THIS PAPER RELATES TO ITEM 09

ON THE AGENDA

CLACKMANNANSHIRE COUNCIL

Report to Council

Date of Meeting: 3rd June 2010

Subject: **Proposed Merger of Claremont Primary School and St John's Primary School in a new purpose built school**

Report by: **Interim Head of Education**

1.0 Purpose

This report provides a summary of the consultation process and the outcomes of the process concerning the proposed merger of St John's Primary and Claremont Primary schools and the plans to build a new school to replace them.

2.0 Recommendations

The Council should:

2.1 approve the plans to merge St John's PS and Claremont PS.

2.2 approve the plans to build a new school for the merged St John's and Claremont Primaries on the site of Redwell playing fields in Alloa.

2.3 instruct officers in the education service to consult with parents, staff and pupils about the design of the new building, the alterations that will be required to the A907 and about the name and identity of the school to be formed as a result of the merger of the two primary schools.

2.4 instruct officers to take the next steps in the process required to secure the necessary funding for the building from the 'Scottish Futures Trust'

3.0 Considerations

3.1 An independent review of education 3-12 was approved by Council in September 2007. The review was chaired by Bob McKay, a former director of education and in reaching its conclusions, sought the views of parents, staff and other stakeholders.

3.2 A cross party working group was set up to consider what actions needed to be taken to implement the recommendations of the independent review.

3.3 The group received evidence from a recent review of the school estate and also from officers who described what might be the best environment for learning in the 21st Century. This included the need to consider how

Curriculum for Excellence would be implemented in all the authority's schools from August 2010.

3.4 It was clear, from the evidence submitted regarding the school estate, that St John's PS was nearing the end of its useful life as a school and was the top priority for attention. The case for building a new school to accommodate pupils from St John's and Claremont Primary schools is made in the paper of October 2009. (appendix 1)

3.5 For St John's PS to be made suitable for purpose it would require significant structural repair to the roof and the rear wall; a water course runs under the building and there are problems with internal drainage; it requires internal modification to make it compliant with current equalities legislation; significant redesign of the top floor which cannot be used for classroom accommodation for reasons of health and safety would be required. In addition, the original part of the building is listed by Historic Scotland and there are limitations to the range and type of upgrading that can be carried out. For example, it is unlikely that consent would be obtained to alter the windows to a height where pupils could see out of them. Further issues with the St John's site include lack of provision for outdoor learning within the school grounds, insufficient dining facilities, insufficient space for creativity such as performance space and a gym which falls well short of current expectations in terms of size and amenity.

3.6 A number of options were appraised. These included consideration of whether St John's could be refurbished as well as building a new school. Indicative costings for refurbishment and extension of the school were around £4m.

3.7 Significant risks were identified in carrying out a refurbishment. A major concern was the potential for the estimated costs to escalate if a refurbishment uncovered conditions associated with working with a very old building. In addition, consideration needed to be given to sustainability in, for example, the Council's capacity to make the appropriate carbon reductions.

3.8 Taking account of the level of risk, and considering using the most sophisticated design and engineering techniques which would be required to overcome the challenges previously described, it was agreed that a refurbished and extended school would not represent good value for money and could not meet all of the expectations of a school fit to deliver an excellent service for the 21st century. New build was, therefore, the sustainable option.

3.9 Further examination of the conditions of primary schools revealed that whilst Claremont was in 'condition C' (national criteria exist to determine the condition of a school building where A is the best rating and D the poorest) it still presents challenges in connection with access, and more particularly with compliance with equalities legislation. In addition, some pupils have had to be accommodated in temporary huts in the playground restricting pupils' access to other areas of their school such as the library and general purpose areas.

3.10 Indicative costings for a merged school in a new building are £11m. The results of these represent a cost effective option which means that more pupils can benefit from being educated in a new, state of the art building. This is believed to represent the best value whilst providing benefits to the greatest number of young people.

