

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

14 SEPTEMBER 2000

ST VIGEANS PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report provides feedback on a recent statutory consultation exercise and recommends closure of St Vigeans Primary School with effect from the end of the current school session in June 2001.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a notes the responses to the recent consultation exercise on the possible closure of St Vigeans Primary School (see Appendices 4 and 5; see also 4 individual submissions and a petition, all in the Members' Lounge).
- b subject to the approval of Scottish Ministers in accordance with current legislation, authorises the closure of St Vigeans Primary School with effect from 28 June 2001, and the transfer of its delineated area into the delineated area of Warddykes Primary School with the exception of:

- i the area shown in Appendix 1 (including all addresses on the A92 within the current delineated area and the whole of the settlement of Marywell) – which should be transferred into the delineated area of Inverkeilor Primary School

and

- ii the area shown in Appendix 2 (which is the Northernmost part of the current delineated area bounded by the unclassified road running North-East from the fork in that road at Cut-the-Wind to Mains of Parkhill, and by a line running due West from that fork to the current boundary of the delineated area of Colliston Primary School) – which should be transferred into the delineated area of Colliston Primary School

and

- iii the area shown in Appendix 3 (which is a narrow strip of land to the West of the current delineated area bounded by an unclassified road running North-West from a fork in the road just South of the school, the railway line, the current boundary line between the delineated area of St Vigeans Primary School and Inverbrothock Primary School, and a line running due West from the fork in the road just South of the school to the boundary line of the current delineated area) – which should be transferred into the delineated area of Inverbrothock Primary School

- c authorises the consequential minor amendments to the delineated areas of Arbroath Academy and Arbroath High School (the areas in Appendices 2 and 3 being transferred from the delineated area of Arbroath Academy into the delineated area of Arbroath High School)
- d instructs me to seek the approval of Scottish Ministers to implement the above recommendations
- e in recognition of the unusual situation in which children currently enrolled in St Vigeans Primary School would find themselves in the event of closure of the school, and to provide reassurance to these children and their parents, to accord a higher degree of priority than normal to any placing requests these parents may make for their children to attend any Angus school in the event of closure of St Vigeans, that priority to be higher than that accorded to any other "Category 3" placing request from outwith the delineated area of the specified school, and to apply only at the time of transfer from St Vigeans Primary School.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Reference is made to:

- the meeting of the Education Committee on 25 April 2000 when the Committee considered Report No 449/00 and instructed me to undertake a preliminary consultation exercise with staff and parents of St Vigeans Primary School on the possibility of closing that school in June 2001 (Article 4 of the minute of the meeting refers)
- the meeting of the Education Committee on 6 June 2000 when the Committee considered Report No 603/00 and authorised a statutory consultation exercise on a proposal that St Vigeans Primary School should be closed on 28 June 2001 and that one of a range of options for the transfer of its delineated area should be implemented at that time (Article 5 of the minute of the meeting refers)

2.2 The basis on which the statutory consultation exercise was authorised relates to:

- the condition and layout of the current St Vigeans school buildings, which require a significant capital sum to be expended to bring them up to a more acceptable standard
- the capacity of neighbouring schools (one of which is only 0.6 miles away from St Vigeans Primary School) to cater adequately for all pupils enrolled in St Vigeans Primary School (the 42 pupils enrolled in June 2000 could all have been accommodated without difficulty in the closest school to St Vigeans Primary School – Warddykes Primary School)
- the need for a significant capital investment (approximately £30 million) to be expended across several Angus schools and the difficulty in all the circumstances of allocating a sufficiently high priority to any St Vigeans improvements – particularly since investment in school buildings will certainly be a continuing major requirement, with an inevitable and indefinite need to prioritise between competing needs even if substantial additional funding is made available
- the lack of any compelling alternatives to closure of the school measured against educational, community and economic factors

2.3 Given the Council's statutory obligation to secure economy, effectiveness and efficiency and given the range of deserving projects competing for scarce capital resources, the fundamental question posed is:

“Is it justifiable to spend a significant capital sum in upgrading a school building when alternative educational provision can be provided in a nearby school?”

