

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL (Education and Inspections Act 2006)

Extract of Schedule 2 to The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013:

Contact details

1. The name and contact details of the LA or governing body publishing the proposal, and the name, address and category of the school proposed for closure.

Cumbria County Council. School Organisation Team, Parkhouse Building, Baron Way, Kingmoor Business Park, Carlisle CA6 4SJ.

The school to be closed is St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Mountain View, Cockermouth, Cumbria CA13 0DG (DfE number 909/3404). The category of the school is voluntary aided catholic.

Implementation

2. The proposed closure date or, where it is proposed that the closure be implemented in stages, the dates of, and information about, each stage.

Closure would be effective on 31 August 2022.

Objectives and reason for closure

3. The objectives of the proposal and the reason why closure of the school is considered necessary.

Numbers have been declining at the school for a number of years and the governing body has been unable to appoint a Catholic headteacher or find a Catholic Multi Academy Trust able to take on the school. These circumstances have led the governing body to request that the county council undertake a closure consultation.

The objective of the proposal is to improve the standard of education on offer to the children of Cockermouth and the surrounding area.

The school has an Ofsted judgement of Requires Improvement.

As at the October 2021 pupil census the school had 6 children on roll, which has since fallen to 4.

There is sufficient capacity in other nearby local schools to accommodate those children remaining in the school who haven't already relocated.

Pupil numbers and admissions

4. Information on the numbers, age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is currently made at the schools.

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a 4 to 11 year old co-educational

primary school.

At the October pupil census there were 6 pupils on roll.

Displaced Pupils

5. Details of the schools at which displaced pupils will be offered places, including:

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) the alternative provision for children recognised by the LA as reserved for children with special needs; and
- c) in the case of special schools, alternative provision made by LAs other than the authority which maintains the school.

- a) Children who formerly attended St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, and have relocated recently, have chosen to attend other schools from Cockermouth town and the surrounding area.
- b) Not applicable.
- c) Not applicable.

Impact on the Community

6. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact, including details of the extended services the school offered and what is proposed for these services once the schools have closed

There are 2 other primary schools within a mile, and another 2 just outside Cockermouth town at around 2 miles distant from the St Joseph school site. The closure of the school is unlikely to significantly increase journey times for children living the area.

The school has a governor-led nursery, catering for 2 year olds and above, with 2 children currently in attendance. There are other providers in the area and Cumbria County Council's Childcare Brokerage Service is available to help parents find alternative provision.

On closure the school building and the land will revert to its owner, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster.

Balance of denominational provision

7. Where the school has a designated religious character, a statement about the impact on parental choice in the area.

St Joseph's is the only Catholic primary school in Cockermouth, the next nearest Catholic primary school is in Maryport approximately 7 miles away. Children who have recently relocated from the school are now attending school either in Cockermouth or the area immediately surrounding it. Some have chosen other faith-based (Church of England) schools.

Rural Primary Schools

8. Where a proposal relates to a rural primary school a statement (as required by section 15(4) of the EIA 2006) that the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) has considered:

- a) the likely effect of closure of the school on the local community;
- b) the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools;
- c) 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 increase; and
- d) any alternatives to the closure of the school.

- a) There are sufficient places in other schools in the local area to accommodate all children from St Joseph's school and most have already relocated to those schools.
- b) There is likely to be zero cost as there are other schools that lie within the statutory walking distances with places available.
- c) Given the distances to alternative schools in Cockermonth any closure is unlikely to lead to significantly increased car journeys.
- d) The LA has considered alternatives to the closure of the school, along with the governing body and the Diocese of Lancaster, but the dwindling number of children on roll and falling birth rates have made the financial future of the school unsustainable with little prospect of any change.

Maintained nursery schools

9. Where a proposal relates to the closure a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:

- a) the LA's assessment of the quality and quantity of alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be closed and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- b) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

Not applicable.

Provision for 16-19 year olds

10. Where the school proposed to for closure provides sixth form education, how the proposals will impact on:

- a) the educational or training achievements;
- b) participation in education or training; and
- c) the range of educational or training opportunities, for 16-19 year olds in the area.

Not applicable.

Special educational needs (SEN) provision

11. Where existing provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being closed, a statement as to how the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) believes a proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

Not applicable.

Travel

12. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools.

There are likely to be at least 2 alternative schools within statutory walking distance for most children in Cockermouth dependent on their home address.

Consultation

13. Decision-makers will need to be assured that consultation has taken place, and that the statutory process has been adhered to. Therefore proposals should include the results of that consultation.

A formal consultation process was held between 20 September and 29 October 2021 with regards to the proposed closure of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Cockermouth.

Those consulted included parents, the local community, school staff, the school governing body, surrounding primary schools, the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lancaster, local Trade Unions, the local Member of Parliament, district and parish councils and Allerdale Local Committee.

A public meeting was held at the school to which there were approximately 30 attendees.

As well as the distribution of hard copy and email versions of the consultation information, all documentation was available on Cumbria County Council's website and a press release was made.

There were 24 responses to the consultation questionnaire. Of those that responded 5 identified as parents of children at the school, with the majority of the remainder being local residents/members of the local Catholic parish. Overall, 25% agreed that there was no alternative to the closure of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School. Allerdale Local Committee supported the proposal for closure.