

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker	Executive Lead Member for Children's Services
Date:	23 March 2022
Title:	The Future of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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Purpose of this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to set-out the feedback received and recommend a way forward following a four-week period public of consultation about the future of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School.

Recommendation(s)

2. That the publication of a Public Notice be approved to close Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022

Executive Summary

3. On the 10 November 2021 a consultation on the future of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School was approved. This consultation ran from 12 November 2021 until 10 December 2021. A public meeting was held at the school on 24 November 2021 to allow parents and other stakeholders to put forward their views on the consultation directly to officers, offer alternate proposals and ask any questions they might have had.
4. This report sets out the feedback from that consultation, analyses the feedback and recommends that, on balance, the best way forward in terms of the education of children in this area, is to close the school and make provision elsewhere for the small number of children affected.

5. The report therefore seeks approval to publish a Public Notice to close Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022.

Contextual information

6. Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School is a small rural Church of England school. Its performance, as rated by Ofsted, has been inconsistent. Over the past seven years it has been judged to be inadequate in two separate Ofsted judgements, the most recent being in July 2019.
7. The school has received Ofsted monitoring visits in February 2020, November 2020, January 2021 and May 2021. Following these visits, the school remains in a category of concern, despite improvements that have been noted. These improvements rely heavily upon external support.
8. The Education & Adoption Act 2016 places a duty on the Secretary of State to issue an academy order to all inadequate maintained schools and secure a sponsored academy solution for the school. The school was judged inadequate in July 2019 and the academy order was served on the school by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) on 25 September 2019. Efforts to secure an academy sponsor with the appropriate experience and credentials required to effectively support the school have been ongoing, however declining pupil numbers and financial viability concerns have proved a major obstacle for those trusts who considered taking on the school.
9. Throughout the pandemic, officers in the RSC's office have met with the Local Authority on a weekly basis. Finding a sponsor to take on Hatherden Primary School has been a very regular feature of these meetings. Following the initial consultation period, officers fed back to the RSC's office that there had been public disquiet that a sponsor had not been found. However, the lack of a credible plan for sustained viability has prevented the RSC's office from securing a sponsor solution.
10. Specific discussions have taken place with the RSC about the potential of federation with another local school, however, the RSC has determined that this is not an option, and the academy order must remain in place.
11. Discussions had been held with the RSC and Diocese about the future of the school and it was collectively agreed that a consultation process with regard to the closure of the school should be held. Both the Diocese and the RSC have been kept informed throughout the consultation period and their views on the recommendation within this report are attached at Appendix A.

12. The school had 47 pupils on roll in the October 2020 census, but this has reduced over the last year to 33 pupils at the October 2021 census as parents continue to choose other schools. Four pupils have joined in the Early Years reception age range this year so far against a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 16, (7 December 2021). There are indications that the number of pupils joining the school in September 2022 may exceed this low number but will still fall well short of the PAN.
13. Budget reductions, driven by smaller pupil numbers, have led to a restructuring of the staff team and this has resulted in fewer staff taking on a wider set of management responsibilities which reduces management capacity.
14. In October 2014 Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School was categorised 'Inadequate' by Ofsted. Although a subsequent inspection in September 2015 rated the school as 'Good', following a period of Local Authority (LA) support, the school has been unable to sustain this rating. It was last inspected in July 2019, when inspectors judged the school to be 'Inadequate'. The inspectors noted that safeguarding arrangements required urgent review and sharpening. In addition, inspectors noted that leaders needed to improve the leadership and management of the school, including governance, the quality of teaching and learning, and the progress made by pupils in writing and mathematics.
15. The school has benefitted from intensive, and largely funded, support from Hampshire Inspection and Advisory Service (HIAS) in order to improve the educational experiences and safeguarding of children in the school. Further support has also been provided through the Diocese of Winchester and via the DfE funded school to school support through a local Teaching School.
16. Since the inspection in 2019, Ofsted have monitored the school four times. At each of the monitoring visits where Ofsted made a judgement, inspectors noted that leaders, and those responsible for governance were taking effective action. Despite this, inspectors also noted that the impact of the extensive external support provided to the school, by the LA and the local teaching school, has been impeded by ongoing changes in the school's structure and leadership related to the fall in pupil numbers, as well as the challenges of the pandemic.
17. In the January 2021 monitoring visit, it was acknowledged that leaders and those responsible for governance are taking effective action to provide education in the current circumstances. It was also noted that a number of pupils had left the school and the school was now running two classes for the number of pupils on roll.

