



Section 4

# Equality Analysis Toolkit

**Proposed Closure of Wennington Hall  
School**

**For Decision Making Items**

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

Lancashire County Council intends to close Wennington Hall School, Lodge Lane, Wennington, LA2 8NS on 31 August 2022.

The proposal arises because of continuing low educational standards at the school over a prolonged period of time; the failure of the Regional Schools' Commissioner to secure a sponsor to convert the school to an academy; the inability to award a contract to take over the maintenance of the school by an independent sector provider; and the school's lack of financial viability.

## **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?

If approved, the proposal will directly affect the pupils currently on roll in year groups Year 9 and 10. Alternative school places will be needed for these pupils.

There are 8 pupils in year 11 who will have left the school by the time the proposal is implemented.

There are 7 pupils impacted in Year Groups 9 and 10 who are boys with social, emotional and mental health needs.

Draft plans for all pupils are now co-produced, completed and signed off and planning for transition is underway. Transition plans will be agreed with all schools on case by case basis with pupils potentially be on new school roll following transition at the start of the summer term.

There will be an impact on staff working at the school who will potentially face redundancy or alternative employment options. The council's HR team continue to work with the school to help ensure that the school receives appropriate HR advice and that staff understand their options.

### **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?

The 7 pupils impacted are boys in Year Groups 9 and 10. All have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and social, emotional and mental health needs. The impact on groups with protected characteristics include the characteristics of age, gender, disability (although not all with an EHCP may consider themselves to have a disability).

Information on any protected characteristics of members of staff is not known.

## **Question 4 – Engagement/Consultation**

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

In accordance with the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, a stage 1 consultation period ran from 6th September to 17th October 2021.

During this consultation period, a total of 4 individual responses were received, all from members of staff.

Given the benefits of continuing to adhere to social distancing rules, it was decided not to offer physical consultation events. Instead, a virtual event for Union Representatives was held on 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021. 6 Representatives attended this event on behalf of 4 Unions. Other virtual events for any interested parties were offered during the week of 20th September but were cancelled due to no bookings being made.

The consultation received four responses and highlighted a number of concerns should the school be closed. In the main, these related to the impact of redundancy, specifically loss of income, financial security and professional reputation. There were also concerns raised about the sufficiency of alternative education places for pupils affected by the closure.

If the decision is taken to close Wennington Hall School, places for children for whom it is agreed that special school provision continues to be required will take account of parental preference, the child's views, distance from home and the confidence of the proposed school to meet the identified needs. Schools within the maintained and non-maintained/independent sector will be considered. The local authority will continue to work with the school to ensure stability in provision and to work on implementing the decision during the remainder of the Spring and Summer Term, prior to the proposed closure on 31 August 2022. Annual reviews have taken place for all pupils and transition plans are being developed.

## **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;

The proposal could disadvantage young people, who are pupils at the school. Given their additional needs, this group of young people may have more difficulty setting in to a new school environment.

The proposal is likely to disadvantage staff, given the potential risk of redundancy, or the need to find alternative employment. The school has supported staff wellbeing, including through support from the Lancashire Emotional Health in Schools Service. Advice has also been made available through the council's HR team, to help ensure that staff are able to make informed decisions about their future.

### **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?

There may be a cumulative impact in terms of travel and travel costs in the context of rising fuel prices.

Wennington Hall draws its pupils from a wide area of Lancashire. It is a county-wide provision and very few pupils come from the immediate locality, so the potential closure is expected to have minimal effect in

terms of e.g. increased home to school travel time, on children and their families in the local neighbourhood.

However, the exact impact cannot be known given pupil's final destinations are subject to transition plans with their new schools. Transport will be provided in accordance with the council's SEN transport policy.

### **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, the original proposal will be continued. The proposal arises because of continuing low educational standards at the school over a prolonged period of time; the failure of the Regional Schools' Commissioner to secure a sponsor to convert the school to an academy; the inability to award a contract to take over the maintenance of the school by an independent sector provider; and the school's lack of financial viability.

### **Question 8 - Mitigation**

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

Individual transition plans codesigned with pupils and families. Where possible and appropriate, pupils could be transitioned to new schools in the summer term 2022, prior to closure, to help them settle early.

With regard to staffing, the local authority has experience in staff redeployment and retraining and provision of support and advice regarding redundancy. Should the decision be taken to close the school, the local authority will continue to work with the school to help ensure that staff understand their options.

### **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.

These factors remain valid but we acknowledge the potential disruption for the young people and affected staff.

### **Question 10 – Final Proposal**

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

The proposal arises because of continuing low educational standards at the school over a prolonged period of time; the failure of the Regional Schools' Commissioner to secure a sponsor to convert the school to an academy; the inability to award a contract to take over the maintenance of the school by an independent sector provider; and the school's lack of financial viability.

### **Question 11 – Review and Monitoring Arrangements**

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

The impact on pupils will be considered through EHCP annual reviews, and in the development of their transition plans. It is expected that the Headteachers of receiving schools will be tracking progress carefully.

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Position/Role: Director of Policy, Commissioning and Children's Health

Decision Signed Off By

Cabinet Member or Director

For further information please contact

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