3 STATUTORY CONSULTATION EXERCISE

- 3.1 In accordance with statutory requirements all statutory consultees were contacted directly and invited to make written submissions. Advertisements were also placed in the local press.
- 3.2 In recognition of the school holiday period in July/August, the deadline for written submissions to be received as part of the statutory consultation exercise was set as Thursday 31 August 2000 – thereby allowing all those consulted a period of over two months to make written representations.
- 3.3 On 29 August 2000, a meeting was held in the St Vigeans Village Hall – attended by Councillor Brian Milne, Convener of the Education Committee, and myself. A number of St Vigeans parents (approximately 17) were in attendance at that meeting, along with a number of members of the local community, two prospective parliamentary candidates, a political agent and an MSP (all of whom had been invited to attend by parental representatives). The various points made by parents (and others) at that meeting are well summarised in the written submission prepared on their behalf by Mr James Menzies (Appendix 4).
- 3.4 Four written submissions were received from parents:
 - a document prepared by Mr J Menzies (Appendix 4)
 - a letter from Mr Menzies specifically on the matter of transfer of delineated area in the event of closure (Appendix 5)
 - a letter from a parent highlighting the benefits her three children had gained (and continue to gain, in the case of the younger two children) from attending St Vigeans Primary School (copy letter available in Members’ Lounge)
 - a letter from a parent highlighting the benefits her daughter is experiencing by attending St Vigeans Primary School (copy letter available in Members’ Lounge)
- 3.5 Neither of the secondary School Boards responded to the request to make written submissions, but one head teacher wrote specifically on the matter of transfer of delineated areas, indicating a preference for whichever option would have least impact on secondary school delineated areas. (copy letter available in Members’ Lounge)
- 3.6 One (primary) School Board wrote specifically on the matter of transfer of delineated areas indicating that certain addresses close to the A92 should be transferred into the delineated area of Inverkeilor Primary School. (copy letter available in Members’ Lounge)
- 3.7 A petition containing some 5,000 signatures was presented to Councillor Milne at the parents’ meeting held on 29 August 2000. (The petition is being made available in the Members’ Lounge for perusal).
- 3.8 No other written submissions were received.
- 3.9 The following sections of this report include comment on the detailed arguments submitted by the St Vigeans parents in Appendix 4.

4 SCHOOL CLOSURES – RELEVANT FACTORS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 4.1 At its meeting on 14 October 1997, the Education Committee agreed to adopt certain criteria when considering viability of small schools. The first two criteria related to educational factors, specifically factors which may be a concern when there is an exceptionally low number of pupils on the school roll – which the Committee noted would suggest a need to focus on schools with rolls of around 20 pupils or fewer.
- 4.2 The other criteria adopted related to:
- the proximity of an alternative school or schools to which all pupils could transfer
 - the role of the school in the life of the community as a whole
 - the value for money/value for effort which the continued existence of the school would represent when compared to alternative arrangements if the school were to close
- 4.3 Reference to the above criteria can be found within the body of Report No 603/00, which included sections on Educational, Community and Economic factors. These headings have been used below, and within each of the undernoted sections are included comments on the parents' submission in Appendix 4.

5 SCHOOL CLOSURE – EDUCATIONAL FACTORS

- 5.1 Understandably, some parents of the 42 pupils who were in attendance at St Vigeans Primary School in 1999/2000 have exercised their parental rights and transferred their children to other schools. The current (September 2000) school roll of St Vigeans Primary School is:

P1	1 pupil
P2	6 pupils
P3	4 pupils
P4	5 pupils
P5	2 pupils
P6	2 pupils
P7	7 pupils
Total	27 pupils (from 17 families)

Five families (8 children) with children currently enrolled in the school live within the school's delineated area. The other 12 families (19 children) live outwith the delineated area.

If the school closes at the end of the current school session those 20 children currently enrolled in P1 to P6 would have to transfer to another school, and the seven children in P7 will be transferring to secondary school in any case. This would present a short-term disruption to the education of these children, and is therefore an important issue to be considered. Many children do move school during the 7 years of their primary school education and anecdotal evidence points to these children being just as happy in their new school as they were previously. There is no evidence to support an argument that children who do transfer from one school to another suffer any educational disadvantage.

- 5.2 As indicated in previous reports staff in St Vigeans Primary School are to be commended for their unstinting efforts and for the high degree of professionalism with which they have discharged their duties.

