

Broad Oak Community Primary School

Presumption against the closure of rural schools

Issue no. 2.0

Introduction

Broad Oak Community Primary School (Broad Oak) is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2019.

The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance ‘*Opening and closing maintained schools*’ November 2019 (the guidance) refers to a presumption against the closure of rural schools. The guidance states:

“Proposers should be aware that the Department expects all decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This doesn’t mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area”

The presumption against closure does not mean that rural schools cannot be closed by local authorities, but they have a duty to carefully consider the factors set out in the guidance when proposing to close a rural school. These factors are:

- *alternatives to closure including: federation with another local school; conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust; the scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc;*
- *transport implications i.e. the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues;*
- *the size of the school and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g. in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available;*
- *the overall and long term impact on local people and the community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility; and*
- *wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils.*

Each of these factors is addressed below.

Alternatives to closure

A number of alternative options were considered by the local authority before agreeing to consult on the proposed closure of Broad Oak. These were included in the consultation document and are set out below for ease of reference:

- **Federation.** Broad Oak is in a federation with Punnetts Town Community Primary School (Punnetts Town) and Dallington CE Primary School (Dallington). Although federations are recognised as a way of enabling smaller schools to work more formally in partnerships to share costs, this has not addressed the financial challenges faced at Broad Oak.

- **Amalgamation.** Consideration was given to amalgamating Broad Oak with Punnetts Town. This option was discounted because there is little pupil movement between the two schools and there is insufficient capacity at either site to accommodate all the pupils on roll across the two schools.
- **Linked infant and junior schools.** Consideration was given to merging Broad Oak with Punnetts Town with one school becoming an infant school and the other a junior school. The local authority's School Organisation Policy states that it is committed to amalgamating infant and junior schools as data analysis shows that overall Key Stage 2 pupil outcomes are higher in East Sussex all through primary schools in comparison to junior schools where children transfer at the start of Year 3. As stated above, there is little pupil movement between the two schools and this would not address the low pupil numbers and budget challenges the school faces. For these reasons this option was discounted.
- **Academisation.** In undertaking their due diligence, academy trusts, both local and national, find some small schools to be financially unviable or too isolated to be included in their trust, unless they convert with other small schools as a local hub. Governors have not expressed a desire to academise and no academy trust has approached the local authority about taking the school into their trust. This would not address the low pupil numbers and budget challenges the school faces.
- **No change.** As outlined in the consultation document, Broad Oak has been undersubscribed in each of the last five years and pupil numbers fall significantly short of its published admission number each year. There is very little in-area demand for places at the school. The school faces significant financial challenges as set out in the Lead Member report. Doing nothing is not an option.

A number of alternative options to closure were suggested by respondents to the consultation to address the challenges the school faces. These are set out again for ease of reference and are categorised according to the following headings.

Those considered unrealistic, costly or outside the control of the local authority or school

- Increase the funding for the school either from local authority resources or by lobbying government, and work with the school to help improve it.

Local authority response: The national funding formula is determined by the government and allocated to local authorities via the Dedicated Schools Grant. The local authority does not have resources to increase funding for the school.

- Re-open the swimming pool to attract more pupils.

Local authority response: Re-opening the swimming pool would be costly both in terms of initial outlay and ongoing running costs which would fall to the school. There is no evidence that a swimming pool would attract more pupils to the school.

- Merge Punnetts Town, Broad Oak and All Saints and St Richard's CE Primary School (ASSR) and build a new school on land in Halley Road, Broad Oak.

Local authority response: The cost of purchasing land and building a new school would be prohibitive and could not be considered a priority within the local authority's agreed capital programme.

- Insist that children from the village go to the school.

Local authority response: The local authority cannot insist that children from the village attend the school.

Those considered within the local authority's control / influence

- Lower the PAN at Broad Oak to 15 and invite the local pre-school to move into the spare classroom on site
- Reduce the PANs at Broad Oak and ASSR to 15 and Cross-in-Hand to 30.