18. A monitoring visit in May 2021 concluded that leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. However, it also explained that ‘leaders’ work to improve the curriculum remains ongoing. A number of factors have impeded the pace of this urgently needed work. Managing changes to the school’s structure and leadership led to some initial momentum being lost.’ It further comments, ‘The Local Authority and Diocese continue to invest heavily in supporting the school. By coordinating their work, this is enabling leaders to concentrate on a streamlined set of school-improvement priorities. Currently, local authority and diocesan support are focused on curriculum planning. This work is freeing up school leaders’ capacity to focus on other priorities and the day-to-day running of the school.’
19. It is also the view of the Local Authority School Improvement Team that the changes in staffing related to falling numbers, and associated budget pressures, has an adverse effect on leaders and teachers’ collective capacity to improve the school at a sufficient pace, despite the considerable external support they receive. In addition, when the school is once again good, and no-longer receives additional support, it will be challenging for a school of this size, with the related reduced leadership and teaching capacity, to respond to the common place challenges faced by schools on a regular basis, such as the recent review of the primary curriculum. Similarly, the many and various leadership and management roles that are typically shared out amongst a range of school staff will, in this school, sit with only the interim acting headteacher and one other teacher.
20. This presents leaders and governors with challenges around the effectiveness of leadership and management in addition to the workload and wellbeing of individual staff. There are also implications for the curriculum experience for children as a result of very small numbers in some year groups. The school has already lost pupils because parents want them to attend a school with children their own age and this leaves those pupils who remain at Hatherden increasingly isolated from their peers.

Finance

21. Set out in the table below is the budgetary position for the school up until the end of the financial year 2023/24.

<i>Financial year</i>	<i>In Year +surplus / -deficit £</i>	<i>Cumulative position £</i>
<i>Balance from 2020/21</i>		<i>+88,222</i>
<i>2021/22</i>	<i>+45,227</i>	<i>+133,449</i>
<i>2022/23</i>	<i>+17,704</i>	<i>+151,153</i>
<i>2023/24</i>	<i>+14,642</i>	<i>+165,795</i>

22. The in-year surplus for 2021/22 is because the school received funding for 47 pupils as per the October 2020 census and the school has run less classes with the Headteacher teaching for part of the time.
23. However, it is the governing body's intention to recruit a part time member of staff up to 0.6fte in addition to the two existing members of staff.
24. The in-year surplus for 2022/23 and 2023/24 assumes the school will be funded for sufficient pupils for this scenario to unfold and the teaching costs are also assessed to reduce. The funding for 2022/23 is based on 33 children in attendance at the school at the October 2021 census and the funding for 2023/24 is based on estimated pupil numbers of 35 children. The school are assuming seven children will join the Early Years reception class in September 2022 however the school is losing pupils across other year groups.
25. The number of on-time first preference applications for a place in the Early Years reception in September 2022 is five, therefore there is some risk that the actual numbers on roll for funding purposes will be lower than the forecast of seven. Any reduction in pupils will reduce the level of funding received (average funding per pupil is £3,659) which will need to be met from the school's balance.

Consultation

26. Comments and questions were received during the consultation process and are set out below:
27. Q: Why is this being proposed now particularly given the impact of Covid over the last 18 months?
A: Despite all the external support put into the school through the Local Authority, Teaching School and Diocese, the evidence suggests that sustained improvement will not be maintained once this support is reduced / removed. The challenges the pandemic has brought to all schools over the past 18 months is fully recognised however, they cannot be allowed to mask the continuing issues faced by the school, prior to and following the issuing of the Academy Order on 25 September 2019.
It was only after lengthy discussion between the Local Authority, Diocese, DfE and RSC that a decision was taken to open a consultation on the future of the school.
28. Q: The school provides a wonderful education and environment for those children to attend
A: The issue faced is related to the quality of education currently being provided to children in the school not the environment. The level of quality

can only be sustained with significant on-going input from the Local Authority, Teaching School and Diocese. Without this input and, as a result of low numbers reducing staff numbers, the school does not have the leadership capacity to sustain a high quality of education to children in the school.

29. Q: Small is good and allows some children to flourish who would not in a larger setting

A: Small schools can be good in many ways and provide the right environment for many children to thrive and achieve. However, all schools must have the capacity to run successfully under their own leadership and management and this is the particular element that cannot be sustained at Hatherden.

