

CONSULTATION REPORT

on the

Proposal to close Pells CE Primary School

June 2016

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 On the 21 March 2016 the Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability gave approval to formally consult with key stakeholders on the proposed closure of Pells 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 Pells 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 920 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
Pells CE Primary School	151
Hamsey Primary School	15
Iford & Kingston CE Primary School	15
St Pancras Catholic Primary School	15
Southover CE Primary School	15
South Malling CE Primary School	15
Rodmell CE Primary Primary	15
Wallands Community Primary School	15
Western Road Community Primary School	15
Priory School	15
Sussex Downs College	1
Maria Caulfield MP	1
Lewes District Council	45
Lewes Town Council	20
Diocese of Chichester	1
Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Catholic Schools Service	1
Riverlodge Surgery	20
School Hill Medical Practice	20
St Andrew's Surgery	20
Anchor Field Surgery	20
Mid Downs Medical Practice	20
Sussex Voluntary and Community Learning Consortium	10
Lewes Library	20
Lewes Children's Centre	20
Pippa's Group	20
Lewes New School	20
Lewes Old Grammar School (nursery)	20
Kingston Pre-school Group	20
Lewes Clock Tower Nursery	20
Honey Bees Playgroup	20
Mohair Centre Holiday Playscheme And Nursery	20
Newick Pre-school Playgroup	20
Cottage Pre-school Group	20
Barcombe Playgroup	20
Busy Bees Day Nursery At Lewes	20
South Malling Nursery School	20
South Malling Pre-School	20

Organisation	Number of Copies
Southover Nursery School	20
The Old School House Montessori Nursery	20
Toddlers Inn Ltd	20
Stepping Stones Lewes Community Nursery Ltd	20
Ymca Steps Nursery	20
ESCC Councillors	48
Trade Unions	7
TOTAL	920

- 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 21 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 at Pells CE Primary School on the 4 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 Pells CE Primary School were encouraged to express their views. These were gathered by the Head of School and submitted by email. The overall view expressed by the children was that they liked their school and it should not close just because it was a small school. The pupils particularly highlighted that they would be sad to be split up from their friends and would miss their teachers; however some commented that it might be exciting to make new friends. 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:

- 104 consultation responses were received during the consultation period of which 43 were completed on line and 61 forms were returned via freepost
 - 1 letter was received
 - 4 emails were received.
- 4.2 Where known the following stakeholders responded to the consultation
- 22 parents / carers of a child at Pells CE Primary School
 - 3 pupils at Pells CE Primary School
 - 4 members of staff at Pells CE Primary School

- 5 members of the governing body at Pells CE Primary School
- 46 members of the local community
- 23 other (Home educating parent, parents of children at local schools, teacher at local school, governor at a local school, retired teachers, local town and district councillor, local MP, local town and district councillor, parent of past pupil, prospective parent, Grandparent, local resident and past resident of Lewes, local business, 'just wanting to save our schools')
- 1 Not answered

5. PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING, 4 MAY 2016

QUESTION AND ANSWER DOCUMENT produced following the meeting

Q: In light of the government white paper and the desire for every school to become an academy it would appear that we are too small to be an academy - is this really a consultation process or is it a done deal?

A: This is a genuine consultation and we want to hear the views from parents, pupils, staff, the local community and other stakeholders. The Lead Member attended the public consultation meeting to hear and listen to all the views, comments and discussions. He will take account of all responses received during the consultation period before a final decision is made.

Q: Is this proposal merely about saving money?

A: 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 we have 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.

Q: Why is the headteacher post being covered by interim leadership arrangements and not being advertised?

A: Interim leadership arrangements are in place until the end of the academic year. We believe it will be difficult for the school to recruit to a headteacher post; at the start of the last academic year there were many schools across the county without a permanent headteacher. Our normal procedure when going through a process like this would not be to bring in a permanent headteacher until a final decision is taken on the proposal in case that decision should be to close the school.

Q: Could vacant teaching posts be advertised as temporary or fixed term to avoid the use of supply teachers during this time?

A: Yes, they can.