Local authority response: While these options would reduce the amount of surplus places in the area it would not address the financial challenges that Broad Oak faces.

- Give the school more time (respondents suggested different timescales) and advertise it better.

Local authority response: The local authority does not believe giving the school more time would alter the situation, decline has been evident over-time, and governors have been unable to identify solutions or present a case for the school's viability.

- Include Broad Oak in the Heathfield school's community area so that children in Heathfield have access to two church schools and two community schools in the area.

Updated local authority response: On 24 February 2020 the Lead Member approved the change to the community areas to ensure that should a decision be taken to close Broad Oak, children living in the Broad Oak community area would be able to access a local school. In approving the change it was decided that merging the community areas would be of benefit to local families whether Broad Oak closes or not, as it would broaden the range of options available within the area.

- Merge Punnetts Town and Broad Oak over two sites, one infant and one junior.

Local authority response: This option was considered prior to consulting on closure but was discounted for the reasons set out above.

- Close Five Ashes which is a smaller school.

Local authority response: Five Ashes does not face the same challenges as Broad Oak in terms of its pupil numbers, surplus places and financial position. Five Ashes is full to capacity and is predicted to remain so. It has no surplus places. Five Ashes is rated good by Ofsted.

- Sell the school's detached playing field to provide a cash boost to the school; and partially develop the school site to release some of the asset.

The DfE '*Advice on standards for school premises*' March 2015 confirms that all maintained schools and academies must provide suitable outdoor space to enable physical education in accordance with the school curriculum and to enable pupils to play outside. Except with the consent of the Secretary of State, local authorities cannot dispose of any playing fields used by a maintained school for the purposes of the school.

Those considered within the school's control

- Expand the Woodlands Federation to include other local primary schools or Heathfield Community College
- Academisation
- Develop the school as a community hub.

Local authority response: The governing board has given no indication that it is considering any of these options.

No new options came forward during the representation period, other than Broad Oak reducing its PAN from 20 to 10, alongside other schools being encouraged to reduce their PANs, and turning Broad Oak into a special school. While reducing PANs at one or more schools would remove surplus places from the area it would not address the ongoing challenges that Broad Oak faces. Converting Broad Oak into a special school would still result in all the pupils at the school having to find an alternative school as the special school would only be for pupils with an EHCP which indicates special school not mainstream provision.

