



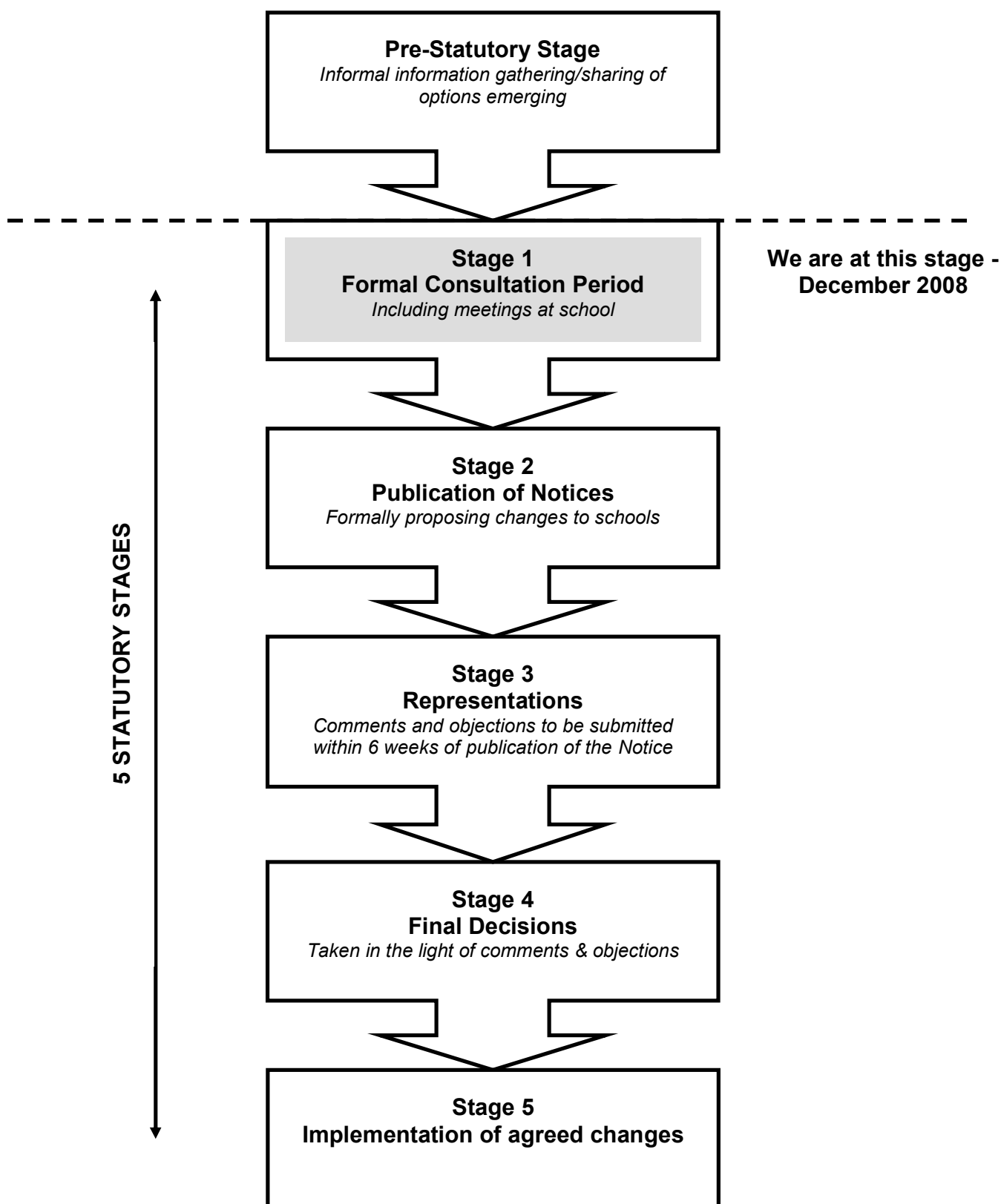
**PROPOSAL FOR THE CLOSURE OF  
CHURCH LAWTON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION  
December 2008 and January 2009**

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**December 2008**

## MAKING CHANGES TO SCHOOLS



## **PURPOSE OF THIS CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

1 To undertake formal consultations with the parents / carers of pupils at Church Lawton Primary School and other interested parties to ascertain their views, before any final decision is taken regarding the proposal to close the school in summer 2009.