- 5.3 Criteria relating to concerns about exceptionally small year groups are not an issue, and the school roll – which has averaged around 40 pupils in recent years – is sufficient to ensure that appropriate stimulation and challenge can be offered to all pupils.
- 5.4 The major concerns about the negative impact which the current school buildings may have on learning and teaching were highlighted in Report No 603/00. These are:
- the disruption to learning (and the concerns about pupil safety) caused by children having to go outside the main building to get to the toilet, the barely adequate state of the toilet blocks themselves (HM Inspectors of Schools report that some children are reluctant to use the school toilets), and the need for children returning to the main building from the toilet during class time having to gain entry by pressing the security buzzer
 - the lack of indoor PE facilities within the main school campus, with pupils undertaking gym in a hall some several hundred yards distant from the school
 - the limited space to accommodate children having lunch in school
 - the lack of storage space, which in turn contributes to a more cramped learning environment than is ideal
 - the lack of space for confidential discussions (particularly with parents, but also with pupils and a range of support agencies)
- 5.5 In addition to the above major concerns, the building is less than ideal in a number of other ways, each of which may appear to be relatively minor on its own, but the cumulative effect may well have a detrimental impact on learning and teaching. These shortfalls were also highlighted in Report No 603/00, and they are:
- inadequate office accommodation
 - extremely limited facilities for staff
 - poor heating in some areas of the school
 - lack of “wet areas” in classrooms
 - limited floor area in each classroom
 - poor acoustics
 - lack of a physical barrier between the play area and the road
- 5.6 There would seem to be agreement in principle with parents that the current building falls short of the ideal, although surprisingly parents have taken issue with some of the concerns raised about the standard of the current building, including:
- “parents and members of the community are concerned that any upgrading of the school should not include the provision of a gym hall, as this would also pose a threat to this rural facility” (Appendix 4 – Para 3.2). The rural facility referred to is the Village Hall.

(Comment – It is extremely unusual to find parents arguing against improvements to their schools of any type; certainly representations have been received in the past from parents of pupils in schools which lack integral gym facilities)
 - “pupils, parents or staff have not found noise transmission to be a problem” (Appendix 4 – Para 6.3)

(Comment – This is useful information. However, the initial comment in the Asset Management Plan that “there are problems of sound transmission between classrooms particularly during music sessions or when audio-visual presentations

are being held” continues to be a valid observation in the context of attempts to prepare Asset Management Plans which offer consistent commentaries on a standardised basis for all schools; these plans all make reference to acoustics as one of a number of standard headings)

- “there is no justification for the replacement of windows and doors costing £25,000 as the windows are wind and watertight” (Appendix 4 – Para 8.1)

(Comment – Once again, it is extremely unusual to find parents arguing for fewer rather than more improvements to a school building. In the specific case of windows, the current windows are not easy to open, they contribute to heat loss from the building, and they have a limited life remaining. If a major refurbishment of the school were being undertaken, there would appear to be some sense in replacing windows at the same time, rather than waiting for a short time after the refurbishment and causing another wave of disruption by then undertaking a programme of window replacement)

- 5.7 Notwithstanding the small number of somewhat surprising differences of opinion between officers of the Council and parents about certain detailed property issues (as listed above in Para 5.6), there is agreement that, if the school is to remain open, then the current school buildings must be improved in the near future. In their report on the school published in April 2000, Her Majesty’s Inspectors of Schools recommend that steps should be taken to make certain property improvements, and there must therefore be a concern that the building’s shortfalls may impact detrimentally on the quality of education available in the school, no matter how dedicated the staff, nor how supportive the parents. Closure of the school would offer one way of ensuring that all affected children can be educated in school buildings which meet a higher standard than does the current school building of St Vigeans Primary School.

6 SCHOOL CLOSURE – COMMUNITY FACTORS

- 6.1 Much is made in the parents’ response of concerns about rural infrastructure (Appendix 4, Section 3), and in general terms these concerns are understood. However, general concerns about rural infrastructure tend to relate normally to areas which are entirely rural in terms of their location, implying a degree of remoteness from major settlements, and this is clearly not the case as far as St Vigeans is concerned. The primary school is 0.6 miles distant from its nearest primary school neighbour, which is a school located very firmly within the burgh of Arbroath. The close proximity of the whole St Vigeans community to Arbroath makes for a wholly different perspective on “rural infrastructure” than would normally be the case.
- 6.2 Angus Council has a strong record in terms of its support for rural schools and it is more than a little disingenuous to attempt to suggest that the closure proposals for St Vigeans indicate any lack of support for rural schools or for rural communities.
- 6.3 In June 2000, the school roll comprised 14 children from within its delineated area, and 28 children from outwith that area. At that time 18 primary school children resident in the St Vigeans area were enrolled in other Angus schools. These figures are perfectly understandable and reflect a common trend among parents to choose whichever school for their children they feel is most appropriate. The fact that the parents of as many as 18 children in the delineated area chose to send their children to schools other than St Vigeans probably reflects the relative ease with which other schools can be accessed by parents, but certainly does not in any way suggest that St Vigeans Primary school is an absolutely vital part of the local infrastructure. (The 28 children attending the school as a result of parental placing requests probably also reflect the relative proximity of other school delineated areas, but in addition are testament to the good work of the staff of the school, undertaken and appreciated in spite of the less than ideal state of the school building).

