

Statutory proposal for the closure of Ripley CofE Primary School (Voluntary Controlled)

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Surrey County Council, in consultation with the Diocese of Guildford intends to discontinue Ripley CofE Primary School with effect from 31 August 2018.

Contact details

Name and address of Local Authority publishing the proposal:

Surrey County Council, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT1 2DN

Name, address and category of school proposed to be discontinued:

Ripley CofE Primary School, Wentworth Close, Ripley, Surrey GU23 6ED (voluntary controlled)

Contact details during statutory representation period:

Ripley Consultation, School Commissioning, Surrey County Council, County Hall, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2DN

Email: schoolorg@surrey.gov.uk

Web: www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/ripleystatutorynotice

Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to close the school: 31 August 2018

Reason for closure

Following an inadequate Ofsted inspection, the school is subject to a Directive Academy Order from the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC), acting on behalf of the Secretary of State. In order to continue, the school must be sponsored by a multi academy trust in accordance with legislation. There is no viable sponsored academy solution for the school. Therefore the local authority is duty bound to propose closure of the school.

Pupil numbers and admissions

The numbers for whom provision is currently made at the school:

The school is a mixed mainstream setting which currently provides 196 places for years Reception to 6, with 28 places in each year.

Displaced pupils

There are currently 38 children on roll, 29 of whom are in years Reception to 5 and would therefore require an alternative primary school place in September. Around half of those are from the village of Ripley, whilst the majority of other children live closer to other schools. There is sufficient capacity in the local area for the majority of displaced children.

If the Leader determines to proceed with closing the school, the local authority would offer an alternative school place to all pupils on roll at Ripley CofE Primary School at the time the decision is effective.

There would be provision at Send CofE Primary School, the nearest school to Ripley, for any displaced pupils that wish to go there. Send have vacant places in some year groups, and in other year groups additional capacity would be provided where needed. We do however recognise that this may not be an appropriate offer for all children.

During the informal consultation it was indicated that some families may have preferences for other local schools and live closer to other schools. Some schools in the surrounding areas have vacancies in some year groups and the local authority will endeavour to meet parental preferences for school places where that is possible

There are no children on roll with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

For future cohorts, current projections for school places indicate there is not an immediate need to re-provide places that would be lost by the discontinuance of the school. The local authority will monitor the projected need for future school places and propose changes if required to ensure sufficient places are available.

Impact on the community

Through the informal consultation stage, the local authority recognises that the majority of the local community disagreed with the proposal to close the school. The school is seen as an important part of the village. However, the school has not been providing good quality education related to Ofsted judgements since before 2010 and was judged as inadequate by Ofsted in 2017. Children from the village would have a better quality and more sustainable education in surrounding schools that are good or outstanding.

The local authority also recognises that the closure of the school could also result in the loss of the building as a community facility. There is a village hall within half a mile of the school, around a 10 minute walk, which is available for hire. It is anticipated that the private nursery on the school site could continue in its current location. With regard to the pre-school, which is a separate organisation but within the school buildings, the Diocese have confirmed that a pre-school would not meet the conditions of the Trust Deed for the site. However, it recognises that the pre-school would need time to find alternative premises so would not serve immediate notice on the pre-school, allowing time for the pre-school to re-locate to a new site. It is envisaged that this period would be no longer than 12 months from the date of the school's closure.

Rural Primary Schools

Ripley CofE Primary School is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order. In putting forward this proposal the local authority has considered Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in regard to rural schools.

The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 contain a presumption against closure of rural schools, and it is a requirement that proposers must consider the effect of the discontinuance of any rural primary school on the local community. The statutory guidance specifically states that '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.' The guidance states that when producing a proposal, the proposer must carefully consider:

- The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools;
- The availability and likely cost to the LA of transport to other schools;
- Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result in the discontinuance of the school and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- Any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.

Each of these points is addressed below:

Likely effect of closure of the school on the local community

Please see section above 'Impact on the Community'.

Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standard at neighbouring schools

The school was judged to be Outstanding by Ofsted in 2008, however since the subsequent inspection in 2010 the quality of education at the school has not been considered as good. At its most recent Ofsted Inspection in May 2017, the school was judged as Inadequate and had 139 pupils on roll. Pupil numbers fell to 73 in October 2017 and currently there are 38 pupils on roll with fewer anticipated to be on roll in September. Some year groups consist of only two or three pupils and as such children would have limited access to working and playing with children of their own age. It is not considered that the proposed closure of Ripley CofE Primary School would have any detrimental effect on standards at neighbouring schools as no further permanent changes are required in the foreseeable future as a result of Ripley closing.

