

Consultation Analysis

**PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW SCHOOL AMALGAMATING CHRIST
CHURCH C OF E INFANT SCHOOL AND ENGLEFIELD GREEN INFANT
SCHOOL AND NURSERIES**



SURREY
COUNTY COUNCIL

Consultation Analysis - Proposal to Create a New school amalgamating Christ Church C of E infant school and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries

Introduction

Surrey County Council, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and the Governing Bodies of Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries, published an informal consultation on the proposal to open a new school by amalgamating the two schools into a single institution from September 2020. It is proposed that the new school would be a voluntary aided school and would be situated on the existing site of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries.

This paper is an analysis of the responses received during the informal consultation period. This paper will be submitted to the Lead Cabinet Member for All Age Learning with the Cabinet Member report for consideration in the decision to determine whether to proceed with the publication of statutory notices.

Subject to that decision a period of statutory representation will commence from 11 March to 22 April. A further paper will be published analysing responses during that period and will be submitted with the report to the Leader of the Council on 12 May 2020.

Consultation Summary

The informal consultation was open from 22 January to 26 February. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via a formal consultation response form, included at the end of the consultation document, as well as an online form.

Two public meetings were held, one at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries on 30 January at 6pm and one at Christ Church C of E Infant School on 11 February at 2pm.

The responses to the consultation will inform the decision taken by the Lead Cabinet Member of All Age Learning on 10 March whether to progress to statutory notices and the further decision taken by the Leader of the Council proposed for 12 May to determine the statutory notices.

An Equalities Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the informal consultation period and statutory notices and responses to the consultation will contribute to this.

Key points from the consultation responses:

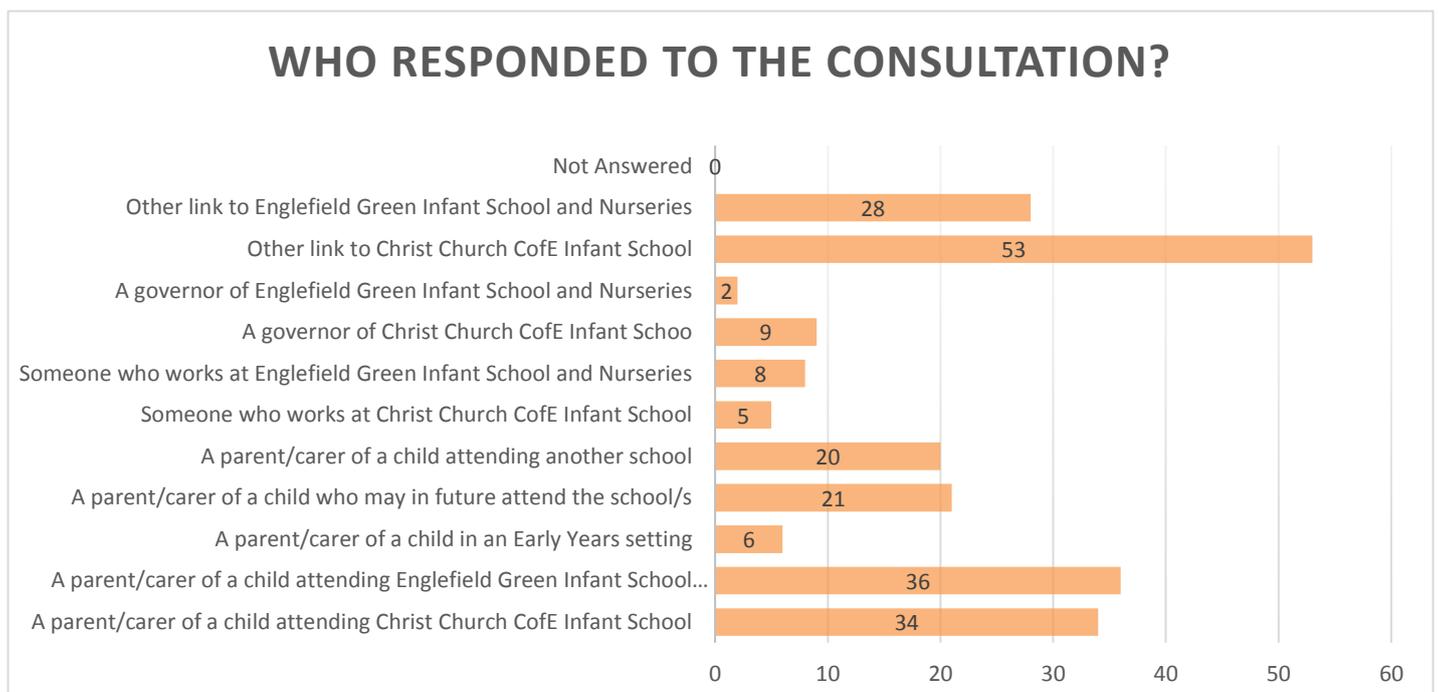
- The majority of respondents **do not agree** with the proposal (63%)
- 32% of all responses were from parents of pupils currently at both schools
- The majority of parents of pupils at Christ Church C of E Infant School **disagree** with the proposal (68%)
- The majority of parents of pupils at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries **agree** with the proposal (58%)