3.11 The final decision of the 3-12 working group was to recommend to the Council that officers should consult on a proposal to build a new school to accommodate both St John's PS and Claremont PS on a new site. In 2009, each Council was invited to make a bid to the new Scottish Futures Trust for payment of half of the cost of a new school building. It was acknowledged that the capital receipt which might be realised as result of the sale of the Claremont site was substantial (around £2.9m) and that this would alleviate pressure on the Council's borrowing to fund the costs of a new building. Therefore, in November 2009, a bid was made to the Scottish Futures Trust for a new building to accommodate both schools on the Redwell site with an anticipated net capital cost of £8.1m.

3.12 Council approved a report in December 2009 which recommended that a formal, public consultation should be conducted in relation to the proposed merger of the two schools.

Consultation

3.13 The consultation process, led by the Head of Education began in February 2010. 1000 paper surveys were printed (appendix 1). In addition, electronic responses to the consultation were invited.

3.14 A public meeting, advertised in the local paper and through a leaflet drop in the area, was held on 30 March. No register was taken but it is estimated that no more than 5 members of the public attended the meeting. The majority of those attending were parents who were recognised from previous meetings. Issues raised through the parents' meetings were raised again and one member of the public was concerned about the disposal of St John's current building if the proposal went ahead.

3.15 Meetings were held with each school's Parent Council and with staff of the respective schools. Two parents' meetings were conducted in each of the primary schools. It is estimated that around 20 families were represented at each of these events.

3.16 A further meeting for the parents of both schools was held on 31 March. Around 40 families were represented at the joint meeting.

3.17 Along with individuals' responses received at meetings and through questionnaires and emails, representation also was made in writing by both Parent councils and by Alloa Central Community Council. St John's Parent Council issued its own questionnaire to parents. 22 returns were made to this. The staff of Claremont Primary school submitted a collective response to the consultation. A petition signed by the residents in the vicinity of Redwell Place was also received.

3.18 Due to the range and type of issues raised, it was agreed to extend the consultation period and to hold one further meeting on 20 May 2010 to answer more fully the points raised.

3.19 Prior to the final meeting for both schools held on 20 May, 94 questionnaires and emails had been received in response to the consultation. This is a disappointingly low return. There are 250 and 175 families represented by St John's and Claremont primaries respectively. This represents an overall return of 22.1%.

3.20 From the questionnaires returned, it is clear that most respondents are not in favour of the proposed merger. A similar number, although not necessarily the same people, are not in favour of the Redwell site.

3.21 The issues raised at the consultation meetings and through the questionnaires can be categorised as follows:

3.22 Educational – concerns mainly relate to the benefits that a new school would bring to pupils and concerns about the size of the school. Many negative comments concluded that the projected roll of 420 pupils in the school would be too large and the ethos of the smaller schools would be lost as a result.

3.23 Engineering – concerns relate to ground conditions of the site as well as its proximity to the A907 and the railway line. In particular, questions were raised about soundproofing the school and drainage of the site. Concerns were raised about possible disruption to learning caused by noise from the railway. Previous testing along the Stirling Alloa & Kincardine railway covers the site. Levels are relatively low and can be mitigated by careful orientation of the building, the use of suitable glazing and acoustic treatment of ventilators. Similarly fears about ground conditions and drainage of the site are largely unfounded. A ground investigation report was commissioned by the Council and carried out by specialist consultants, 'Land Drill' in spring 2009. These built upon the tests carried out during the appraisal of the site as a possible location for the new Alloa Academy. Whilst some additional foundation requirements exist, these are minimal and additional costs have been factored into the indicative costs. Surface water drainage has been poor, but this is felt due to the lack of suitable land drainage. The provision of land drainage to cover the new school grounds and the relaid football pitches has also been factored into the indicative cost.