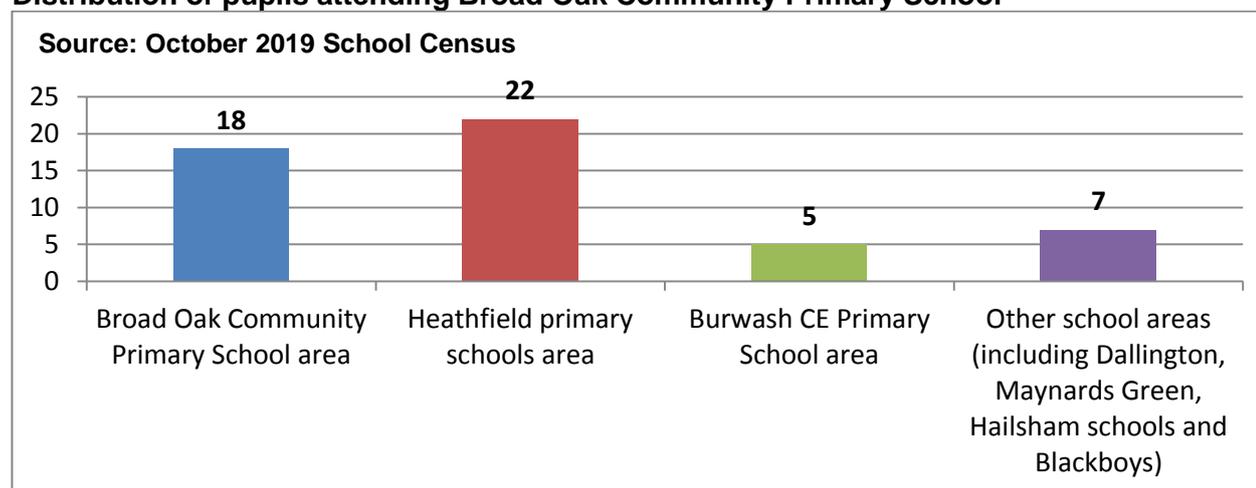
Transport Implications

Some families may be impacted by additional travel costs and travel time. The closure of the school may impact members of the community who would have to go beyond the local village to engage with teachers and use community facilities. Respondents to the consultation cited the impact on traffic and the environment of children having to travel by car to their nearest alternative school.

According to the October 2019 school census there were 60 primary age pupils living in the Broad Oak community area attending state funded primary schools in East Sussex. Of these, only 18 (30%) attend Broad Oak. The remaining 70% attend other schools in the county.

The majority of pupils (65%) currently attending Broad Oak are from outside its community area, with the largest proportion (42%) living in the Heathfield schools community area. This is illustrated in the chart below.

Distribution of pupils attending Broad Oak Community Primary School



From this information it is evident that the majority of pupils attending Broad Oak already face journeys to and from school each day, while most of the primary age pupils living in the Broad Oak community area also choose to travel to schools outside the community area rather than attend their local school. It is highly likely that journey times, and therefore the impact on traffic congestion and the environment, could be reduced in the event that Broad Oak closes as the majority of displaced pupils would have the opportunity to attend schools nearer to their home address.

Alternative schools are not far from the village and would be in travelling distance for community activities - between 1.5 and 5.4 miles away from Broad Oak as shown in the table below. For the majority of pupils and families these schools could be nearer to their home address.

Distance from Broad Oak Community Primary School to alternative schools in the local area

School	Distances in miles (rounded)
All Saints' and St Richard's	1.5
Cross-in-Hand	2.3
Parkside	2.5
Punnetts Town	2.3
Dallington	3.8
Maynards Green	3.5
Mayfield	3.7
Five Ashes	5.4
Burwash	5.1

Latest analysis shows that of the 40 Reception to Year 5 pupils likely to be affected by the proposal, approximately 60% live nearer, or the same distance, to an alternative school, with approximately 40% living further away. Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils who meet the criteria set out in the link below. From the information currently available, the local authority considers that five pupils would be eligible for free home to school transport to their nearest alternative school, meaning the additional cost to the local authority would be negligible. The local authority acknowledges that some pupils living in the Broad Oak community area and attending the school might face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day. However, for the majority their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance.

<https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schools/transport/>

It is envisaged that displaced pupils would continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers and that, given the majority of pupils would be able to attend a school nearer to their home address it is unlikely there would be an increase in car usage. To the contrary, it would be hoped that car usage would reduce thereby having a positive impact on the environment.

Size of the school and quality of education

Broad Oak is a small rural school with a published admission number of 20 and capacity for 140 pupils (20 x 7 year groups). At full capacity the school would be expected to have 5 classes. Due to its low pupil numbers the school is currently organised across 3 classes as follows:

- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class of 14
- Year 3 / 4 class of 19
- Year 5 / 6 class of 24

Source: Pupil numbers confirmed by school in February 2020

Broad Oak last received an Ofsted rating of 'Good' in 2011. At its last two Ofsted inspections in 2016 and 2018 the school was rated overall as requiring improvement. In 2018 the effectiveness of leadership and management, personal development, behaviour and welfare and early years provision were all rated good. However, quality of teaching, learning and assessment and outcomes for pupils were rated as requiring improvement resulting in the overall judgement of requires improvement.

The local authority has provided a range of support to Broad Oak in recent years for teaching, learning, leadership and management. The school also has a progress group in place which provides additional school improvement support and monitoring from the local authority.