- Some respondents commented on the new school being a church school with 29 in support of the idea and 40 against.
- Out of the 70 responses from parents of pupils at both the current schools only 21 made comments in relation to the religious designation of the new school, 16 were for the school being a Church of England school and 5 were against.

Quantitative Analysis

There were 222 responses to the consultation. 26% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 63% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 11% of respondents didn't know if they agreed or disagreed.

The chart below shows the distribution of who responded to the consultation. The highest percentage of respondents selected "other link to Christ Church C of E Infant School" (24%). The second largest group selected "a parent/carer of a pupil attending Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries" (17%), and third selected "a parent/carer of a pupil attending Christ Church C of E Infant School" (16%). The fourth largest group selected "other link to Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries" (13%)



Percentage who agreed/disagreed/didn't know by individual groups

Responses from parent/carer of a pupil attending Christ Church C of Infant School

Out of 34 responses 18% agree, 68% disagree, 15% don't know

Responses from parent/carer of a pupil attending Englefield Green Infant Schools and Nurseries

Out of 36 responses 56% agree, 25% disagree, 19% don't know

Responses from other links to Christ Church C of E Infant School

Out of 53 responses 9% agree, 83% disagree, 8% don't know

Responses from other links to Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries

Out of 28 responses 25% agreed with the proposal, 72% disagreed with the proposal, 4% didn't know

Qualitative Analysis

Respondents had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey. Comments left in reply to free-text questions were tagged drawing on 29 possible tags. Each response could have more than one tag attached. The overall frequency of each of the tags provides an indicator of respondent's main concerns regarding the proposal.

| Sub theme | Tag | Number of responses | Prevalence (% out of total responses) |
|---|---|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| New school and implementation | Mixed age learning | 7 | 3% |
| | New school - barriers | 27 | 12% |
| | New school - enablers | 30 | 14% |
| | Church of England character - Against | 40 | 18% |
| | Church of England character - For | 29 | 13% |
| | Larger size of classes and school | 11 | 5% |
| Traffic and transport | Traffic and Transport – barriers | 40 | 18% |
| | Traffic and Transport – enablers | 4 | 2% |
| Admissions and Place Planning | Admissions and Place Planning | 26 | 12% |
| | Housing developments | 21 | 10% |
| Loss in closure of Christ Church Infant School | Loss to Christ Church pupils and families | 27 | 12% |
| | Loss of links to local church CCVW | 16 | 7% |
| | Loss to community in VW | 42 | 19% |
| | What will the site be used for? | 5 | 2% |
| Positive impacts | Positive impacts for children | 10 | 5% |
| | Positive impacts for staff | 3 | 1% |
| | Positive impacts of partnership | 7 | 3% |
| | Positive impacts financial | 13 | 6% |
| | Positive impacts of EG site | 8 | 4% |

