



Proposal to Close Hope CE Primary School and St Mary’s CE Primary School Westbury and Expand Worthen CE Primary School

In accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, the Local Authority - Shropshire Council – proposes to close Hope CE Primary School and St Mary’s CE Primary School Westbury with effect from 31 August 2017. Pupils will be offered places at Worthen CE Primary School. The local authority intends to expand provision at Worthen CE Primary School to accommodate the pupils from the closed schools from 1 September 2017.

Shropshire Council Cabinet, at their meeting on 21 December 2016, approved proceeding to the publication of the closure proposals and initiating the representation stage of the statutory process (as prescribed in the Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools Regulations), having received the report on the outcomes of the first consultation stage. The four week representation period of consultation will run from Thursday 12 January 2017 to Wednesday 8 February 2017. Cabinet will make the final decision at their meeting on Wednesday 1 March 2017, taking into account any representations and comments made during the initial consultation period.

Contact Details

Any person may make comments or object to the proposals by writing to Hope Worthen Westbury Consultation, Learning & Skills Group, Shropshire Council, Shirehall, Abbey Foregate, Shrewsbury, SY2 6ND or by emailing HWWConsultation@shropshire.gov.uk .

The details on the two schools the Council proposes to close are:

Name of School and Address	Establishment Type	Age Range
Hope CE Primary School Hope Minsterley Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 0JB	Voluntary Controlled School	2 to 11
St Mary’s CE Primary School Westbury Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 9QX	Voluntary Aided School	2 to 11

The details of the school in which the pupils will be placed are:

Name of School and Address	Establishment Type	Age Range
Worthen CE Primary School Worthen Shrewsbury Shropshire SY5 9HT	Voluntary Controlled School	5 to 11

All three schools are part of The Hope Worthen Westbury Trinity – A Federation of CE Primary Schools. The schools in the federation come under the Diocese of Hereford.

Implementation

The intention is to implement the closures with effect from 31 August 2017.

Reasons for closure

The Hope Worthen Westbury Trinity – A Federation of CE Primary Schools was established in May 2016, bringing together the three schools under the leadership of a single governing body and an acting headteacher. In July 2016 the federation appointed a permanent headteacher. The closure proposals were initiated by the federation's governing body, based on support from the community.

All three schools have faced substantial challenges in recent years, including the recruitment and retention of headteachers for each school and other teaching staff, Ofsted inspection judgements that were not yet good for two of the schools, falling pupil numbers and the associated pressures this has had on the schools' budgets.

Westbury currently has a 'Requires Improvement' judgement from Ofsted, while Hope was judged as 'Good' at its last inspection. Worthen, following an Ofsted inspection on 8 and 9 November 2016, has been graded 'Good' having previously been graded 'Requires Improvement'. The positive action by the leadership of the federation to change has resulted in this significant improvement. Despite this, the outcomes for pupils across the wider federation remain volatile and the capacity to improve more limited than in larger schools.

The three schools have collectively lost 29 pupils between January 2016 and the annual school census in October 2016, down from 114 to 85 (down nearly a quarter). The fall in pupil numbers is in part due to the cohort sizes in the individual schools being so small, with parents citing this as their main reason for removing children. With pupil numbers being the key basis on which schools receive their annual funding, this means that revenue is falling and budgets are and will become increasingly difficult to balance.

The governing body of the federation has a responsibility for, and a strong commitment to, securing and sustaining good or better outcomes for all their pupils. It is their view that this cannot be achieved with the current organisational structures and so governors formally determined, at a meeting on 6 July 2016, to initiate a statutory consultation process, via the local authority, on the closure of the sites at Hope and Westbury and the consolidation of provision on the Worthen site.

Pupil numbers and admissions

The numbers of pupils in each of the schools for whom provision is currently made is detailed below.

