

Appendix 5: Responses From Staff

How will the proposal affect you?

"Pupils from Blackness will attend Grange Primary school and families will need to be integrated into the Grange community."

"Children from Blackness will move to my school."

"Slight increase in numbers in school where I work. This is manageable in relation to the numbers that would be attending."

"It will impact on the council expenditure and I am a council employee."

If you support the proposal, what are your reasons?

"The current situation financially is not equitable compared to other schools in Falkirk Council. All resources should be shared equally and no one school get more than others unless there is a specific need. The children at Blackness would benefit from a wider peer group and the many experiences available at Grange Primary."

"I appreciate this proposal from both sides and recognise the many positives and the negatives of children attending a small school. There can be a lack of opportunities for the pupils both academically and socially from attending a school where one teachers time is stretched between numerous year groups all within one classroom, potentially having P1 to P7 all within the same class. This is a hugely time consuming job not only planning, tracking and assessing pupils at Early, First and Second level but also at different maturity levels. The transition to high school is harder for these pupils with such small support networks from their peers and sometimes from non at all with such a small school roll. The school has always been used as a free 'private' school or by parents who believe their child will received a higher level of support when they have additional needs, many from outwith the catchment area so taking support from children within the catchment area. With the massive cutbacks within the council area you cannot justify keeping a school open that is costing the council so much money and the cost per pupil is so much higher than other pupils/schools within the Bo'ness Cluster are receiving. The town has lost its recreation centre and there are other resources at risk or have been cut back so how can you keep a school open for so few pupils when there is plenty of other provision they can access."

"It will be better for the children at Blackness to have more opportunities to interact with their peers and adults"

"With the council's financial shortfall I think this would make sense"

"I believe that the number of pupils attending Blackness and future projections of pupil numbers means it is no longer viable as a primary school especially in the current economic climate."

"In the current economic climate, it is not viable to keep a school, such as this, open when it is not even filled to one third of its' capacity. The money currently being used for the upkeep of this school and to resource learning could be used elsewhere in the community to support a greater amount of pupils. Blackness pupils would be placed in larger mainstream classes where they would mix and build relationships enhancing their social and emotional wellbeing. It is extremely difficult for a class teacher to plan effectively in order to teach 15 pupils across 5 different stages and 3 different curriculum levels ensuring that all pupils are reaching their potential. It's a major workload issue for the class teacher."

"The funds saved can be used to support schools within Falkirk Council."

"I support the closure of Blackness Primary school:

- numbers have significantly fallen, keeping a school open for so few children does not make economic sense. Especially when the council needs to make vast savings

- numbers of catchment children do not seem to be rising to meet the capacity of the school.

- Grange Primary, or any other Falkirk school, can provide the same quality of education as Blackness Primary. Children can have a peer group that is at the same developmental level.

- many non-catchment children attend the school, many that are from out with Falkirk Council, therefore Falkirk Council are paying to education children who's families do not pay any council tax in the area

- a large school can provide more age specific activities for children. There will be more opportunities in a larger school such as after school clubs, class trips, class visitors, age-appropriate experiences.

- being in a class with peers of the same age has huge benefits over being in a multi- composite where ages can range from P1 - P7- being in a small school with few children does not prepare pupils for life outside if primary school, moving on a busy high school can be challenging when children are used to a small school. This can impact on pupil HWB when they move on to high school.

- Cost of running the school has to be looked at. If the same education can be provided then there is no need to keep a small school open. Blackness is within close travelling distance, it is not a small rural school miles away from anywhere else."

"Council budget cuts are affecting other areas of education that they wouldn't need to if they didn't have to pay to keep a small school open."

"There's not enough pupils to make it viable. I think the pupils will get a better all round experience at Grange Primary School."

The Proposal Document considers a range of alternative options to permanent closure. Do you have any comments on these or any suggestions for other alternatives to closure that should be considered?

"None are actually feasible"

"They nursery was a good idea but I believe the costs made the project infeasible"

"I do not believe that any of the options are viable."

"Option 1 could provide an outdoor nursery setting for Falkirk Council children which may be of benefit."

Educational Benefits?

"The children from Blackness will have an excellent educational experience at Grange with the opportunity to develop more friends within their peer group. Being part of a larger class group will permit the children to have opportunities to learn from others and have a broader educational experience particularly in literacy and numeracy. Activities such as STEM, PE and after school clubs, etc will allow them to participate in team sports and activities more suited to their age. Developing relationships with children from more diverse backgrounds will help develop their life experience and build resilience."

"There are lots of benefits for the children of Blackness school. Their class will be of their peers so everything will be at the appropriate level for them"

"The pupils of Blackness would benefit from mixing with larger groups, and being in age/stage classes. A larger primary school would better prepare them for the transition to secondary education."

"The children at blackness primary would mix with their peers they will meet at secondary school."

"I think the children at Blackness would benefit from attending a larger school where there are more peers for age-appropriate social interactions, extra-curricular clubs and wider opportunities."