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----|----|
| Negative Impacts | Distrust in the consultation and implementation | 13 | 6% |
| | Negative impacts for children | 19 | 9% |
| | Negative impacts for staff | 13 | 6% |
| | Negative impacts partnership | 2 | 1% |
| | Negative impacts financial | 4 | 2% |
| | Negative impacts on CYP with SEND | 8 | 4% |
| | Negative impacts on low income families | 3 | 1% |
| Ideas and innovation | Ideas for CC site | 7 | 3% |
| | Ideas for new school | 16 | 7% |
| | Ideas to support transition | 14 | 6% |
| Questions | Questions - other | 15 | 7% |

Key themes from the consultation

There were 7 key themes that emerged from the consultation response

New school and Implementation

Respondents mentioned hopes and fears for the new school. Some respondents mentioned the current mixed age class teaching (3%) at the current schools and the majority who mentioned mixed age class teaching would prefer to move back to individual year groups.

Some parents mentioned the larger size of the school (5%) and classes and were concerned about the impacts on pupils from Christ Church.

Some respondents were concerned about the new school being a church school with some respondents in support of the idea (13%) and some against (18%). It should be noted that there were also 13 (6%) responses tagged as “loss of links to the local church” that were not given the tag of “Church of England character – For” as they do not want the new school to be in Englefield Green.

Out of the 70 responses from parents of pupils at the current two schools 21 made comments in relation to the religious designation of the school, 16 commented they were for the school being a Church of England school and 5 commented that they were against.

Traffic and Transport

18% of respondents commented regarding traffic and transport barriers. Some were concerned about the additional traffic in Englefield Green. Some respondents were concerned about additional journey time to the new school, particularly for pupils at Christ Church who already travel from Chertsey to Virginia Water.

2% of respondents transport and traffic enablers mentioning better traffic on the road that Christ Church Infant School is on and closer proximity to local junior school St Jude’s.

Admissions and Place Planning

12% of respondents commented on admissions and place planning. Some respondents mentioned the need for more school places in Chertsey. Some respondents advised they would have liked to be informed of the consultation before the closing date for admissions for Sept 2020. Some respondents felt more should be done to publicise surplus places at Christ Church. Some respondents felt that more should be done to provide affordable housing in Virginia Water to bring families into the area

10% mentioned new housing developments particularly in Longcross and Chertsey, and felt that families moving into the area would benefit from the places currently at Christ Church.

Loss in closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School

12% of respondents mentioned loss to Christ Church pupils and families, valuing the small site and smaller class sizes. Some respondents value the current teaching and support at Christ Church and worry this will be lost in the new school.

19% of respondents mentioned loss to the community in Virginia Water, the heritage of the site and the value in a school that has been open for 175 years. 7% commented on the loss of links to the local church, Christ Church Virginia Water. 2% of respondents asked what will happen to the site that Christ Church C of E Infant School is currently on.

Positive Impacts

3% of respondents mentioned positive impacts of the partnership seeing gain in the collaboration between the two schools. 5% mentioned positive impacts for children. 13% commented on positive financial impacts mentioning the new school would be a better sustainable offer. 4% of respondents were positive about the new school being situated on the Englefield Green site.

Negative Impacts

6% of respondents felt distrust in the consultation and the decision making before the consultation was published.

6% of respondents were concerned about negative impacts for staff and wanted to make sure staff were not adversely impacted. 9% respondents felt there were negative impacts for children and young people in amalgamating the two schools particularly for pupils currently at Christ Church who may need support in transitioning to a larger site and who have experienced change in staff in the past and need stability. 4% mentioned negative impacts for children with special educational needs and disabilities. 1% also mentioned negative impacts on low income families such as additional travel and costs of new uniforms.

Ideas and Innovation

3% of respondents had ideas for what the current site in Virginia Water could be used for. 7% had ideas for the new school and 6% had ideas to support transition.

Additional analysis of parent/carers responses at both schools

Christ Church Infant School

The majority of parent/carers who responded from Christ Church Infant School disagree with the proposal. There were 34 responses and there are currently 53 pupils in the school, 42 in years R and 1 who will be affected by the consultation.

