

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 Pinfold Primary School, Pinfold Lane, Scarisbrick, L40 8HR and expand Kingsbury Primary School by creating a satellite provision on the site of Pinfold Primary School is published by Lancashire County Council, the relevant local authority. Pinfold 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 and prescribed alterations to begin, and information about each stage.

It is proposed to close Pinfold Primary school on 19 April 2024. As of January 2024, the school had one pupil on roll. This child is due to move to specialist provision.

It is proposed to open the satellite provision to Kingsbury Primary school on 22 April 2024. As of January 2024, the capacity at Kingsbury Primary School was 120 and the school was oversubscribed. There is a need for extra provision of special school places in the area. (See s19 proposal: Pinfold Kingsbury Satellite)

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

Pinfold Primary School is a small, rural community primary school within West Lancashire. The school has seen a reduction in the number of pupils on roll from 46 in September 2014 to four in September 2023.

Whilst the pupil numbers have declined in this rural area, the school's numbers have fallen to a greater extent than those in the other schools. With only one pupil currently on roll and in the process of being transferred to Kingsbury Primary School, and no significant housing planned for the area, this position is unsustainable.

Financial Viability

Pinfold primary school has been unable to set a balanced budget for 2023-24 financial year. Current forecast position shows a circa -£13,000 overall deficit at the end of the current financial year. Projections show that this would increase to -£37,000 in 2024-25

and -£69,000 in 2025-26. Staff numbers are already at floor levels and minimal non-staffing costs are already at the lowest practicable level.

The proposed special school places are for Kingsbury Primary and will be funded by the High Needs budget and managed through Kingsbury School as per all other pupils.

Consultation

Between 15 January to 9 February 2024, at the request of the governing body, the initial consultation took place. During this consultation period, a total of 4 responses were received by members of the community. In addition, a consultation event was held at the school on 29 January 2024. At this event, 9 interested parties attended.

Conclusion

The local authority has concerns that Pinfold 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.

Pinfold Primary School is a voluntary aided school, providing primary day education for pupils of all abilities. The published admission number of the school is 49 and the physical (net) capacity of the school is 51. As of the September school census, there were 4 pupils aged between 4 and 11 on roll, currently there is only 1 pupil on roll.

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.

Whilst pupil numbers in the area have declined over recent years, the capacity within the other two schools in the planning area would provide sufficient capacity for the Pinfold Primary School pupil. The nearest school is St Mark's primary school and is 1.5 miles from Pinfold with 51 pupils on roll. The school has capacity for 105. The closest non-faith school is 2.3 miles away at Ormskirk West End. This school has 93 pupils on roll but has capacity for 210 children. St Mary's Scarisbrick has 87 pupils on roll and capacity for 105 children. This school is 2 miles from Pinfold. Based on current and projected pupil numbers, there should be sufficient places in all cohorts of the other schools to accommodate the pupils if Pinfold Primary School was to close.

The admission numbers and numbers on roll for the two closest schools are as follows:

	Admission No	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Ormskirk West End	30	16	14	11	9	22	10	10	92

St Marks CEP	15	8	9	6	8	4	9	6	50
Scarisbrick St Mary's	15	15	11	12	12	8	18	14	90
Totals	60	39	34	29	29	34	37	30	232
Available places		21	26	31	31	26	23	30	188

There are sufficient places in all of the year groups at neighbouring schools to admit pupils from Pinfold Primary School.

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.

The standards of education offered by neighbouring schools, as judged by the most recent Ofsted reports are as follows:

- St Mary's Scarisbrick – Requires Improvement
- St Mark's Primary – Good
- Ormskirk West End Primary – Good

- a) Should Pinfold Primary School close, there are no current children without provision as the child still on roll at Pinfold is about to be placed on roll at Kingsbury special school.
- b) Please see previous answer.
- c) N/A

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 Pinfold Primary School at the point of the proposed closure.

Should Pinfold Primary School close, there are no current children without provision.

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. 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):

Pinfold 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 are currently no children attending the school site, 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.
- There are currently no children attending the school site. Any children who would wish to attend Pinfold Primary School can be accommodated by local schools no more than 2 miles away.
- The proposed use of Pinfold as a satellite site for Kingsbury primary school means that the children will be arriving to school via home to school transport and not by parents. The transport would pull into the playground to drop pupils off so there will be no parking around the school. There is still going to be sufficient outdoor playground for the children to access, however part of the playground nearest the main road will be repurposed for parking facilities, therefore there will be no impact to surrounding roads.
- Both the local authority, the school and governing body 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 unlikely at this time as the financial due diligence will show that the school is not viable.

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.

N/A

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 Pinfold Primary School are:

St Mark's Primary School	1.5 miles
St Mary's Scarisbrick	2 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 Pinfold 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 Pupil Access team on 01772 532 109.

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.

There is only one child, and this child will be accessing specialist provision and therefore home to school transport.

16. Procedure for responding to the consultation

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, 19 February 2024, any person may respond, support, object to or make comments on the proposal by posting them to Kirsty Roberts, Asset Management Team, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD. Responses can also be emailed to Kirsty.Roberts@lancashire.gov.uk.

To be considered as part of the decision-making process to determine the proposal, responses must be received no later than 15 March 2024.