## **INTRODUCTION**

2 The County Council is continuing its work in response to 'Every Child Matters' and the Children Act 2004. The Government has put schools at the heart of the change and Cheshire's response is a wide ranging review of its education provision – Transforming Learning Communities. This review addresses a broad range of issues, including the need to manage the effect of a reducing number of pupils, the drive to continue improving outcomes for children, and meeting the requirements of the Children Act. Significant changes are also needed in the delivery of services for children and families.

3 The purpose of this document is to outline the reasons for proposing the closure of Church Lawton Primary School and to encourage you to give your views on this proposal.

## **WHY IS CHURCH LAWTON PRIMARY SCHOOL BEING CONSIDERED FOR POSSIBLE CLOSURE IN SUMMER 2009?**

4 The area to the south and east of Alsager is currently served by four schools: Scholar Green Primary School, Rode Heath Primary School, Woodcocks' Well CE Primary School and Church Lawton Primary School. Overall there are too few pupils attending the four schools to sustain them all.

5 Church Lawton Primary School has a capacity for 105 pupils, having been designed and built to accommodate 210 pupils. Changing use of the accommodation has reduced the school's capacity to its current level. Scholar Green Primary School has a capacity for 210 pupils (which it is proposed will be reduced to 180 in September 2009). Rode Heath Primary School has a capacity for 210 pupils and Woodcocks' Well CE Primary School has a capacity for 103 pupils (which it is proposed will be reduced to 89 in September 2009).

6 There has been a significant reduction in pupil numbers at Church Lawton Primary School since 1999. In January 2008 the school had 68 pupils registered on roll and 35.2% surplus places. This surplus is forecast to rise to 44.8% in 2013.

7 The forecasts for January 2013, based on January 2008 numbers of pupils for each of the three other local schools are:

	NUMBER ON ROLL	SURPLUS PLACES	% SURPLUS PLACES
Rode Heath PS	159	51	24.3
Scholar Green PS	136	44	24.4
Woodcocks' Well CE PS	87	2	2.2

(This table assumes reductions in capacity at both Scholar Green PS and Woodcocks' Well CE PS in 2009).

Figures for the remaining schools in Alsager are:

	NUMBER ON ROLL	SURPLUS PLACES	% SURPLUS PLACES
Alsager Highfields CPS	263	0	NIL
Cranberry PS	175	35	16.7
Excalibur PS	209	1	0.5
Pikemere School	208	2	1.0
St Gabriel's Catholic PS	196	14	6.7

(This table assumes a reduction in capacity at Cranberry Primary School to 210)

8 The Ofsted inspection report of Church Lawton Primary School (November 2006) stated that the School "provides a satisfactory standard of education". The personal development of children was good, and pupils made satisfactory and sometimes good progress in the Foundation Stage. However, pupils of higher ability did not always achieve as well as they should in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics. Achievement overall was rated as satisfactory.

9 The overall effectiveness of the school was also rated as satisfactory by Ofsted, as was leadership and management, teaching and learning, the curriculum and other activities. Care, guidance and support were considered "good" and it was noted by Ofsted that the school's "warm and caring atmosphere" was the reason why a number of parents have actively chosen to send their children to the school. In January 2008 over 30% of the children at the school lived outside the county of Cheshire.