Q: Where do you get your forecast statistics from? The Office for National Statistics (ONS) have predicted great rises for school places up to 2022. The birth rate figures you predict do not match up and you are not taking into account housing developments and you should also be considering people moving into Lewes with families. Should children that attend Lewes schools only be children that are born in Lewes?

A: The Local Authority uses ONS and health authority data, GP registrations, early years nursery take up and information on housing developments to inform their pupil forecasts. The figures set out in the presentation show that the birth rate in Lewes has fallen in recent years from 195 in 2011/12 (reception intake year 2016/17) to 134 in 2014/15 (reception intake year 2019/20) – a fall of 61 births per year over a 3 year period.

In certain parts of the County, for example Hailsham, we will see a significant number of school places required in the future due to the volume of housing developments planned there. We believe that the falling birth rate in Lewes will lead to sufficient places being available in the town even taking into account planned housing development at North Street and Mallong Farm.

One of the challenges is that the Admissions Code requires Local Authorities to meet parental preference where possible. Pells is not always the first preference school for local parents, significant numbers of whom have opted to make use of other schools in the town over the last five years rather than send their children to Pells.

Q: Assuming your figures are correct what would the class sizes be like in four or five years' time in Lewes? Do you acknowledge that class sizes in Lewes will go over 30? Twelve pupils have already left the school and at least 2 of those families have been split up. What will happen when all other pupils need to be moved? If Landport does not have a school all children will have to go to other schools and there is not a safe crossing route.

The children already leaving the school are having an unsettling effect on children and staff remaining at the school. Can we stop children from leaving the school?

A: We believe in general there will be sufficient places available in 2017/18 across the town to accommodate children displaced from Pells were it to close. Year 3 in 2017/18 (the current year 1) is likely to see a shortfall of places but schools within the Lewes Co-operative Trust have indicated a willingness to exceed their published admission number (PAN) if needed to accommodate all pupils from Pells.

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. This may be the case in Year 3 in 2017/18.

We appreciate the challenge that is created by children leaving the school. It should be remembered that Pells remains open and there is no need for parents to move their children to other schools at this stage. However, if parents choose to move their children to a school with space that is their right under the admissions code. We will work with the leadership team to support the school through this challenging time. If a decision is taken to close we have a duty to ensure every child has a place at an alternative school and admissions would look at each case on an individual basis. Where eligible we would support with transport costs taking into account distance and routes to school.

Q: Where will you put the SEN children and what transition will be available for them? You won't find other schools in Lewes that will take those children. People have said that they choose this school because it is a small school. It seems to me that in this world there is a bias against small schools when we know that small schools work well for some children. If some children are attending this school with SEN their outcomes in this school won't be good. You won't find other schools in Lewes that will take those SEN children.

A: Pells is a mainstream school like other schools in Lewes. All mainstream schools support and accommodate pupils with SEN. Children attending other mainstream schools in Lewes have access to a range of support to help with their needs and this would be the case for children moving from Pells. Outcomes for children with similar needs are good in other schools.

Q: The LA has set out its responsibilities to provide sufficient places and to promote excellence. Is this solely in relation to academic achievement? This school has a high number of SEN pupils. If achieving excellence is about leaving school with good manners, confidence, high self-esteem, then this school achieves that.

A: Determining achievement and attainment does not only look at raw scores and how many pupils' reach level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2. It also considers progress made and there is a measure called expected progress. What we can unfortunately see is that the children here do not make expected levels of progress by the time they leave year 6. Children who start at a similar level in other schools make better progress and we have a responsibility to ensure that we have the same ambition for children at Pells.

Q: You said the LA had looked at all of the options. There is a high proportion of parents looking for the option of flexi schooling. Would the LA consider Pells as an option to become a flexi-school?

A: The Local Authority and the Diocese have explored other options including partnerships and federation – no schools in the area have expressed a willingness to federate or amalgamate with Pells and no academy solutions have been put forward. 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. These will be considered by the Lead Member alongside all other responses from the consultation.

The option of flexi schooling is something that an individual headteacher can look at based on a number of factors. Ultimately the final decision rests with the headteacher.