- 6.4 The school delineated area as a whole does not form a natural or easily identified single community, and the close proximity of the school to the burgh of Arbroath is an important feature in determining the centrality of the school to community life in the area.
- 6.5 Other than the school PTA, there are no community groups which make use of the school buildings for lets outwith school hours. The village hall however is used by a number of local groups (see Appendix 4, Para 3.2), as well as being used by the school for PE (for which the Council pays a modest annual rent) and by the school PTA. Whilst concerns about the future viability of the village hall are understandable they may well prove groundless as many other village halls across Angus face similar circumstances to that which would be faced by St Vigeans were the school to close. The Council tries to support these village halls in a variety of ways. In any case the continued existence of the village hall in the event of closure of the school points to a capacity to maintain community involvement without reference to the existing school building.
- 6.6 The centrality of schools to community life is recognised, but – given the geography of the area and the location of the current school building – it is difficult to argue that St Vigeans Primary school is an indispensable focal point for community life in this area.
- 6.7 In all the circumstances, community factors do not combine to make a convincing case against the closure of St Vigeans Primary School.

7 SCHOOL CLOSURE – ECONOMIC FACTORS

- 7.1 Both the recently published HMI report on St Vigeans Primary School, and the recently completed Asset Management Plan have identified shortfalls in the current school building.
- 7.2 To address these shortfalls, officers of the Council have identified two feasible options which would require the Council allocating within its Financial Plan estimated sums of:
- either
- £250,000 (Option 1 as described in the Asset Management Plan : this project envisages the school having to continue to use the village hall for gym)
- or
- £400,000 (Option 2 as described in the Asset Management Plan : this option would include provision for an integral gym hall within the main campus)
- 7.3 Parents have queried the rationale and costing behind both of these options and have prepared an alternative proposal (see Appendix 4) which they have costed at £69,500. This proposal was submitted on 31 August 2000, and there has been insufficient time to scrutinise it, neither in terms of feasibility nor in terms of accuracy of costing. Initial reaction is – obviously – to suggest that this option fails to address adequately several of the shortfalls identified in the current building, and that the costings are optimistically low. If the Council decides not to close the school, but rather to undertake improvements to the school building, then – as has happened with other projects in the past – officers of the Council would clearly give this alternative proposal careful consideration. (It should be noted that, without exception in these cases, parental representatives have focussed on a more ambitious and more costly improvement project than that initially envisaged by officers).
- 7.4 Contrary to the assertion in the opening paragraph of Section 8.0 of Appendix 4, considerable detail has been provided for parents on the costings for Options 1 and 2 noted above. My view continues to be that a sum of approximately £250,000 is the minimum which the Council should be estimating as the cost of undertaking the building

work needed to bring the current school building up to the standard likely to be needed now and in the foreseeable future.

- 7.5 The resources available to the Council for capital projects are tightly constrained, and each year the Council is faced with exceptionally difficult decisions which attempt to prioritise between many deserving priorities across a range of Council services. Within the education service alone in Angus the current estimate is that an indicative sum of £30 million is the capital cost required to upgrade Angus schools to a reasonable standard (Education Committee 25 April 2000, Article 4 of the minute of the meeting refers).
- 7.6 In any major public service which relies on a large number of buildings, it seems inevitable that the total cost of desirable capital replacement/improvement will always be in excess of the resources likely to be available, and that prioritisation will continue to be required indefinitely. In these circumstances it seems highly imprudent to argue for the retention of all existing school buildings whatever the circumstances, and positively irresponsible to argue for significant capital expenditure to be allocated to improving a building which is not essential to the delivery of a high quality service for all.
- 7.7 At the end of the day, economic factors cannot be separated entirely from educational factors. Spending significant amounts of scarce capital funding on unnecessary buildings is not the best way to protect the education service as a whole from the harsh constraints of the prevailing economic climate.

