

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

26 November 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 346/96

**NEWTYLE SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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**ABSTRACT**

This report outlines possible options for the future of the Secondary department of Newtyle School.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a) confirms its support for a fully viable two year secondary department as an integral part of Newtyle School; and
- b) instructs me to continue to monitor the viability of the Newtyle secondary department on the basis of educational criteria.

**BACKGROUND**

At its meeting on 4 June 1996 the Education Committee instructed me to bring forward a report on possible options for the future of the Secondary Department in Newtyle School (Article 7 refers).

For many years, Newtyle Secondary School has operated as a school with a full primary department covering stages Primary 1 to Primary 7, and a secondary department covering only stages Secondary 1 and Secondary 2. Whilst various arrangements have pertained in the past for pupils completing S2 in Newtyle Secondary School, for much of the life of Tayside Regional Council these pupils were expected to continue their secondary education in Harris Academy. Some years ago, parental choice was extended to enable parents of pupils completing S2 in Newtyle to attend either Harris Academy or Menzieshill High School.

The delineated area of Newtyle Secondary School contains the delineated areas of the primary department of the school itself, and the delineated areas of Birkhill Primary School, Auchterhouse Primary School, and Liff Primary School. It seems clear that parents of pupils resident within this area find the journey to a secondary

school in Dundee both acceptable and reasonably convenient. In addition, over the years some parents have expressed a clear preference for their children to attend a six-year secondary school from S1 onwards, whilst other parents have believed that the 2 year period spent by pupils in the secondary department of Newtyle Secondary School is beneficial. In order to keep as much faith as possible with the spirit of parental choice, Tayside Regional Council further extended that choice in 1991 by allowing parents of pupils completing P7 and living in the delineated area of Newtyle Secondary School to choose to send their children to Newtyle Secondary School, or to Harris Academy or to Menziesshill High School, without having to make a placing request.

At its meeting on 4 June 1996, the Education Committee agreed to extend further this parental choice so that parents resident in the delineated area of Newtyle Secondary School may now choose to send their children to Forfar Academy or Harris Academy or Menziesshill High School, either on completion of S2, or on completion of P7 when the choice also includes Newtyle Secondary School (Article 7 refers).

Since the reorganisation of local government was finally decided by central government, some parents have expressed concerns that their children may not be able to attend the school of their choice in Dundee if they spend S1 and S2 in Newtyle Secondary School. It seems likely that these fears have contributed to a further acceleration of the downturn in the roll of the secondary department of Newtyle School in the last 2 years, although there has been a steady decline in this roll for a considerable time now.

Numbers of pupils in 1996/97 are:

- primary department (P1 to P7) - 74 pupils
- S1 - 19 pupils
- S2 - 23 pupils.

In addition to the Head Teacher, there are 4 full-time teachers in the primary department, and 6 (FTE) teachers in the secondary department.

The unusual nature of Newtyle Secondary School (it was the only two-year secondary school in Tayside, and all other secondary pupils in Angus attend a six-year secondary school), combined with its exceptionally small roll, now declining further, have resulted in continuing speculation about the future of the school.

## **VIEWS EXPRESSED BY SCHOOL BOARDS**

Given that the Education Committee instructed me to undertake this report in response to an earlier request by the School Board of Newtyle Secondary School, I sought the views of that body, and the Board's position is as outlined in its letter to me dated 30 September 1996 (Appendix). The School Board of Birkhill Primary School has now also written to me asking that I undertake a feasibility study into the possibility of upgrading Newtyle to a six-year Secondary School.

## **OPTIONS FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

The undernoted represent options which may be available to the Council in considering the future of Newtyle Secondary School.

### **a) Closure of Secondary Department**

In terms simply of cost-effectiveness, this is the most obvious option. In considering this option, it is important to stress that the school would continue to exist, but as a primary school only, with the capacity to expand its primary roll quite significantly. By adopting this option, the Council would be likely to make its operations more cost-effective, although in terms of revenue costs, there may be small off-setting staffing requirements in other secondary schools which experience increases in their rolls as a result of the enrolment of Newtyle pupils. In any case all of the staff in the secondary department would require to be redeployed in other schools or granted voluntary premature retirement if the Council were able to agree to requests for this. Closure of the secondary department would result in all Angus children attending similar types of secondary school, with each pupil continuing to be offered a full range of subject choice, but would also reduce the existing very wide range of parental choice of school in the Newtyle, Auchterhouse, Birkhill and Liff areas, although this choice would still be a wider one than is available to other parents. Pupils currently attending Newtyle secondary department would attend Forfar Academy, Harris Academy or Menzieshill High School on the assumption that Dundee City Council could continue to offer places to pupils in each of the latter two schools.

