



CONSULTATION REPORT

on the

Proposal to close Rodmell CE Primary School

June 2016

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	3
2.	The Consultation	3
3.	Consultation Events	4
4.	Consultation Responses	5
5.	Public Consultation Meeting, 3 May 2016, Questions and Answers	6
6.	Response from Rodmell's Children	12
7.	Key Issues Raised by Respondents	14
8.	Petition	20

1. Introduction

- 1.1 On the 21 March 2016 the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability gave approval for the Council to formally consult with key stakeholders on a proposal to close Rodmell CE Primary School.
- 1.2 The proposed changes to the organisation of schools have to follow a prescribed process established by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) as updated by the Education Act 2011 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 1.3 This process complied with these requirements.

2. The Consultation

- 2.1 A six week public consultation on the proposed closure of Rodmell CE Primary School commenced on 15 April and ran until 27 May 2016. Hard copies of the Council's consultation document were distributed to approximately 1,420 key stakeholders and interested parties. Table 1 below provides a list of consultees. The consultation document was also made available on the Council's website.

Table 1

Organisation	Number of copies
Rodmell CE Primary School	111
Iford and Kingston CE Primary School	15
St Pancras Catholic Primary School	15
South Malling CE Primary School	15
Southover CE Primary School	15
Wallands Community Primary School	15
Western Road Community Primary School	15
Hamsey Community Primary School	15
Pells CE Primary School	15
Cradle Hill Community Primary Schools	15
Chyngton Primary School	15
Seaford Primary School	15
Anney Catholic Primary School	15
Denton Community Primary School	15
Harbour Community Primary School	15
Meeching Valley Community Primary School	15
Newhaven Academy	15
Meridian Community Primary School	15
Peacehaven Heights Primary School	15
Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School	15
Priory School	15
Seahaven Academy	15
Peacehaven Community College	15
Seaford Head	15
Lewes College	1
Maria Caulfield MP	1
Lewes District Council	45
Rodmell Parish Council	10
Diocese of Chichester	1
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Catholic Schools Service	1
Old School Surgery	20
Seaford Medical Practice	20
Mid Downs Medical Practice	20
St Andrew's Surgery	20
School Hill Medical Practice	20
Anchor Field Surgery	20

Organisation	Number of copies
Riverlodge Surgery	20
Chapel Street Surgery (Newhaven)	20
Quay Side Medical Practice (Newhaven)	20
Anchor Health Care Centre	20
Rowe Avenue Surgery (Peacehaven)	20
Sussex Voluntary and Community Learning Consortium	10
Lewes Library	20
Seaford Library	20
Newhaven Library	20
Peacehaven Library	20
Lewes Children's Centre	20
Newhaven Children's Centre	20
Peacehaven Children's Centre	20
Seaford Children's Centre	20
The Co Operative Childcare Brighton	20
Denton Island Nursery	20
Denton School Nursery	20
Happy Valley Pre-School	20
Early Birds Pre-School	20
Noah's Ark Nursery School And Daycare	20
Pebbles Day Care	20
Railway Nursery Ltd	20
Butterfly Nursery	20
Butterfly Nursery Ltd	20
Happy Days Nursery	20
Hopscotch Nursery (Peacehaven)	20
Rainbow Childcare - Peacehaven	20
Telscombe Cliffs Nursery School	20
Wild Monkeys Childcare	20
The Blue Door Nursery	20
Charlie Bear's Nursery	20
Chyngton Methodist Church Playgroup	20
Early Birds Pre-School	20
Goodtimes Pre School	20
Hopscotch Nursery (Seaford)	20
Little Poppets	20
Micklefield School (nursery)	20
ESCC Councillors	48
Trade Unions	7
TOTAL	1420

2.2 The consultation document included a response form to assist and encourage people to give their views. Interested parties could provide a response to the consultation by returning the response form attached to the consultation document, by completing it online, by letter or by email.

2.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared for the proposal.

3. Consultation Events

3.1 A meeting was held with school staff and their union representatives on 22 April 2016 to provide the opportunity for officers to provide more detail about the proposal and for those attending to ask questions and raise concerns. A Question and Answer (Q&A) document was produced after the meeting and emailed to the headteacher to circulate to all staff.

3.2 A public meeting was held in the Church of St Peter, Rodmell on the 3 May 2016 to provide more detail about the proposal and enable parents, carers and all interested

parties to ask questions and raise concerns. Notes were taken at this meeting and a Q&A document responding to the key issues raised was produced and posted on the Council's website for people to view. This can be viewed in section 5 of this report.

- 3.3 The children of Rodmell CE Primary School were encouraged to express their views. An officer from the Council met with representatives of the school council on 24 May 2016. 27 letters were also received from pupils. The overall view expressed by the children was that their school was special to them because it was a small school and they hoped that it would not close despite the proposals. The pupils particularly highlighted the facilities available at the school, the friends they have made, the school trips, the help they receive from school staff, the fundraising activities they participate in and the schools affiliation to the church. The feedback received from pupils can be viewed in Section 6 of this report.