3.24 Enforcement – safety was a concern for almost all of those who responded and was raised on every occasion at meetings of parents and the public. In particular the speed of traffic on the A907 was an issue. Many believed that although some St John's PS pupils have to cross the A907 to access the current building, the greater number of pupils crossing the road from the Claremont catchment would increase the risk. Discussions have been held with the police in connection with both road design and safety. The police will work in partnership with parents and the Council to enforce new traffic regulations and to help to ensure the safety of pupils.

3.25 The petition from the Redwell residents sought to draw attention to what the signatories believe would represent a deterioration in the entrance to Alloa from the Arnsbrae roundabout.

3.26 The staff of Claremont Primary School were positive about the proposals and looked forward to working in a modern school. Their concerns and comments were largely about the logistics of the merger.

3.27 The response of the Community Council favoured the merger and had no concerns about the size of the new school. The Community Council raised concerns about the perceived dangers of building so close to a main road.

3.28 The questionnaires designed by the Parent Council sought levels of agreement or disagreement on a score of 1-10 where 10 = most. In relation to the proposal for a new school for St John's, 15 respondents scored between 8 and 10 in favour. The range of scores used was 1-10

3.29 There were 2 respondents who were in favour of a merger with scores of 8-10. The remaining responses all scored below 3.

3.30 Pupils in both schools were consulted using a bespoke, online survey which was completed in class time. This meant that as many pupils as possible had a chance to respond with their own views. Staff were asked to help pupils to understand the question but not to prompt them with answers. The results of the pupils currently surveyed, demonstrated that 40% in both schools were in favour of the proposal. However, there were many more favourable comments than negative ones.

3.31 The purpose of the final meeting was to provide parents with response to the concerns and questions raised. A short presentation was given by the Interim Head of Education and a paper was tabled which tried to answer many of the points made previously (appendix 2).

3.32 From the final discussions held on 20 May, attended by approximately 32 parents from both schools, it became clear that whilst there was little obvious movement in the views held previously about the merger, or about the proposed site, there was no consensus either about other options.

3.33 As far as could be discerned, the views varied between the parents of the 2 schools as well as within the parent groups of the respective schools.

3.34 In spite of the concerns raised about the proposal, officers believe that it represents the best option in which to provide most educational benefits to the greatest number of pupils within an establishment fit for the 21st century.

4.0 Sustainability Implications

4.1 The Scottish Government requires all new school developments to be carried out with the following principles:

- to have regard for others who do not have access to the same levels of resources
- to minimise the impact of actions on future generations by reducing the use of resources and minimising environmental impacts
- to live within the capacity of the planet to sustain our activities and replenish resources which we use

4.2 A key objective of the school estates strategy is that new schools should demonstrate commitment to the highest design and environmental standards.

4.3 The design phase of the proposed new school would, therefore, require to be consistent with current sustainability criteria

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1 Financial Details

5.2 The full financial implications of the recommendations are set out in the report. This includes a reference to full life cycle costs where appropriate. Yes ☑

5.3 Finance have been consulted and have agreed the financial implications as set out in the report. Yes ☑

5.4 Staffing: The merger of the two primary schools would result in the saving of a headteacher's post. There would also be a small saving in administrative costs.

6.0 Exempt Reports

6.1 Is this report exempt? Yes ☐ (please detail the reasons for exemption below) No ☑

7.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

(1) **Our Priorities 2008 - 2011**(Please double click on the check box ☑)

The area has a positive image and attracts people and businesses	☑
Our communities are more cohesive and inclusive	☐
People are better skilled, trained and ready for learning and employment	☑
Our communities are safer	☐
Vulnerable people and families are supported	☐
Substance misuse and its effects are reduced	☐
Health is improving and health inequalities are reducing	☐
The environment is protected and enhanced for all	☐
The Council is effective, efficient and recognised for excellence	☑

(2) Council Policies (Please detail)

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?
Yes ☑ No ☐

9.0 Legality

9.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers. Yes ☑

10.0 Appendices

10.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

Appendix 1 - option appraisal

Appendix 2 - additional information for parents

11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)
Yes ☐ (please list the documents below) No ☐

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NAME	DESIGNATION	SIGNATURE
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APPENDIX 1

CLACKMANNANSHIRE
COUNCIL

The case for building a new school to accommodate pupils from St John's and Claremont primary schools.