Availability and likely cost to the LA of transport to other schools

Support with transport would be provided for eligible pupils provided they meet the criteria. The criteria can be found on the Surrey County Council website at: <https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/school-transport/under-16-transport-to-school> Of the 29 pupils on roll that would require a primary school in September, around half reside outside the village and closer to other schools. Therefore it is anticipated that travel support may be required for around 16 pupils. These costs would be met from the Local Authority's Home to School Transport budget.

Any increase in the use of motor vehicles

With half of the pupils who would be on roll in September residing outside of the village and closer to other schools, it is anticipated that any impact on traffic would be minimal.

Any alternatives to closing the school

The statutory guidance regarding school closures references consideration to 'scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities eg. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc.' The local authority rejected this as an option as it would not address the requirements of the Directive Academy Order, which was issued as a result of an inadequate Ofsted judgement

Options considered by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)

Content provided by the RSC

The RSC approached the Good Shepherd Trust (GST) to sponsor Ripley. After considering the request GST declined to sponsor Ripley on viability grounds (low pupil numbers, forecasted first preference places). The RSC then worked with the Diocese of Guildford to identify other suitable sponsors using the following criteria:

- An approved academy sponsor by the Department for Education;
- Established track record of turning around underperforming schools;
- A strong plan and immediate capacity to effect a turnaround in the school;
- The ability to safeguard the religious character of the school, with appropriate church representation on the board of the MAT and the local governing body of the school.

No suitable sponsor was identified that was able to meet this criteria

Under the terms of the National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the National Society (Church of England) and the Department for Education, it is for the Diocese to agree on a suitable sponsoring multi-academy trust (MAT) with the Regional Schools Commissioner. Any MAT seeking to sponsor a Church school must be able to safeguard the religious character of the school. In the case of Ripley CofE this means any non-Church MAT wishing to sponsor Ripley would need at least 25 per cent of

the Trustees to be Church appointed. The RSC can only consider possible sponsorship arrangements for Ripley if they meet the terms of the MOU.

Options considered by the Diocesan Board of Education

Content provided by the Diocese of Guildford

1. Academy sponsorship of the school through membership of a Multi-Academy Trust

Under the terms of the National [Memorandum of Understanding](#) (MOU) agreed between the Department of Education and The National Society (on behalf of the Church of England), the Regionals Schools Commissioner (RSC) in consultation with the Diocesan Board of Education (DBE), are responsible for identifying a suitable sponsor for the school.

The MOU clearly states that any sponsorship arrangements of a Church of England school identified by the RSC must, in the opinion of the DBE, safeguard the religious character and ethos of the school.

In the case of Ripley CE Primary School, the diocese's Good Shepherd Trust (GST) were invited to sponsor the school in the summer of 2017 and after careful consideration of the position of the school and the current pupil numbers at that time, declined to sponsor the school.

Prior to the Local Authority's consultation on proposed closure starting in February, the diocese were approached by the South Farnham Educational Trust (SFET) who expressed an informal interest in the school.

The diocese met with SFET in the autumn of 2017, however the diocese rejected this proposal as it had no confidence that SFET understood how to maintain or develop the Christian character and ethos of the school.

SFET offered a side-agreement to legally safeguard the Christian character and ethos of the school however, in the view of the DBE, this was not sufficient to ensure that the Christian character of the school would be protected following academy conversion and the proposal was declined on this basis.

The RSC was kept informed at every stage of this process and the DBE worked closely with the RSC and Local Authority officers in considering the proposals.

Once the public consultation on the proposed closure was underway, two further verbal expressions of interest were received. Both of these expressions of interest were investigated and explored by the RSC and the DBE and were not taken forward for further consideration by the RSC and DBE on the conditions set out by the RSC which included the following criteria:

- An approved academy sponsor by the Department for Education;
- Established track record of turning around underperforming schools;
- A strong plan and immediate capacity to effect a turnaround in the school;
- The ability to safeguard the religious character of the school, with appropriate church representation on the board of the MAT and the local governing body of the school.

2. Federation

The diocese was asked by the Local Authority to consider the options for the possible federation of Ripley CE Primary School with other neighbouring Church of England primary schools.

DBE officers invited all local Church primary schools to meet informally with the diocese, to explore whether any neighbouring church school would be prepared to federate with Ripley CE Primary as part of forming a Multi-Academy Trust.