4. Consultation Responses

- 4.1 All written responses received during the consultation will be provided to Cabinet for consideration ahead of the meeting on 19 July. A summary of responses, grouped by key theme is provided at Section 7:

In total:

- 118 consultation responses were received during the consultation period of which 85 were completed on line and 33 forms were returned via freepost. It should be noted that a number of duplicate responses were made.
- 1 letter was received
- 2 emails were received
- The governing body of Rodmell CE Primary School submitted an 'Audit Framework and Proposal' to the Director of Children's Services
- 10 respondents emailed members of Cabinet directly

- 4.2 Where known the following stakeholders responded to the consultation

- 27 parents/carers of a child at Rodmell CE Primary School
- 5 pupils at Rodmell CE Primary School
- 9 members of staff at Rodmell CE Primary School
- 4 members of the governing body at Rodmell CE Primary School
- 40 members of the local community
- 31 other (a local teacher, East Sussex resident, Local MP, local nursery owner, former pupils, friends and relatives of parents with children at the school and of staff at the school, parents of children at local schools, teachers at local schools, past pupils, teacher/union rep, visiting professional, Rodmell Parochial Church Council)
- 2 not answered

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING, 3 MAY 2016

QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT produced following the meeting

Q: The consultation document is not a fair representation of the school. The Local Authority did not ask the school to read it before it was published. The information about the balanced budget is incorrect and while attainment is below the national average it does not highlight the small cohort of children, pupils ability and progress children make. The school has also been judged by Ofsted to be a good school.

A: The information provided in the consultation document about the budget position of the school reflects the financial information provided by the school to the Local Authority at that time which showed that it had a deficit budget of £12,000. The information subsequently provided by the school however, showed a surplus. Officers from the Local Authority are working with the school to understand how the school has gone from having a deficit budget to a surplus and the 3 year forecast presented. This information will be taken into account by the Lead Member along with all other consultation responses.

The Local Authority does not save any money by closing the school – Local Authority funds are separate to school funding. But school funds are public money and the Local Authority has a responsibility to ensure efficient use of school funding; inefficient use impacts on all schools and children in the county.

The national funding formula (NFF) will also bring more challenges financially. The implications of the NFF cannot be reasonably estimated at this time, but the facts are that there is overall no additional funding and some schools may face budgetary reductions as a result. Schools will also need to consider resourcing rising costs including: the National Living Wage; pay awards; increased National Insurance contributions; the apprenticeship levy; supporting SEN provision.

The most important consideration is that the children at the school receive the standard and breath of education they are entitled to. No-one is questioning the hard work and dedication of the staff at the school. However, there are variations in attainment at the school at all key stages. Attainment at key stage 2 has been consistently below the national average for the last 3 years.

Q: You state that the school's budget share is high. Other small schools have a higher budget share than Rodmell including Five Ashes CE Primary School which was part of the Heathfield Area Review. Why are they not being considered for closure?

A: The budget share at Rodmell is high (£6,241.15) and significantly above that of other local schools. The average budget share per pupil for East Sussex primary schools is £3,787.33. This excludes carry forwards or deficits and any additional funds received, for example pupil premium.

One of the key differences with the Heathfield Area Review was that as the Area Review was being undertaken Wealden District Council's emerging Local Plan put forward plans for significant new housing across the Heathfield area in the period to 2037. Taking this into consideration it was felt that the closure of any schools in the area could not be taken forward because of the risk of future pressure on places that could arise as a result of the new housing.

Q: Can you tell me what the extra funding (£20,000) provided by the Local Authority was for?

A: To support the school budget

Q: Why did the Local Authority outsource the Area Review?

A: The Local Authority has had a significant amount of pressure in terms of its budgets which has led to a reduction in staffing numbers. It was felt that as this was a complex piece of work we wanted to ensure that we had sufficient capacity to dedicate to it and that there was real value in having an external consultant do this work in terms of the knowledge and expertise they would bring to the work.

Q: The Local Authority has said that governors are responsible for the school budget, I understand the Local Authority removed delegated powers from the governing body some time ago. This makes this consultation a very doubtful process

A: The Local Authority indicated to the governing body its intention to remove the delegated budget at the point when it was trying to understand from the school how they arrived at their original predictions indicating that they were in a deficit position. However, this has not happened as the school subsequently presented a budget indicating a surplus of £6,000. It would be remiss of the Local Authority not to allow time to look at the budget plan now presented by the school and we would expect to have a better understanding of how the school arrived at its figures by the time the consultation has ended.

Q: Can you explain what the Local Authority has done to help the school federate and during the time when schools were being asked if they would federate with Rodmell were the schools given the same information that the school could potentially be closed? Can you provide documentation supporting your claims? Can the Local Authority not act to force schools to federate?

A: The Local Authority has been actively promoting federation with all small schools in the County since 2014 and has, along with the Diocese, spent a considerable amount of time working at exploring options with Rodmell.