The comments left by parents who disagreed (68%) with the proposal mention the value of the current teaching at Christ Church, value of the current site and small school, concerns about transition particularly for pupils with special needs

“Christ Church is a fantastic school it’s small, and every staff member truly knows every pupil on a personal level. My children feel safe here it’s like a family”

“This is an abhorrent waste of an amazing school area with forestry facilities and a swimming pool.”

Also concerns about increased distance to travel to the new school and particular concerns from families in Chertsey who currently travel 4 miles to Virginia Water and the journey would increase to 6 miles.

“I am a Chertsey resident who was not able to send my daughter to a school at the end of our Road or any in our town we accepted a place at Christchurch which turns out is a gem of a School..... Myself along with at least 7 or 8 other parents will now have to travel by car approx 24 miles a day to and from Englefield Green this affects our jobs and childcare, do we have a choice? I don't think this an option for us I will consider home schooling.”

“traffic at Englefield Green is already heavy during school hours and unfair to the residents”

Some parent/carers also commented on timescales for moving to the new school

“Given the very short notice of potential amalgamation, no period of time has been allowed to discuss the full potential impact on children affected and the disruption they will experience”

The comments left by parents who agree (18%) with the proposal mentioned the stability in the new school and improved facilities and funding. They also mentioned a need for good transition arrangements for Christ Church pupils.

“I can see that an amalgamation has the potential to deliver the consistency in leadership and staff that Christ Church desperately needs and I am hopeful that the negatives of large class sizes and change for the children will be balanced by consistency, improved facilities and funding and more appropriate teaching arrangements”

The comments left by parent/carers who didn’t know (15%) whether to agree or disagree raised questions of whether only one infant school in Virginia Water is sufficient and concerns of travel and transport.

Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries

Over half of the parent/carers who responded from Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries agree with the proposal. There were 36 responses and there are currently 121 pupils at the school, 80 in years R and 1 who will be affected by the consultation. The number of responses are similar, however a lower percentage of parent/carers from Englefield Green responded to the consultation than Christ Church as there are more pupils at Englefield Green.

The comments left by parent/carers who agree (55%) with the proposal mentioned opportunities to move back to one year class teaching over mixed age teaching, building on strengths of both schools, positives of becoming a Church of England school and sustainability for the future.

“better facilities, resources, parental engagement and most importantly, excellent leadership.”

“Given both schools already have links to the diocese, I support this being a VA CofE school. Especially given the strong link to St Jude’s school.”

“I believe that it would be immensely beneficial to both schools. EGIS is a superb school with exceptional management and dedicated, well meaning, incredible teachers who just want the children to succeed.”

The comments left by parents who disagreed (25%) with the proposal mentioned disruption for pupils, worries in losing the current school and additional traffic in the area.

“--- has settled in really well and loves his school, teachers and class mates. This proposal to close the school is absurd and will cause so much destruction for all the children”

“Extra pupils will create very big problems with traffic outside the school it’s bad enough now.”

Some mentioned not wanting their child to attend a Church of England School

“I do not agree with faith schools”

The comments left by parent/carers who didn’t know (19%) whether to agree or disagree mentioned wanting to have more information about the proposal, worry if teachers leave, how transition would be managed, cost of new uniforms and the new school being a Church of England School.

“I can see there are sensible financial arguments and efficiencies driving this proposal in the longer term. My concerns are around how the transition is managed for current pupils and their parents/carers - particularly for children with additional needs.”

“ Many parents rely on second hand uniform to keep costs down or pass on uniform to younger siblings. A change in uniform will result in an additional financial burden to current parents.”

“As my child attends EGIS it's advantage for us that the new school is going to be formed in Englefield Green . What's worry me is parking space near school as the only way to drop my child to school is by car. At the moment parking space is very limited so how another 60 cars going to park find the space?”

“I am a bit concerned of introducing a strong religious component in the Education of my child at such early age. As they grow older they can understand better complex ideas and make their minds. As I have seen in other CofE schools, I am concerned as well on future admission restrictions to only Christian children.”

