Dufftown Library Survey: Summary of Responses

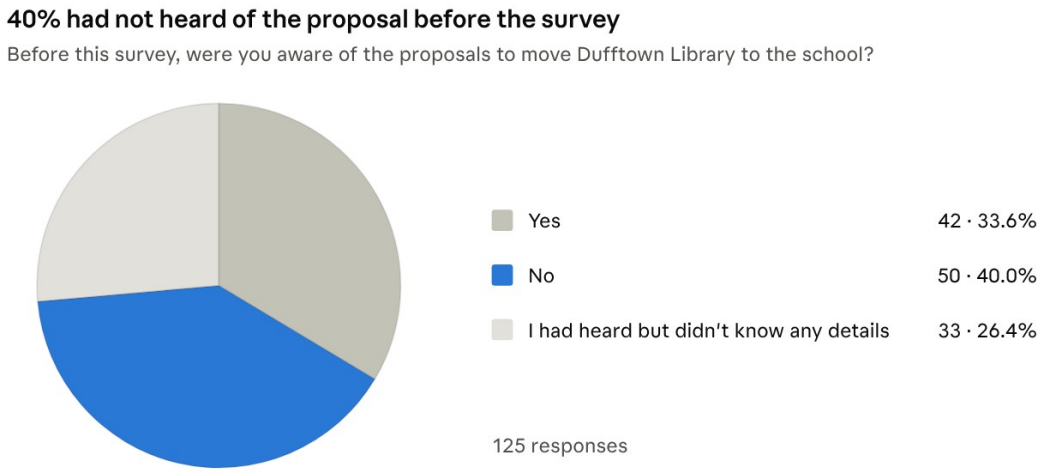
Respondents strongly opposed moving Dufftown library into the school. The main concerns were child safety, losing a visible service from the high street, parking and access, and fears that the move would lead to closure.

The online survey received 125 responses. It asked five multiple-choice questions, shown in the charts below, and two open questions:

Question	Responses
What do you think would be the main benefits or disadvantages of moving the library to the school?	106
Do you have any other comments on this topic?	51

Survey results at a glance

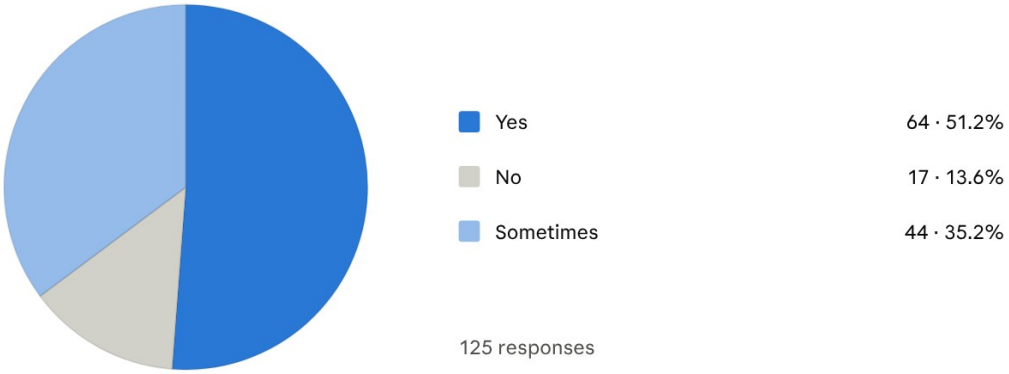
Three in four respondents (94 of 124) do not support the move, and 84% think it would harm the High Street. Most respondents already use the library, but only 19 of 123 said they would use it at the school. Before the survey, 40% had not heard of the proposal.



Online survey · 125 responses

86% of respondents use the library at least sometimes

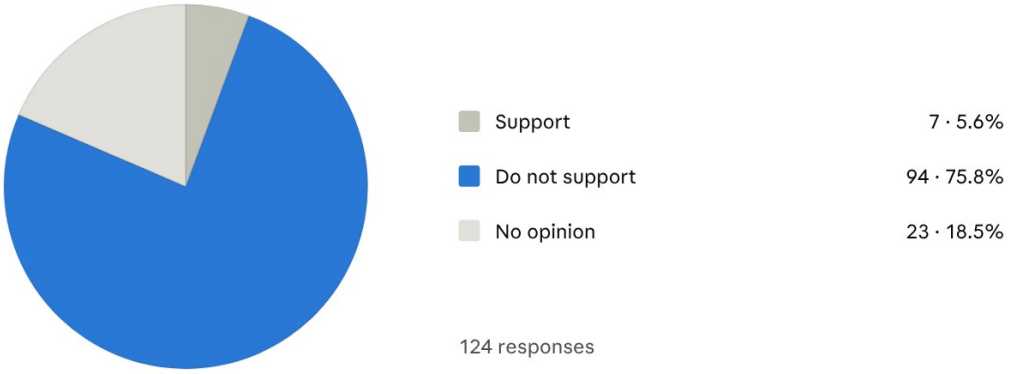
Do you currently use Dufftown Library?