As part of the Area Review process, and in a number of meetings from June 2015 onwards federation has been discussed as a possible option for the school. The Local Authority has approached other local schools and academy chains to try and identify a federation or academy solution for the school. Discussions were held with the Lewes Co-operative Trust who considered whether federation or amalgamation could be a possibility, no schools expressed a willingness to federate or amalgamate with the school. The headteachers and governors of those schools were aware of the implications.

Federation is not considered a viable option for the school going forward as it was felt that federation would not provide future sustainability for the challenges the school is facing. Although the Local Authority has a role in supporting schools to explore federation it is not responsible for securing a partner school. Federation is a decision made by the governing bodies of schools and the Local Authority can only direct governing bodies to federate in exceptional circumstances.

Q: Why are the Diocese not looking at including Rodmell as part of the Multi-academy trust (MAT)?

A: The Diocese have had discussions with the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) who gives permission for a school to become part of a MAT. The RSC has been very clear that unless groups of small schools that amount to two form entry between them come together it is not likely to be a financially viable option. Schools cannot convert with a deficit budget Schools that are part of a MAT have to be financially viable, year by year and when sponsors do due diligence they look three years ahead.

Q: It seems that it just comes down to economics. Is it a movement by the government that small schools do not fit into their plans?

A: Nationally the government views a small school as anything less than two forms of entry. Consideration would not be given in the current climate to creating a new school of the size of Rodmell. However, we have a lot of small schools in East Sussex and where viability is an issue it is looking to bring schools together in partnerships. The area review in Lewes identified two schools that the Local Authority were looking at regarding closure. Options for bringing those schools together with other schools had been investigated without success.

Q: Is this really a consultation process or has a decision already been made to close the school? Your presentation has given the impression that this is a forgone conclusion. We would like your reassurance that this isn't the case, that during the consultation period you will actively look to seek federation solutions and finding a business case.

A: The decision has not been made at this stage and we are in the consultation stage. Our presentations have set out the reasons why we have recommended the consultation on closure. The Lead Member will take account of all responses received during the consultation period and consider all information before a final decision is made. The consultation is about listening to all views and opinions to allow an informed final decision to be made. Our investigations concluded that there were no partnership options that would create a sustainable model for the school going forward. As a Local Authority at this stage we are not looking at alternatives as we feel we have exhausted all avenues with other schools.

Q: In terms of the consultation document it looks like you are only consulting on closure particularly when the Lead Member said you should be looking at other options. Teaching staff were not made aware of the Lead Member recommendation that he would consider alternatives put forward. This was not fed back to the school and we only became aware of it through parents.

A: The Lead Member did not ask the Local Authority to look at options but put the offer out to the schools involved to come up with alternatives. Parents and governors can examine partnership opportunities for the school as alternatives to closure but the Lead Member was clear that a robust and long term viable business case would have to be submitted. If you believe there are alternative options please put forward your proposals including detailed information about the educational and business benefits including its long term sustainability. The Lead Member was clear that all credible options will be considered, alongside all other responses from the consultation before a final decision is taken.

Q: Much is made of the fact that we are not local parents. What other local schools will our children be able to attend as the schools are saying they have no places and are oversubscribed and will schools have to go over their PAN to accommodate all those extra pupils?

A: Most of the pupils that attend Rodmell come from outside the community area – and outside the Lewes community area. We would expect many pupils to apply to schools closer to their home address.

Q: You did say that you had to take into consideration the children. By putting our children into a class with 30 pupils and above they would be getting lost in that system. Some children need a small classroom and cannot cope with being put into large classrooms. A school in Newhaven has 37 pupils in a class; that is not providing great opportunities for the children. You cannot get to speak to the teachers. Some of us have taken our children out of these schools.

A: We believe in general there will be sufficient places available in Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford in 2017/18. There are a few year groups in Key Stage 2 where

there may be a small shortfall in places. Class size legislation prohibits classes of more than 30 in Key Stage 1 unless supported by an additional teacher. Class size legislation does not exist in Key Stage 2 and schools are therefore able to exceed 30 in a class if required. We will work with schools in those areas to ensure all children have a place for September 2017

Q: Parents choose Rodmell because it is a small school and because they want to get a Church of England education. Parents had the option of choosing bigger schools and you are discriminating against those that want their children to attend a faith school. Why are the children who live outside the community not attending the schools nearer to their homes? It is parents personal choice and the right to choose will be taken away by closing the school.

A: Parents have a right to express a preference for a school, not to choose which school their children attend. There are church schools (both VC and VA) in the wider area including in Lewes and Seaford that parents will be able to express a preference for.

Q: We have a high number of SEN children. The progress our cohort of children make is good. Their journey here is unique. It is not just about attainment but about the journey they make.

A: Rodmell CE Primary School is a mainstream school. All mainstream schools are required to meet the individual needs of all their pupils including those with SEN. All schools in the area want all children to thrive and have access to a range of support to help with their needs. This would be the case for children moving from Rodmell and all schools would be expected to provide the same level of care as that provided at Rodmell.

Q: You are saying that the White paper has changed since it came out. We know that the current proposal states that there will be a sparsity factor

A: The sparsity factor is deployed by East Sussex in determining support for local schools. Eligibility for sparsity funding is currently based on guidelines set by the DfE relating to two factors.

