

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL

Extract of Schedule 2 to The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools)(England) Regulations 2013 (as amended):

Contact details

1. The name and contact address of the local authority or governing body publishing the proposals and the name, address and category of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued.

The proposal to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, Bleasdale, Preston, PR3 1UY is published by Lancashire County Council, the relevant local authority. Bleasdale Church of England Primary School is voluntary aided. The local authority can be contacted at the following address: Education, Quality and Performance Service, Room 2:27, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD.

Implementation

2. The date on which it is proposed to close the school or, where it is proposed that the closure be implemented in stages, the dates of and information about each stage.

It is proposed to close the school on 31 August 2019. As at March 2019, the school had two pupils on roll with one in Year 4 and one in Year 6. The pupil in Year 6 will leave the school at the end of this academic year to progress on to secondary school. This will leave one pupil at the school.

Reason for closure

3. A statement explaining the reason why closure of the school is considered necessary.

The proposal arises due to a fall in pupil numbers and the associated impact on the educational and financial viability of the school.

Pupil Numbers and Admissions

As at March 2019, the school had two pupils on roll, one in Year 4 and one in Year 6. The pupil in Year 6 will leave the school at the end of this academic year to progress on to secondary school. There were no admissions to the school in September 2018. In addition, the housing forecasts over the next five years are only expected to yield approximately three pupils across the Bleasdale, Calder Vale and Claughton planning area of the Wyre District and there is sufficient capacity to accommodate these pupils in other schools.

Financial Viability

With only one pupil forecast to be at the school in 2019/20, the school will be in an irrecoverable financial deficit position as a result. From April 2019, the school's funding will be based on the two pupils on roll, leading to a considerably lower level of financial resources being available to the school.

The school has sufficient funding to continue operating in 2018/19 but would go into an

irrecoverable financial deficit from September 2019. Staff numbers are already at floor levels and minimal non-staff costs are already at the lowest practicable level.

Consultation

Between 7 January and 15 February 2019, at the request of the governing body and in partnership with the Diocese of Blackburn, the stage 1 consultation took place. During this consultation period, a total of seven responses were received by non-pupils, such as staff, governors and members of the community. In addition, a consultation event was held at the school on 28 January 2019. At this event, nine appointments took place with nine interested parties in attendance.

Conclusion

The local authority has concerns that Bleasdale Church of England Primary School is no longer viable. This is due to the low pupil numbers and the future financial viability of the school. The local authority is satisfied that an alternative school place can be secured for the pupil affected by the proposed closure within a reasonable travelling distance.

Pupil numbers and admissions

4. The numbers (distinguishing between compulsory and non-compulsory school age pupils), age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is currently made at the school.

Bleasdale Church of England Primary School is a voluntary aided school, providing primary day education for pupils of all abilities. The published admission number of the school is eight and the physical (net) capacity of the school is 56. As at the October 2018 school census, there were two male pupils aged between 4 and 11 on roll.

As at March 2019, there were no pupils with an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).

Displaced pupils

5. A statement and supporting evidence about the need for places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

Pupil numbers on roll in each year group as at the January 2019 School Census, together with the published admission numbers (PAN) and physical net capacities of the local schools, were as follows:

School	Number on roll as at January 2019 School Census								PAN in 2018/19	Net Capacity
	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total		
Bleasdale CE Primary	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2	8	56
St Mary's Catholic Primary	6	4	7	4	5	3	6	35	7	52
Calder Vale St John CE	3	5	0	5	5	0	5	23	10	53
Total	9	9	7	9	11	3	12	60	25	161

If Bleasdale Church of England Primary School were to close, there is sufficient capacity in the other two local schools to accommodate the pupil who would remain on roll at the end of this academic year. In addition, the housing forecasts over the next five years are only expected to yield approximately three pupils across the Bleasdale, Calder Vale and Cloughton planning area of the Wyre District and there is sufficient capacity to accommodate these pupils in other local schools.

6. Details of the schools or further education colleges at which pupils at the school to be discontinued will be offered places, including:
- a) any interim arrangements;
 - b) the provision that is to be made for those pupils who receive educational provision recognised by the local authority as reserved for children with special educational needs; and
 - c) in the case of special schools, the alternative provision made by local authorities other than the authority which maintains the school.

There are two alternative primary schools within the local planning area. One is a voluntary aided Catholic school and the other is a voluntary aided Church of England school. These schools have been judged as 'Outstanding' and 'Good' by Ofsted and, as at the October 2018 School Census, the pupil numbers at these schools are 35 and 23 respectively. The nearest Church of England school is Calder Vale St John's Church of England Primary School, which is 3.5 miles away from Bleasdale Church of England Primary School by car.

- a) No interim arrangements are proposed. At the point of the proposed closure, there will only be one pupil at the school who will need to be offered a place at an alternative school. The local authority will support the pupil in finding a suitable alternative place.
- b) There are no pupils at the school who are receiving educational provision recognised by the local authority as reserved for children with special educational needs.
- c) Not applicable.

7. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or further education college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

The 'Displaced pupils' section above confirms that there are sufficient places at neighbouring schools to admit the pupil who will be on roll at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School at the point of the proposed closure. The local authority will endeavour to secure a place in accordance with parental preference wherever possible.

Impact on the community

8. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community of the closure of the school and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

The local authority recognises that the closure of a school can impact on the wider community, particularly when this is a rural school as is the case with this proposal.

The local community has access to a Parish Hall, which is located across the road from the school. The Parish Hall is made up of a main hall, a meeting room, a kitchen and storage areas, as well as ample car parking. The local church is also located a short way past the school, on the same road. If the school was to close, the local authority is satisfied that the local community would continue to have access to suitable community facilities.

Rural Primary Schools

9. Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15, a statement that the local authority or the governing body (as the case may be) considered section 15(4):

Bleasdale Church of England Primary School is deemed by the Department for Education's categorisation to be a rural school. As such, the local authority is required to take some additional factors into consideration when a proposal to close a rural school is produced. These factors are considered below:

- As there will only be one child on roll at the point of the proposed closure and there were no admissions to the school in September 2018, the local authority does not believe that there will be an adverse impact on the local community. It is also noted that the local community will continue to have access to other local facilities, namely the Parish Hall and the church.
- The nearest Church of England primary school is Calder Vale St John's Church of England Primary School, which is located 3.5 miles away by car. This is felt to be a reasonable distance from the current school and that this will not result in a significant adverse impact.
- As there will only be one child on roll at the point of the proposed closure and the closest Church of England primary school is only 3.5 miles away, the local authority does not believe that this will have a notable impact on the increased use of motor vehicles.
- Both the local authority and the school, governing body and diocese have given consideration to the alternatives to closing the school and no adequate, long term solutions can be found. Given the pupil numbers and the limited growth for the local area of the next five years, joining a multi-academy trust is not possible as the financial due diligence will show that the school is not viable. In addition, the school has been part of a number of collaborations, including at the time the governing body, in partnership with the Diocese of Blackburn, approached the local authority to consult on its future. Any structural solution would require ongoing financial support to make it viable and, therefore, no adequate solution has been found.

Balance of denominational provision

10. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

The nearest Church of England primary school is Calder Vale St John's Church of England Primary School, which is located 3.5 miles away. This school was judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted and has the capacity to accommodate the pupil from Bleasdale Church of England Primary School.

Maintained nursery schools

11. Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:

- a) the local authority's assessment of the quality and quantity of the alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- b) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

N/A

Sixth Form Provision

12. Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, the effect for 16 to 19 year olds in the area that closure will have in respect of:

- a) their educational or training achievements;
- b) their participation in education or training; and
- c) the range of educational or training opportunities available to them.

N/A

Special educational provision

13. Where existing provision that is recognised by the local authority as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the local authority or the governing body (as the case may be) believe the proposals are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

N/A

Travel

14. Details of the length and journeys to alternative provision.

Due to the rural location of the school, it is felt that using walking distance as a measure is unreasonable. Therefore, the closest alternative schools measured by travelling in a car from Bleasdale Church of England Primary School are:

Calder Vale St John's Church of England Primary School	3.5 miles
St Mary's Catholic Primary School, Cloughton-on-Brock	3.8 miles

Eligibility for home to school transport is measured from the child's permanent home address to school so the above distances are only a guide as to the possible distances. The local authority will provide transport assistance to the following groups of pupils who live in Lancashire and attend Bleasdale Church of England Primary School at the time that the school is proposed to close:

- Pupils who live over 3 miles* away from the school they move to provided it is their nearest suitable school
- Pupils who live over 3 miles* away from their allocated school even when it is not their nearest suitable school (this is an exception to current policy)

*For those pupils from low income families (these are pupils who are eligible for free school meals or the parents are receiving the maximum amount of working tax credit), travelling expenses will be awarded where the school they move to is over two miles from their home.

If parents want local practical advice on school transport, they can contact the North Area Pupil Access team on 01524 581112 or 01524 581267.

In addition, free transport must also be provided where a pupil is attending their nearest school and the walking route is not suitable, regardless of the distance from home to the nearest school.

15. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how the proposed arrangements will mitigate against increased car use.

It is likely that this proposal will lead to a minimal increased use of transport as the proposed closure will only affect one pupil, although it is difficult to provide an estimate for this increase as it depends on the alternative school chosen by parents.

Where transport is provided by the local authority, the type of transport provided is at our discretion. If a child is entitled to free transport to and from school, the local authority will normally provide them with a travel pass for a bus service, a contracted vehicle, such as a coach or minibus, or a railway service. In exceptional circumstances, a taxi may be provided.