Online survey · 125 responses

Three in four respondents do not support the move

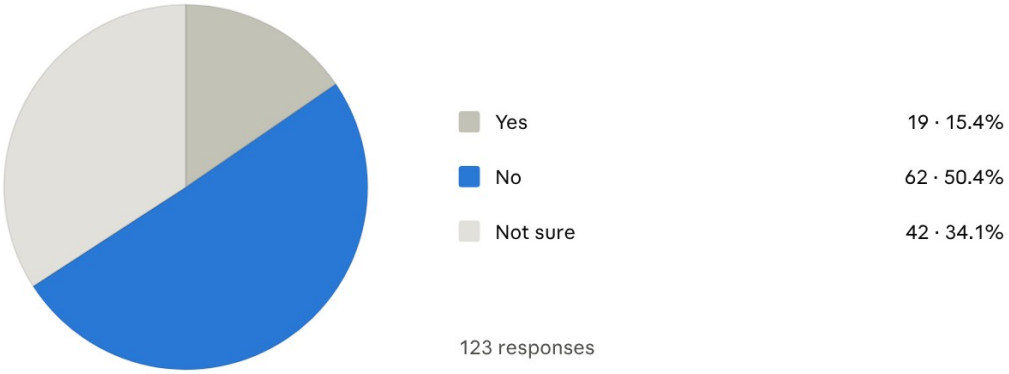
Do you support the proposal to move Dufftown Library to the school?



Online survey · 124 responses

Half say they would not use the library at the school

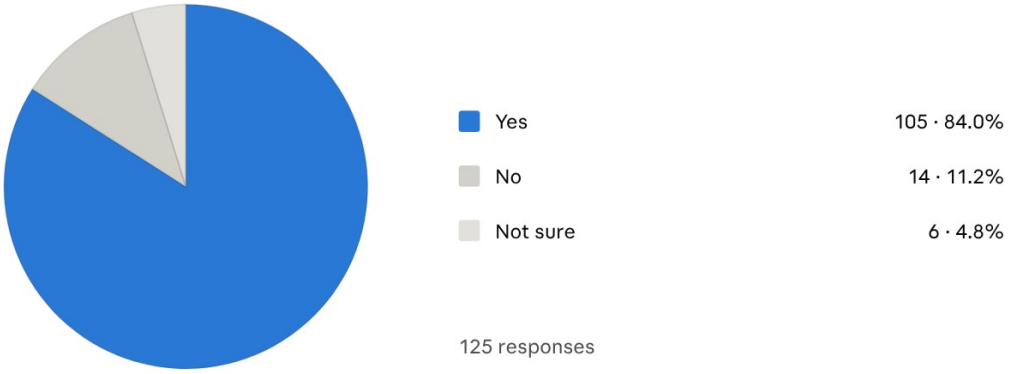
If the library moved to the school, would you use it?



Online survey · 123 responses

84% think the move would harm the High Street

Do you think moving the library from the town centre would have a negative impact on Dufftown High Street?



Online survey · 125 responses

Question 1: benefits and disadvantages of the move

Most of the 106 respondents named only disadvantages. Around one in five said they could see no benefit at all, and only a small minority were neutral or supported the move with conditions.

Main disadvantages

Child safety and safeguarding. This was the most common concern, raised in around a third of responses. Respondents were uneasy about members of the public entering school grounds during the school day, often through the playground. They asked how library users would be vetted and how access would be monitored, and many felt a separate entrance would not remove the risk. Some adults said they would feel uncomfortable going onto school property themselves.

Loss of a visible high street service. Around a quarter of respondents valued the library's position on Balvenie Street. They described it as central and visible, close to shops, the chemist and cafés, and a point of contact for visitors and tourists. They feared a move would leave another empty building on a struggling high street, reduce footfall and undermine recent regeneration investment. Several worried the building would be converted into flats.

Parking, traffic and access. Respondents said parking near the school is already difficult. York Street was repeatedly described as narrow, congested and poorly surfaced, with pavements unsuitable for wheelchairs and mobility scooters. One respondent noted that the school has worked to keep traffic away from its gates.

Opening hours and school holidays. Around one in five asked whether the library would open in the evenings, at weekends and during school holidays. They worried its hours would be tied to the school timetable.

