

# CLT Briefing Paper

Wednesday, 11 February 2026

## Boroughmuir High School Accommodation Pressures

### 1. Key Points

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- A forecast roll of 1,684 pupils in August 2026 means that Boroughmuir High School has exceeded its capacity of 1,610 pupils.
- A large S1 intake in August 2026 has caused the school to question their ability to accommodate demand for places. Discussions with the school and analysis of the impact of the large intake is ongoing.
- Delivery of additional accommodation, or even more minor changes for August 2026 appears unlikely.
- Offsite accommodation solutions – including use of commercial and partner accommodation – are being explored.
- The use of shared accommodation with James Gillespie’s High School at Darroch has been ruled out due to the anticipated negative response from both school’s communities.
- Catchment change is considered undeliverable and is unlikely to address the immediate issues. However, in the long-term there may be opportunities and a need to deliver some catchment change.
- Projections and analysis of P1 and S1 catchment populations suggest that S1 intakes at Boroughmuir will fall sharply from 2026, however, the roll will continue to rise, adding to accommodation pressures, until at least 2030.

### 2. Background

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#### Accommodation Pressures

- 2.1 Boroughmuir High School’s Notional Capacity is 1,560 pupils. However, at [Education, Children and Families Committee in March 2025](#) the outcomes of the secondary school capacity review recommended that this be increased to a ‘Planning capacity’ of 1,610 pupils.

- 2.2 The Education, Children and Families Committee in March did not accept the proposed capacity change without first undertaking works at the school to improve the 'suitability' of the school. Accordingly works have been commissioned to improve dining and access to social spaces – including promoting better use of outdoor spaces.
- 2.3 The roll at the time of the census in September 2025 was 1,626, exceeding both the former Notional Capacity and the new 'Planning' capacity. The forecast roll for August 2026 is 1,684 pupils.
- 2.4 It is important that the roll of the school is within the Planning Capacity (1,610 pupils) which has been established to ensure a sustainable future and avoid the issues now being experienced which require reactive interventions and could have long-term impacts on curriculum.
- 2.5 However, more critically, the S1 intake in August 2026 is forecast to be 328 pupils. The S1 intake limit for a school with capacity for 1,610 pupils (and Boroughmuir's stay-on rates) should be 280 pupils. The current S1 and S2 also both exceed 280 pupils.
- 2.6 The school management team have asked for additional accommodation as they believe they will struggle to accommodate this large S1 intake within existing facilities due to the impact it will have on timetabling – particularly for practical subjects. Officers from the Council's QIEO team are due to meet with the school management team to confirm the position and the impact of the school accommodating this large intake.

### **Building Capacity**

- 2.7 The '[Planning' capacity](#) for the school is based on analysis of the number of timetabled spaces and applies a 'frequency of use factor' to all these spaces.
- 2.8 However, any building also has an ultimate 'physical' capacity based on statutory technical requirements such as the number of toilets available and escape capacity in the event of fire. Although the number of toilets at Boroughmuir is sufficient for an occupancy of over 2,000, the building warrant approved for the new extension in 2018 was based on fire escape for a total occupancy of 1,702 (342 for the extension and 1,360 for the original building). With an expected student roll of 1,684 in August 2026 it is possible that the total occupancy (students, staff and visitors) will exceed the 1,702 figure.
- 2.9 Accordingly, the design team currently looking at the suitability works (who were also the architects of the 2018 extension) have been asked to also determine a maximum safe occupancy of the Boroughmuir building so that a plan for the management and access to the building can be developed. At the time of writing this information was still awaited (expected mid-February).

### 3. Solutions

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#### Onsite Solutions

- 3.1 As per above, some work is in progress to improve existing social spaces and also provide an additional CDT space. However, this work will only formalise the 'Planning capacity' and lack of resource, timescales to mobilise minor works teams, timelines for permissions mean that delivery of most of these necessary interventions is unlikely by August 2026.
- 3.2 In addition to the above, feasibility work is being undertaken to identify more major works that could be undertaken to provide additional learning and teaching space within the existing building footprint. This includes consideration of closing in terrace areas. However, these options are likely to be technically difficult, potentially disruptive and may, ultimately, be undeliverable given concerns about the impact they may have on the physical capacity of the building.

#### Offsite Solutions

##### *Temporary Units*

- 3.3 Discussions between officers from the Council's Strategic Asset Planning Team and the school management team have explored a number of options. The school management team's preference is for temporary classrooms to be delivered in the school grounds. However, they are concerned that once additional capacity is created at Boroughmuir High School, it will be difficult to remove it given demand for places at the school. Through the appeals process the Council would not be able to argue that it did not have capacity.
- 3.4 However, there are other concerns about installation of temporary units:
  - 3.4.1 It would not be possible to install temporary units by August 2026 through conventional processes.
  - 3.4.2 The school site is tight with very limited external space – the number of temporary classrooms would be limited. There are likely to be Planning issues with locating temporary classrooms on the canal side, which offers the most suitable space.
  - 3.4.3 Loss of external space will reduce social space when Education, Children and Families Committee have asked for this to be increased to address suitability concerns.
  - 3.4.4 The increased capacity will still need to access the main building, placing additional pressures on dining and other social spaces.