10 In spite of Church Lawton Primary School's overall satisfactory performance, the significant fall in the school's roll and its relative lack of popularity in the local community give cause for concern. In January 2008, only 22.1% of parents who live in the school's catchment area chose to send their children to Church Lawton, in contrast with other local schools. In January 2008, the figures were:

School	Percentage of children living in catchment area who go to the school
Church Lawton PS	22.1
Scholar Green PS	62.5
Rode Heath PS	77.1
Woodcocks' Well CE PS	60.0

11 The considerable reduction in the number of pupils attending the school over recent years and the present low number on roll, which looks set to decline further, puts in question the future stability and sustainability of the school. For these reasons the Council is considering the possible closure of Church Lawton Primary School in the summer of 2009.

## MOVEMENT OF PUPILS

12 There are 7 schools within a two-mile radius of Church Lawton Primary School which between them have a significant number of surplus places. These are the schools in the tables in paragraph 7, but excluding Woodcocks' Well CE Primary School which is 2.4 miles from Church Lawton. The availability of places at a large number of schools has come about because of the overall decline in pupil numbers within the locality.

13 As noted above, around 78% of pupils from within the Church Lawton Primary School catchment attend other schools, and because numbers at the school are bolstered by parents living some distance away, only a small proportion of children at the school live locally. Again this contrasts strongly with other local schools. In January 2008, the figures were:

School	Percentage of children at the school who live in its catchment area
Church Lawton PS	22.7
Scholar Green PS	61.3
Rode Heath PS	77.1
Woodcocks' Well CE PS	50.0

## PUPIL NUMBERS

14 Church Lawton Primary School has a Net Capacity of 105 places. Historic and forecast pupil numbers on roll at the school are as follows:

<b>Historic</b>	<b>Number on Roll</b>	<b>% of Surplus Places</b>
January 1999	103	1.9%
January 2000	95	9.5%
January 2001	92	12.3%
January 2002	95	9.5%
January 2003	96	8.5%
January 2004	86	18.1%
January 2005	85	19.0%
January 2006	73	30.5%
January 2007	67	36.2%
<b>Current (most recent PLASC data)</b>	<b>Number on Roll</b>	<b>% of Surplus Places</b>
January 2008	68	35.2%
<b>Forecast</b>	<b>Number on Roll</b>	<b>% of Surplus Places</b>
January 2009	62	41.0%
January 2010	66	37.1%
January 2011	63	40.0%
January 2012	59	43.8%
January 2013	58	44.8%

(The above forecast figures are projected from the January 2008 numbers on roll)

The actual pupil numbers for September 2008 indicate that these projections are likely to be an overestimate.

15 Primary pupil numbers have declined significantly across the County in the past 10 years, as well as across the country as a whole. However an increase in live births has meant that pupil numbers have increased marginally in some areas, but this still leaves a pressing need to reduce surplus places in those areas where supply of places significantly exceeds the demand from the local population.

## **ADMISSION TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS**

16 There are places available at nearby schools. Parents have the right to look for and access provision in any of these or other schools should they so wish. Should the decision be taken to proceed with the closure of the school, the Authority will work closely with parents and receiving school(s) to help to "manage" the move as effectively as possible.

## **TRANSPORT**

17 29.4% of the pupils currently attending Church Lawton Primary School live in the county of Staffordshire. One child lives in Stoke-on-Trent, 32 live in the catchment areas of other Cheshire schools, and the remaining 15 live in Church Lawton's catchment area. A table giving details, and a distribution map of pupils' homes is attached.

18 If Church Lawton Primary School is closed, an individual assessment will be required for displaced children to determine whether or not transport should be provided to their alternative school. This will need to be carried out in liaison with the Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire local authorities.

## **SITE AND BUILDINGS**

19 No decision has been made regarding the future use of the Church Lawton Primary School site and buildings should the school close. This would be dependent on current planning policies and restrictions relating to alternative uses at the time of closure. The approval of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) would also be required for any proposed alternative use of the playing field area.

## **FINANCE**

20 Most of a school's budget is based on its pupil numbers which, in turn, defines the number of staff and the resources available to a school. Therefore, the fewer the pupils, the smaller the budget. If pupil numbers drop below a certain level then the Fair Funding formula provides additional support for small schools.