1. Proportion of children in the area who have to travel more than two miles to their second nearest school. It is not to do with the distance between the two schools, it is related to the mean distance. The mean distance is then calculated for these pupils and this becomes the school's sparsity distance.
2. The average year group is less than 21.4 for the primary phase and 120 for the secondary phase.

The sparsity factor would not apply to Rodmell as, although they would qualify under the average year group size, their sparsity distance is only 1.74 miles.

Q: The statement in the presentation about attendance at Rodmell CE Primary School is incorrect.

A: According to RAISEonline validated 2015 data attendance at the school is as follows:

- Attendance was low, in the lowest 10% of mainstream schools nationally
- Attendance was low, in the lowest 10% of mainstream schools nationally for the following groups: FSM, non-FSM, boys, girls, SEN with EHC/statement, no SEN

Q: The consultation document states that Rodmell Primary School often struggles to attract children and in January 2016 had only 48 on roll when it's PAN is 63. This is due to the devastating impact of a previous Ofsted Requires Improvement judgement and the loss of the school bus. For the last five years the school has had a full intake in Reception and this year's intake was going to be full and Local Authority predictions are that we are going to be full.

A: The school has struggled to meet its pupil admission number, particularly from its community area, at the January 2016 census the school had 48 pupils against a capacity of 63 which represents a 24% surplus of places. Only 9 of the children (19%) attending the school live in the school's community area. Over the last 10 years annual birth rates in Rodmell and Southease parishes have averaged at 3 per year. Not all these children attend the school. 14 pupils attend another local primary school. The predicted annual birth rate in the future is expected to be similar. First preferences have been low over the last few years. Even if all places were filled with any preferences the school remains a very small school.

Q: I know from parents in the Newhaven area that the classes and the schools in Newhaven do require a lot more improvement.

A: The Local Authority worked closely with Rodmell when it was a Requires Improvement school to enable it to become a good school. We similarly work with all other schools to ensure they secure judgements as Good or Outstanding schools. Like Rodmell, Denton has also moved from Requires Improvement to Good. Harbour Primary School were inspected recently and we await the outcome.

Q: How many times was Denton and Meeching Valley in Special Measures?

A: Denton has not been in Special measures. Meeching Valley was judged to be in Special Measures in 2012. In March 2014 the school was judged as 'Requires Improvement'

Harbour Primary School

May 2016	2 - Good
February 2014	3 – Requires Improvement

Denton Primary School

April 2015	2 - Good
April 2013	3 - Requires Improvement
June 2011	3 - Satisfactory
January 2008	3 - Satisfactory

Meeching Valley Primary School

March 2014	3 - Requires Improvement
March 2012	4 - Special Measures
December 2008	3 - Requires Improvement

Rodmell CE Primary School

November 2014	2 - Good
November 2013	3 - Requires Improvement
March 2009	2 - Good

Q: Has the Diocese given any thought to what might happen to the school building? If it is under threat as a school would the church also be under threat as it would lose some of its community when children and family are not attending services. I believe the school site was donated to the village?

The Lewes Area Review report Appendix 1 of the Lead Member report on 21 March states in Recommendation 2, page 27, last bullet point, *'Discussions are ongoing with the Diocese of Chichester to use any capital receipts from the school sites/buildings*

to improve facilities at other church schools in the town' I take it you have taken a valuation of the site?

A: While the Diocese has to be mindful of the cumulative effect of these decisions, decisions about churches and schools are made by two different departments within the Diocese. As we are under Charity Commission legislation, if we were to sell the school, the Diocese would have to gain best value. The Diocese has not considered what would happen to the land at this stage and would not do so until a final decision has been made about closure, in order to remain impartial during the consultation.

The discussion with the Local Authority referred to was an in principle discussion about both area reviews in terms of the Local Authority's desire to secure from the Diocese agreement to making a financial contribution through reinvestment in the education of the children displaced from the school.

Q: It has made a tremendous difference to the church community to have a school in the area. The benefit has been mutual for the church community and the school. It is disappointing that the diocese does not hold that precious. I don't think the Diocese understands how mercenary that sounds. It is so sad that the heart is being ripped out of these communities.

A: The Diocese is fully aware of what happens in a community when it loses its school, church or both but unfortunately because of the circumstances has to consider the long term financial viability of the school, given that the Diocese does not have the financial resources to subsidise small schools

6. Meeting with Pupil Representatives on Tuesday 24 May 2016

Consultation on Proposal to close Rodmell CE Primary School

Responses of Rodmell's Children

What do you like about your school?

- Get to learn to swim at Newhaven Pool
- Maths, Science, times tables, Literacy, RE, Golden Time, Assembly, Art, pasta treats
- The teachers, they are funny
- Our friends that we have for company
- Get lots of support as it's a small school. In class if the teacher asks a question, and children put their hands up, teachers can listen to everyone's answer unlike in a big school
- Get more opportunities as it is a small school; we get to know everyone's name and are friends with everybody in other year groups
- Don't have split playtimes; like being able to play with everybody in other year groups
- Rodmell is a great school, get to have friends in every class, it is like one big family
- I like the school and don't want it to close down
- It is a nice place to be, I like doing writing

What do you think about the school maybe closing?

