

THE HENRY PRINCE CE (C) FIRST SCHOOL, MAYFIELD

Proposal to close The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield on 31 August 2019

Formal Consultation – 23 January to 5 March 2019

PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION

1. The governing body of The Henry Prince CE (C) First School has approved a period of statutory consultation on a proposal to close the school on 31 August 2019.
2. The purpose of this consultation is to make you aware of the key issues and to seek your views on the proposed closure. This document and any further information will be published at www.henryprince.org.
3. The county council and the Lichfield Diocesan Board of Education support the proposal.
4. As yet, no final decisions have been made so it is vital that you make your views known to the governing body by 5pm on 5 March 2019.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL?

5. It is proposed that The Henry Prince CE (C) First School, Mayfield closes on 31 August 2019.

BACKGROUND

6. Following continued reductions in pupil numbers and an increasing budget deficit, the governing body consulted on closure in 2017. During the consultation the school received positive support and a range of suggestions from parents and the local community. In response, **the governing body agreed a set of actions with the county council to help the school increase pupil numbers and become more financially sustainable**, including:
 - increasing the age range to be become a primary school;
 - introducing wraparound early years provision;
 - positive engagement with QEGS on their future admission arrangements;
 - further promotion of the school: issuing press releases, reception admissions flyers, advertising Year 5 open evenings, promoting nursery places, working with the local parish councillors and developing a new school website.
7. Excluding nursery pupils, there were 36 pupils attending the school at the time of the consultation in 2017 but that number has fallen to 30. The governing body's actions were intended to increase numbers every year: to almost 50 by September 2019 (and to 70 by 2024). **However, pupil numbers remain too low** as only 29 pupils are expected to be on roll at the school in September 2019.

WHAT ARE THE KEY ISSUES?

8. **The key issues facing the school are low pupil numbers and the school's finances.**
9. The Henry Prince CE (C) First School is a small Church of England school in Mayfield, East Staffordshire and on the outskirts of Ashbourne. With a capacity of 75 places, **the school is less than half full**, with only 30 pupils currently on roll (excluding nursery).
10. Every school receives an amount of funding for each pupil at the school. As a small school with low pupil numbers, the financial burden on the headteacher and the governing body from extremely limited funding has meant that **governors are unable to set a balanced budget** for The Henry Price.
11. Based on the current number of pupils attending the school and the likelihood that this will not increase significantly in the future, budgeting models show that the school is likely to have a deficit of £199,000 by the end of 2019/2020. **The deficit is forecast to increase to £311,000 in 2020/21 and to £420,000 in 2021/22.** To put this into context, ten additional pupils would be needed to increase the school budget by £35,000 per year
12. **To be financially viable, The Henry Prince needs to grow significantly every year and become almost full.** Without rapid growth, the school cannot generate the funding necessary to meet its current operating costs, to fund another teacher for a future Year 5/6 class and to clear the large deficit over time,
13. However, **the school's budget position is worsening** because, as Table 1 below shows, the number of applications for a Reception place in 2019 remains low (with only 5 applications for the 15 places available) and the total number of pupils is not increasing (it is expected to fall to 29 pupils in September 2019).
14. The governing body have continued to look at sharing head teacher costs with other local schools, including through a federation or sharing a headteacher across more than one school, but these have been unsuccessful. They have continued to attempt a federation of the school with another school and again this has proved unsuccessful and **governors have exhausted all other options available to them to secure the future of the school.**
15. **The Henry Prince First School achieved a "good" judgment from Ofsted** in October 2017. However, the governing body, the county council and Diocesan Board are clear that the worsening financial position means that **the school is unable to sustain the high quality of education and, therefore, consultation on closure is appropriate.**

INTAKES AND NUMBER ON ROLL

Numbers on roll at The Henry Prince

16. Table 1 sets out the numbers of pupils by year group (excluding nursery pupils). The vacancies shown are against a total capacity of 75 places.

School Year	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total	Surplus Places
Historical and current numbers on roll									
2007/08	10	14	11	10	15	n/a		60	15
2008/09	8	9	16	10	11	n/a		54	21
2009/10	9	5	7	10	9	n/a		40	35
2010/11	8	8	5	5	8	n/a		34	41
2011/12	10	8	8	6	5	n/a		37	38
2012/13	4	11	8	8	5	n/a		36	39
2013/14	7	4	11	8	8	n/a		38	37
2014/15	9	6	4	12	9	n/a		40	35
2015/16	7	9	7	4	9	n/a		36	39
2016/17	9	7	9	5	4	n/a		34	41
2017/18	5	9	7	9	4	n/a		34	41
2018/19	2	5	9	6	8	n/a		30	45
Expected and projected numbers on roll									
2019/20	5	2	5	9	6	2	n/a	29	46
2020/21	5	5	2	5	9	3	2	31	44
2021/22	7	5	5	2	5	5	3	32	43
2022/23	5	7	5	5	2	3	5	32	43

Table 1: Historical and projected numbers on roll. NB The school also operates a nursery which currently has 6 pupils on roll (3 aged 4+ and 3 aged 3+).