Prior to 2016 when Broad Oak received the first of its two Requires Improvement judgements from Ofsted, pupil numbers were at or close to the school's capacity of 140. Since then, pupil numbers have declined to 52 at the October 2019 school census, although this number has risen to 57 in February 2020 according to the school.

A section 8 monitoring visit was undertaken at Broad Oak by Ofsted HMI on 8 October 2019. The monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and took place because the school had received two successive judgements of 'Requires Improvement' at its previous section 5 inspections. The key findings of the inspection were that:

'Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.'

"The school should take further action to:

- *Continue to develop the school's curriculum to ensure that it is coherently planned and sequenced so that pupils are able to know more and remember more as they progress through the school*
- *Ensure that the recent improvements in the teaching of phonics are sustained so that there is a clear focus on ensuring that younger pupils promptly gain the phonics knowledge necessary to read well*
- *Maintain a sharp focus on continuing to improve teachers' subject knowledge to enhance the teaching of the curriculum.'*

The monitoring letter also noted the *"Local Authority is providing effective support and challenge to Leaders and Governors to improve the school. Advisers from East Sussex Local Authority are following timely, focused support and guidance in all aspects of the school's work. Staff training, together with the school's involvement in specific local authority-led projects, is helping to improve the quality of education in the school."*

Respondents cited that Broad Oak was amongst the top two performing schools in Heathfield in 2019. The local authority acknowledges that pupil progress at Key Stage 2 has generally been in line with the national average for reading, writing and mathematics for the last three years, although mathematics was below the national average in 2018. Progress in reading and mathematics strengthened considerably for the 2019 KS2 cohort. However, the proportion of pupils attaining reading, writing and mathematics (combined) at the expected standard has been in the lowest 20% of schools nationally for three years.

The budget proposal submitted by the governing board (please refer to section 12) is predicated on a plan to move from three classes to two from September 2020. The governors propose to organise the two classes as follows.

EYFS, KS1 and KS2				KS2		
reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
2	6	1	7	10	9	7
One class of approximately 16				One class of approximately 26		

The local authority believes there is a combination of factors that would make a school of two classes particularly challenging. These range from the economic arguments, through leadership challenges, teacher quality, staff and pupil morale and curriculum provision. There has been a range of research over the fifty years exploring the impact of school size and although much of it has been conducted in the United States there are still points that are valid in the UK.

In terms of educational outcomes there is little evidence that school size impacts on pupil outcomes, however, when looking at the literature in more detail generally the size of the small primary schools is above 100 pupils. It is the combination of factors that would make the situation at Broad Oak, or any very small school, challenging. The key factors can be summarised as:

