



Equality Analysis Toolkit

The proposed closure of Bleasdale Church of
England Primary School

For Decision Making Items

July 2019

Question 1 - What is the nature of and are the key components of the proposal being presented?

Proposal to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, with implementation on 31 August 2019.

Under The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, the local authority is both the proposer and the decision-maker for this type of proposal and must carry out a statutory consultation process before a decision on the closure of a maintained school is made.

At the request of the governing board, in partnership with the Diocese of Blackburn, Lancashire County Council (LCC) started the statutory process in relation to the proposed closure of Bleasdale Church of England Primary School. The process began on 3 December 2018, when Cabinet approved a stage 1 consultation be undertaken on the proposed closure of the school due to a fall in the numbers on roll at the school making the school educationally and financially unviable.

Question 2 - Scope of the Proposal

Is the proposal likely to affect people across the county in a similar way or are specific areas likely to be affected – e.g. are a set number of branches/sites to be affected?

This decision would impact the pupils at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, where there will be one pupil on roll in September 2019. The family concerned will be provided with support to find an appropriate alternative school. LCC will provide assistance with transport to alternative provision for any children that are eligible under the authority's current transport policy.

Question 3 – Protected Characteristics Potentially Affected

Could the proposal have a particular impact on any group of individuals sharing protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, namely:

- Age
- Disability including Deaf people
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race/ethnicity/nationality
- Religion or belief
- Sex/gender
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage or Civil Partnership Status

And what information is available about these groups in the County's population or as service users/customers?

No disproportionate adverse impact is anticipated as a result of this proposal. In terms of protected characteristics potentially affected, the pupil who will be affected is male and of primary school age.

A small number of staff may also be affected but information on their protected characteristics is not known.

The school is a Church of England primary school and one of the alternative school options is also a Church of England primary school, so no adverse impact in relation to religion or belief is anticipated.

Question 4 – Engagement/Consultation

How have people/groups been involved in or engaged with in developing this proposal?

There is a defined statutory process in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 which must be followed before making a decision on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education.

The statutory process consists of two consultation stages. The stage 1 consultation ran from 7 January to 15 February 2019 and was for the recommended minimum period of six weeks during term time and all relevant parties were consulted. For the stage 1 consultation when the future of the school was being considered, a booklet was produced by the local authority which set out the key factors and information related to the proposal. This booklet included a questionnaire which sought views on the proposal from interested parties and stakeholders. The questionnaire was also made available online and this could be accessed via the local authority's website. The school also arranged for copies of the booklet to be distributed to all parents, carers, staff and governors of the school. Additional copies were also placed in the school's reception. The local authority also ensured that copies of the booklet were made available in prominent locations, such as Wyre Borough Council and local libraries.

The stage 1 consultation questionnaire asked respondents whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to close the school. Whilst there were only seven responses, 71% strongly agreed or tended to agree. Only one response disagreed with the proposal.

During the stage 1 consultation period, a consultation event was held at the school between 3pm and 8pm on 28 January 2019 for parents, staff, governors and any other interested parties to ask questions and make comments on the proposal. At the event, nine appointments took place and two staff, a representative from the National Education Union, the landowner and five governors attended. Local authority staff in attendance were as follows: Senior Adviser for Primary (North),

School Adviser, Human Resources Business Partner, Area Pupil Access Officer (North), School Provision Planning Principal, School Statutory and Trading Support Manager (Finance). The Diocesan Director of Education was also in attendance.

At the appointment, people were asked whether they would be in support of the school closing. Eight of the nine attendees, whilst expressing their sadness acknowledged what they described as the 'reality' that the school was no longer financially viable with such low pupil numbers.

A formal consultation was not conducted with the pupils as there will only be one pupil on roll in September 2019.

The local authority then published a stage 2 statutory notice and an accompanying proposal document on 24 April 2019, the first day of the stage 3 representation period. These documents were available on the LCC website and were widely circulated to interested parties, such as Wyre Borough Council, parish councils, Lancashire County Councillors for the district, the Regional Schools Commissioner and OfSTED. The school also made arrangements to share this information with parents, carers, staff and governors, to display the statutory notice and to include these documents on their website.

No responses were received during the representation period.

Question 5 – Analysing Impact

Could this proposal potentially disadvantage particular groups sharing protected characteristics and if so which groups and in what way? This pays particular attention to the general aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- To eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation because of protected characteristics;
- To advance equality of opportunity for those who share protected characteristics;
- To encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life;
- To contribute to fostering good relations between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not/community cohesion;

No. There are no groups of individuals with protected characteristics at the school.

There is only one pupil affected by the proposed closure. No issues of equality have been raised during the consultation processes.

Question 6 – Combined/Cumulative Effect

Could the effects of this proposal combine with other factors or decisions taken at local or national level to exacerbate the impact on any groups?

This is a stand-alone proposal and is not reliant on the outcome or implementation of another proposal. The local authority's opinion is that this proposal is not related to any other proposals that have been, are, or are about to be published.

Question 7 – Identifying Initial Results of Your Analysis

As a result of the analysis has the original proposal been changed/amended, if so please describe.

No changes or amendments have been made to the original proposal as a result of the consultation outcomes.

Question 8 - Mitigation

Will any steps be taken to mitigate/reduce any potential adverse effects of the proposal?

If the decision is taken to close the school, the local authority will work with the school to ensure that there is a smooth transition for the pupil moving schools. The local authority also has processes in place to assist staff affected by the closure decision, should it be taken, which would assist them in securing alternative posts or retraining if desired.

Question 9 – Balancing the Proposal/Countervailing Factors

This weighs up the reasons for the proposal – e.g. need for budget savings; damaging effects of not taking forward the proposal at this time – against the findings of the analysis.

The small size of the school is the cause for concern regarding its future and the resulting impact on both educational and financial viability.

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 and no applications for September 2019.

Question 10 – Final Proposal

In summary, what is the final proposal and which groups may be affected and how?

The proposal is to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, with effect from 31 August 2019. At the end of the 2018/19 academic year, there will be one pupil at the school.

Question 11 – Review and Monitoring Arrangements

What arrangements will be put in place to review and monitor the effects of this proposal?

Once a decision has been taken to close the school, the local authority is legally obliged to implement the proposal. Through the school adviser, the local authority will ask in general terms whether the remaining pupil has settled into their new school and whether they are making good progress. It is expected that the Headteacher of the receiving school will track the pupil's progress.

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Decision Signed Off By: Councillor Phillippa Williamson

Cabinet Member or Director: Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

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