

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

23 April 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 193/96

PADANARAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee undertake a formal consultation exercise within the terms of The Education (Publication and Consultation Etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, as amended, on a proposal that Padanaram Primary School be closed with effect from August 1996, and that the delineated areas of Kirkriggs Primary School and Southmuir Primary School be extended to include those parts of the delineated area of Padanaram Primary School contained within the delineated areas of Forfar Academy and Webster's High School respectively.

BACKGROUND

Padanaram is a small community just over 2 miles from Forfar on the Forfar-Kirriemuir Road. Padanaram Primary School itself is sited approximately half a mile from the village of Padanaram.

The school has for several years been a one-teacher school, and has been a school which serves only stages Primary 1 up to Primary 4. On completion of Primary 4, pupils are expected to transfer to Kirkriggs Primary School in Forfar. In this regard, Padanaram is unique as it is the only primary school in Angus Council which does not serve the full primary age range.

As with all schools, the roll has fluctuated over the years, but there has been a steady trend of declining numbers. In the current school session, the roll is 11 pupils, five of whom are in Primary 4 and are therefore leaving the school at the end of June. Other changes will mean that in August 1996, the school will have on its roll only 4 pupils - one pupil in Primary 2, two pupils in Primary 3 (all three being girls), and one boy in Primary 4. One of these P2 pupils is enrolled in Padanaram Primary School as a result of a parental placing request. At present there is one pre-school child living in the delineated area, due to commence school in August 1997; two other pre-school children are expected to attend primary schools in Forfar this August, as a result of parental placing requests.

It is impossible to be absolutely precise about the number of pupils which are required to make a school viable, but with a roll as small as 4 pupils, there are serious doubts about the ability to provide sufficient contact with any individual pupil's peer group to enable as effective a social development programme as is desirable, and indeed to ensure that any individual pupil's cognitive development potential is being fully realised.

Given these circumstances, I have visited Padanaram Primary School and spoken with the Head Teacher, and the parents of the pupils concerned. Whilst quite naturally there is some sadness at the prospect of Padanaram Primary School closing, there does appear to be a realisation that such a step may well be in the best interests of the pupils concerned, particularly given the relatively close proximity of other primary schools and the existing arrangements whereby older primary pupils attend these schools. Some parents, however, during my meeting with them, continued to express a desire that the school remain open, notwithstanding the educational concerns which I expressed.

PROPOSAL

In all the circumstances, I would strongly recommend that Padanaram Primary School be closed. That part of the delineated area of Padanaram Primary School which is contained also in the delineated area of Forfar Academy would transfer into the delineated area of Kirkriggs Primary School and that part which is contained also in the delineated area of Webster's High School would transfer into the delineated area of Southmuir Primary School. Members should be aware that, if the education authority does wish to close a school, then it requires to enter into a consultation exercise as prescribed in The Education (Publication and Consultation, Etc) (Scotland) Regulations 1981, as amended. This exercise would enable the parents of the children concerned to make their views known more formally, and these views could then be taken into consideration. A further Committee Report would be brought forward in June of this year to allow the Committee to take a further decision, based on the outcome of the consultation exercise.

CONSULTATION

This Report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive and the Director of Law and Administration.

JIM ANDERSON

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/CJ