October 2009

St John's Primary School is situated to the northern end of Grange Road in Alloa. The original building was constructed c. 1908 by local architects Kerr McCulloch in the Art Nouveau style and is category B listed. It is a symmetrical block with two storeys and a basement, constructed from red sandstone with various pitched and slated roofs, intermediate flat roofs and roof ventilators. The school was extended in 1939 with the addition of a gym hall and associated accommodation constructed in brick with a flat roof. A further classroom extension was added c 1960 with ground and lower floors constructed in brick and concrete with pitched and slated roofs.

The school has a capacity of approximately 300. Its current roll, including placing requests, is 263. Its projected roll in 2012 is approximately 180/190.

Over the last four years the condition of the building has been rated C, C, D and D. The most recent Suitability Core Fact review rated the building as D.

There are significant concerns about the original building's roof and the condition of its back wall. Internal drainage in the building is poor and there is water course running under the building which creates a number of relatively intractable problems.

In addition, there is poor accessibility to the building for disabled young people; currently access is restricted to the ground floor and basement rooms. The playground is small, steep in places and the school has no playing fields; it uses a nearby local park. There is restricted access to the first floor of the school's original building for reasons of fire safety.

The building is at the end of its serviceable life. Considerable investment is required to refurbish the school in the short term; the implied actions will not solve all of the condition issues associated with the building and will not solve all of the concerns which exist about its suitability.

Leaving the condition of St John's unaddressed beyond on-going, relatively minor maintenance would be an action which would carry significant risk; the building's fitness for purpose would decline further and, probably, with increasing pace, there would be increasing risk that children's learning would be disrupted while a succession of short term repairs was carried out. There is a risk that the building may become unusable in the next two or three years.

The central 'business' requirement is for the major refurbishment of the existing St John's school building or for the construction of a new school which meets an agreed level of specification which will render it affordable and fit for purpose in the 21st century in the terms demanded by local and national policies, e.g. 'A Curriculum for Excellence', probable reductions in class sizes and the promotion of the health and well-being of young people and communities.

However the need to improve the physical provision made for young people attending St John's Primary School might best be addressed, it would need to have the capacity to provide all of the following:

- 14 classrooms, including 3 rooms for small group teaching, (based on an estimated roll of 200 in 2012 and assuming that class size maxima for P1 to P3 will be set at 18)
- early years accommodation at current levels
- after school care accommodation
- computer suite large enough to accommodate 30 pupils
- a library
- a dining hall /social space
- a gym hall large enough to accommodate two full-sized badminton courts
- PE storage
- PE changing facilities, which can support community use of the gym hall and adjacent football pitches
- meeting room for 12 people
- small low-stimulus room
- hygiene suite / medical room/ disabled WC
- toilets
- reception area and admin. office
- headteacher's office
- staff room and toilets
- support staff work base.

The need to address the poor and deteriorating condition and suitability of St John's Primary School could be dealt with in a number of ways. One of the ways in which these needs could be addressed is through building a new school on Council-owned land adjacent to the existing St John's Primary School but building a school large enough to accommodate St John's pupils and those from Claremont Primary School, a neighbouring primary school.

Claremont Primary School is a purpose-built primary school dating from c. 1966. It is situated at the western edge of Alloa on a sloping site extending to approximately 0.81 hectares (2.0 acres). The building is concrete framed with flat roofs, cavity brick walls and a roughcast finish. A timber frame extension was added c. 1999 to the northwest corner of the school to form a nursery classroom. The school has a hut containing two classrooms.