30. Q: If we give the school time, the school will recover

A: The current situation has not suddenly appeared; it has been on-going for over two years now, arguably for eight, and solutions explored within the conditions set by the Department for Education. To date no solution has been found and there is little prospect for one being agreed within these current regulations.

31. Q: How many potential sponsors were approached by the DfE/RSC?

A: Eight separate Trusts were approached to sponsor the school, but all declined owing to their lack of capacity plus concerns around the school's financial viability and its declining pupil numbers. In addition, the non-faith Trusts were also concerned about the need to make changes to their articles to reflect the religious ethos of the school.

32. Q: What will be the future impact of housing in the area?

A: The forecast level of housing in the area can be managed through existing provision in the area should a decision be taken to close Hatherden.

33. Q: There are very few pupil places available in the area so how will the Hatherden pupils be accommodated if the school closes?

A: Discussions have been held with a local school and it has been agreed that the school will be able to accommodate any Hatherden pupils who would like a place at that school.

34. Q: Why is the Local Authority and the Diocese not drumming-up interest with prospective parents?

A: Schools individually promote their provision and do so in a framework of co-operation with all schools in the area so that schools are not seen to be directly competitive with each other but, still meet the expectation that parents can make choices in their children's access to education. The Local Authority performs its statutory function in the admissions process, publishing its

statutory composite prospectus of all schools in its administrative area that carries the required information about all schools.

35. Q: What has the Local Authority and the Diocese done to find a potential sponsor?

A: The Local Authority has liaised closely with the RSC's office who has responsibility for finding a suitable academy sponsor. Since the consultation has ended Hampshire County Council has been in contact with the RSC regarding the possibility of the school becoming federated with another school or another Academy Trust being found to run the school. The reply from the DfE states 'the department does not consider a federation a suitably resilient and stable option for Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School, however they would be happy to consider a strong school converting to become an academy to sponsor the school if Hampshire can identify a suitable school'. Similarly, on the potential of an Academy Trust being found, the DfE stated 'the feedback (from another Academy Trust) is that the school would only be considered if Hampshire was able to develop a credible plan for sustained viability (effectively increasing pupil growth). As this is not the case, the option of the school joining this Academy Trust will not be taken forward'.

36. Q: What support has the school received from Hampshire County Council, the Diocese and the Teaching School over the last couple of years?

A: The equivalent of 15 officer days from the Diocese together with over 30 officer days of support from HIAS. This support has included

- Safeguarding, support and advice for school leaders and staff.
- Leadership support for school leaders and governors from the LA officers, the Executive Headteacher of a Teaching School, a National Leader of Governance and the headteacher of an effective local school.
- Curriculum support and guidance for leaders and teachers particularly focussed on English and mathematics. In addition, LA advisors developed a three class and then a two class curriculum because school staff did not have the capacity to undertake this work in a timely manner and fulfil all their other responsibilities.
- Early Years leadership and teaching guidance and support.
- Regular monitoring and evaluation of the work of leaders and governors to improve the provision they make for the education of their pupils.

37. There were also some questions about decision-making process, and it was explained which DfE guidance is being followed with this proposal.

Current DfE policy was explained that any school judged to be inadequate by Ofsted has an academy order placed upon it leading to the school being removed from the Local Authority and placed into a Multi Academy Trust.

Kit Malthouse MP has written to the Local Authority following receipt of a number of letters from constituents. Replies have been sent that detail the background to the proposal and the process being followed.

38. Comment: Expression of love for small village primary schools. Vital to community, centre of village, nice all ages can mix (not a parent of a child in Hatherden themselves).

Response: Small schools can be good in many ways and provide the right environment for many children to thrive and achieve. However, all schools must have the capacity to run successfully under their own leadership.

39. Comment: The children are happy at the school and enjoy the forest school teaching provided by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust. The school place an emphasis on pupil lead learning and the children receive a well-rounded education.

Response: The pupils are happy at the school, but the school does not have the sustainable leadership capacity to deliver a high quality of education to children in the school.

40. Comment: The church is in support of the school staying open, the school is financially healthy, closure would lead to the demise of the village / church.

Response: The school is financially healthy at present, but this is based on a small number of teachers. To improve the educational standards at the school additional leadership is required and this would then push the budget into an annual deficit. Although the church is in support of the school remaining open the Diocese fully supports the consultation around school closure.