- Really feel upset because I have lots of friends and sad if I got split apart from my best friend
- We would all get split up, my best friends would go to different schools, we would not be able to see each other
- Won't be able to have so much fun at another school
- When you go on a school trip, teachers can help you more and find you if you got lost
- Although I am leaving soon because I am in Year 6 I don't want the school to close.
- Although tomorrow is my birthday I would rather do the protest because I love this school
- If you go to a school in a city or a town there is not so much peace and quiet. In the mornings when you come to school you would not be able to hear the birds singing over the noise of lots of cars
- I would miss the view of the South Downs and miss Monks House where we have an allotment and grow our own vegetables
- All the things outside, got lots of friends and in other places there are not as many spaces there
- Feel a bit scared and sad that I could be in a bigger school and scared as I would not know who the people are there and what is going on.
- I like the PE [equipment] at Rodmell in the hall and would be worried other schools would not have the same things
- We have time to play and run around before we go into school in the morning and would be worried that you would not be able to do this at another school

What would you miss about your school if it had to close next Summer?

- Our friends
- The South Downs
- I would cry because I would miss our school
- Teachers, they might not be as funny as they are here
- The lessons, they won't be the same at other schools as if there are more children you won't get the same support as at a small school
- In a bigger school you would have to move to a different class, here you get to stay in your own class and have your own trays.
- Worried about where you would be sitting as here some like to sit at the front and

- some at the back and I like being able to choose where I can sit
- Won't be able to get the chance to go to another school like this again
 - Where we get to play because of all the nature and places where there are fun things to make from, for example the ivy
 - Worried that you might not make a friend at another school as great as the friend made at Rodmell especially because I have known them for a long time.
 - I don't see my friends very much outside school as I am so busy
 - You could see your friends for tea
 - I like the chance to do drawings at Monks House and the visitor we had from Brighton Museum
 - Worried might have to go to a boarding school
 - I have been to a school that has already closed down so worried about making friends again
 - Not being able to do the fundraising like we do here such as the time we made ice-lollies and Valentine's day chocolates. We do fundraising for the PATINA moving on Parade and our link school in Gambia.
 - If you don't use all your packed lunch you can recycle and give to the poor.

How would you feel about going to another school?

- I wouldn't like it. You would have to make all your friends again
- Some people might not be nice to you and you might get bullied
- Here everything is perfect and no-one is mean
- I was happy when I came here because another boy was friendly straight away
- My friend is already leaving the school and I feel sad because it has happened before

Is there anything else you want to ask or tell us about?

- Is the school going to close?
- Why do they want to close the school?
- When you close the school, why don't you think about what the children feel and the adults and why don't you come in and see how the children are doing?
- What school do we go to if they close the school?
- What if we don't like the other schools?
- What if we don't want to be home schooled because you don't make any friends?
- Why can't Rodmell join with Pells?
- Another school won't be as much fun
- Rodmell is one of a kind, it is the best!

7. KEY ISSUES RAISED BY RESPONDENTS

School Places

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reception intakes to the school have been full for the last few years Pupil forecasts suggest the school will be full by the end of the decade Have the numbers at the school fallen because of the uncertainty about its future? Parents have chosen to travel to Rodmell because it is a good school with a Christian character. There are no other schools with a Christian ethos in the local area. 	<p>The average annual birth rate in the Rodmell and Southease Parish in the period 2001/02 (reception year intake 2006/07) to 2010/11 (reception year intake 2015/16) was only 3.4. In the period 2011/12 (reception year intake 2016/17) to 2014/15 (reception year intake 2019/20) the average annual birth rate was even lower at 2.5.</p> <p>The majority of children attending Rodmell CE Primary School do not live within the local area to the school. Only 19% of pupils attending the school at the January 2016 census came from the community area. The significant majority of children living in the community area choose to attend other local schools. No child allocated a reception year place for September 2016 lives in the school's community area.</p> <p>Even if Rodmell CE Primary School were to fill to capacity it would remain a very small school (63 places). There are insufficient pupils in the community area now, and predicted for the future, to sustain an educationally and financially viable primary school in the long term without relying on attracting pupils from areas closer to other schools.</p> <p>The latest set of pupil forecasts for the area, which take account of proposed housing developments indicate that there would be sufficient primary reception year places in the period to 2022/23 were Rodmell CE Primary School to close. If at any point in the future temporary shortfalls were to appear in the Newhaven area as a result of housing developments in Newhaven, there is capacity at other schools in the town to provide one off bulge classes if required. Appendix B sets out CSD's forecasting methodology and predictions for the area.</p> <p>There will be sufficient places available in other schools in the area in 2017/18 for children from Rodmell CE Primary School if it were to close. There might be a very small shortfall of places in Newhaven in Years 1, 5 and 6 depending on which schools parents express a preference for. This would be addressed through working with the other schools in the area.</p> <p>Asking schools to exceed PAN is a strategy adopted in other parts of the county where there is pressure on places but the level of demand does not justify the creation of bulge classes. Forecasts indicate that this strategy would only need to be in place for a very short period of time until the larger cohorts leave the primary phase. It should be noted that there is no class size legislation in Key Stage 2 which limits class sizes to 30 pupils.</p> <p>The Council acknowledges that statutory consultation around school organisation will cause a level of uncertainty which can be a contributory factor on pupil numbers at the school. However, the pupil numbers at the school have been low for a significant number of years.</p> <p>Listed below are the schools in the local area with a Christian character in the local and surrounding area.</p> <p>Iford & Kingston CE Primary School Southover CE Primary School, Lewes South Malling CE Primary School, Lewes St Pancras Catholic Primary School, Lewes Annecy Catholic Primary School, Seaford</p>