Q: Are the responses to the consultation going to be available before the Lead Member decision is made? Can consultation responses be made available to view during the course of the consultation? People may gain confidence to respond by viewing what other people say.

A: We have received advice that in order to publish responses before the consultation period ends we would need to ask respondent's for their consent. Although it may encourage people to respond it could also potentially discourage others from participating.

The Lead Member report is published 10 days before the meeting takes place and the report will provide an analysis of all the responses received.

Q: What would happen to the site if the school closes?

A: The Diocese has not considered what would happen to the land at this stage other than to begin looking at Trust documents to check on any restrictions on future use. This is a very complicated process. The Diocese refrains from any consideration of possible use at this stage so as not to pre-empt in any way the outcomes of the consultation.

If 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 Pells. Any reinvestment would have to be in church school provision.

Comments made by parents about their specific situations and experience

- I sent my kids to another local school, biggest mistake of my life. Let them become excellent in other forms than just academic, in art, writing, music.
- My son is starting here in September and my other children are here. Teachers saw me when pregnant, they see him now, he has his routine here.
- My son has been failed in a bigger school; he won't make progress in a bigger class. This school remembers my family and this is what this school does and what you have here is excellence. We are going possibly to bring other schools down. Please try and keep our family community going. At this school your child is not categorised as naughty because the teachers know you.

6. Response of Pell's Children

1. What do you like about your school?

- That there are not many children
- That we are pushed to our limits
- School dinners
- We get reward time
- There is lots of sport
- It is local to everyone
- It is small – we get lots of attention
- It is easy to make friends

2. What do you think about the school maybe closing?

- Sad because we will have to organise another school which will cause our parents hassle
- Annoying as we really like this school
- Sad because we will be split up from our friends
- Sad, angry and emotional because it is emotional to leave all your friends and you won't be able to play with them anymore
- Ridiculous – you might be split from your friends and siblings
- Annoying – we might start a new class in September then we might have to move schools

3. What would you miss about your school if it had to close next summer?

- The teachers and everybody
- Friends who you won't be able to see
- Work that you like
- Teachers and the education – people here know where you are
- Everything to do with the school
- Reward time

4. How would you feel about going to another school?

- Sad leaving friends
- Worried because you don't know what the people in the new school are going to be like
- Sad, nervous and excited – you could make new friends
- Sad leaving friends who might not go to the same school as you
- Not happy - we might get sent to a school we don't want
- Unhappy – you will have to get up earlier to go to a school further away
- If sibling go to different schools it will be really difficult
- We will leave all our happy memories behind
- Annoyed – we might get judged on how we look and act. People might not want to be our friend

5. Is there anything else you want to ask/ tell us about?

- There is nothing wrong with our school why might you close it down?
- Our friends are really important
- Just because its small, doesn't mean it has to close
- It's not good for children with special needs to have to change schools and teacher
- I like this school – I don't understand why it might shut down