- The huge professional challenge for a teacher required to teach across a wide age range. In this case Broad Oak is proposing a class for reception through to year 3. This covers three key stages and would mean pupils from 4 to 8 years old in the same class. The teacher would need an in depth knowledge and understanding of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) as well as Key Stage 1 (KS1) and KS2.
- Teacher quality could be an issue both from a recruitment and retention perspective and from the ability to be able to respond to such a range of needs in one class. Many teachers specialise in early years that will include some elements of KS1 but it is unlikely that the same teacher would have the training and experience to teach all pupils through all key stages in the same class. If Broad Oak needs to recruit new staff in the future, attracting teachers to a post where they will be responsible for 3 or 4 year groups in one class may present a role that few will feel they can deliver effectively.
- In terms of pupil outcomes this could create a significant risk with the teacher needing to respond to assessments and national testing in EYFS, year 1 phonics and KS1 SATs in one class and KS2 SATs in the other class where there are multiple year groups in one class. This would test the expertise of the most effective teachers and could have a negative impact on both pupil progress and outcomes.
- Curriculum planning and delivery could also be an issue. With the National Curriculum that was updated in 2014 and the new Ofsted Inspection framework from September 2019 there is a requirement to teach a broad and balanced curriculum and to evidence pupil's learning and progress across a wide range of subjects beyond the core of English, maths and science. There is a need to sequence the curriculum in such a way as pupils build on their skills and knowledge over time. This is complex in a larger school and in a very small school like Broad Oak would be even more challenging to deliver a coherent and fit for purpose curriculum. It would require at least a three year rolling curriculum if there are three years in a single class. Particularly in PE and school sport it would be very challenging to deliver quality provision and good outcomes with such a diverse range of skills and ability in a class.
- Extra-curricular and enrichment activities could also be a challenge. Given the limitations in staffing the opportunities for pupils to take part in a diverse range of learning opportunities beyond the classroom will be extremely limited. Again, using the example of school sport playing in school teams and joining local events could be difficult, therefore overly limiting for pupils.
- Leadership capacity not only at the most senior level but at subject leader level could also a significant challenge. It is difficult for small schools where there are four or five teachers but to have only two teachers would mean that each teacher would have to be the subject lead for multiple curriculum areas and have responsibility for learning and progress, curriculum planning and assessment in a range of subjects. Even though the teachers would probably draw on support for subject leadership across the federation there would still need to be leadership for all aspects of learning in the school and teachers would need to understand the curriculum and how it pertains to the context of each school. This is a huge challenge and a significant impact on teacher workload.
- The research also talks about the impact on teacher and pupil morale and suggests that extremely small and extremely large schools struggle with this dimension. In the governing board's proposal for a two-class school, a pupil could be taught by the same teacher for four years, there would be no flexibility to move pupils or staff to create or cope with different class dynamics.

In conclusion there are multiple reasons why such a small school would be both uneconomic and educationally inadvisable and these have been outlined above. In a research paper by Slate and Jones 2005 where they reviewed the literature relating to school size they concluded; '*The research shows that both very small and very large schools are negatively related to school quality. In both cases the school will lack appropriate resources to serve students effectively.*' The local authority is

also concerned about how parents and carers would perceive a two-class school in the future when applying for a school place for their children.

All other schools in the Heathfield area are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.

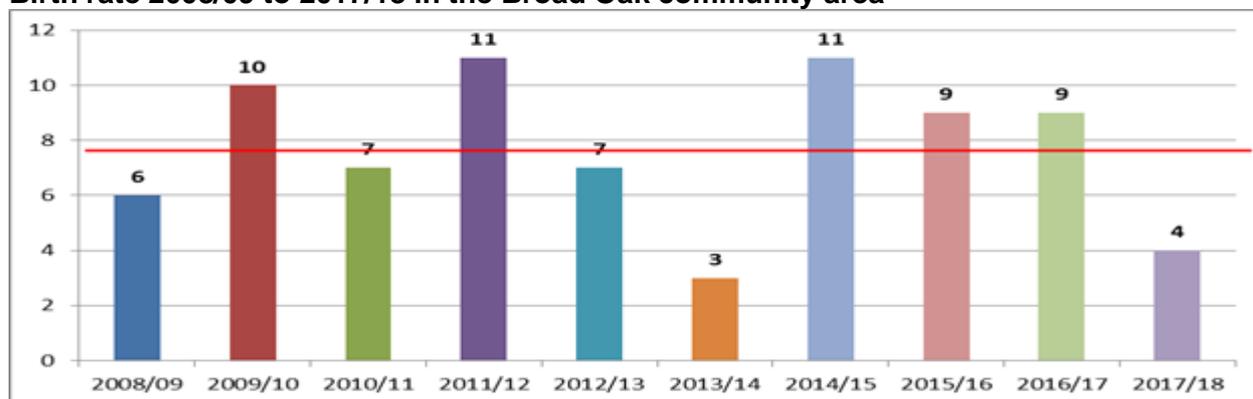
The impact on local people and the community

The majority of respondents to the consultation classified themselves as members of the local community. The local authority recognises that the majority of respondents disagree with the proposal to close Broad Oak. The school is seen as an important part of the village and its loss could have an impact on community life. This is addressed in the Community Impact Assessment appended to the Lead Member report.