21 The budget per pupil at Church Lawton Primary School is £4,642 which is 52% more than the Cheshire pupil average of £3,049 (all figures are based on the current funding formula using 2008/09 values). This additional cost reduces the funding available to other schools.

22 The option to close Church Lawton Primary School would, in the long term, reduce expenditure by at least £99,000 per annum (based on the current funding formula using 2008/09 values). There may be additional costs which may be offset against the formula savings initially. All net savings will be re-distributed within the Dedicated Schools Budget.

## **STAFFING**

23 If the proposal to close Church Lawton Primary School is agreed, then all posts in the school would cease to exist. However, continuing provision would need to be made for the children in receiving schools and retaining the valuable skills and experience of staff of the closing school would be a key factor in ensuring a smooth transition for pupils. Existing staff would be re-employed, as far as possible, in the receiving school/s. The Local Authority would also work closely with other schools in the review locality to identify further opportunities for staff re-deployment and would ensure that staff at the school were fully supported throughout the closure process.

## **HOUSING**

24 The Local Authority takes account of new housing developments in its projections for individual schools. Data is routinely gathered from Congleton Borough Council, which is the local planning authority, regarding on-going and planned housing development and this is matched to school catchment areas. A 'child yield' factor is then applied to the developments to arrive at an estimate of the scale of additional demands for school places that might be expected from the new housing.

25 The gross figure of 'child yield' (the additional pupils from new housing) is adjusted to reflect present patterns of attendance and is known as the 'adjusted child yield.' For example, if 70% of the pupils presently resident in the catchment area attend the local school and 30% attend an alternative school, the estimated number of pupils from new housing will be allocated to these two schools in the same proportions.

26 On the basis of available information, the Authority is confident that, should Church Lawton Primary School close, there will still be sufficient school places in the area to meet demand.



## TIMESCALES

27 Following this consultation, the County Council's School Planning Select Panel - an all-party group of County Councillors - will meet to receive a report on the consultations and decide on its recommendation.

28 If the Panel recommends closure and this is subsequently approved by the Children's Services Executive, formal Notices proposing closure would be published and displayed at Church Lawton Primary School, at other locations in the area and in the local press. There would then follow a period of at least six weeks for objections and comments on the proposed closure.

29 At the end of this period a final decision would be taken. If there are no objections the decision can be taken by the Executive of the County Council. If there are objections to the proposal for closure these would be taken to a special Sub Committee of the Executive for decision.

30 This timetable means that, if following the consultation, the Council proposes closure, a final decision on closure in summer 2009 could be reached by early spring 2009.

31 It is proposed that the programme for the implementation of any change would be:

December 2008 and January 2009	Formal Public Consultations at Church Lawton Primary School as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents &amp; Public – Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008 (5.00 pm - 7.00 pm)</li> <li>• Staff – Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008 (3.30 pm)</li> <li>• Governors – Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008 (4.15 pm)</li> </ul>
23 January 2009	Closing date for responses
Consideration of the outcomes of the public consultations by:	
Week beginning 26 January or 3 February 2009	School Planning Select Panel; and
12 February 2009	County Council; and
17 February 2009	Children's Services Executive
24 February – 7 April 2009	Publication of Notices – if a decision is taken to proceed. This would be followed by a period of at least six weeks during which objections and representations, e.g. in support, could be lodged

April / May 2009	Final decision taken by Cheshire East Authority
August 2009	Proposed date that the closure would take place

## HOW DO I COMMENT ON THE PROPOSALS?

32 There will be a drop-in session (explained in the following pages) for parents and other interested members of the community on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008, between 5.00pm and 7.00pm at Church Lawton Primary School with officers from the County Council. County Councillors may also be present. All views expressed will be recorded and considered.