7. KEY ISSUES RAISED BY RESPONDENTS

School Places

Consultee Comment	County Council Response																																	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At a time when the population of Lewes is growing there is need for more school places, not fewer. The large number of primary age children from the North Street development has been seriously underestimated by the council. This would be the nearest primary school to serve more than 400 new homes proposed in North Street alone. Encourage more people to attend, don't run the school into the ground. 	<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> <p>Parents are entitled to express a preference for a school for their child. It is the responsibility of the school, and the governing body, to ensure that the provision they make is attractive to parents.</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.</p> <p>Births in Lewes between 2003/04 (reception year intake 2008/09) and 2012/13 (reception year intake 2017/18) have fluctuated from a low of 156 in 2005/06 to a high of 201 in 2009/10. Since then, there has been a marked fall in the birth rate with numbers in 2013/14 (reception year intake 2018/19) at 137 and 2014/15 (reception year intake 2019/20) at 134.</p> <p>Pells CE Primary School has suffered from very low parental preferences for many years as illustrated in the table below. Even at times of high demand for places in the town the school has been unpopular and unable to attract sufficient pupils.</p> <table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr style="background-color: #FFFF00;"> <th></th> <th colspan="2">2012/13</th> <th colspan="2">2013/14</th> <th colspan="2">2014/15</th> <th colspan="2">2015/16</th> <th colspan="2">2016/17</th> </tr> <tr style="background-color: #FFFF00;"> <th>Published Admission Number (PAN)</th> <th>1st Prefs</th> <th>% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr style="color: red;"> <td>20</td> <td>7</td> <td>-65%</td> <td>6</td> <td>-70%</td> <td>9</td> <td>-55%</td> <td>11</td> <td>-45%</td> <td>9</td> <td>-55%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>For 2016/17 only nine first preferences were received by the closing date for applications. This number reduced to four after parents were given the opportunity to re-submit their preferences. A late application was received for Pells so the school is likely to start September with five children in its reception year.</p> <p>In the period 2001/02 to 2003/04 pupil numbers at the school were close to its capacity of 140. Over the last twelve years numbers have been on a downward trend – in the period 2004/05 to 2009/10 numbers were generally between 110 and 120 each year. Since 2010/11 numbers have been less than 100 and as low as 83 in 2013/14.</p> <p>Over the last five academic years the percentage of primary age children living on the Landport Estate attending Pells CE Primary School has fallen from 34% (70 pupils) in January 2012 to only 23% (51 pupils) in January 2016. In contrast the percentage of children living on the Landport Estate attending other schools in Lewes has risen from 62% (127 pupils) in January 2012 to 74% (164 pupils) in January 2016.</p> <p>The take up of reception year places from those who have attended the early years provider on site (Pippa's Group) is low and declining:</p> <p>2012/13 - 4 out of 8 children (50%) 2013/14 - 5 out of 8 children (63%) 2014/15 - 8 out of 12 children (67%) 2015/16 - 6 out of 13 children (46%)</p> <p>The latest set of pupil forecasts for Lewes, which take account of the proposed large developments at North Street and Old Malling Farm indicate that primary reception year intakes will fall in the period to 2018/19 before rising again in the period to 2025/26. However even at its peak reception year intake numbers are expected to be below 200 in the town. Beyond 2025/26 the Council's demographic based forecasts</p>		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17		Published Admission Number (PAN)	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	20	7	-65%	6	-70%	9	-55%	11	-45%	9	-55%
	2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16		2016/17																									
Published Admission Number (PAN)	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN	1st Prefs	% 1st Prefs Above/ Below PAN																								
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	<p>indicate that reception year intakes will decline. This means that 200 reception year places in Lewes (assuming Pells CE Primary School closes in August 2017) will be sufficient to meet future demand for places. Appendix B sets out the Council's forecasting methodology and predictions for the Lewes area.</p> <p>The Council's pupil forecasts are highly accurate with an accuracy of +0.5 to +0.1% over the last four years. The pupil forecasts take account of both the impact of new housing on future births, and the impact of school aged children moving into new housing. The Council has recently reviewed its pupil yield factors to check accuracy. The review indicated that that the Council's pupil yield produced marginally higher pupil yields than other models. The Council has therefore continued to use this model to ensure there is sufficient capacity without overprovision. The most recent example of the use of this forecasting model shows that the housing development in Hailsham produced less pupils than the Council's model estimated. Further detail on this is provided in Appendix B. There is no evidence to suggest that the pupil forecasts for Lewes are inaccurate, on experience to date the forecasts will identify more pupils than will actually result from the new housing.</p> <p>There will be sufficient places available in other schools in Lewes in 2017/18 for children from Pells CE Primary School were it to close. There will be a very small pressure in Years 3 and 4 and this would be addressed through working with the other schools in the town. The Lewes Co-operative Trust has already indicated willingness for schools to exceed PAN if necessary to ensure every child has a place.</p> <p>Asking schools to exceed PAN is a strategy adopted across the county where there is pressure on places but the level of demand does not justify the creation of bulge classes. Our forecasts indicate that this strategy would only need to be in place for a very short period of time until the larger cohorts in Years 3 and 4 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>
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Ofsted Judgement