17. Based upon parental preferences, Table 1 projects **that numbers on roll will remain in the low 30s and the school will stay less than half full**. To become financially viable, the school needs numbers to be growing towards 60 and beyond.
18. NHS data indicates that there was a cohort of 21 children in the catchment area who could have applied for a Reception place for 2019/20, however the expected Reception intake is 5 pupils, which is less than a quarter of 21. The projected Reception intakes for 2020/21, 2021/22 and 2022/23 are based upon **future cohorts of 20, 25 and 17 children**, respectively. The Year 5 projected intakes in Table 1 assume that at least half of the Year 4 pupils stay on at The Henry Prince.
19. In the East Staffordshire Borough Council Local Plan, there is a “Tier 1 strategic village allocation” of **20 new dwellings for Mayfield that could generate around 4 additional primary-aged pupils**.
20. If The Henry Prince School closed, **the county council considers that there is sufficient capacity for children within existing schools**.

CLOSURE PROPOSAL: SCHOOL ADMISSIONS

21. It is important to state that no final decision on the future of The Henry Prince has been made and there is no need for parents to apply to move their children from the school at this time.

Catchment areas

22. It is proposed that the catchment area of Dove CE (VC) First School will be expanded to accommodate the area currently served by The Henry Prince.

23. Ryecroft Middle School, near Uttoxeter will continue to be the catchment area middle school for children presently residing within The Henry Prince catchment area in Year 5 to Year 8.

Admissions to Reception for September 2019

24. Parents who have expressed a preference for The Henry Prince will be contacted between now and 1 February 2019 and invited to make new preferences that can be considered if the decision is taken to close the school. This process will be centrally managed by the county council's School Admissions Service.

Current Pupils (Reception – Year 4)

25. The headteacher will be in touch with parents between now and 1 February to discuss their likely preference for an alternative school if the decision is taken to close the school. There will also be the opportunity for parents to speak individually to the headteacher at the parents' evening on Wednesday 30th January should they wish to.

26. Places for children in current Reception to Year 3 classes will be available at Dove CE (VC) First School from September 2019 for all families that want a place at the proposed catchment area school. Children within current Year 4 will also be able to be admitted to Ryecroft Middle where this is the parent's preferred school.

27. If after the 15 May the decision is taken to close the school parents will be asked to complete a short application form for their preferred school. This process will be centrally managed by the county council's School Admissions Service.

Nursery Provision from September 2019

28. If after the 15 May the decision is taken to close the school, parents of nursery-aged children will need to apply direct to a childcare provider: Families can find local childcare provision offering funded places for 3 and 4 year old children via the county council's website at <http://staffs.fsd.org.uk>. For further information or support on looking for childcare please email fis@staffordshire.gov.uk.

CLOSURE PROPOSAL: HOME-TO-SCHOOL TRANSPORT POLICY

29. The county council's current transport policy provides free transport to the catchment area or nearest school where a pupil's home is over a set walking distance.
30. This entitlement would continue to Dove First School for those children who either live within The Henry Prince catchment area or for whom Dove First is the nearest school, and it is over two miles away from their home.
31. Pupils who live outside The Henry Prince First School current catchment area would be entitled to free transport to either their catchment area school or their nearest school (including schools outside Staffordshire) if it is over two miles walking distance from home.
32. Older pupils would continue to receive free transport to Ryecroft Middle School where they live within the catchment area, as they live over the walking distance to the school.
33. The county council's home to school transport policy can be viewed at www.staffordshire.gov.uk/schooltransport.

CLOSURE PROPOSAL: STAFF

34. In the event of school closure, staff will be supported in accordance with the school's Redundancy and Reorganisation Policy. The Policy provides an open and transparent process, with a focus on supporting and providing the necessary assistance to employees during a period of change. Governors will ensure that staff are fully consulted, with the school's HR Advisor available to provide support and advice as needed. Unions and professional associations can advise and support their members.

CLOSURE PROPOSAL: LAND AND BUILDINGS

35. The original buildings are owned by trustees for the foundation charity of the school. The playing field and newer buildings are owned by Staffordshire County Council. It would be for each party to determine the future use of the buildings and land they hold.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY VIEWS KNOWN?

36. **Please send your views to the school's governing body by 5pm on Tuesday, 5 March 2019.** All the written views received will be considered by the governing body before a decision is taken on whether to continue with the closure proposal and to move to the "Representation" stage.
 - Write to the school address or email your views to the Chair of Governors at office@henryprince.staffs.sch.uk.
 - Meetings will be held at the school on Monday, 28 January 2019 (at 4.00 pm for staff and at 5.30 pm for parents).
 - A further public meeting will be held in the Mayfield Memorial Hall on Tuesday, 12 February at 5.00 pm.

WHAT IS THE TIMESCALE FOR CONSULTATION?

37. The timetable for the proposed school closure is shown below. We are in the “consultation” stage, which is the first of five statutory stages that must be completed.
38. Following the end of the consultation period, the governing body will consider the responses and decide whether to postpone or cease the closure proposal or whether to move to the “publication” and “representation” stages.

Statutory Stages	Action	Provisional Dates
1. Consultation	6-week formal consultation period	23 January to 5 March 2019
2. Publication	Publication of a statutory notice	18 March
3. Representation	Following publication, the representation period would allow a further 4 weeks for the receipt of comments and objections	18 March to 12 April
4. Decision	The County Council’s Cabinet is the decision-maker	15 May
5. Implementation	Proposed closure date	31 August 2019

39. A final decision on any recommendation to close the school would be taken by the county council’s Cabinet on 15 May 2019. In reaching a decision, Cabinet would consider the Department for Education’s guidance to local authorities, which states that “Decision-makers should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area”.
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