8 OTHER FACTORS

8.1 Demographic Trends

- 8.1.1 Given the information provided above in paragraphs 5.1 and 6.3 about parental placing requests, it should be immediately obvious that accurate predictions about future school rolls are difficult to make – particularly for small schools where small changes in parental choice can lead to huge percentage changes in the total roll.
- 8.1.2 At the time of the last annual school census (September 1999), there were 2509 primary children enrolled in the 13 primary schools in the burgh of Arbroath and its rural hinterland. The total capacity of these schools is 3084 primary pupils.
- 8.1.3 Focussing specifically on Warddykes and Inverbrothock, as does the parental response (Appendix 4 – Section 7), the population of the Warddykes area (3569 in 1999) is projected to rise to 3720 by 2004 – a rise of 4.2%, and the population of the Inverbrothock area (4103 in 1999) is projected to rise to 4267 by 2004 – a rise of 4%. In this same period the overall Angus population is projected to fall by 0.2%, and a similarly small reduction in the Angus school age population over the same period is also expected.
- 8.1.4 What seems absolutely clear is that there is significant spare primary school capacity in the Arbroath area, and that projected population trends in the next few years are unlikely to have any real impact on this situation.

8.2 Financial Considerations

- 8.2.1 The principal financial considerations relate to the difficulty in justifying significant capital expenditure on a building which could legitimately become surplus to the Council's requirements without undue disadvantage accruing to any pupils (as set out in Section 7 above).

8.2.2 Other financial considerations are not central to consideration of possible closure. The Asset Management Plan for St Vigeans does make reference to a range of financial indicators, an approach which is entirely consistent with the Asset Management Plans prepared (or in the process of preparation) for other schools. In relation to other small schools in Angus the cost effectiveness of St Vigeans Primary School (in terms of cost per pupil) is acknowledged (Appendix 4, Para 4.1 although the methodology used by parents is not that used by the HMI Audit Unit). Understandably (since it is a small school), the total annual running cost per pupil of St Vigeans Primary School is higher than the average total annual running cost per pupil of all Angus primary schools. (1999/2000 – Cost per pupil £2,444 – St Vigeans Primary School; £2,030 – Angus primary school average; £1,939 – Scottish primary school average; source “Scottish Schools – Costs 1997/98 to 1999/2000”, published by HMI Audit Unit, Scottish Executive, January 2000).

8.2.3 The likely revenue savings which would accrue to the Council were St Vigeans Primary School to close in June 2001 are estimated to be approximately £34,000 in 2001/2002 and £51,000 in each full financial year thereafter.

9 ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

9.1 The good work and commitment of staff in St Vigeans Primary School has been acknowledged and commended in previous reports and once again in this report. The strong support which the school receives from parents is also commended, and the efforts of parents to bring forward arguments in favour of the retention of St Vigeans Primary School are very much to their credit, and to the credit of the whole school community. However, it is important to recognise that similar comments could be made about any Angus school : staff in all our schools display dedication and commitment, and we are fortunate in Angus to have a body of very supportive parents who do support and appreciate their children’s schools.

9.2 In their submission (Appendix 4, para 2.4), parents imply that St Vigeans Primary School is somehow offering a special or unusual type of facility for pupils who have experienced difficulties in other schools. Whilst it is accepted that St Vigeans Primary School offers a supportive ethos, so too do other schools; it is also accepted that some children have moved into St Vigeans School and have been happier there than they were in their previous schools, but many other schools can provide examples of this phenomenon – by no means all of these being small schools.

9.3 If St Vigeans Primary school does close, then obviously there will be one less school from which parents can choose. However, current legislation provides parents with statutory rights in terms of choice of school, and the reduction of parental choice which would flow from the closure of St Vigeans Primary School (Appendix 4, Para 2.5) would be relatively minor.

9.4 The consultation exercise offered a number of options, included within each of which was provision for transfer of all or part of the delineated area to Warddykes Primary School. The proximity of Warddykes Primary School (0.6 miles from St Vigeans Primary School) and its capacity to provide for all children from St Vigeans Primary School makes Warddykes an obvious choice for most addresses within the St Vigeans delineated area. Any other designated school for these addresses would mean children having to undertake much longer journeys than would be necessary were they to attend Warddykes Primary School.