Hope CE Primary School			
Numbers on Roll		Nursery	6
Nursery	6	Reception	1
Reception to Year 6	19	Year 1	3
		Year 2	3
		Year 3	3
		Year 4	2
		Year 5	3
		Year 6	4
		Total	25
Gender			
Female	9		
Male	16		

3 pupils receive special educational needs support

St Mary's CE Primary School Westbury			
Numbers on Roll		Nursery	9
Nursery	9	Reception	3
Reception to Year 6	30	Year 1	6
		Year 2	4
		Year 3	2
		Year 4	6
		Year 5	3
		Year 6	6
		Total	39
Gender			
Female	21		
Male	18		

7 pupils receive special educational needs support

Worthen CE Primary School will have a Published Admission Number of 17 with an initial planned capacity of 120.

Worthen CE Primary School			
Numbers on Roll		Reception	9
Reception to Year 6	38	Year 1	1
Gender		Year 2	4
Female	16	Year 3	8
Male	22	Year 4	10
		Year 5	6
		Year 6	0
		Total	38

4 pupils receive special educational needs support
 2 pupils have statements of special educational needs

Displaced pupils

Displaced pupil from Hope CE Primary School and St Mary's CE Primary School Westbury will be offered places at Worthen CE Primary School. The federation governing body implemented interim operational arrangements in September 2016, which have provided for pupils of school age from all three schools to be taught on the Worthen site, whilst the pre-schools have remained open at Hope and Westbury. In the event that Cabinet approve the school closures, the pupils from the two closing schools will have been part of the new school community at Worthen for a full academic year, which will minimise the impact on their education resulting from the closures. This will include support to pupils with special educational needs.

The current Worthen site will need to expand to accommodate the displaced pupils, for which capital provision is being made. It is not anticipated that the proposals will have any detrimental impact on neighbouring schools. No concerns were raised on this aspect of the proposals during the first stage of the consultation process.

Impact on the community

The likely effects on the communities of Hope and Westbury have been considered in the light of experience gained from school closures which have taken place in Shropshire and elsewhere. If the schools were to close, the communities might become less attractive to some families, but it would not necessarily have an effect on most potential residents. It might change the balance of the type of potential residents without affecting their numbers.

There are a number of settlements in the surrounding area which currently do not have schools but remain viable. Some of these are already part of the community of other neighbouring schools. Schools would naturally seek to remain a focal point of not just their immediate settlement, but also the wider community as a whole. The headteacher and governors of the federation have made clear their intentions to retain close relationships with the communities of Hope and Westbury.

Rural primary schools

Both Hope CE Primary School and St Mary's CE Primary School are designated rural primary schools as defined under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order. As such Shropshire Council has carefully and appropriately considered alternatives to closure, transport implications and the overall and long term impact on local people and the community from the closure of the village schools and of the loss of the buildings as community facilities. The Council has worked closely with the federation governing body and officers for the Diocese of Hereford in considering these issues.

Balance of denominational provision

The three schools are in The Hope Worthen Westbury Trinity – A Federation of CE Primary Schools, which come under the Diocese of Hereford. The remaining provision at Worthen CE Primary School will remain under the Diocese of Hereford. The proposal does not therefore impact on parental choice in terms of access to a church school.

Early years provision

The closure of Hope CE Primary School and St Mary's CE Primary School Westbury would have an impact on local early years provision. Hope CE Primary School and St. Mary's CE Primary School Westbury both have pre-schools as part of their provision, while Worthen Pre-school is independently operated by a parent managed charitable group and runs from the village hall, next to the school.

Continued affordable and accessible early years provision is seen as being very important to the local community and the future success of the federation of schools. The governors would like to bring together the current mix of school led and voluntary managed early years provision into one, school run nursery on the Worthen site. The expectation would be for the nursery to open from 9 am to 3.00 pm, 5 days per week. The school will fully consult and work with their early years staff and the managers and committee of the voluntary managed provision at Worthen.

The Council has set aside resource from the capital programme for the development of early years provision in the area. This funding will be allocated towards the capital works required at the Worthen site. The provision will form part of the build on the school site, with staff accessing facilities - eg staff room and toilets - from the main school building rather than requiring their own and thus increasing capital costs.

Travel

The interim operational changes implemented by the federation governing body from the beginning of the autumn term 2016 included the provision of transport arrangements for the pupils from the Hope and Westbury communities to Worthen CE Primary School. These arrangements are working effectively and so it is presumed, in the event that Shropshire Cabinet approve the closure of the two schools, that these transport arrangements will continue.