Ofsted Judgement

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school was graded 'good' by Ofsted in November 2015. Why does the Local Authority want to close a good school? Only one school in Newhaven is rated 	<p>The Council provided significant support to Rodmell CE Primary School to enable its move from 'Requires Improvement' to 'Good'. However, attainment in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 show variation year on year with many results below national average. Attainment at Key Stage 2 has been below national average L4+ for Reading/Writing/Mathematics for the last three years. The recently received provisional outcomes data for Key Stage 2 for this year shows that no children (0%) achieved the expected standard in reading, writing,</p>

<p>'Good' by Ofsted. All other schools in Newhaven are rated as 'requires improvement'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other schools in Newhaven are currently rated by OfSTED as requires improvement and at least 1 school has 37 pupils in some classes 	<p>maths combined against an East Sussex average of 51.5%.</p> <p>It is recognised that trends are difficult to establish as cohort numbers are very small. However, we have a responsibility to ensure that all children make expected levels of progress by the time they leave Year 6.</p> <p>It is considered that in such a small school it would be extremely challenging to provide a wide and diverse curriculum and would limit the range of opportunities available for all pupils both for their academic and social development.</p> <p>One local school, Iford & Kingston CE Primary School, was rated 'Outstanding' by Ofsted when it was last inspected. Two schools in Newhaven are rated 'Good' by Ofsted. There are also five schools in Lewes, three schools in Seaford and two schools in Peacehaven who are currently rated 'Good'.</p> <p>The Council works closely with all schools to ensure they secure judgements of 'Good' or above as it did with Rodmell CE Primary School when it was judged to 'Requires Improvement.'</p>
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School's Budget

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school's budget was in surplus at the end of the 2015/16 financial year and a three year balanced budget is forecast. Other small schools have a high budget share and they are not being proposed for closure. The savings will simply be redistributed into other areas of the Council budget for things like road repairs. 	<p>The Council has been working with Rodmell CE Primary School on its three year budget plan; the school has recognised that the initial budget plan they submitted as a balanced budget did not balance across the three years. The school has recognised that in order to create a balanced budget for this financial year it will require reorganisation of key resources, including reducing to two teaching classes from September 2017. The Council and the school had explored this option prior to the consultation on closure. The Council and governors recognise that taking these steps will have a significant impact on the school. The school will be left with a very challenging budget with no flexibility or contingency built in. In addition, in order to secure a balanced budget this year, the Council will be required to provide additional resources. The Council has agreed with the school arrangements for the school to monitor the budget regularly.</p> <p>The Council is concerned about the impact and the quality of the education and development of children at the school when it reduces to two classes: with 4-7 year olds in one class and 8-11 year olds in the second class. The school currently operates with three classes: maintaining standards will be much more difficult with one class per Key Stage and will present significant challenges in meeting national curriculum requirements.</p> <p>The Council does not save any money by closing the school – Council funds are separate to school funding and should the school close funds are distributed across all schools. School funds are public money and the Council has a responsibility to ensure efficient use of school funding; inefficient use impacts on all schools and children in the county. The government is also making changes to the national funding formula which will mean schools will face additional challenges in the future.</p>

Headteacher Recruitment

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LA states the school will struggle to recruit a headteacher. Have they tried? The resignation of the headteacher has nothing to do with this. She resigned well before the Area Review result was made public. A number of schools are without a headteacher. There 	<p>The substantive headteacher resigned her position with effect from end of August 2016. Recruitment to Headteacher roles in small schools is challenging, both locally and nationally. Recruitment activity across the county indicates that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for Rodmell CE Primary to recruit to a headteacher vacancy. Attempts to recruit on an interim basis have not yet proved successful.</p> <p>Our normal procedure when going through any process that could lead to a significant change in the leadership and management of a school for example partnership, federation or closure would be to recommend that the governing body should not to attempt to recruit to a permanent headteacher role until a final decision is taken on the proposal</p>

is no mention of them closing.	
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Strengths of Rodmell CE Primary School

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is an amazing school where we raise money for charity. It is quite small so you get a lot of attention. Quality of teaching staff who are very supportive. 	<p>The Council recognises that reviewing the future of any school is controversial and emotive. The Council is challenged with balancing the sensitivities of community feeling on the one hand, with consistently providing a high quality education offer which can be sustained and afforded. Pupils, parents, carers and teachers, both current and past have strong ties to the schools they attend or have attended as part of their own life-stories.</p> <p>The Council has recognised the contribution of the staff and governors of Rodmell CE Primary School towards creating a good school. However, the Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of children and young people.</p>