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An Ofsted grade of 'requires improvement' is equivalent to the former grade of satisfactory: this means that there are many good aspects to the schools learning and teaching. • How do you know it won't get good at its next inspection? • The school could improve more with good support from the county council • Please consider making changes/upgrading to better the future education of the children at Pells. • There has been nothing done to help shake off the unjust stigma the school has suffered. 	<p>In September 2009 the school was judged to require 'Special Measures'. In January 2012 the school was removed from special measures due to improved leadership but with an inadequate judgement on outcomes and given a notice to improve. In February 2013 and February 2015 Ofsted judged the school to 'Requires Improvement'. The 2 year period for the school's journey to good ends in February 2017 and the in-year data suggests that outcomes will remain low this year with insufficient improvement in both progress and outcomes to lift the school successfully beyond a requires improvement judgement. The recently received provisional outcomes data for key stage 2 for this year shows that only 33% (4 out of 12 pupils) achieved the expected standard in reading, writing, maths combined, significantly below the East Sussex average of 51.1%. All of this means that it is very unlikely that the school will be judged good at the next inspection. As the school has been judged 'Requires Improvement' twice in a row, it is very likely that Ofsted will place the school in a category of concern as the pace of improvement has not been swift enough over a number of years to address significant pupil underachievement.</p> <p>The school has received significant support from the Council and the Diocese but despite this the school continues to face challenges in achieving an Ofsted judgement as a good school. This has been confirmed by the interim leadership who have identified significant areas of underperformance. Council monitoring arrangements confirm this view noting that many targets remain unmet or only partially met, and the recent key stage 2 results for this year provide further evidence that the school is underperforming. Despite the considerable efforts of the school, the Council and the Diocese it has not been possible to break the long term cycle of underperformance.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other local schools are in SM or RI – are you proposing to close them? 	<p>The Council has a duty to ensure all pupils receive a good standard of education. It is a matter of serious concern that the provision for the pupils at Pells CE Primary School does not enable them to make expected levels of progress by the time they leave Year 6. Children who start at a similar level in other schools make better progress. The attainment of pupils in Year 6 has been significantly below the national average in three of the last four years, and is significantly below again this year. Pells CE Primary School is not delivering the level of ambition that we have for the children of this county.</p>
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Headteacher Recruitment

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why is the headteacher post being covered by interim leadership arrangements and not being advertised? Try advertising for senior management don't just assume. 	<p>Since January 2016 interim leadership arrangements have been in place and will continue until the end of the academic year. Recruiting headteachers in all schools, but particularly small schools is very challenging, both locally and nationally. The school will face an additional challenge in this respect as it is an underperforming school and it will have another Ofsted inspection within the next year. Recruitment activity across the county indicates that it will be very difficult, if not impossible, for Pells CE Primary to recruit to a headteacher vacancy.</p> <p>There is no permanent leadership solution for the school. The interim leadership being provided by the Council and the Lewes Co-operative Learning Trust is in place until the end of this academic year. The interim leadership arrangements are not financially sustainable from the school's budget; the Council is currently funding these arrangements. The Lewes Co-operative Learning Trust has confirmed that they do not have the capacity to sustain longer term leadership for the school. If the decision is reached that the school will close the Trust would be prepared to provide further interim leadership, in the interests of the children at the school, during the period of closure. However these arrangements will not be available should the decision be made to keep the school open as this would require a different plan and increased leadership capacity to take the school through very challenging circumstances.</p> <p>Our normal procedure when going through a process like this would not be to attempt to recruit to a permanent headteacher role until a final decision is taken on the proposal in case that decision should be to close the school. It is unlikely that a prospective Headteacher seeking a permanent position would commit themselves to a school in such circumstances.</p>

Strengths of Pells CE Primary School

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many of the pupils prefer the security and comfort of a smaller school with a caring environment. Parents value sending their children to the school as it offers smaller class sizes and they feel they would not thrive in a larger school. This school's demographic is different from all others in the town. It is part of the community and provides a non- 	<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>Pells CE Primary School is a mainstream school and 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. The Council expects that all children who move from the Pells CE Primary School to other schools would be provided with the same level of care at their new school. Outcomes for children with similar needs are good in other schools.</p> <p>The school has received significant support from the Council and the Diocese but despite this the school continues to face challenges in</p>