School organisation and capacity to accommodate displaced pupils

The 10-year average birth rate in the Broad Oak community area is less than 8 per annum (the school’s published admission number is 20), with a high of 11 and a low of 3, as illustrated below.

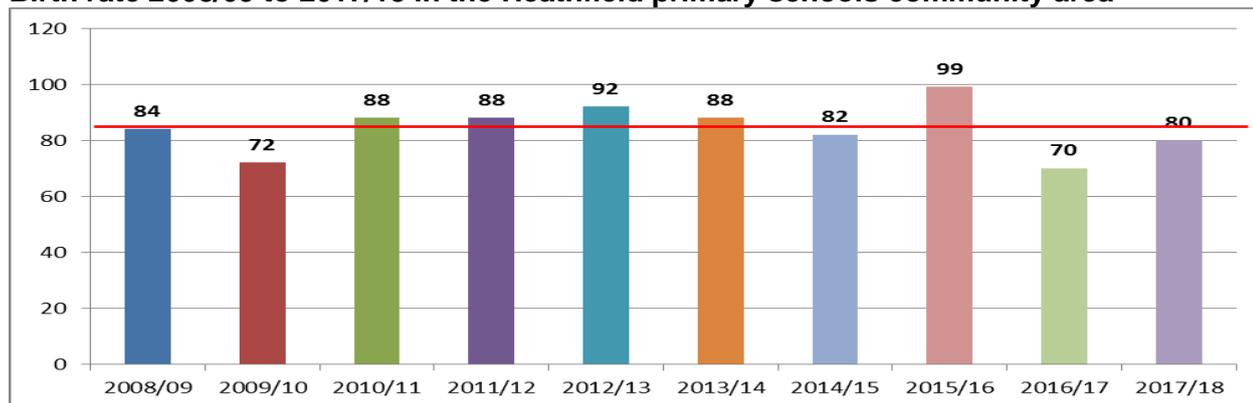
Birth rate 2008/09 to 2017/18 in the Broad Oak community area



Source: ONS Live Birth Data

In the same period, births in the Heathfield community area have averaged fewer than 85 a year, with a high of 99 and a low of 70 as demonstrated below.

Birth rate 2008/09 to 2017/18 in the Heathfield primary schools community area



Source: ONS Live Birth Data

Based on births alone the combined published admission number (110) of the three Heathfield schools (All Saints’ and St Richard’s CE Primary School, Cross-in-Hand CE Primary School and Parkside Community Primary School) would have been sufficient in each year of the ten years to accommodate all of the children born in the Heathfield and Broad Oak community areas.

Wealden District Council provides regular updates on housing numbers and trajectories to inform the local authority’s pupil forecasts. The most recent update was provided in spring 2019 and showed that

just short of 600 homes are planned in Heathfield and Waldron Parish during the Wealden Local Plan period between 2018/19 and 2027/28. Within this total the Wealden Local Plan sets a windfall allowance of 50 dwellings for the village of Broad Oak over the same period.

The local authority’s published pupil yields from new housing are:

Pupil yields from new homes

Pupil yield per new dwelling by property type and size	Houses 2 bed+	Flats 2 bed+	Houses / flats 1 bed
Primary schools	0.25	0.0375	0.00

Taking these pupil yields into account and assuming that all new homes are houses with two bedrooms or more, in Heathfield and Waldron Parish as a whole the local authority estimates 150 additional primary age pupils would be generated across all year groups from new homes over a ten year period (approximately 21 additional pupils per year group). The housing specifically in the Broad Oak community area would, over the same period, generate an estimated 12 to 13 additional pupils (approximately 2 additional pupils per year group over the period). The demand for places is therefore likely to be in Heathfield rather than in Broad Oak. The local authority’s pupil forecasts take account of these housing figures and the likely demand for school places they will generate.