33 You can complete the attached form or, alternatively, you can complete an electronic version which can be accessed via the County Council's website at: [www.cheshire.gov.uk/TLC](http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/TLC). You may also write directly to Trish Burnett whose contact details are given in paragraph 34 below. Please forward your comments by Friday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2009.

34 For further information, contact Trish Burnett – Transforming Learning Communities, Cheshire County Council, Room 417, County Hall, Chester CH1 1SQ, 01244 972379, [Trish.Burnett@cheshire.gov.uk](mailto:Trish.Burnett@cheshire.gov.uk).



This is an explanation of how a 'drop-in' session is organised.

## **WHAT IS A 'DROP-IN' MEETING?**

A 'drop-in' session is an event arranged for parents and members of the community to come and ask questions and seek clarification, on an individual or small group basis, on issues about the recommendation/s for their school. There is no formal presentation of the recommendation/s but all parents will have received this booklet explaining the proposal/s prior to the session.

All questions and statements are recorded as well as the answers given by the officers. These form part of the documentation given to County Councillors who will discuss, debate and make a decision at their subsequent meetings.

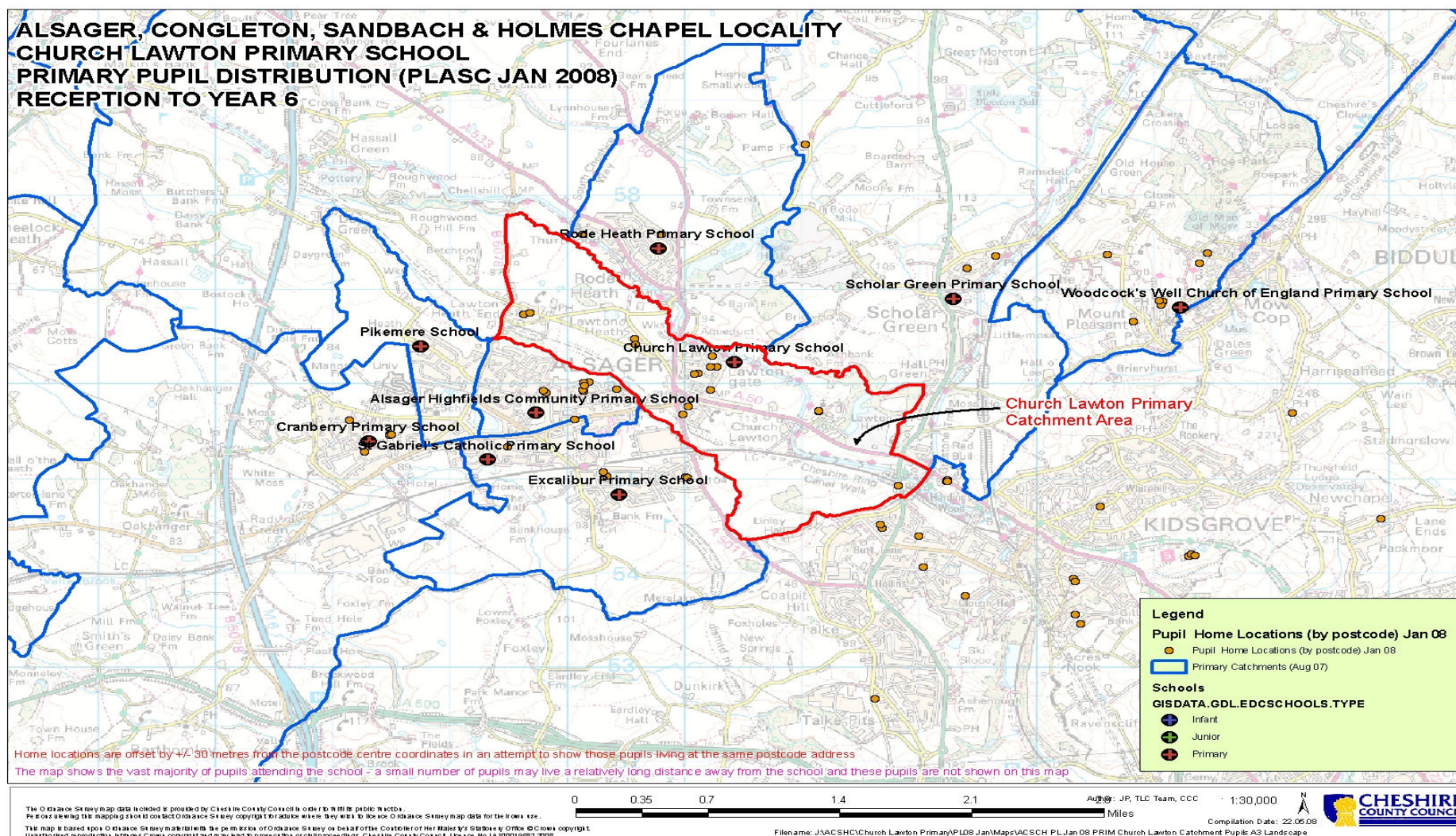
## **WHO WILL I SPEAK TO?**

The session has a number of officers who are seated at tables ready to listen to you and explain and respond to your questions. There is also a second officer at each table who records your questions and statements and the answers given to you.

## **WHY DO WE CONDUCT THE MEETING IN THIS WAY?**

This style of event gathers a greater quantity of and wider views than an 'open' public meeting. It also ensures that everyone has an opportunity to speak and allows for individual concerns to be raised in a more structured manner.

## Appendix 1: Pupil Distribution Map for Church Lawton Primary School, (Source: PLASC Jan 2008)





## Appendix 2: Where do the pupils who attend Church Lawton Primary School live? (Source: PLASC Jan 2008)

<div><div>School Attended</div><div>School Catchment Area</div></div>	Church Lawton Primary School	9	15	5	5	1	2	3	7	47	0	21	68	68
	Alsager Highfields Community Primary School													
	Church Lawton Primary School													