The building is not fully accessible; there are significant external and internal barriers to disabled access. Externally the roughcast is prone to cracking and spalling. The building's PVC cladding is in need of repair or replacement. Playground surfaces are weathered and worn and require to be overlaid or renewed. Roof coverings are likely to require to be replaced in the medium term. The building's heating system is inefficient and costly to run; it requires to be replaced with a more energy efficient alternative.

The school has a capacity of approximately 240. Its current roll, including placing requests, is 201. Its projected roll in 2012 is approximately 190/200.

Over the last four years the condition of the building has been rated B, B, C, C. The most recent Suitability Core Fact review rated the building as C with it showing low scores for accessibility and for safety and security..

The risks associated with Claremont Primary School are lower than those relating to St John's. The school is in generally better condition currently. The school is however reaching an age when it will start to require increasing amounts of maintenance.

The need to address St John's as a matter of some urgency introduces the opportunity for the existing and probable future condition of Claremont to be addressed at one and the same time, the opportunity for the needs of both schools to be addressed in a coherent manner.

If St John's and Claremont primary schools were to me merged a building to to address this 'requirement' would need to have;

- 20 classrooms (based on a projected roll of approximately 400 in 2012 and assuming class sizes of 18 in P1 to P3)
- 4 other rooms for small group teaching etc.
- early years accommodation 60:60
- out of school care /community accommodation
- two computer suites, each large enough to accommodate 30 pupils
- a library
- a dining hall / social space
- two gym halls, each large enough to accommodate two full-sized badminton courts
- PE storage
- PE changing facilities
- support staff work base, with sink
- meeting room for 12 people
- two low stimulus rooms
- hygiene suite / medical room/ disabled WC
- toilets
- reception area and admin. office
- Headteacher's office
- staff room and toilets

Neither of the schools' existing sites could accommodate such a building. Redwell Playing Fields have emerged as a preferred site; the ground conditions on these fields has been confirmed recently as being suitable for building. The playing fields are owned by the Council.

The strengths of this option are that the land owned by the Council is available and could comfortably accommodate a new school accommodating Claremont and St John's, the site of a new school would be close to those of the current schools, the site can be accessed by an existing bridge over the railway from St John's current catchment area, site access from the adjoining

main road should be relatively easy to arrange, any school development could incorporate facilities which would enhance community use of the existing playing fields, existing arrangements exist to assist pupils attending St John's to cross the main road from the Claremont area , the building of a new school on the Redwell Playing Fields would not disrupt the work of either school, there would be no need to decant the schools' pupils to another site or temporary classrooms in the schools' playground, playground areas would remain available for use during the building of a new school, site access and health and safety problems would be minimised, any school formed from the merger of St John's and Claremont would have a roll of approximately 400 (assuming an entry date of August 2012), a roll which is not large and does not have possible dysfunctional consequences. The construction of a new school for St John's and Claremont would lead to reduced property maintenance and energy costs.

Weaknesses associated with this proposed action could be seen as being that the use of the Redwell Playing Fields would result in some small loss of recreational space; arrangements for crossing the main road from the Claremont side of any merged catchment area would need to be extended; staff, parent and pupil loyalties to existing schools would be lost.

A cost estimate for the construction of a new school for St John's and Claremont on Redwell Playing Fields would be £11,000,000. There would be a capital receipt in the order of £2,900,000 from the sale of land occupied currently by Claremont. The net capital cost of the option would be £8,100,000.

St John's pupil roll in 2012 would be approximately 49% of the total projected roll of a school formed by any merger with Claremont. The pressing need is to address the poor and deteriorating physical condition of the former school and to lift its pupils into an environment hugely more conducive to learning in and for the 21st century.

The 'share', as it were of this project attributable to the need to address the deteriorating condition of St John's is approximately 49%. This would suggest that any grant awarded to support its realisation would be in the order of £3,969,000

This would suggest a capital grant of between £1,984,500 and £2,695,000 depending on whether any grant made was calculated before or after the anticipated capital receipts were applied to the total estimated capital cost of the project.