<p>judgemental, specialist scheme to children and families with diverse needs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is a community led by the dedicated teachers, who have carried the school with no visible input from the county. 	<p>achieving an Ofsted judgement as a good school.</p> <p>The Council has recognised the contribution staff make to Pells CE Primary School. However, the Council cannot avoid making decisions for the future which are in the best interests of children and young people.</p>
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Impact on pupils

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving my children will have an adverse effect on their education as they are settled at school and doing well Friendship groups may be split up. The closure could result in siblings being at different schools (increasing time/finance burden of transport and emotional impact of split) Current Pells pupils living near the school will have to travel a long way to other schools in some cases and there aren't good enough local public transport links in the town. This process has created an atmosphere of uncertainty for parents of pupils at the school and are already moving their children to other schools. This is unsettling for pupils who remain at the school. 	<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>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 the school to close the Council is confident that teaching staff at other schools would manage the transition that any pupils from Pells CE Primary School who are moved into the school will benefit from the new arrangement.</p> <p>In the event of closure we recognise that there could be an impact upon the length of journeys between home to school for some pupils on roll. Home to school transport will be provided in accordance with East Sussex County Council's published policies, with individual cases being considered on their merits.</p>

Alternative Suggestions

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not enough has been done to investigate alternative options for the school Explore sufficiently all options for amalgamation and federation and take into account the unique data of the school with its 	<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 Pells CE Primary School. No Academy Trust has expressed an interest in taking the school into their Trust; the long term underperformance, low parental preferences and low pupil numbers means that it is very unlikely to be attractive to an Academy Trust.</p> <p>Whilst the Lewes Co-operative Learning Trust have a commitment to improve the outcomes of all pupils in the town and is providing interim leadership, the Trust and other schools are not willing to federate or</p>

<p>percentages of SEND and PPD.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider the school offering the option of flexi schooling • Consider making the school a farm or forest school to attract a wider social mix of children and enable less academically inclined children to excel in and enjoy other skills • Consider formally changing the school into one for children with more difficulties • Twin a good school in Lewes with Pells and share senior staff • The best option, given the key location of the school and its superb site, would be close to it and then re-open it under a new name (Trinity School?) and new leadership. 	<p>amalgamate with Pells CE Primary School. It is unlikely that federation would improve the popularity of the school anyway. No other school has room to accommodate all the pupils from Pells CE Primary School on their own site – a split site school has been considered but would create difficult challenges for the school and parents to manage, and in any event, no school has shown an appetite for that model.</p> <p>The Council has a role in supporting schools to explore federation but it is not 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 i.e. when it has been identified as causing concern and is eligible for formal action.</p> <p>The Council did not receive any proposals for the future of the school during the consultation process and no firm proposals were shared with the school leadership or governing body. On 23 May 2016 the Chair of Governors confirmed in a telephone conversation with the Assistant Director: Education and ISEND that the governing body were not bringing forward a solution and that no groups had discussed any potential solutions with her regarding the future of the school.</p> <p>Following a meeting between the Director of Children’s Services, the Assistant Director: Education and ISEND and Councillor Ruth O’Keeffe on Friday 24 June 2016, a proposal was submitted on 29 June 2016 by Councillor O’Keeffe for a ‘Farm School Approach’ for Pells CE Primary School. This proposal was not shared with the school during the consultation period but has since been sent to the Chair of Governors. As requested by the Lead Member this proposal has been fully evaluated by officers who have assessed that the proposal does not address the key challenges that the school faces, it has not been fully costed by the proposer and will not lead to the rapid improvement required at the school. The proposal and evaluation are provided in Appendix C of the Cabinet report. The Chair of Governors has reviewed the plan and her view remains unchanged that there is no sustainable way forward for the school in light of the significant challenges the school is facing.</p> <p>The proposal has been costed by officers and is found to be unaffordable. The Farm school would cost at least £100K to set up, and cost £50K each year to cover running costs. In addition setting up a Farm School would require planning permission for change of use and constructing any necessary buildings. This process would take at least 6 months and would cost in the region of £20K. Any loss of playing field space would also require Secretary of State permission. The proposal does not offer a financially viable solution for the school.</p> <p>Though much has been made of the local community support for the school, this is not supported by the data in 2.1.5 of the Cabinet report which show that the majority of families living on the Landport Estate, have not chosen, and do not choose to send their children to the school, and that the popularity of the school continues to decline. There is no evidence that the Farm School proposal would increase the popularity of the school.</p> <p>The imminent Ofsted inspection, which in light of the key stage 2 results this year we would now expect early next academic year, is likely to judge the school to be inadequate and this does not allow time for any further exploration of options for this school.</p>
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Impact of the proposals on Teaching Staff

