No action
2. Action to manage capacity (e.g. restriction on placing requests)
3. Prioritisation for investment, which could include:
  - a. Preventative Maintenance Project

- b. Refurbishment Project
- c. Extension to the building
- d. New Build

When undertaking assessments of our learning estate we will also consider the long-term sustainability of our buildings, including the budget required to develop our learning estate to the required standard . Where there are concerns regarding sustainability, and the long-term affordability of the learning estate programme, recommendations may include one of more of the following:

1. Use of building (or part of the building) for another purpose (e.g. to generate income through the lease of the building to a partner organisation).
2. Rezoning
3. Mothballing
4. Merger of schools
5. Closure

All the above potential recommendations would require extensive engagement under statutory consultation processes.

### 4.3 Community Engagement

We are committed to working closely with our local communities to establish our priorities for investment in our learning estate. We will also engage with all relevant stakeholder groups, including school staff, children and young people, parents and service partners to ensure all views are considered.

We will complete a comprehensive review of each Associated School Group (ASG), taking account of all of the learning estate assessments and recommendations relating to each early learning & childcare setting and school within the ASG. We will work together with our communities and stakeholders to agree an approach to future investment within the ASG area, agreeing actions that will enable us to work towards meeting the learning estate strategy aims across a sustainable learning estate, within a suitable timeframe, and within the budget available to us.

### 4.4 Statutory Consultation

#### 4.4.1 Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Any proposed changes to the learning estate will need to take account of statutory consultation requirements. The Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 establishes a consultation process in respect of school closures and other major changes that affect schools.

The [Guidance for School Consultation](#) sets out the consultation requirements, which includes the demonstration of educational benefit of any proposal. The 2010 Act also makes special arrangements in regard to rural schools, establishing a procedural presumption against the closure of rural schools.



In considering alternatives to closure local authorities may choose to consider “mothballing” a school (or a stage of education). This is a temporary closure which does not require consultation under the 2010 Act. A Moray mothballing policy will be agreed to support operational and strategic decision-making. Following mothballing a school, or stage of education, may reopen due to an increase in pupil numbers, or a decision may be taken to move to statutory consultation on permanent closure.

## 4.5 Managing the Learning Estate

### 4.5.1 The Learning Estate Team

The Learning Estate Team was established in April 2021. The team comprises of:

- Programme Manager
- Senior Project Managers
- Communications Officer support (officer located within the Communications Team)
- Community Support Officer support (officer located within the Communities Team)

The main remit of the team is:

- Appraising the learning estate in line with the national and local learning estate strategy.
- Leading on the development of prioritised investment plans to enhance and develop the Learning Estate in line with the learning estate strategy principles and key drivers, within available budgets.
- Project management of agreed learning estate projects.
- Collaboration with the Planning Service to understand Housing Land Audit trends and to ensure current and future Local Development Plans take into account available school capacity and the ability to adapt the estate. Supporting Planning colleagues to secure appropriate Developer Obligation Contributions.
- Collaborating with the Property Service to ensure property led Asset Management and Preventative Maintenance plans take account of long-term investment plans for the learning estate within each ASG.
- Liaising with Environmental & Commercial Services regarding School Catering and Transport requirements.
- Keeping abreast of best practice in relation to all aspects of the learning estate, and incorporating learning into all projects and practices.
- Developing and maintaining a standardised brief for early learning & childcare, primary, secondary and additional support needs enhanced provision buildings in line with best practice and to support the achievement of best value.

### 4.5.2 Learning Estate Programme Governance

The Learning Estate Programme Board is led by the Depute Chief Executive (Education, Communities & Organisational Development) and includes Heads of Service for: Property

and Housing, Head of Economic Growth and Development, Head of Environmental & Commercial Services, Head of Financial Services (S95 officer), Head of Education, Head of Education Resources & Communities, Head of HR, ICT and Organisational Development; and Head of Governance, Strategic Planning and Performance. The Board meets quarterly and maintains an oversight of the delivery of the Learning Estate Strategy and associated learning estate investment plans.

Investment proposals agreed by the Programme Board will be submitted to the Asset Management Working Group for consideration alongside the corporate review of planned Capital Plan spend.

Each investment project will have its own Project Board led by the Head of Education Resources & Communities.

The Learning Estate Team and Property Asset Management Team will meet on a monthly basis, working in partnership to deliver projects under preventative maintenance planning, in line with agreed Learning Estate Investment Plans. Any investment in the learning estate should be targeted according to the factors set out in this strategy, to maintain our buildings at the required standard and to minimise the budgetary impact.

#### 4.5.3 Reporting to Committee

A Learning Estate Strategy Update paper will be presented to Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on an annual basis. This will include updates on ASG level investment plans and short, medium and long-term priorities.

Individual Project investment decisions will be presented for consideration by Committee at the appropriate point in the Project Lifecycle.

Learning Estate capital spend updates will be presented to Education, Children's and Leisure Services Committee on a six monthly basis.

#### 4.5.4 Investment in our learning estate

The delivery of learning estate investment plans will be dependent on the availability of capital funding. The Scottish Government has indicated that 2022 is likely to be the final round of the current national Learning Estate Investment Programme (LEIP). ASG level plans will need to take account of the availability of funding over the life of the proposed plan, taking account of the overall funding required to achieve the aims of the learning estate strategy across Moray, and recognising that investment will need to be prioritised to ensure we are delivering excellent and equitable learning environments for our children and young people within a timescale that is fair and reasonable.

#### 4.6 Learning Estate Programme Current Indicative High Level Plan (September 2022)

This timeline represents current prioritised work for the Learning Estate Programme (with funding identified within the Moray Council Capital Plan). This timeline is subject to regular review and will be informed by ASG level plans, developed in consultation with communities and stakeholders over the next three years. Updates to this plan will be included in the annual learning estate programme updates.