On 19th February 2020 Wealden District Council (WDC) took the decision to withdraw its Local Plan after the Planning Inspector found that the Plan could not proceed in its current form. WDC has subsequently embarked on the process of developing a new Local Plan.

This will inevitably lead to a period of uncertainty while WDC reviews its position and begins to form an opinion on the likely quantum and location of future housing development it has to plan for in the district. What is almost certain is that this will lead to a greater number of new homes being built in the district in future years. What is less certain at this stage is how much more and where in the district this might happen. The details of this will become more apparent over time, but currently there are no indications from WDC that they will look to Heathfield or the village of Broad Oak to provide significantly more or any less housing than is already planned. Both settlements are prominent within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), where the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) specifically guards against large scale residential development.

The local authority must continue to discharge its statutory duty in terms of ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet demand and that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their local community and makes best use of public funding. In the absence of any new information from WDC the local authority has to take account of what is currently known and develop its school place planning strategies accordingly.

While some may argue that Broad Oak should remain open until there is more certainty about the future position in Wealden, the local authority considers that this would create its own uncertainty for the school community and is unlikely to immediately affect pupil numbers at the school and in the wider area. If the local authority finds in the future that there is a requirement for new places in the district as a result of new housing developments, it would look to provide these places locally to where the demand is.

At the October 2019 school census there were 1,306 pupils on roll across the nine schools in the Heathfield area with surplus places high at 19%. This is illustrated in the following table.

Pupil numbers in the Heathfield area (October 2019)

Capacity	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Capacity	Surplus	% surplus
		230	230	230	230	230	230	230				
Broad Oak	20	5	1	6	9	8	6	17	52	140	88	63%
All Saints' and St Richard's	20	15	13	14	10	17	6	14	89	140	51	36%
Cross-in-Hand	60	58	37	42	41	58	44	38	318	420	102	24%
Dallington	15	15	13	17	17	17	14	11	104	105	1	1%
Five Ashes	10	10	10	8	7	13	7	7	62	56	0	0%
Mayfield	30	20	20	27	25	23	24	21	160	210	50	24%
Maynards Green	30	30	30	30	30	33	32	30	215	210	0	0%
Parkside	30	30	30	29	31	30	30	30	210	210	0	0%
Punnetts Town	15	15	12	16	12	14	17	10	96	105	9	9%
Totals	230	198	166	189	182	213	180	178	1306	1596	301	19%

Data source: October 2019 school census

In the absence of the official January 2020 school census data, which will not be released by the DfE until mid to late March 2020, the local authority has undertaken an interim assessment of capacity in local schools using pupil number returns submitted by schools in January and February 2020. This has enabled the local authority to assess, albeit informally, the capacity of schools in the Heathfield area to accommodate displaced pupils from Broad Oak should it close on 31 August 2020. The information is provided in the table below.

Provisional pupil numbers in the Heathfield area (January / February 2020)

Capacity	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Capacity	Surplus	% surplus
		230	230	230	230	230	230	230				
Broad Oak	20	6	1	7	10	9	7	17	57	140	83	59%
All Saints' and St Richard's	20	15	13	13	10	17	6	13	87	140	53	38%
Cross-in-Hand	60	58	40	43	41	64	47	42	335	420	85	20%
Dallington	15	15	12	17	18	17	13	11	103	105	0	0%
Five Ashes	10	10	10	8	7	14	7	7	63	56	0	0%
Mayfield	30	21	22	28	25	19	24	21	160	210	50	24%
Maynards Green	30	32	30	29	30	32	32	31	216	210	0	0%
Parkside	30	30	29	30	31	30	30	30	210	210	0	0%
Punnetts Town	15	15	12	15	13	14	16	10	95	105	10	10%
Totals	230	202	169	190	185	216	182	182	1326	1596	281	18%

Data source: Pupil number returns by schools in January and February 2020

Pupil numbers across the nine schools have increased by 20 to 1,326 since the October 2019 school census, with surplus places falling from 19% to 18%. Pupil numbers at Broad Oak have increased by 5 to 57, with surplus places reducing to 59%.