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
What will happen to the teaching and support staff?	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, or at least offer an interview to a member of staff at risk of redundancy who meets the essential criteria of the person specification. For vacancies within the Council, other than in schools there is a mechanism for staff at risk of redundancy to join the redeployment register.
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Impact on Community

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pells has a long standing history in Lewes. To close it would be a travesty. The school is the heart of the community and closing it will have a devastating effect on the community and local businesses. 	<p>The Council and the Diocese acknowledge that where a school closure is proposed it will have an impact on the local community. The Council and the Diocese have no plans for the site and 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 Diocese 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. In disposing of the playing field, the Council would require consent from the Secretary of State under Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.</p>

Impact of the proposals on other schools

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The closure would result in increases in numbers in classes at other schools and being scheduled to the limit. My children's school has a considerable number of new pupils from this area and has seen a considerable increase in behavioural issues from an influx of anxious and unsupported children which is impacting on my children. Bigger classes could lead to disruption and affect the quality of learning children will receive. The council should consider the imbalance of Christian Faith Schools in Lewes if there is a closure. 	<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> <p>Pells CE Primary School is a mainstream school and 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. The Council expects that all children who move from the Pells CE Primary School to other schools would be provided with the same level of care at their new school. Outcomes for children with similar needs are good in other schools.</p> <p>There are a number of other church schools (listed below) in the town that parents will be able to express a preference for when applying for a school place:</p> <p>Iford & Kingston CE Primary School Southover CE Primary School, Lewes South Malling CE Primary School, Lewes St Pancras Catholic Primary School, Lewes</p>

Other Comments

Consultee Comment	County Council Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I think the council is being rather selfish and just thinking of how much extra money they can put 	<p>The Council does not save any money by closing the school – Council funds are separate to school funding. But school funds are public money and we have 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</p>

<p>in their pockets and not the children whose education and confidence and well-being will suffer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This is about the Council profiting from the sale of the land • You should fully consult parents with children who attend the school, all staff and the local community • If you have to close the school mothball it because birth rates are cyclical and it will avoid wasting money on building new schools. 	<p>will mean schools will face additional challenges in the future.</p> <p>The Diocese owns the majority of the school site, the Council owns the playing field. The Council and the Diocese have no plans for the site and 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 Diocese 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. In disposing of the playing field, the Council would require consent from the Secretary of State under Section 77 of the Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.</p> <p>The consultation process has included consultation with parents, all staff and the local community.</p>
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Responses generally accepting of the Proposal

- The children may thrive if they have the opportunity to have an education alongside other Lewes children in bigger schools
- Parents should vote with their feet, ie move their children to Pells. If enough parents sent their children to the school I assume the Council would have to keep it open. Without this sort of support, I feel that the Council has no option but to close the school.
- The best thing we can do for these children is to give them the opportunity of an education alongside other Lewes children in bigger schools where they will have the chance to thrive
- Although I understand the Council's reasons for proposing to close Pells CE Primary and am sorry that there is no immediate solution could the Council please consider
 - How best to support the particular needs of the pupils, particularly vulnerable children many with SEND and some from deprived backgrounds, who will suffer greatly from the closure of the school., those with SEND, who currently attend Pells?
 - The large number of primary age children from the North Street development, the number of which has been seriously underestimated by the council, according to Maria Caulfield MP. The best option, given the key location of the school and its superb site, would be close to it and then re-open it under a new name (Trinity School?) and new leadership.
- Pells has always had a poor reputation and has been the 'sink' school in the town. It has failed the children of Landport and should be integrated into their town.

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.