Impact on pupils

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Peer groups and siblings may be split up. Children will be heartbroken and afraid they will lose their friends. How will transition be managed especially for vulnerable learners? Parental preference is taken away. Get lots of support at the school as it is a small school. Would miss the South Downs, the birds and the peace and quiet We feel safe at our school. New teachers would not know us so well. The small environment of the school works well for the children. 	<p>The Council recognises that proposing changes to school organisation means there will be changes for pupils. Were closure approved, arrangements would be made for parents/carers to apply for a place at an alternative school in the local area. Parents/carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would like their child/ren to attend. Parents/carers would be offered a school place for their child/ren, either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form, or if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. It should be noted that parents have a right to express a preference for a school, not to choose which school their child/ren attend.</p> <p>The Council will try to meet parents/carers' preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places will be made in line with the admissions policy as set out in the school admissions booklet which is available on the East Sussex website https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/admissions/</p> <p>Free transport would be provided to eligible children if appropriate. This is unlikely to be significant as we would expect the majority of pupils to attend schools closer to their home address.</p> <p>The Council and affected schools have a duty to support appropriate transition arrangements and the Council would take all practical steps to ease the transition for pupils, most especially for vulnerable learners and those with SEND.</p> <p>Should the proposal be implemented the Council would work with pupils, their parents and the relevant schools to make appropriate transition arrangements for pupils to familiarise themselves with their new environment.</p> <p>Were Rodmell CE primary School to close the Council is confident that teaching staff at other schools would manage the transition of any pupils to their new school. These circumstances are not unusual in that schools regularly manage in-year admissions.</p>

Alternative Suggestions

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The LA has not done enough to investigate federation options for the school Being federated with another school would benefit each by sharing not only a headteacher but by 	<p>The Council has been actively promoting federation with schools since November 2014 and has, along with the Diocese, spent a considerable amount of time exploring options for Rodmell CE Primary School. No Academy has expressed an interest in taking the school into their Trust; the low admission number; very limited number of births in the local area; significant long term financial challenges and small site means that it does not present as a viable proposition and is therefore is not attractive to an Academy Trust.</p> <p>The Council has a role in supporting schools to explore federation but it is not</p>

<p>pooling resources and ideas resulting in a stimulating environment for children to produce of their best and to grow in confidence.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council should stop the process and look at our five year plan 	<p>responsible for securing those partnerships. Federation is a decision made by the governing bodies of schools and the Local Authority can only direct governing bodies to federate in exceptional circumstances.</p> <p>A proposal has been submitted by the 'Save our Schools' campaign group which has been set up by parents. This proposal has been evaluated by officers who have concluded that the proposal is not viable, it does not address the challenges that the school faces and will not lead to the future sustainability of the school. The proposal and evaluation are provided in Appendix C to the Cabinet report.</p> <p>The Council has looked at alternative plans. It has taken forward discussions with Iford and Kingston CE Primary School about the interim leadership support that the school could provide to Rodmell CE Primary School during the 2016/17 academic year. Representatives of the governing body of Rodmell CE Primary School engaged in subsequent discussions to further explore this. However, the governing body of Iford and Kingston CE Primary School has since confirmed that it feels unable to support Rodmell CE Primary School for 2016/17 due to their forthcoming building works and their upcoming Ofsted inspection. The governing body feel that the focus of management at the school needed to be firmly on their own school over the next twelve months. The governing body has however indicated a willingness to consider the possibility of partnership between the schools in the future if it is agreed that the school will not close. The governing body have indicated that they feel a sense of moral purpose to support Rodmell CE Primary School given the close geographical proximity of the two schools but have concerns about their capacity to do so.</p> <p>Across the county there are models of successful partnerships between schools, including small rural schools, and whilst this partnership by no means presents a straight forward or guaranteed solution to addressing the challenges faced by Rodmell CE Primary School it nonetheless may present an opportunity, worthy of further exploration, for securing a more sustainable future for the school. It could be considered premature to close down this opportunity to explore this partnership.</p> <p>It should be recognised that allowing time to explore this option could have a negative impact on the school as it will extend the period of uncertainty for parents and staff. In this event, to mitigate this the Council and governing body should commit to maintain regular communication. It should also be noted that there is no firm commitment from Iford and Kingston CE Primary School to agree to partnership just a willingness to further explore this option. The Council will investigate and evaluate fully any proposals brought forward by the governing body.</p>
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Impact of the proposals on Teaching Staff

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What will happen to the teaching staff? I will lose my job - in a wonderful school where the children are put first at all times. I will be made redundant and my family will lose a salary. 	<p>Should the current proposals be implemented, the Council would work with the current members of staff, including teaching and support staff in line with the Council's 'Managing Change Policy'. The Council would seek to minimise any compulsory redundancies as a result of the closure. If there are any school-based vacancies in East Sussex that are of interest to those staff at risk of redundancy, colleagues in Personnel and Training would liaise with the school(s) regarding the availability of staff to fill the vacancy, by seeking the agreement of the school to participate in the redeployment process.</p>