	Cranberry Nursery and Infant and Junior Schools													
	Excalibur Primary School													
	Offley Primary School													
	Rode Heath Primary School													
	Scholar Green Primary School													
	Woodcocks' Well Church of England Primary School													
	Total Number of Pupils attending the schools listed, who live within the Locality													
	Total Number of Pupils attending the schools listed, who live outside the Locality but within Cheshire													
Total Number of Pupils attending the schools listed, who live outside Cheshire														
Total Number on Roll (Mappable) inc SEN Pupils, PLASC Jan 2008 (All Areas)														
Total Number on Roll (Inc SEN Pupils) PLASC Jan 2008 (All Areas)														

### Notes

- (1) Analysis considers pupils in the maintained sector only, from Reception to Year 6 pupils. Any Special Unit pupils are included.
- (2) The pupils analysed by postcode within the PLASC Jan 2008 return represent on average 99.9% of pupils within the database, ie on roll at Cheshire primary schools at January 2008. Those pupils not analysed did not have associated postcode data in order to map them.



**Proposal to Close  
Church Lawton Primary School**

**Consultation Response Form**

*Please tick the relevant boxes to indicate your views and add any comments you wish to make.*

Do you agree with the proposal to close  
Church Lawton Primary School in summer 2009?

Agree                      Disagree

☐                              ☐

Comments (if any)
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*Please tick the relevant box(es) to indicate any of the following that apply to you:*

Parent/Carer of Present Pupil(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parent/Carer of Pre-school Child	<input type="checkbox"/>
Governor	<input type="checkbox"/>
Member of staff	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pupil	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	.....

Name                      .....

Address                      .....

Signed                      .....      Date                      .....

Please return this form to: Trish Burnett, Cheshire County Council, Room 417, County Hall, Chester CH1 1SQ by **23<sup>rd</sup> January 2009**. Alternatively, you can complete an electronic version of the form, which can be accessed via the County Council's website at: [www.cheshire.gov.uk/TLC](http://www.cheshire.gov.uk/TLC)