



Proposed Closure of Church Lawton Primary School – Formal Consultation
Event
Tuesday 9th December 2008 (5.00-7.00pm)

The formal consultation event took place at Church Lawton Primary School for parents / carers and members of the local community on Tuesday 9th December between 5.00pm and 7.00pm. Approximately 60 people attended (parents/carers, grandparents of pupils, staff, governors, members of the local community, the Local County Councillor, representatives of Church Lawton Parish Council, Members of Cheshire East Shadow Council).

The main concerns raised were as follows:

Consultation arrangements

- The consultation document is worded in a negative way, giving the impression that closure was a foregone conclusion;
- Disagree with the format of consultation; should be one meeting for parents where all can hear everything that is said;
- The process has been made too long and confusing with the informal consultations;
- The consultation document focuses on areas for improvement but this is unfair when Church Lawton isn't being compared against other schools;
- The LA submission for the consultation meeting seemed to differ from the original documentation presented at the informal consultations.

General comments on the proposal

- Proposal is driven by the need to save money;
- Belief that the proposal is based on the fact that it would upset the least number of people;
- Why didn't the LA step in before now i.e. when it realised the numbers were falling?
- What has the LA done to support the school? If there had been more support we might not be in this situation;
- Redistributing money if the school closes would be at a loss to the school and the children as they will be put into larger classes elsewhere;
- Proposals were timed too late for proper and full consideration by parents – feel they should have been made aware of the issues relating to the continued

viability of the school and falling rolls earlier so they could have considered what strategies to attract more children to the school;

- Friendships groups and class sizes (larger classes) would be affected if children transferred to other schools;
- Critical for pupils to change school when commencing Year 6;
- Proposal could cause staff to opt for more secure jobs elsewhere;
- Specialist staff could be vulnerable before closure because of reduced funding;
- What work has the TLC team undertaken in examining the use of surplus capacity at the school, and why hasn't this been included in the documentation?

Views on Church Lawton Primary School

- The LA will be closing an excellent school without considering the pupils; It has small classes and doesn't just concentrate on SAT results. Children are given an all-round education there;
- The LA is promoting ECM; why does it not consider how distraught the children will be if the proposals go ahead?
- What will happen to the nursery?
- The school was in a similar position a few years ago yet it survived;
- There are large numbers of children with SEN issues and these are well supported;
- Being a small school Church Lawton has the flexibility to care for each child individually, especially vulnerable children;
- The school has an excellent ethos;
- Small class sizes is a large factor in attracting parents to the school;
- The school has not been marketed properly; some parents in the area are not aware of the school's existence; this should have been addressed by the governors;
- Pupils removed from their local schools due to bullying have settled in very quickly at Church Lawton.

Decision-making process

- The County Councillors who will be making the decision on the future of the school should have attended the consultation event to speak to parents and listen to their views;
- Why was the advice offered by Scrutiny Committee for a 2 year reprieve for the school overturned?
- The fact that the decision to reject the advice of the Scrutiny Committee advice was made by Cllr Rowlands, who had supported the original recommendation for closure, represented a flaw in the decision making process. Will Cllr Rowlands read all the responses? He should visit the school;
- Why is the LA rushing this proposal through before the new council comes into existence?
- Clarification on how the final decision would be made and by whom, was sought.

Admissions; Parental preference

- Parental preference will be removed; preference for Church Lawton but could not risk completing form to that effect; would have preferred to have known the

school's position before completing the preference form; require guarantee that LA can give parents their next choice;

- Timing of announcement caused confusion for parents and had a negative effect on next year's intake to the school; TLC has caused parents to move their children before a decision has been made which is making the situation worse for the school; not enough time given to choose another school;
- The process is dragging on and this in turn is not helping the school to recover; this is not fair on children or parents;
- Timescales for this proposal are tight; how can parents plan?
- Will consider home education if closure proceeds;
- Weren't made aware that school existed when looking to apply for a school place.

Pupil places in local area

- Not enough Yr 1 places in the remaining schools to accommodate all displaced Church Lawton Yr 1 pupils;
- Child currently in a mixed Y3/4 class of 12 pupils in total; is there any guarantee that the same class organisation would be available in alternative schools?
- Had contacted all schools in the area who stated they were full in the relevant year group;
- I can't get my children into the same school of my choice (Yrs 1 & 3, and an 18 month old child);
- Why close the only school in Church Lawton when Alsager has 5 or 6 schools?
- Concern that if Church Lawton closes it will overload other schools in the area;
- All other Alsager schools are full, so private education is my only other choice;
- All the good schools are full;
- Query over accuracy of data;
- How can you assess children coming from new housing?
- Concern that the local housing estate currently mainly houses elderly people; what will happen when young families move in?
- If the school does close, the village definitely won't attract young families;
- We have been looking into ways to bring younger families into the village; one of the schemes is to look into converting the larger houses owned by the elderly into affordable apartments for young families;
- There are many children coming from outside the County;
- Have you taken into account the prospective pupils coming from the two nurseries?
- There are plans for new build in the area, this will impact on numbers for the school; have these been considered?

Alternative options

- A 2 year reprieve is needed while Cheshire County Council and Cheshire East change over, giving the school the chance to market itself fully and turn itself around;
- The school has developed an action plan; why has this not been considered?
- Could not the option of federation or trust status for the school be considered?

Rural status

- Why is Church Lawton not classed as a rural school? Feeling that Church Lawton is classed as rural when it suits; lack of consistency.

Travel Issues

- What assistance will be given for transport to alternative schools?
- Will now have to travel by car rather than walk to school as next preference is too far away.

Community issues

- The needs of the community must be taken into account;
- The school is used by the community and is the only meeting place left in the village; it is the central point for all activities;
- Strong feeling that this would tear the heart out of the community and not encourage new families into the area;
- The school is unique and at the heart of the community;
- The Parish Council were advised a number of years ago by the Borough Council that they could not use the school for extended services as it wouldn't be covered by the insurance. The Parish Council would support this if it were pursued once again;
- The teenagers of the village currently have use of the school playing fields for recreation but where would they go if the school closes?
- The village has recently lost its youth centre which has meant the loss of the guide and scout groups; to lose the school would mean the demise of the village;
- The village is split into three sections, the school is located centrally to these sections;
- There is no mention of the Church Lawton community in the document and the effect on it if the school closes;
- The loss of the school would have a detrimental effect on house prices and property sales in Church Lawton;
- More extended services could be explored if the school was reprieved for a two-year period.

Future use of school building

- Concern about what will happen to the grounds if the school does close;
- What are the plans for school building if it closes?
- Will residents be able to influence the future use of the building and will they be informed about what will happen to it?

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