Surplus places in the Heathfield area remain high at 19%. Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of surplus capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts. A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

“It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools”.

In larger towns around one form of entry (30 intake places) is allowed while in other areas around half a form of entry (15 intake places) is allowed although margins vary depending on specific forecasts, capacities and circumstances. This figure is deemed to give the appropriate amount of flexibility in an area and is set against the need to ensure the efficient use of resources. In practice, the amount of surplus places planned for in an area will also take account of local circumstances.

By the closing date for primary school applications on 15 January 2020, Broad Oak had received two first preferences for its 2020/21 reception year intake. In comparison, the surrounding primary schools received the following first preferences:

First preferences for 2020/21

School	PAN	1 st preferences
Broad Oak	20	2
All Saints' and St Richard's	20	12
Cross-in-Hand	60	48
Dallington	15	12
Five Ashes	10	4
Mayfield	30	23
Maynards Green	30	40
Parkside	30	39
Punnetts Town	15	19
Totals	230	199

Data source: School admissions system

The closure proposal would directly affect pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 at Broad Oak. It is apparent from the information provided that, were Broad Oak to close, there would be sufficient places in the surrounding Heathfield area schools to accommodate the estimated 40 Reception to Year 5 pupils who would be displaced from the school at the end of the academic year and the two children who have expressed a first preference for a reception place at Broad Oak in 2020/21. Year 6 pupils currently at Broad Oak would not be directly impacted as they will move on to secondary school in the new academic year.

The following tables show the local authority's projected pupil numbers for the Heathfield area to 2022/23, taken from the annual update to its pupil forecasts in July 2019. The local authority's pupil forecasts take account of factors such as the local birth rate in the area, demographic projections of future births and current housing plans in the area. Based on information currently available to the local authority on births, house building and future demographic growth in the area; it is confident there would be sufficient capacity in the area to meet future demand for places. The effect of Wealden District Council's recent decision to withdraw its Local Plan is considered in section 11 of this report.

Reception intake and total number on roll forecasts

Reception intake forecasts	Combined PAN	2018/19			2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
		Yr R NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Yr R NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Yr R NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Yr R NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Yr R NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %
Heathfield primary review area	230	168	62	27%	198	32	14%	197	33	14%	168	62	27%	189	41	18%

Number on roll forecasts	Combined capacity	2018/19			2019/20			2020/21			2021/22			2022/23		
		Total NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Total NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Total NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Total NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %	Total NOR	Surplus places	Surplus %
Heathfield primary review area	1596	1299	297	19%	1317	279	17%	1347	249	16%	1354	242	15%	1343	253	16%

Source: January 2019 School Census and ESCC Pupil Forecasts 16.07.19

The Heathfield Primary Area Review Area contains the following schools: All Saints' and St Richard's CE Primary School; Cross-in-Hand CE Primary School; Parkside Community Primary School; Dallington CE Primary School; Broad Oak Community Primary School; Five Ashes CE Primary; Mayfield CE Primary School; Maynards Green Community Primary School and Punnetts Town Community Primary School

As can be seen from the information above, there are sufficient places in schools in the surrounding area to accommodate pupils from Broad Oak. Based on current pupil numbers across the nine schools, were Broad Oak to close surplus places in the area would reduce from 18% currently to 9%, still above the level recommended by the National Audit Office. Local schools should benefit from the proposal by reducing surplus places in the area and providing more certainty to the remaining schools about pupil numbers. The proposal should create a more sustainable network of schools in the local area thereby reducing the risk of more schools becoming unviable.

February 2020