### **b) Upgrading of the Secondary Department to a Four Year Department**

Such a step may give encouragement to parents and members of the community anxious to secure the future of the secondary department. It would however still leave Newtyle in an anomalous position, being the only four-year secondary school in Angus when all other children are attending six-year schools. There would be significant additional revenue costs incurred in providing a full four-year curriculum which would be reflected in a very high cost per pupil, even if all pupils in the delineated area were to attend

The maximum roll of a four-year department would be 187 pupils, assuming every single pupil currently in attendance at the appropriate stages of each of the 4 feeder primary schools/departments went on to enrol in Newtyle secondary department; given the existing pattern of parental requests and enrolments in other schools, however, a much lower figure than this is likely to be a more accurate estimate. No matter how small the roll of a 4-year school, there would be a requirement to employ a full range of Principal Teachers (subject) and this would inevitably lead to an exceptionally high unit cost per pupil. There would also be a requirement to extend the existing premises incurring significant capital cost.

### **c) Upgrading of the Secondary Department to a Six Year Department**

This option has the attraction of removing uncertainty and giving a similar type of secondary education to all Angus pupils. Based on the maximum figures given above in option (b), and assuming a very high staying-on rate of 80% into S5 and 60% into S6, the maximum roll would be 239 pupils. As before, the current pattern of parental choice suggests this figure would in practice be

considerably lower, and would be very unlikely to be over 200 pupils. In any event, the projected roll of a six-year school in Newtyle is extremely small which would result in significant doubts about the school's ability to deliver a full range of curricular experience, and in very high revenue costs, particularly when calculated on a unit cost per pupil basis. There would be a further significant obstacle to overcome in pursuing this particular option as significant capital expenditure would require to be committed to enable the current premises to be extended to cater for the full six-year curriculum, and for all the classes in a six-year secondary department.

d) **Retain Status Quo**

This option allows all the previous options to continue to be given consideration should circumstances change. For example, should there be a significant increasing trend in the school population, then the above options may take on a different slant. Similarly, a continuing downward trend puts each option in a different light again.

## **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The attached financial appendix gives estimates of costs/savings associated with each of the above options.

In order to implement either option (b) or option (c), significant building alterations would require to be effected to the current premises before any pupils could be enrolled as S3 pupils. Similarly, a full complement of Principal Teachers (subject) would require to be in post when the first S3 pupils were enrolled for either option (b) or option (c). The estimated additional revenue costs are therefore **minimum** costs and would have to be incurred no matter how small the school roll were to turn out to be.

As can be seen, these options represent significantly different spending commitments, ranging from **savings** of £160,000 per annum (option (a)) to **additional** revenue costs of £570,000 per annum **and** a capital outlay of £900,000 (option d).

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The dilemma in addressing the current situation in Newtyle Secondary School seems to relate to the tension between providing an educational service which on the one hand, is cost-effective, and, on the other hand, offers as wide a range as possible of parental choice. No matter which option the Council pursues, it seems inevitable that one or other of these aspects - cost-effectiveness and parental choice - will fall short of the ideal. Notwithstanding these considerations, the current roll of the school raises genuine questions about the ability of staff, no matter how skilled or how hard-working, to cater adequately for the developmental needs of pupils when the peer group is so small.

Option a) is clearly the most appropriate one in terms purely of financial efficiency. To implement this option would require a formal consultation exercise to be undertaken, and it seems certain that the Newtyle School Board and those parents who do wish to continue to send their children to Newtyle will request that closure not be effected. The current roll of S1/S2 in Newtyle does call the secondary

department's educational viability into question, and this all-important aspect of the situation must at least be closely monitored if parental opinion is to be given legitimate consideration.

Whilst upgrading of the secondary department is clearly attractive to the parental community, it is impossible to obtain absolute assurances from individual parents about future enrolments. In recent years, only a proportion of pupils transferring from P7 in any of the four associated primary schools have transferred to Newtyle Secondary School, and it would seem to be highly unlikely that this situation could suddenly change to one in which **all** P7 pupils from Auchterhouse, Birkhill, Liff and Newtyle would transfer to Newtyle at the commencement of S1. Even if this highly unlikely state of affairs were to be attained, this would only result in an average S1 intake of 50 pupils, which is considerably less than that of the overwhelming majority of mainland Scottish schools, and which - even if it were not to fall below this level - would continue to be so small as to raise serious and legitimate questions about the educational suitability of the school.