The project could be designed and built for pupils to move into it at the start of school session 2012/2013.

This is a cost effective way of addressing the deteriorating condition of St John's and the emerging and actual concerns which exist about the suitability of Claremont; It would provide fully fit for purpose learning and working

conditions for the area's young people, staff and support too for learning in the community.

APPENDIX 2

St John's/Claremont - Additional Information for Parents

Are you sure the proposed new school will have the number of pupils you say?

Yes. The roll estimate, that the school would have between 405 and 415 pupils, is based on factors including, birth rates, existing pupil numbers, nursery classes and plans for new housing. The planned developments would be expected to add around 25-30 pupils to the roll of a new merged school.

Is the proposed school too big?

Small schools sometimes have to have composite classes with different age groups in one class. This means teachers have to plan different lessons and make sure topics aren't covered twice. In very small schools, pupils are less likely to be able to learn from each other. Some small schools overcome this by forging links with partner schools, but this usually involves travel to access facilities, which can be expensive.

In small schools, head teachers are more likely to be called upon to provide teaching cover, meaning they have less time to devote to managing the school. Larger schools provide more opportunities for teachers to learn from each other and share good practice.

While small schools allow lots of opportunities for pupils to take on leadership roles or take part in school teams or clubs, in larger schools, particular school events tend to become the responsibility of stages within the school in order to give opportunities for involvement. Larger schools often have more facilities available on site and can provide a wider variety of activities.

Fife Council suggests that the optimum range of size of primary schools should be 52 pupils (to allow for three stages of classes) to 444 pupils (to allow for a two stream school). The proposed school would lie within this range.

How does the size of a school affect learning?

A school of the size proposed will keep classes the same size and will certainly have fewer composite classes.

Amongst Clackmannanshire's primary schools there is no relationship between the size of the school and the attainments of our young people in writing, mathematics or reading.

A study from the early 1990's looked at variations in Scottish elementary

school children's reading attainment. It reports that variations among schools did not appear to relate to schools' size, socioeconomic composition or location.

The factors which contribute to high standards of attainment are leadership, quality of teaching, high aspirations for young people, the involvement of parents in their children's school and their learning - with the support of parents, all of these can be present in a school of the size proposed, as they are present currently in St John's and Claremont.

Does the size of the school effect the ethos?

Here is what HMIe has said about the ethos of some of the bigger primary schools in Clackmannanshire:

> *"Staff create a welcoming, caring and supportive ethos. Staff know children very well and are sensitive to their needs. They set high standards for children's learning and behaviour. Children feel safe at school. Relationships with parents and the wider community are a strength of the school."*
>
> *(Alva Primary School – roll at inspection was 377)*
>
> *"The school had developed a strong partnership with parents. The school had very good arrangements in place for ensuring the care and welfare of pupils. The school's welcoming ethos was a strength of the school."*
>
> *(Tillicoultry Primary School – roll at inspection was 397).*

Larger schools can and do have a positive ethos. Size is not the determining factor here: it is the commitment of a school's staff which counts.

A new, merged school will have a positive ethos; its staff will have a commitment to support the personal and social development of all young people at the heart of their work.

Will a bigger school on a new site be able to build relationships such as the existing schools have with their local communities?

Secondary schools, special schools, larger primaries and denominational schools have had to build relationships with a wide range of communities. They have shown that they can do this very effectively. HMIE reports confirm this, not just for our schools but for schools right across the country.

Most schools are very good at building links with their communities even when these are diverse. They are good at this because they understand that building these links is in the best interests of their pupils.

If a new, merged school is built, its headteacher and its staff will build strong links with the communities it serves.

Will the proposed merger reduce parental choice?

No. Parental rights to make placing requests to other schools will continue. Parents will still be able to make placing requests to all of the Council's schools and, indeed, to schools in neighbouring Councils.