Impact on Community

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The school is an integral part of and brings life to this community. It is the heart of the village w 	<p>The Council and the Diocese acknowledge that where a school closure is proposed it will have an impact on the local community, however many pupils travel from Newhaven, Peacehaven and Seaford to attend the school and the larger proportion of children who live in the local area have chosen to attend other schools.</p>

<p>close links to the small church congregation, a major factor in keeping our church and village alive. Closing it will have a detrimental effect on the whole community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school has served the village for years. The Council should ask why a school in the village could be afforded back in 1856 when there was more poverty, but cannot be afforded now. • Loss of a community asset in my village. Loss of an institution which helps to bring villagers together - young and old. • The village needs to attract fresh young families and provide suitable education for their children. 	<p>The Diocese is fully aware of the impact on a community when it loses its school, church or both but unfortunately because of the circumstances has to consider the long term financial viability of the school, given that the Diocese does not have the financial resources to subsidise small schools.</p>
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Impact of the proposals on other schools

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools in the local area are saying they have no places and are oversubscribed. Where would our children go if the school closes? • I teach at a primary school in Seaford. In Seaford pressure on class numbers is already high with schools fuelled to undermine the spirit of the law limiting reception and KS1 sizes to 30 rationing across key stages. If you take Rodmell out of the equation this pressure then increases, we had 3 from entry imposed on a 2 form entry site. It was awful. 	<p>A full response including the detail on the impact of closing the school on school places, and details of our pupil forecasting methodology and pupil yield for housing development is provided in Appendix B of the report to Cabinet.</p>

Other comments

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this about the Council profiting from the sale of the land • As a democratically 	<p>The Council does not own the Rodmell CE Primary School site and would not therefore profit from the sale of the land.</p> <p>The Diocese owns the school site. The Diocese has no plans for the site and</p>

<p>elected body it is your duty to carry out the will of the people who elected you.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no public support for these closures and many councillors, including Cllrs Butler and O’Keeffe do not believe the proposal is right. • Will we get a grant for a new school uniform and a bus service? 	<p>will not consider the future of the site until such time as the school’s future is determined in order to remain impartial during the consultation. If the decision was taken to close the school and the school site was sold, the proceeds would go into an education foundation account to be invested and used for Education purposes in the Diocese and it would be for the trustees to decide whether the money would be reinvested in the local area to support children who have been displaced from the school. Any reinvestment would have to be in church school provision.</p> <p>Closure of a school is always the last resort and is particularly the case with a small rural primary school. Whilst the Council needs to take account of public opinion it also has a duty to ensure the educational and financial capacity of a school to provide a sustainable good level of education for pupils.</p> <p>There is no uniform grant from the Council however many schools make special arrangements for pupils entitled to Free School Meals.</p>
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Consultation Document

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the document was inaccurate, factually wrong and misleading. • Federation with another school would not provide sufficient financial benefits – please say what financial benefits would not be provided. • The school has had recommendations that other schools come to see the “inspiring indoor learning environment” in the Reception class and have advised ‘other head teachers to ask advice from the headteacher on how to improve their schools. 	<p>The Council used the latest verified information available at the time of constructing the consultation document.</p> <p>Federation would not increase the pupil numbers at Rodmell CE Primary School and would not therefore bring in any additional income to the school. Whilst federation may help reduce some leadership costs the school is still small and will still face challenges to secure financial stability in the longer term.</p> <p>The school received an Ofsted judgement of ‘Good’ in its last inspection; there has been no formal assessment by Ofsted or the Council since the inspection to indicate that the school is ‘moving towards outstanding’. The Council has, through its work with the school, advised that the school has quickly begun to address the two areas identified for further improvement by Ofsted in November 2015.</p> <p>The Council encourages all schools to learn from good practices. Just under 85% of the schools in East Sussex are Good or Outstanding and most provide advice to others; some schools have the capacity to provide significant additional support to others schools to enable them to move to ‘good’.</p>

8. Petition

- 8.1 During the consultation period a 5,000+ signature petition in relation to the proposed closures of both Rodmell CE Primary School and Pells CE Primary was submitted to the Local Authority. The petition is available for members to view.
- 8.2 The petition was presented at Full Council on 10 May 2016 where the following motion was moved.

In view of the increasing need for Primary School places in and around Lewes in the next five years, the strength of public feeling shown by a petition of over 5,000 signatories and the emerging plans for the future at both Rodmell School and Pells School, the Council recommends to Cabinet that the process towards the closure of these two schools is halted at the end of the consultation to enable these plans to be put into place.

- 8.3 A recorded vote on the motion was requested and taken. The motion was carried, the votes being cast as follows - 28 for the motion and 20 against the motion. In accordance with the Lead Member decision and the resolution of the Council we have sought to look at possible alternative options and to engage with stakeholders to consider any emerging plans that are put forward.