"Pupils would be placed in larger mainstream classes where they would mix and build relationships with a greater number of pupils rather than only 2 or 3 children in the same class that they may or may not get on with. With pupils in a bigger class, they would be able to participate in group work that would extend and develop their knowledge and understanding with a larger number of peers their age. PE lessons would certainly look much different in that pupils would be able to engage in learning that was more tailored to their age and stage; they would be able to participate in sports tournaments and games practise that was more age appropriate."

"Children will have access to more diverse social situations and wider opportunities at Grange Primary."

"Further opportunities for children to work with peers that are at the same age and stage. New friendships. Opportunities for learning within a stage or level that is similar and not broad and wide ranging. Preparation for ""real life"", busy high schools etc"

"Children attending Blackness could learn in a more age appropriate and social setting"

"I believe the pupils will have a better all round education. They will have more opportunities to develop their social and emotional well being. They can build more friendships with pupils their own age."

The impact on your local community?

"Please see previous statement"

"In the current economic climate with services being reduced across the board, the budget for Blackness PS could be better used in the community."

"I don't think there would be a negative impact at all."

"I do think it would be important to ensure the community hall was saved and could still be used for community events."

"There's less competitions and judgement between Blackness pupils and families and Grange."

The effect on travel arrangements for Blackness children to Grange Primary School

"No impact as the children are used to travelling to the school by car or school bus."

"There is a bus provided for pupils anyway so assuming this would remain the same"

"Very little difference as I don't believe any children now walk to Blackness school. It's quite a dangerous wee road"

"As not all the pupils actually live in the Blackness catchment, some may choose to attend school in their catchment area or local authority. Those who would transfer to Grange would qualify for transport or could be transported by parent/carers who are already bringing siblings to Grange nursery."

"Many of the children already get a bus to school, it would just be a slightly longer journey to Grange."

"Many of the children attending Blackness are already within the Grange Primary catchment so there should not be much of an effect on transport. Those out with the Grange Primary catchment area/Falkirk Council area will have schools that are suitable for them to travel to."

"Many children come by car to Blackness school currently, this proposal should not have any further environmental impact."

"A previous Blackness parent whose child attended Grange nursery told me that it takes her longer to drive to Blackness than it took her to drive to Grange, from her home in Blackness."

"Some of the Blackness pupils already live in the Grange Primary School catchment area."

Do you have any further comments on the proposal?

"Closure of Blackness Primary is the best solution to ensure the children receive a broader educational experience and Falkirk Council spend taxpayers monies responsibly."

"I worked at Blackness a few years ago and I loved it there but then there were approximately 30 pupils. I feel the decline in numbers is just too much and does not give the children there the same experiences as they would have at a school in a class of their peers."

"Although I appreciate that the children of Blackness are given more support due to the small numbers, I feel that all children in Falkirk Council should be given the same. Education should not be a postcode lottery. With cuts being made throughout the council, particularly in education, it does not make sense to keep Blackness open"

"I attended secondary school with some students from Blackness primary and it took them a long time to integrate. As I parent I can't understand why this would be something you would want for your child at such tricky age."

"Those pupils attending Blackness might indeed get a greater amount of time spent on them individually within the school, but I believe that the pupils would benefit much more socially and emotionally in a class of their own peers. At Blackness, pupils are not always able to socialise and work with children of their own age, it's not always possible to explore other friendships as they are limited to who is in their class."

Economically, it is not viable to keep such a school open when there are major cuts happening all over the council at the detriment of whole communities, towns and groups of people i.e. Bo'ness Recreation Centre closing and possible closure of Grangemouth Stadium. Some of the pupils that attend Blackness do not actually live in the Falkirk Council area and I don't understand why these places should be funded when there are financial cuts happening everywhere."

"I believe it would be beneficial for the public and council to close the school."

"I believe it's too much money to keep Blackness open when there are communities and groups being affected by other council closures."

Responses from those not in Agreement with the Proposal

How will the proposal affect you?

"I will lose the job I have employed in since 2015."

"I will lose my job and an asset to the community will close"

"I will lose my job"

If you do not support the proposal, what are your reasons?

"The current pupil role is 16 children (whether or not they live in Blackness), which I would imagine will only grow in future years, with the current new build housing located at Bo'ness Drum area. Where are all the new families going to send their children given that Bo'ness schools are likely at capacity?"

"Blackness is a wonderful place to work, one of the best jobs I've ever had. I do not support the proposal as I am worried about my employment."

Education Benefits

"I don't believe there is any benefit to putting children into a larger class size, when they are currently used to the smaller and more personal teaching approach at Blackness"

"The children would be in contact with a wider range of peers. The children would be able to take part in larger group activities."

The impact on your local community?

"It is a focal point and heart of the community"

The effect on travel arrangements for Blackness children to Grange Primary School

"More stress and cost"

Do you have any further comments on the proposal?

"I maintain that a nursery would most likely guarantee future numbers increase, as most parents would enrol their child into the Primary School associated with the Nursery being attended"

"I do understand the financial aspect of the proposal to close Blackness. I just wish there was a way for this lovely school and to continue without closing it and separating all the children."