The number of placing requests from St John's to Claremont and vice versa is very low. The numbers of placing requests from other schools to St John's and/or Claremont is also very low.

Are ground conditions at Redwell playing fields suitable for building a new school?

The ground conditions are suitable for building a school on. Independent, external surveyors carried out a series test bores to check the ground conditions in the Redwell. The surveyors concluded that it was perfectly possible to build a school on the Redwell.

Is it true that ground conditions in the Redwell playing fields were so bad that they stopped the new Alloa Academy being built there?

No, it's not true. Redwell was looked at as a possible site for the new Alloa Academy. It was judged to be too small to accommodate the new Alloa Academy.

Is the proposed site too close to the railway? Won't train noise interrupt lessons?

Any school would be built so that its classrooms were not next to the railway line and modern insulation cuts out external noise. Noise from the trains does not disrupt the work of children attending Struan House School. In addition, new plantings of trees along the line will help to further cut any noise.

Is it safe to build a school close to the railway?

Advice would be taken from Scotrail and other expert sources on the safest location of any new school within Redwell. There will be a fence round the proposed school and there is already a fence along the railway line. Any school's playgrounds will be supervised during playtimes and lunchtimes. Children attending any school built on Redwell will receive education about safety as well.

Many schools are built near to railway lines and operate entirely safely.

Is the proposed site too close to the A907?

The design of any school built at Redwell will take full account of the need for young people to be able to cross roads safely. The actions which need to be taken will be a key concern in the design of any new school: parents, pupils and road safety experts would be involved in the design of the school.

The police have informed us that in the last 10 years there have been only five road traffic accidents in the stretch of road between the Arnsbrae Roundabout and the roundabout at the Claremont House Hotel involving personal injury. Four of these have been described as 'slight'.

Will children who have further to travel get free school transport?

Any pupil aged 7 or under living more than a mile from the new school would be entitled to free transport to and from the school (unless attending because of a placement request). They would be entitled to free school transport if over 8 and living more than two miles from the school.

Could we build a new a school on the site of the old Alloa Academy?

The land which the old Alloa Academy was built on is to be sold and the money raised is committed to helping to pay for the three new secondary schools which the Council has built.

Would a new school spoil the outlook from homes and the western entrance to Alloa?

The community, school staff, pupils and parents and planning and other Council staff will be involved in the design of any new school. It will be built to high standards of design including its external appearance – every effort would be made to design and build an attractive school building which would add to the amenity of the area in every respect.

Is there anywhere else where a new, merged school could be built?

There is some land across the railway line from the Arnsbrae Roundabout that the Council owns. This has been looked at recently to see if it might be a suitable site for a primary school. The conclusion reached by the Council's planners and other staff is that it would not be a suitable site – it would be too small and right in the middle of industrial and commercial developments.

Can we build two new, separate schools?

No. St John's building is in poor condition. This problem needs to be addressed now. Claremont's building is in reasonable condition: it does not need to be replaced immediately. Merging the schools would allow Claremont's pupils to benefit from a new school as well.

If a merged school does not go ahead then a new Claremont would not be built in the foreseeable future. There would be no automatic upgrade of the facilities at Claremont.

A merged school would allow the pupils at St John's ***and*** *Claremont to benefit from the educational benefits which a new school would bring.*

What will the educational benefits be?

The educational benefits will be extensive and include:

- *Extended and enhanced access to new technologies, PE and sports facilities, library and other learning resources*
- *State of the art classrooms*
- *State of the art nursery accommodation*
- *Enhanced and extended facilities for children with learning difficulties*
- *Enhanced social and playground facilities*
- *Enhanced working environment for staff*
- *Enhanced promoted post structure*
- *Enhanced community facilities*
- *Enhanced staff and pupil morale.*

These conditions will lead to higher levels of achievement and attainment for all pupils. These levels will be secured in a physical environment fit for purpose in the 21st Century.