41. Comment: Concerns about closing the school and young families not being attracted to the area/ having to travel to get to school thus creating a larger carbon footprint. Urged to consider wider consequential impact.

Response: Many pupils already travel to other surrounding schools for their education. The provision of one bus to take all pupils to a neighbouring school could reduce the overall carbon footprint.

42. Comment: Ex teacher with increasing concerns re: educational standards, safeguarding and finances. Only option is for the school to close.

43. Additional responses were received through the on-line response form. Respondents were asked to identify how they were connected to the school, which option would be their preference and any further comments they wished to make about the consultation.

44. Of the 254 responses received about how they were connected to the school, 72 were parents, five were members of staff, 19 were pupils, seven were

governors and 151 described themselves as something other than those three categories, including members of the community.

45. Of the three preferences available to the respondents 324 wished to leave the school open, 41 sought to seek an academy sponsor and 17 wished to see the school closed.
46. Other comments received through the on-line process are as follows:
47. 79 people said that the school should remain as it is an integral part of the village community, with a further 10 saying that the school was an asset for the church.
48. 45 people stated that, in their opinion, a small school was better for the children at the school with many parents choosing to send their child(ren) to a small school.
49. 39 respondents were happy with the education being received by the pupils.
50. 34 people suggested that the school be given a chance to improve.
51. 31 commented that as Covid had adversely affected the school the consultation should not be happening now.
52. Nine wished to wait for a new Ofsted judgement before a decision on the future of the school was decided.
53. 52 people said that the school had failed the pupils, mostly due to the poor leadership in the school and time should be given to the school to improve.
54. 25 people commented on the way in which the school delivers well rounded pupils with the ability to hold adult conversations on a number of topics.
55. 28 remarked that the school was a happy place for the children.
56. 38 people identified that the staff are working incredibly hard to provide a good education for the pupils.
57. 44 respondents stated that the mixed age teaching worked well in the school and it allowed each child to mix with both older and younger pupils.
58. 41 people suggested that the school should be federated with another school or to seek an academy sponsor. Four people suggested that the County

Council should try and get the academy order revoked to allow federation. One response suggested that the County Council should be challenging the DfE on the proposed academisation ruling and that the consultation should be paused until answers had been received from the RSC.

59. 29 people said the school was a nurturing place for the children with 55 suggesting that the pupils were flourishing in the school.
60. 13 thought the school was improving under the new leadership and that this should be given time to see if this improvement remains.
61. 12 people said that the school has an excellent learning environment with a further 12 stating that the Forest School element is an asset that many schools do not have.
62. 17 people remarked on the opportunity of the pupils to learn Spanish.
63. 21 respondents said that the school needed to remain to attract younger families to the village and a number of these respondents made reference to the proposed housing development in the village.
64. 27 people said that the school is welcoming, and the pupils are well behaved, including older pupils looking after younger ones.
65. 13 people agreed that the children have a great experience at the school.
66. Eight respondents said that closing the school is a great upheaval for all concerned.
67. Nine people suggested that the County Council should promote the school in order to attract more pupils into the school which was a question also asked at the meeting with the response set out in section 29.
68. Five people asked where the children will go to school should the closure happen, and this is laid out in the admissions section below.
69. Eight responses were received by email directly after the consultation had closed. These responses are set out below:
70. HCC need to support the school. Closing would remove local choice. Leadership at the school needs to be better.

71. Local school is vital. Should try to find academy sponsor now Covid is settling down.
72. My child is happy in a small school and feels valued.
73. Queries information provided at the meeting, states that families will not be drawn to the village if there is no school.
74. Email asking why we're consulting to close now after two years of a pandemic? More time needs to be spent finding a sponsor.
75. Children are happy, are being well educated and things have changed since the 2019 Ofsted report.
76. School should be given a reprieve and an opportunity to build.
77. My child is happy, well-educated and making progress.

Legal implications

78. The Council has the power to make a proposal to close a maintained school under the Education and Improvement Act 2006. When formulating any closure proposals in relation to a rural primary school the council must have regard to:
 - (a) The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community
 - (b) The availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools,
 - (c) Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase, and
 - (d) Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.
79. In addition, the Council is also required to have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the DfE when deciding whether a maintained school should close. The relevant statutory guidance is 'Opening and closing maintained schools' dated November 2019 and 'The making significant changes (prescribed alterations) to maintained schools' dated October 2018.