Public Meetings

Two public meetings were held, one on 30 January at Englefield Green Infant School and the second on 11 February at Christ Church Infant School. At each public meeting there was a short presentation followed by 45 minutes for attendees to ask questions.

72 people attended on 30 January:

7 parents of pupils at Christ Church

17 parents of pupils at Englefield Green

17 parents who did not specify which school their children attends

12 staff at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries

6 staff at Christ Church Infant School
5 Governors at Christ Church, Englefield Green or St Judes
3 perspective parents of the two current schools
5 residents/members of local community.

36 people attended on 11 February:

1 parent of pupils at Christ Church
4 parents of pupils at Englefield Green
10 parents/grandparents who did not specify which school their children attends
6 staff at Christ Church Infant School
2 staff from other schools
2 residents/members of local community
6 other affiliation with Christ Church Infant School
5 Other

Themes arising from the public meetings reflect the themes from the responses to the consultation. After the public meetings questions and answers were published on Surrey Says alongside the consultation information. This can be found as an appendix to this report.

Responses on behalf of organisations and petitions

The National Secular Society

The National Secular Society have submitted a response opposing the proposal. The society suggest that Englefield Green Infant School and Nursery should remain a community school

The response shows concern that the new school could be discriminatory to non-Anglican families, the society would strongly oppose any changes to current admissions arrangements in the future. They are concerned that in the future, if oversubscribed, the school could choose to select 100% of its pupils based on religion.

The response outlines reasons for opposing the new school under the following 5 headings:

1. Faith schools are inherently discriminatory.
2. Voluntary aided faith schools can apply discriminatory admissions policies.
3. Most parents just want a good local school – not a faith school.
4. A new faith school would create an imbalance of denominational provision and impede parental rights.
5. A new faith school would harm community cohesion

Guildford Diocesan Board of Education (GDBE)

Guildford Diocesan Board of Education is the religious authority for Christ Church CofE Infant School and the proposer of the new Voluntary Aided Church of England infant school on the Englefield Green site.

A formal response has been submitted supporting the proposal set out in the consultation document.

The Board supports the analysis set out in the consultation document that the quality of education for infant aged pupils in the Virginia Water and Englefield Green area will be best served by the amalgamation of CCVW and EGIS on the Englefield Green site. Building on the history and heritage of both schools, the new, larger infant school will be more sustainable and better able to develop an outstanding educational offer for all local pupils in a stable and disciplined environment, working

with St Jude's CofE Junior nearby. As a Church of England school, the new school will have a distinctly Christian ethos but be fully inclusive of those of other faiths and no faith.

The Accord Coalition for Incisive Education

A response has been submitted disagreeing with the proposal. The concern is that the school would not be inclusive of all faiths and concern that the admissions policy could be changed to include a faith based criteria.

The response questions the statement 'Church schools do not seek to convert children to Christianity' and felt this could not be guaranteed in the future.

They also raised concern for impacts on staff who are not Anglican and their future opportunities for promotion within a church school and the risk of religious discrimination in the appointment of governors.

The response also raised concern if the land of the site at Englefield Green will transfer from Surrey County Council and be held in trust by the Diocese of Guildford. The respondent states "traditionally faith school providers have provided the land for their VA schools and this has been part of the partnership between the providers and the state. We observe therefore, that the Council surrendering land in this way departs from traditional practice and may not be in the best interests of achieving value for the Surrey tax payer."

Humanists UK

A response has been submitted disagreeing with the proposal. They raise concerns that Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries will close as a community school and that the new school will be a Church of England School.

They raise concern that the differences between a VA school and a community school are not made clear in the consultation documents.

They raise concerns for any future recruitment and potential to promote staff on the basis of their religious background.

Petitions

A petition has been published on Change.org in opposition to the closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School. 388 people had signed the petition on 26 February 2020

The National Secular Society have published a petition calling on Surrey County Council to reject proposals to replace Englefield Green Infant School with a voluntary aided Church of England faith school. The petition was not submitted as part of the organisations response to the consultation and it is not known how many people have signed the petition.

Appendix One



Questions and
Answers 140220.pdf