
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

2 June 2026

Cabinet (Education)

Title: **Planned temporary closure of educational provisions**

Purpose: To outline a standardised procedure in connection with the planned temporary closure of educational provisions, compliant with updated Scottish Government Guidance

Recommendation: That Cabinet:

- a) Notes the decisions taken, which resulted in the temporary closure of two early years' classes for session 2026-27;
- b) Approves the adoption of the proposed policy for future temporary closures, in line with updated Scottish Government Guidance and;
- c) Agrees to the submission of an annual report to Cabinet summarising any proposed temporary closures for future sessions.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines a new proposed policy for managing temporary closures of educational provisions, following the publication of updated guidance from Scottish Government. The proposed policy for North Ayrshire Council is submitted for approval for implementation from 2027.
- 1.2 This report also advises on two remote rural early years' classes that have been subject to planned temporary closure in session 2025-26 and will remain temporarily closed in 2026-27 for lack of registered children for that academic session.

2. Background

- 2.1 On 19 December 2025, the Scottish Government wrote to Directors of Education with information on an update to the sections of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Guidance that cover planned Temporary Closures (previously referred to as "mothballing"). This work was the culmination of a collaborative process involving Scottish Government and a number of Local Authorities throughout 2025.
- 2.2 A temporary closure is a time-limited cessation of operation of a school, early years class or stage of education where a local authority has evidence that the provision could reasonably re-open in the future.

- 2.3 Whilst there are no primary or secondary establishments in North Ayrshire which have been temporarily closed under the new guidance, at early years registration for 2025, there were no families requiring a place at Corrie PS Early Years Class. There was one approach in May 2025 in respect of Pirnmill PS Early Years Class, however, the family decided to register elsewhere due to there being no other children registered. Both provisions were, therefore, temporarily closed for session 2025-26 due to there being no children registered.
- 2.4 Registration for early years places for the forthcoming academic session (2026-27) opened from 4 February to 1 March 2026. Again, no parent/carers registered their child for either Corrie or Pirnmill Early Years' classes, despite these choices being available for selection on the online form. A decision was therefore taken to extend the temporary closure of both of these provisions for session 2026-27, pending further review at the same time next year.
- 2.5 In order to implement the new guidance systematically going forward, a new policy is proposed for implementation from 2027 and is attached at Appendix 1. The main aim of the policy is to ensure lawful, transparent, proportionate decisions are made that do not undermine statutory requirements for permanent school closures under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 2.5 The policy provides guidance on the processes to be followed by officers when considering or implementing temporary closures of educational provision. It applies to all North Ayrshire early years' provisions, primary and secondary schools, covering all individual stages of education, including Gaelic provision.
- 2.6 The policy aims to ensure that:
- The educational benefit of children and young people is central to decision making
 - Decisions are evidence-based, transparent and accountable
 - Communities and parent/carers are engaged fairly and openly
 - Temporary closure is not used to undermine the intent of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
- 2.7 Temporary closures are exceptional measures and must only be used where there is a realistic prospect of reopening. The policy outlines the circumstances in which a temporary closure may be considered.
- 2.8 Before a decision to temporarily close a provision is considered, an analysis of the educational merits of such a decision must be carried out.
- 2.9 A proposed timeline for the annual consideration and review of temporary closures from 2027 onwards is included within the policy.
- 2.10 Under the policy, an annual report outlining any proposed temporary closures will be prepared for consideration by Cabinet.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that Cabinet:

- a) Notes the decisions taken, which resulted in the temporary closure of two Early Years classes for session 2026-27;
- b) Approves the adoption of the proposed policy for future temporary closures, in line with updated Scottish Government Guidance;
- c) Agrees to the submission of an annual report to Cabinet summarising any proposed temporary closures for future years.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

4.1 None.

Human Resources

4.2 In circumstances where planned closure is expected to be temporary, staff are likely to be redeployed elsewhere within the education service.

Legal

4.3 The proposed policy is informed by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and its supporting Scottish Government guidance. Schedule 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 provides that any arrangement likely to result in the permanent discontinuation of a school, early years' provision or stage of education constitutes a closure proposal and must follow the statutory consultation process.

Equality/Socio-economic

4.4 Equality and Children's Rights Impact Assessments would be required in certain future circumstances e.g. where there is still demand, but numbers are very low.

Climate Change and Carbon

4.5 None.

Key Priorities

4.6 Improving outcomes for children, young people and families
Ensuring fair access to education and services
Efficient and sustainable service delivery

Community Wealth Building

4.7 None.

Islands Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA)

4.8 The revised guidance clearly recognises that the impact of temporary closures can be more pronounced in island locations. As such, where a temporary closure is proposed but registrations/pupil numbers are very low, a full impact assessment, including Equality Impact Assessment and Children's Rights Impact Assessment would be undertaken as per the guidance, with particular consideration given to island matters..

United Nations Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

4.9 The following Rights are positively impacted by the proposals:

- Education/ Goals of Education (Articles 28/29)
- Best Interests of the Child (Article 3)
- Non-Discrimination and Equality (Article 2)

Consumer Duty

4.10 None.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Head Teacher of the 2 affected Early Years classes and with Legal Services.