80. The guidance states that the Council should be satisfied that there are sufficient surplus places elsewhere in the local area to accommodate the displaced pupils, and the likely supply and future demand for places in the medium and long term. The Council should also take into account the overall quality of alternative places on the local area and the popularity of other local schools.
81. The guidance states that the Council should adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. However, this does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. When producing a proposal to close a rural primary school, the proposer must consider:
- *the likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community*; the closure of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School can be mitigated by the proposed relocation of pupils to Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School if parents wish to have their children educated at the school.
 - *the proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community, i.e., is the school being used by the local community*; Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School is not the school of choice by the majority of its community.
 - *educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools*; Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School was last inspected by Ofsted in July 2019. The school was graded as Inadequate. At the four monitoring visits undertaken by Ofsted since then the inspectors noted that leaders, and those responsible for governance were taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation and providing education in the current circumstances. Despite this, inspectors also noted that the impact of the extensive external support provided to the school, by the LA and the local teaching school, has been impeded by ongoing changes in the school's structure and leadership related to the fall in pupil numbers (with the school reducing to two classrooms), as well as the challenges of the pandemic. It is likely that, following the pattern seen before, when the LA reduces its support, the school will be unable to maintain the progress it has made to date. The Section 8 inspection in May 2021 concluded that leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation. However, it also explained that 'leaders' work to improve the curriculum remains ongoing. A number of factors have impeded the pace of this urgently needed work. Managing changes to the school's structure and leadership led to some initial momentum being lost.' It further comments, 'The Local Authority and Diocese continue to invest heavily in supporting the school. By coordinating their work, this is enabling leaders to concentrate on a streamlined set of school-improvement priorities. Currently, local authority and diocesan support

are focused on curriculum planning. This work is freeing up school leaders' capacity to focus on other priorities and the day-to-day running of the school.'

- *the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools;* the closure of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School will incur some additional transport costs to provide Home to School Transport for children living in the catchment area of Hatherden Primary School. Each child's transport eligibility will be assessed; transport is provided if the journey to the new catchment school, Appleshaw, St. Peter's Primary School, for an 8 year-old child is more than 2 miles or for children aged 8 and over the journey is more than 3 miles. Children living outside Hatherden's catchment area will also have their transport eligibility assessed, in line with the Home to School Transport policy, based on their home address and the school they attend.
- *whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term);* there are sufficient surplus places in Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School to accommodate the displaced pupils Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School now and also the longer term.
- *any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the closure of the school, and the likely effects of any such increases;* currently some families travel to Hatherden for their educational needs. The closure of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School and the subsequent relocation of pupils to Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School will not necessarily increase the overall use of the motor vehicle for the school run as parents drive their children to Appleshaw instead of Hatherden.
- *any alternatives to the closure of the school;* As the school has an academy order against it the only other option is for the school to become an academy. As set out earlier in the report specific discussions have taken place with the RSC about the potential of federation with another local school, however, the RSC has determined that this is not an option, and the academy order must remain in place. The local authority believes the closure of Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School provides the best opportunity to stabilise the educational offer in that part of the county.
- *transport implications i.e., the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues;* Hatherden catchment resident pupils will be entitled to local authority funded transport to their new catchment school, Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School, if Hatherden

Church of England (Aided) Primary School closes. Children living outside the Hatherden catchment area will have their eligibility assessed in line with the Hampshire County Council Home to School Transport policy.

- *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;* with a possible number on roll of 32 for the 2022/23 academic year the school is likely to be able to run two classes, one for Key Stage 1 pupils and the other for Key Stage 2 pupils. Running one class across three (KS1) or four (KS2) years will impact on the breadth of curriculum that can be offered at the school.
- *the overall and long-term impact on the local community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility;* no decision has been made about the future of the Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School site and it may be possible to make it available for the community.
- *wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils;* pupil numbers in the area are forecast to fall over the next few years so it is anticipated that there will be places available at good schools in the area.

Personnel Implications

82. Staffing implications will be considered subject to the outcome of the consultation. This, if required, will be done in accordance with the Council's and School's Restructuring, Redundancy and Redeployment Policy, including a duty to consult with those staff potentially affected by any proposed closure or transfer. Details of staff consultations will be set out, including the timetable for formal discussions with staff and unions. Any TUPE implications will also be considered at that stage.