9.5 There are, however, three small sections of the St Vigeans delineated area which are readily accessed by three other schools, namely:

- a section to the East of the delineated area from which Inverkeilor Primary School is easily reached, via the A92 (see Appendix 1)

- a section to the North of the delineated area from which Colliston Primary School is relatively easy to reach (see Appendix 2)
 - a section in the West of the delineated area from which Inverbrothock Primary School is relatively easy to reach (see Appendix 3)
- 9.6 Each of Inverkeilor Primary School, Colliston Primary School and Inverbrothock Primary School has sufficient capacity to cope with the very small number of additional children who would be expected to enrol from each of the above proposed sections of the St Vigeans delineated area.
- (Note:
- Warddykes : Roll 296 pupils; capacity 444 pupils
 Inverkeilor : Roll 92 pupils; capacity 125 pupils
 Inverbrothock : Roll 315 pupils; capacity 335 pupils
 Colliston : Roll 69 pupils (several enrolled between May and August 2000 from St Vigeans Primary School); capacity 75 pupils)
- 9.7 Colliston Primary School and Inverkeilor Primary School are less accessible and further away than Warddykes Primary School from the main section of the St Vigeans delineated area. Furthermore neither one of these schools has sufficient capacity to be sure it could enrol all children who would otherwise have been in attendance at St Vigeans Primary School. Neither Option A nor Option B, therefore, as set out by Mr Menzies in Appendix 5, is feasible.
- 9.8 Option C as set out by Mr Menzies in Appendix 5 (splitting the delineated area between Colliston and Inverkeilor) would require the present St Vigeans delineated area to be divided in such a way that the overwhelming majority of homes were transferred to the Inverkeilor area (as the capacity of Colliston would be unable to cope with the additional numbers of children so transferred). It is extremely difficult to see how it would be possible to divide the area meaningfully in this way. In addition there would remain the concern that the home-to-school journey of many pupils would be much further than it needs to be. In all these circumstances, Option C is not one which I would support.
- 9.9 The most appropriate approach, and the one which is now being recommended, is that the main part of the delineated area should be transferred into the delineated area of Warddykes Primary School, with the exception of the three sections described above and highlighted in Appendices 1, 2 and 3 – which should be transferred to Inverkeilor, Colliston and Inverbrothock Primary Schools respectively. This option is one of those on which the statutory consultation exercise was based.
- 9.10 Parental placing requests will undoubtedly continue to play a part in determining pupil enrolment patterns. In the event of closure, parents of children currently attending St Vigeans Primary School may choose to make placing requests to send their children to a school other than that designated by the education authority; in recognition of the unusual position in which these children and their parents may find themselves it is proposed to accord a higher priority than normal to any such placing request. Specifically, it is recommended that any placing request from the parent of a pupil currently attending St Vigeans Primary School to a school other than that designated by the education authority should be accorded a higher priority than any other “Category 3” placing request from any other parent residing outwith the delineated area of that specified school. This consideration would apply only at the time of transfer of a pupil out of St Vigeans Primary School and only to children currently (September 2000) enrolled in St Vigeans Primary School.

10 CONCLUSIONS

- 10.1 It is clear that St Vigeans Primary School has a committed, caring and highly professional staff who are providing as good a standard of education as they can in a physical environment which is far from ideal.
- 10.2 It is also clear that parents appreciate the work of the staff and that they are supportive of the school as a whole. The efforts of parents in bringing together arguments in support of retention of the school are to be commended.
- 10.3 An objective analysis of the situation would suggest that the arguments in favour of closure outweigh quite significantly the arguments for retention.
- 10.4 It is therefore recommended that the school should be closed – with effect from 28 June 2001.
- 10.5 The delineated area of the school should be transferred in the manner described in Recommendation (b) above, and exceptional consideration should also be given to placing requests for alternative schools from parents of children currently in attendance at St Vigeans Primary School.

11 CONSULTATION AND FINAL APPROVAL

- 11.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration have been consulted on the contents of this report.
- 11.2 Current Regulations mean that it is necessary to refer to Scottish Ministers for approval any proposals about school closure (or variations of delineated areas) regarding schools which are operating at 80% or more of their current capacity. The Council has set the notional capacity of St Vigeans Primary school at 50 pupils, and the roll of the school at the time when the consultation exercise was authorised was 42 pupils. Other schools, affected by the delineated area proposals, are currently operating at over 80% of their respective capacities. In these circumstances it is recommended that the closure proposal should be referred to Scottish Ministers.

Jim Anderson
Director of Education

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.

APPENDICES

JAA/CJ