Under section 14 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (the 2010 Act), Scottish Ministers are required to maintain a list of “rural schools” and to publish an explanation of how this list is derived. The list is periodically updated, and the most recent list was published in May 2017.

**Defining a “rural school”**

The Scottish Ministers use the Scottish Government’s Urban / Rural Classification to determine which schools in Scotland should be considered rural schools and included in the Rural School List for the purposes of the 2010 Act.

The Urban / Rural Classification is a methodology which allows every postcode in Scotland to be classified into 8 different urban and rural categories. Every school can be allocated to one of these categories based on its postcode. A “rural school” is defined as those located within any of the three “rural” categories in the table below. This means that a school which, according to the Urban / Rural Classification, is located in a settlement of under 3,000 people is classified as a “rural school”. 34% of Scotland’s schools are classified as “rural schools”.

The 2017 list excludes the schools which, although their locations are classified in one of the three rural categories, have been found to be located within 500m of an area with a non-rural classification (any of the other five categories in the table) and are not a primary school with fewer than 70 pupils. This reflects the fact that a small number of schools that would not generally be considered to be rural are located at the edge of the settlements which they serve and thus fall into the rural classification. For the purposes of the 2010 Act, it has been decided that it is appropriate that these schools are considered to have the classification of the adjacent settlement and are not included on the Rural School List. The schools which have been excluded from the Rural School List on this basis are listed in the Annex following the List.

There are around 861 rural local authority schools in Scotland of which around 788 are primary schools and 47 are secondary schools, 20 schools providing both primary and secondary education and 6 special schools. This means that 40% of Scotland’s primary schools and 20% of Scotland’s secondary schools are classified as “rural”.

**Scottish Government’s Urban / Rural Classification**

The Government’s Urban / Rural Classification was created to develop understanding of the issues facing urban, rural and remote Scotland and is now used for a variety of purposes, particularly when presenting statistics and information, and is set out in the table below.

The classifications are updated every two years to ensure that it is responsive to changes in population. The May 2017 Rural Schools List is based on the classifications published in 2014.

**How was the classification produced?**

Two main criteria have been used to produce the Scottish Government 6 and 8 fold urban rural classifications: *settlement size (i.e. population or community size)* as defined by the National Records of Scotland (NRS) and *accessibility based on drive time* analysis to differentiate between accessible and remote areas in Scotland. The settlements and accessibility data are then combined to create a Scotland wide classification.
Scottish Government Urban / Rural Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Settlement sizes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Large Urban Areas</td>
<td>Settlements of 125,000 or more people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Urban Areas</td>
<td>Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Small Towns</td>
<td>Settlements of 3,000 and 9,999 people and within 30 minutes drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote Small Towns</td>
<td>Settlements of between 3,000 and 9,999 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Remote Small Towns</td>
<td>Settlements of 3,000 and 9,999 people and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessible Rural</td>
<td>Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remote Rural</td>
<td>Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes but less than 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Remote Rural</td>
<td>Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 60 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**How are settlement sizes estimated and what settlement size thresholds are used?**

NRS Small Area Population Estimates (SAPE) together with information from the Royal Mail Postcode Address File (PAF) were used to classify 2012 postcode units as high or low density. This information was then used to identify areas of contiguous high density postcodes with a population of 500 or more that make up a Settlement. Details of the methodology used for the Mid-2012 Population Estimates for Settlements can be found here.

The population thresholds (i.e. 3,000, 10,000 and 125,000) used to distinguish between urban and rural areas are used to classify the settlements dataset into 'large urban areas', 'other urban areas', 'small towns' or 'rural areas'.

NRS recommend users exercise caution when comparing settlement population estimates with previous years. Whilst an increase in population may be due to new build, it may also be due to the inclusion of existing housing which had previously been separated by a low density postcode (and vice versa for a population decrease).

**How are drive times estimated?**

Drive times are then estimated around settlements classed as 'large urban areas' and 'other urban areas' (population greater than 10,000) to distinguish between accessible and remote areas. For example, in the 6-fold classification, remote small towns are those that fall outwith the 30 minute drive time from a settlement of 10,000 people or more. The 6 fold urban rural classification can also be broken down further into an 8 fold classification. This splits the 'remote small towns' and 'remote rural' into ‘remote’ and ‘very remote’ based on whether the area is over 60 minutes drive from a centre of population.

**Further information**

Further information on the definition of the 6 or 8 fold classification, and previous publications:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/About/Methodology/UrbanRuralClassification

Scottish Government
May 2017