##### *Darroch*

- 3.5 Darroch is James Gillespie's High School's annexe building and is the focus for Gaelic Medium Provision at James Gillespie's. The building was fully refurbished as an annexe of James Gillespie's High School in 2022. It contains 18 general classrooms and social spaces.

- 3.6 However, because it is removed from the James Gillespie's site, timetabling its use has been challenging for the school. Accordingly, in 2024/25 session, it is estimated that spaces in the building were in use 50% of the time. Additional accommodation has been provided as part of a separate project at James Gillespie's High School's main building meaning that it is possible that the 5-6 classroom spaces Boroughmuir High School's management team estimate would be required to timetable half of a BGE year group into Darroch could be made available.
- 3.7 While perhaps possible for August 2026, rising rolls at James Gillespie's High School mean that this solution is likely to be possible only for one or two years.
- 3.8 Furthermore, Boroughmuir High School's management team were concerned about pupil safety between Boroughmuir and Darroch.
- 3.9 However, the main concerns with this solution relate to the likely negative feedback from parent groups at both Boroughmuir High School and James Gillespie's High School and, in particular, the strong response this proposal may draw from the Gaelic community.

#### *Commercial Premises*

- 3.10 There are a number of privately leased office and other commercial premises in the Fountainbridge and Tollcross area that could offer sufficient floor area to accommodate classes from Boroughmuir High School. The Council's Estate's team have been engaged to progress investigation of potential premises based on a requirement for at least 500m<sup>2</sup> of flexible, partitioned or partitionable and secure space.
- 3.11 The challenge with leased properties will be their suitability for school use or the ability to deliver the works necessary to make them suitable within the available timescales having concluded the lease agreement process. This would include the requirement for Planning permission to change the use of the building. Changing the use of the building is something that may make negotiations with landlords more challenging.
- 3.12 Furthermore, pupil safety was a concern for Boroughmuir High School's management team when considering travel to Darroch. This is also likely to be a concern with an offsite commercial premises which may be outside of Boroughmuir's catchment area.

#### *Partner Accommodation*

- 3.13 Napier University's Merchiston campus is approximately 1km from Boroughmuir High School and is located in the heart of Boroughmuir's catchment area making it easily accessible for the majority of the catchment population. An approach has been made to Napier University who are considering whether there is scope for school use of some classroom space in their building. The initial view from their Head of Hospitality is that while rooms may be booked individually around students

timetables, it is unlikely that they will have dedicated space available that can be carved out of their timetable.

### **Catchment Change**

- 3.14 Since plans for the extension of Boroughmuir was first planned it has been regularly reported to Education, Children and Families Committee that this extension alone was unlikely to address projected growth in demand for places at the school. The school has now been maximised on the existing site. Accordingly, reports to Education, Children and Families Committee in [December 2018](#), [March 2020](#), [December 2020](#) have all suggested that, in the long-term, catchment change is required to address accommodation pressures at Boroughmuir High School.
- 3.15 It is acknowledged that the political climate means delivery of this solution is unlikely.
- 3.16 However, there are two issues worth consideration where catchment change is concerned:

#### *Minor Catchment Change*

- 3.16.1 A significant portion of the large Fountainbridge development site on the other side of Viewforth from Boroughmuir High School is within the school's catchment area. While pupil generation from a site that is principally likely to have a high proportion of one-bed flats is only estimated at 16 pupils, there is a known issue with people choosing to rent small flats in Boroughmuir's catchment for a short period in order to be in catchment.
- 3.16.2 Accordingly, it is proposed that a catchment change to realign this area of Fountainbridge with Tynecastle High School be undertaken. This will reduce opportunities for people to consider acquiring an address in Boroughmuir's catchment area and reinforce the message that the Council will take measures to limit opportunities for fraud.

#### *Catchment Change linked to GME Solution*

- 3.16.3 If secondary provision for GME were to move away from James Gillespie's High School there would be an opportunity to consider either how to use Darroch as a means of addressing future growth between James Gillespie's High School and Boroughmuir or to consider a catchment change between the two schools.
- 3.16.4 Currently the new Canaan Lane Primary School feeds to both schools (approximately one-third feed to James Gillespie's with two-thirds feeding to Boroughmuir). Realigning the whole school with James Gillespie's may be possible if Bun Sgoil Taobh na Pairce were no longer to feed to it. Alternatively, realigning Canaan Lane with Boroughmuir may be possible if Darroch were to transfer to Boroughmuir's use.

3.17 Catchment change is unlikely have an instant impact. It is a tool to address long-term issues. Section 3.21 explains why accommodation pressures may be a short-term issue at Boroughmuir High School.

**Refuse Catchment Places**

3.18 In the absence of an obvious solution to increase school capacity or to reduce the scale of demand for places, the option of refusing catchment places has been considered.

3.19 The Council’s current admissions and placement policies and procedures suggest that catchment places will be granted, and no clear process is outlined for refusing such a place. Accordingly, if the Council were to refuse places and this decision were to be challenged by judicial review, the Council’s legal team advise that there is a high risk the Council would lose the judicial review.