After careful consideration and exploring all the options, no Church school was in the position to put themselves forward to establish a federation and create a MAT within the timescales required. There were no offers to amalgamate (merge) schools at this point, only an offer to take some of the Ripley children into classes where there were existing vacancies.

The diocese shared this information with both the RSC and the Local Authority at the end of the autumn term 2017.

3. Amalgamation

At the commencement of the public consultation on the proposed closure of the school, there were no offers or proposals to merge or amalgamate the school with another local school.

During the public consultation process, Clandon CE Primary School came forward with a proposal to merge the two schools. Although this was considered by both the diocese and by Local Authority officers, concerns were expressed about this option on the basis of a lack of school improvement capacity to tackle the significant school improvement challenges faced at Ripley and the significant amount of investment and resources required to make the school financially viable. This proposal was rejected as it was felt that the proposal to amalgamate the two schools could have a detrimental effect on the quality of education offered to pupils of both schools.

Balance of denominational provision

There are a number of other Church of England primary phase schools in the area, therefore it is anticipated that impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and on parental choice would be minimal.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable

Sixth form provision

Not applicable

Special educational needs provision

The existing provision at Ripley CofE Primary School is not reserved for pupils with special educational needs.

Travel

With around half of the pupils who would be on roll in September residing outside of the village and closer to other schools, it is anticipated that any impact on traffic would be minimal. Some pupils may be offered alternative school places closer to their home, thereby reducing car usage.

There are number of alternative schools within 2-3 miles straight line distance of Ripley which are within a 'reasonable' travelling distance. For the purposes of assessing nearest schools for home to school transport, the shortest road route from the child's main place of residence would apply. Send CofE Primary is 2.1 miles away by road route and is the nearest primary school to Ripley, although the council recognises that some families live in other locations and may prefer other schools closer to them.

As set out in Surrey County Council’s Home to School transport policy, a journey to school will be considered as suitable if it allows the child to reach the school without undue stress, strain or difficulty that would prevent them from benefiting from the education. To this end the following journey times are considered to be reasonable for a journey to school:

- 45 minutes for primary aged pupils
- 75 minutes for secondary aged pupils

Eligibility for support with home to school transport will be determined in line with the local authority’s home to school transport policy (<https://www.surreycc.gov.uk/schools-and-learning/schools/school-transport/under-16-transport-to-school>). Consideration would also be given to individual circumstances.

The table below illustrates the distance by road route from Ripley CofE Primary School to the closest alternative schools together with approximate travel times. It should be noted, as above, that around half of the children who would require an alternative primary school place in September, live outside of Ripley and closer to other schools:

Distances measured from Ripley CofE Primary School by <u>road route</u> to the following schools			Approximate travel time	
Name of school	Kilometres	Miles	Driving	Walking
Send CofE Primary School	3.397	2.111	6 minutes	42 minutes
Pyrford CofE Primary School	3.828	2.379	5 minutes	46 minutes
St Mary’s CofE Primary School, Byfleet	5.654	3.513	14 minutes	1 hour 27 minutes
West Byfleet Junior School	5.792	3.599	10 minutes	1 hour 11 minutes
West Byfleet Infant School	5.874	3.650	10 minutes	1 hour 11 minutes
New Monument Primary Academy	5.989	3.721	10 minutes	1 hour 5 minutes
Kingfield Primary School	6.065	3.769	10 minutes	1 hour 13 minutes
The Raleigh School	6.194	3.849	10 minutes	1 hour 9 minutes
Clandon CofE Primary School	6.500	4.039	10 minutes	1 hour 16 minutes
Maybury Primary School	6.539	4.063	11 minutes	1 hour 19 minutes
Westfield Primary School	7.106	4.415	12 minutes	1 hour 26 minutes
Byfleet Primary School	7.168	4.454	14 minutes	1 hour 34 minutes

Distances are measured from the address point of Ripley CofE Primary School to the nearest school gate for pupils to use at each of the schools. Travel times are approximate.

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (25 May 2018), any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by:

Surrey Says website: www.surreysays.co.uk/csf/ripleystatutorynotice

Email: schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk

Post: Ripley Consultation
School Commissioning
County Hall
Penrhyn Road
Kingston upon Thames,
KT1 2DN

Closing date for responses is Friday 22nd June at 5pm.

We will not be able to consider any responses received after this date.

What happens next?

The Leader of the Council will determine the outcome of the statutory representation period on the 9th July 2018.

Surrey County Council must determine the statutory notice within two months of the end of the representation period. If the Council fails to determine the notice within this time, it will pass all relevant material to the Schools Adjudicator who will determine the notice.