Accessibility for older and disabled users. Respondents praised the current building's ramp, wide pavement and nearby parking. Older residents and people with limited mobility said the school would be harder to reach, and some said they would no longer be able to use the library.

Fewer users. Many expected use to fall. Adults without children, older people and more timid users might feel awkward entering a school, and the library would no longer feel like a public space for everyone. Respondents also asked whether computers, printing, an accessible toilet and the range of books would stay the same.

Pressure on school space. Several respondents said the school has no spare room, especially with new housing planned in the village.

Fear of closure. A recurring view was that the move is a cost-cutting step towards closing the library. Respondents mentioned Rothes, where the library moved into the school and later closed. Some felt Dufftown is treated less favourably than Elgin and Forres.

Benefits identified

A small number of respondents named benefits, usually with qualifications:

- **More use by pupils.** Children would have easier access to books, and more might join. Several added that the library is already close to the school, and that more class visits would achieve the same result.
- **Lower costs for the council.** One building to heat and maintain instead of two. Some saw this as a benefit to the council rather than to residents.
- **A new use for the current building**, such as shops, housing or another community use.
- **Possibly longer opening hours or more meeting space.** These were raised as questions rather than expected outcomes.
- **Keeping a library in the village.** A few said the location mattered less than keeping the service.

Question 2: other comments

The 51 additional comments reinforced the opposition and added views on the council's reasoning, along with practical ideas for the library. A handful were simply "No", "None" or "Why?", and two suggested closing the library or using the building for housing.

Keep the library where it is

The strongest message was that the library should stay in its current building. Several respondents said the community has campaigned to keep it before and that this proposal keeps coming back. Many described the library as an essential public asset. Others said the most important thing is that Dufftown keeps a library, wherever it is. Some felt Dufftown receives less investment than Elgin and Forres despite paying the same council tax.

Lessons from elsewhere

Respondents pointed to Rothes, where the library moved into the primary school and later closed, and Aberlour, where they said a school-based library later had to move to other premises. They saw this as evidence that the arrangement has been tried and has not worked. One respondent noted that the library was previously housed in Mortlach school before moving to its current site.

The high street and the future of the building

Respondents did not want another empty or underused building on the main street, and several worried it would become flats. They argued that council policy should strengthen town centres, and that a visible, lit community space supports both residents and tourism.

Child safety

Respondents asked whether the council had carried out a risk assessment, and whether library users would face checks comparable to the PVG checks required of school staff. Some raised practical access questions, such as buzzing in through security doors.

The council's reasoning and the consultation

Some questioned whether the move would save money once the cost of creating space at the school and converting the current building is included. They asked whether any savings would be spent in Dufftown. Others felt the public consultation had been inadequate, or asked how long it would be before the library was under threat again.

School capacity and housing growth

With new housing planned, respondents asked where additional pupils would be taught. Some wondered whether the library space would later be taken back for classrooms.

Access, hours and who the library serves

Respondents noted that opening hours have already been cut, and asked whether a school-based library could open in the evenings. They said there are few community spaces for working adults without children, and that older residents rely on the library.

Ideas for improving the library

- **Longer, more reliable opening hours**, possibly supported by a volunteer rota.
- **More activities for all ages**, such as book clubs, Bookbug sessions, Dungeons & Dragons nights, film screenings, story time, crafts, quizzes, local history and study groups.
- **Bookable space for groups.** Local early-years providers currently share a small corner of the children's area for two hours and would value out-of-hours use.
- **Better promotion** of what the library offers, including new arrivals.
- **A well-publicised public working session** on hours, usage and expansion, including advice from Elgin library staff.

A note on usage

One respondent acknowledged that Dufftown is one of the least used libraries in Moray, despite offering free WiFi, a warm space, an accessible toilet, a book group and holiday activities. They noted that most regular users are over 50 and argued that the focus should be on attracting younger people. Another said they now read mainly e-books. These comments suggest low footfall needs addressing whatever happens to the building.

Overall conclusions

Across both questions, most respondents opposed moving the library to the school. The same concerns came up repeatedly:

1. **Child safety** from members of the public entering school grounds.
2. **Loss of a visible, accessible service** from Balvenie Street, leaving another empty building in the town centre.
3. **Parking and access** on York Street, particularly for older and disabled users.
4. **Restricted opening hours**, especially outside term time.
5. **Fear of closure**, based on what happened in Rothes and Aberlour.

The main benefit identified was easier access for pupils. Many felt this could be achieved through more class visits to the current library.

Respondents want the effort to go into keeping the library where it is and making better use of it. Their suggestions include longer hours, more activities for all ages, bookable group space and better promotion. Several also acknowledged that low usage needs to be addressed, particularly among younger people.