Admissions

83. The number of pupils offered a place for Year R in September 2021 for Hatherden Primary School was 4 (against a PAN of 16) and for Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School was 8 (against a PAN of 15).

84. The number of on-time first preference applications for a place in Year R in September 2022 for Hatherden Primary School was 5 and for Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School was 8.

85. Children currently attending Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School and those due to be on roll in September 2022, will be accommodated in Appleshaw, St Peters Primary School. Parents can express preferences for

other school places at any time and those requests will be handled by the Schools Admission Team in line with published policies.

Transport

86. Subject to the outcome of the consultation any Transport issues arising will be managed in-line with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy.

Conclusions

87. The RSC has been unable to find a suitable academy sponsor for Hatherden CE (Aided) Primary School and has confirmed that federation is not an option the DfE would support. The small size of the school means it is unable to sustain a leadership model capable of providing the breadth of leadership needed within a primary school that could deliver high quality education. Consequently, a Public Notice should be published to commence the statutory consultation to close Hatherden Church of England (Aided) Primary School with effect from 31 August 2022.

REQUIRED CORPORATE AND LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Strategic Plan

Hampshire maintains strong and sustainable economic growth and prosperity:	Yes
People in Hampshire live safe, healthy and independent lives:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy a rich and diverse environment:	Yes
People in Hampshire enjoy being part of strong, inclusive communities:	Yes
OR	

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:	
<u>Title</u> The Future of Hatherden Church of England Primary School	<u>Date</u> 10 November 2021
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives	
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT:

1. **Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA):**

The EIA can be found at the link below:

<https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/equality/equality-impact-assessment/children-services>

Appendix A



Director of Education
Jeff Williams

Steve Crocker
Director of Children's Services
Hampshire County Council
Winchester
SO23 8UG

10th March 2022

Dear Steve

Hatherden Church of England Primary School

Further to our previous correspondence, and my close liaison with senior colleagues in HIAS, I acknowledge the delay in the process of decision-making around the future of Hatherden School, and the added uncertainty and concern this has unavoidably caused for current and potential parents, staff and the community.

The Directive Academy Order resulting from the Inadequate finding by Ofsted has been a focus for the Regional Schools Commissioner, her team, and myself. Together and independently we have sought solutions, particularly in finding a Multi Academy Trust as a home for the school with the irreversible requirement to academise.

This has not resulted in securing a MAT home for the school, as potential MATs comment on the declining pupil numbers and the consequent impact on a sustainable budget, coupled with the vulnerability of staffing and changes in senior leadership that will inevitably impact on sustainable education. Equally, Ofsted's judgment regarding a lack of capacity is important.

Although aware of the policy, I nonetheless requested a consideration of Federation for the school, but this was turned down by the DfE, understandably, in the policy context.

While acutely aware of the impact the decision will have on the community in the immediate and long-term, unfortunately there appears to be little option but to publish the notice to consult on closure, if this is the Cabinet Member's decision. It is rare for a school to be closed,

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and in the Hatherden situation, an historic presence, deeply embedded in a host of aspects of life in the village, would be sorely missed and greatly regretted.

Such decisions are not easy, but in the current situation, we appreciate the RSC's and LA's decision and sadly realise that this would need to be implemented for the future education and flourishing of children in the area.

We will continue to work closely with the LA and school, along with other CofE schools in the area to ensure that transition happens in a timely and sensitive manner. The pastoral welfare of those impacted is important, and we again will work alongside others in this respect.

Yours sincerely

Jeff Williams
Director of Education





Regional Schools Commissioner's Office
South East and South London
Trafalgar House, 1 Bedford Park,
Croydon, CR0 2AQ

Email: RSC.SESL@education.gov.uk

Brian Pope - Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion
Hampshire County Council and Isle of Wight Council
3rd Floor, Ell Court North
Winchester SO23 8UG

11 March 2022

Email: brian.pope@hants.gov.uk

Dear Brian,

Hatherden CofE Primary School

Thank you for your email of 8 March about Hatherden CofE Primary School.

As stated in my letter dated 23 July 2021, despite our ongoing efforts, it has not been possible to find a suitable sponsor for Hatherden due to viability concerns and declining pupil numbers. I, therefore, have no objections to Hampshire County Council continuing with the closure process.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Claire Burton".

Claire Burton
RSC South East and South London
Department for Education