Andrew McClelland
Chief Education Officer, Head of Service (Education)

For further information please contact **Robin Knox, Education Infrastructure Manager** , on **01294 324487**.

Background Papers

None



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

Education Service Policy

Planned Temporary Closure of Educational Provisions

Date: May 2026

Contents

1. Introduction2

2. Considerations2

3. Process3

4. Review and Monitoring3

5. Legislation4

DRAFT

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A temporary closure is a time-limited cessation of operation of a school, early years' provision or stage of education where the Council has evidence that the provision could reasonably reopen in the future. Temporary closure must not:
- be used to avoid statutory consultation
 - have the effect, or likely effect, of permanent closure
- 1.2 This policy sets out the agreed North Ayrshire Council procedure and operational requirements for the planned temporary closure of schools, stages of education and early years provisions. It ensures that decisions are lawful, transparent, proportionate and do not undermine statutory requirements for permanent closures under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. Temporary closures (formerly referred to as 'mothballing') are exceptional measures and must only be used where there is a realistic prospect of reopening.
- 1.3 This policy provides guidance on the processes that must be followed by officers when considering or implementing temporary closures. It applies to all:
- North Ayrshire Council primary and secondary schools
 - Stages of education within schools (including Gaelic or English medium provision)
 - Early years' settings including classes attached to schools

2. Considerations

- 2.1 Temporary closure may only be considered in very restricted circumstances, including:
- A zero-roll position, where no children are attending or registered, and there is a realistic prospect of families returning, particularly in remote or island communities
 - Very low pupil numbers, where wider factors have been assessed alongside educational benefits
 - Where the parent council formally requests consideration of a temporary closure
 - Where a school and its attached nursery are both affected and it is appropriate to temporarily close the whole setting together
- 2.2 Temporary closure must only proceed where analysis demonstrates that there is a potential for short/medium term reopening, supported by future roll projections or early learning and childcare demand evidence.
- 2.3 In non-remote areas, temporary closures should not normally exceed 3 years.
- 2.4 For rural schools, officers must explicitly consider whether temporary closure represents a reasonable alternative under section 12A of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.
- 2.5 Educational benefit must always be the central focus. Additional core factors to assess include:

- Sustained decline in rolls or attendance patterns.
- Sustainability of staffing, resources, and running costs.
- Risk of building deterioration during closure and mitigation required.
- Distance, transport implications and impacts on attendance.
- Effect on community use of facilities and wider community resilience.
- Impact on learners, particularly those undertaking qualifications.
- Statutory early learning and childcare requirements under the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

3. Process

- 3.1 The timeline at Appendix 1 to this document provides the dates to be followed under this process. This aligns the process by which parent/carers are informed about both their early years' placement and the outcome of any placing request application for school aged children and young people.
- 3.2 Meaningful engagement with the following groups is expected before any formal decision is made:
- Parents/carers and children/young people.
 - Relevant staff groups.
 - Local elected members and parliamentary representatives where appropriate.
- 3.3 Engagement should begin as early as possible when viability concerns emerge (typically within the next academic year).
- 3.4 The Education Service will provide a clear rationale and indicative timelines for any potential temporary closure.
- 3.5 Prior to making a recommendation to Cabinet to temporary close an educational provision, officers must:
- (i) Prepare an options appraisal identifying reasonable alternatives
 - (ii) Assess whether the proposal could reasonably be regarded as a permanent closure
 - (iii) Consider educational benefits, community impact and future viability
 - (iv) Confirm compliance with legislation (noted at section 4 below)
- 3.6 Temporary closure must not be used to avoid statutory consultation. Where the majority of parent/carers oppose temporary closure, the Council should move to a statutory consultation on permanent closure as soon as practicable. Where a statutory consultation is ongoing, and where feasible, the provision should remain operational for any remaining children.

4. Review and Monitoring

- 4.1 All temporarily closed provisions must be formally reviewed annually. Reviews must consider updated roll projections, community circumstances and viability of reopening.
- 4.2 Review outcomes must be recorded and reported to Cabinet each year.

5. Legislation

- 5.1 The proposed policy is informed by the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and its supporting Scottish Government guidance. Schedule 1 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 provides that any arrangement likely to result in the permanent discontinuation of a school, early years' provision or stage of education constitutes a closure proposal and must follow the statutory consultation process.

DRAFT

Appendix 1 – Annual Timeline

Dates	Action/Method
Second week in November	P1 Registration for parent/carers for the following school session
January each year	Early years' registration opens for parent/carers of children turning aged 3 on or after 1 March
End of January	Early years' registration closes and allocation of places begins
February each year	<p>At this point, any early years' provision with one or fewer children registered will be known, however, late registrations can be expected up to May each year.</p> <p>Prepare Cabinet report with recommendations on those provisions to become/remain temporarily closed.</p>
15 March each year	Placing request application deadline, legislated within Section 28A of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980.
By 30 April each year	Education to inform parent/carers of early years' place and outcome of placing request application at the same time.