To embark on option (b) or option (c) would require capital expenditure to be undertaken at the outset. Given the current very rigid financial constraints on capital expenditure it seems unlikely that the sum of £700,000 (or £900,000 for the 6 year option) could be found. If it could, serious issues of priority would arise, with any upgrading project of this type inevitably being described as somewhat speculative and less deserving than the needs of children attending schools in buildings of a much lower standard than is ideal. In the context of the current government imposed constraints on capital expenditure, there seems little real prospect of either (b) or (c) being practical options for many years to come, even if there were a strong case for pursuing them.

Option (d) is attractive inasmuch as it enables any decision about future changes to secondary school provision in Newtyle to be postponed, and presumably any future changes in circumstances - currently unforeseen - can then be taken on board. Members may feel that, in all the circumstances as they are currently known, option (d) is the most appropriate one. By offering support to the continuation of a secondary department in Newtyle, however, it would be prudent for the Education Committee to instruct me to continue to monitor carefully the educational viability of this arrangement.

## **CONSULTATION**

This report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance 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/RB

Appendices 2

**NEWTYLE SECONDARY SCHOOL:  
FUTURE OPTIONS AND FULL YEAR COSTS/SAVINGS**

a) **Closure of Secondary Department**

Estimated nett annual revenue <b>savings</b>	£160,000
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b) **Upgrading of Secondary Department to 4-Year Department**

Estimated nett <b>additional</b> annual revenue <b>costs</b>	(£370,000)
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Estimated <b>additional</b> capital expenditure needed	(£700,000)
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c) **Upgrading of Secondary Department to 6-7 year Department**

Estimated nett <b>additional</b> annual revenue costs	(£570,000)
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Estimated <b>additional</b> capital expenditure needed	(£900,000)
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d) **Status Quo**

**No** additional costs or savings  
(current nett revenue expenditure £200,000 per annum)

**Note:** The above figures take no account of any Revenue Support Grant provided by Central Government. Whilst this grant would change were there to be changes to the total number of pupils attending Angus Secondary Schools, the precise effect on these numbers of implementing any of the above options is impossible to quantify with any confidence. It is important however to note that the Council could almost certainly have to commit the entire amount estimated to implement either option (b) or option (c) even if a much smaller number of pupils than expected were enrolled by their parents in Newtyle. Consequently, a larger than expected number of pupils would result in greater expenditure than estimated having to be incurred.

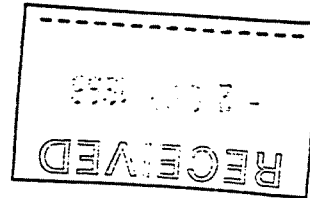
# NEWTYLE SCHOOL BOARD

CLERK: "Manse Garden", Dundee Road, Newtyle, PH12 8UF

30th September, 1996

Report 346/96  
Appendix

Mr. J. Anderson,  
Director of Education,  
County Buildings,  
Market Street,  
FORFAR, DD3 3WE.



Dear Mr. Anderson,

## SECONDARY SCHOOL PROVISION

In response to your letter of 21st August 1996 regarding the subject of Secondary School Provision, this was included on the Agenda at our last School Board Meeting on Thursday the 12th of September. We discussed the feedback from the questionnaire which was carried out by our Board earlier on this year the outcome which showed that the majority of parents would be in favour for Newtyle Secondary School be upgraded to a 6th year school.

Unfortunately, it was felt that the responses included in the catchment areas were not uniformed because some School Boards did not include the option for Newtyle School to be upgraded to a 6th year school. We have since had a response from Birkhill Primary School, a copy of which is inclosed. This obviously shows that it would be of great benefit for the surrounding schools if this action was to be carried out. Also the provision of Newtyle Secondary School to schools outwith the catchment area i.e., Meigle and other Perthshire pupils may also be a possibility to be considered.

Another aspect which was raised was the possible loss of revenue for Angus Schools/Education Authority if secondary pupils were to be educated in Dundee Schools.

We hope that these points will help you in making your report to the Education Committee.

Yours sincerely,

*Grace Robertson - Clerk*  
W. Reekie, Chairperson to Newtyle School Board.

cc: Mrs. M. Ray.  
Mrs. F. Duncan.

enc.