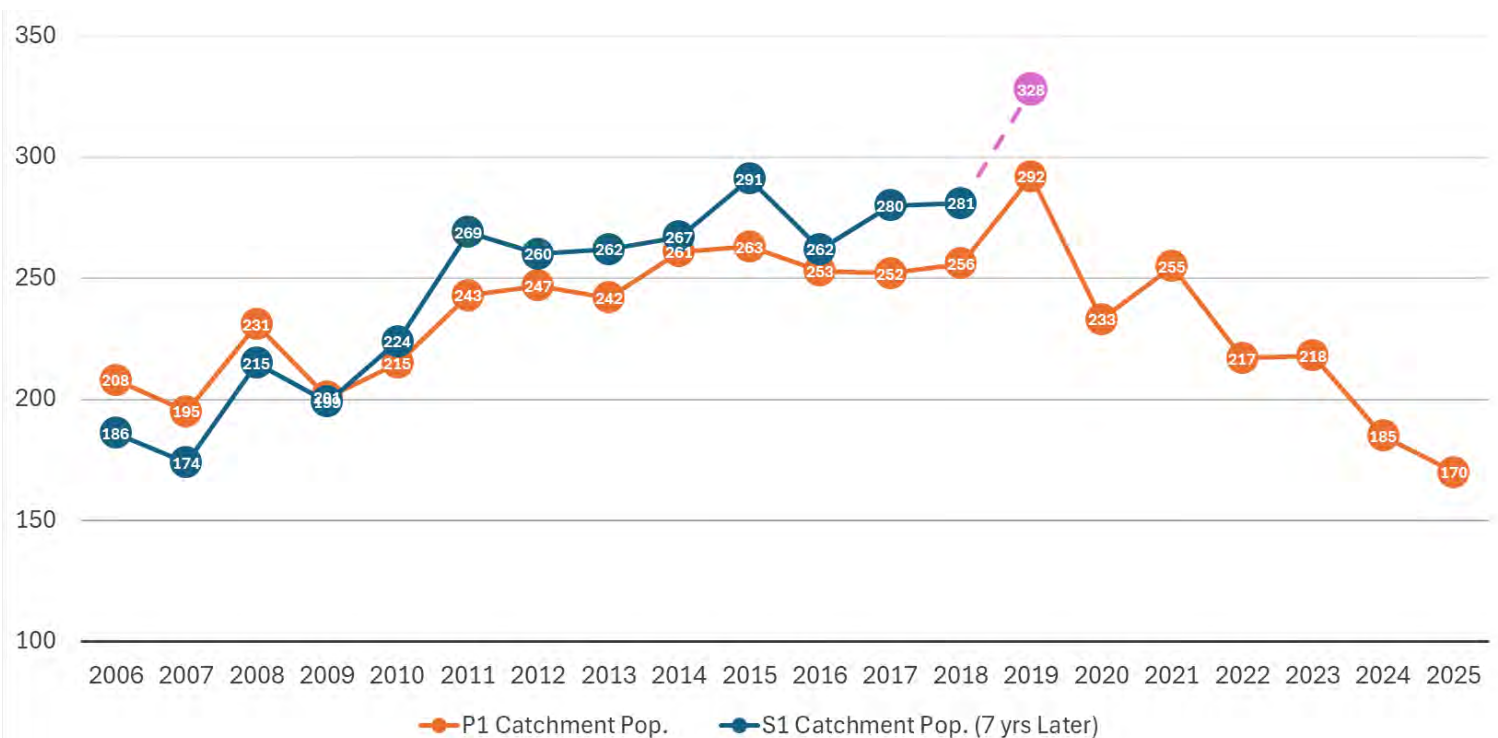
3.20 Any change to the Council’s policy and procedures to allow refusal of catchment places would require consultation in terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

**A Short-term Issue?**

3.21 Projections and historic trends suggest that the accommodation pressures being experienced by Boroughmuir High School may be a short-term issue.

3.22 The graph below shows, in orange, Boroughmuir High School’s P1 catchment population. It also shows, in blue, the same P1 cohort 7 years later when they arrived in S1. The purple dot is the estimated S1 for 2026.

**Graph 1: Boroughmuir High P1 Catchment Population (2005 – 2025) and S1 Catchment Population 7 Years Later (2026 S1 estimated)**



3.23 There are two key takeaways from Graph 1.

1. The rise and fall in the P1 population is broadly observable in the S1 population 7 years later suggesting that the P1 population is a reasonable guide to what future S1 catchment populations may look like.
2. Boroughmuir's P1 catchment population has declined quickly and significantly since a spike in 2019. The P1 spike in 2019 has resulted in the very high S1 now creating accommodation pressures for August 2026. The P1 intakes since 2019 suggest that S1 intakes after 2026 will fall (albeit with a minor recovery in 2028).

3.24 While Graph 1 suggests that the S1 catchment population, and therefore the S1 intake at Boroughmuir High School may fall, it will take time for this reduction to roll through the school. Accordingly, school roll projections continue to show growth in the school roll until 2030 with the school likely to be over capacity until 2032.