

FULL PROPOSAL TO CLOSE CAMERTON CHURCH SCHOOL, CAMERTON, BA2 0PS

Name, address and category of school proposed for closure

Camerton Church School, Camerton Hill, Camerton, BA2 0PS

Category: Voluntary Controlled

Name and contact details of Local Authority publishing the proposals

Bath and North East Somerset Council, Schools Capital and Organisation Team, People and Communities Department, Lewis House, Manvers Street, Bath, BA1 1JG.

Email address: schools_organisation@bathnes.gov.uk

Telephone: 01225 477000

Implementation date

The date of the proposed closure of Camerton Church School is 31 August 2018.

Reason for closure

For many years the Governing Body has attempted to find an alternative to closure of the school. They have tried to increase pupil numbers by holding open days and carrying out publicity and by providing a pre-school nursery on site. The pre-school had to close in July 2017 as there were insufficient numbers of children to make the provision viable.

For a short period the Governing Body also tried educating Camerton Church School Key Stage 2 pupils at St Julian's Church School, tried working closely with other small schools in a collaboration or soft federation and then becoming part of a formal federation of three schools sharing a single Governing Body and Headteacher. The Governing Body were also in discussion with the Department for Education (DfE) about all three schools joining a Multi Academy Trust and becoming academies, however these discussions were put on hold by the DfE.

Despite these efforts pupil numbers at Camerton have gradually reduced and in September 2017 there were only seven pupils in total on roll. As schools are funded on a per pupil basis, with such small numbers year on year, the revenue budget to operate the school has continued to diminish. As a result, it has become difficult for the school to provide a rich and engaging curriculum and for pupils to achieve high standards in their learning.

With so few pupils, it is very difficult for a single teacher to cover the entire curriculum across seven different year groups within one class. It is also difficult for the school to provide opportunities for pupils to develop social friendship groups for the benefit of their social and emotional development.

Continued.....

The Council has a duty of care to ensure children in its schools are able to receive a good education and to access the full curriculum. With such low numbers, the Governing Body believes it would be extremely difficult to provide a rounded education that meets the academic, social and emotional needs of the pupils at the school. This situation is very unusual as Camerton is an Ofsted 'good' school and it is not clear why parents have not chosen to send their children here.

There is not projected to be a significant increase in future pupil numbers at Camerton as there is currently no significant new housing proposed for Camerton village that would serve to generate new families. The Governing Body has therefore concluded that the school is no longer viable either educationally or financially and has taken the difficult decision to propose closing the school.

Pupil numbers and admissions

The school currently provides 70 places for pupils aged 4 to 11 years. At present there are seven pupils on roll.

Displaced pupils

Whilst the statutory process is being carried out, the Governing Body has put in place interim arrangements for the seven pupils currently on roll at Camerton Church School to be educated elsewhere within the Federation, at Shoscombe C of E Primary School, in order to provide the best possible outcomes for them academically, socially and emotionally.

If the school was to close, these seven pupils would be able to remain at Shoscombe and formally transfer onto the roll of Shoscombe should they wish to. Alternatively they would be free to apply to another school. Admission to another school would be subject to available places. If the school is full and parents are refused a place there will be a right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel. If the school has room but the number of applications exceeds the spaces available, the school admission criteria will be used to determine the allocation of places.

There are projected to be sufficient places available in other existing local schools to accommodate future primary age pupils living in Camerton. The next closest schools are St Mary's C of E Primary School in Timsbury and Peasedown St John Primary School in Peasedown St John. Also a feasibility study is being carried out to add more places to Peasedown St John Primary School.

Impact on the community

The pre-school nursery that previously ran from the school closed in July 2017 and the school premises are not used by any community groups or organisations to deliver community services for the village. A very small number of parents are choosing to send their children to Camerton and there are projected to be places available at other local schools to accommodate primary age children living in Camerton. As a consequence, the likely effect of the closure of the school on the local community is expected to be minimal.

Rural primary school

Reference has been made to the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order to confirm that Camerton is a rural primary school. The Local Authority has considered section 15(4) of the Education and Inspection Act 2006.

Continued.....

Balance of denominational provision

The school is a Voluntary Controlled Church of England (C of E) school. If it was to close, there would be 10 less C of E school places per year group available locally. However there are places available in other C of E schools in the local area to continue to make this option available to local parents.

Travel

The Governing Body is providing transport to and from the Shoscombe site for the seven pupils currently on roll at Camerton being educated at Shoscombe. If the school was to close, from 1 September 2018 responsibility for home to school transport for these seven pupils would transfer to the Local Authority and this would continue to be provided for the remainder of the children's education at Shoscombe.

The Local Authority will provide transport between home and school in line with the Council's current Home to School Transport Policy. Transport would be provided where the school attended is the nearest appropriate one as designated by the Local Authority, and where the distance as measured by the nearest available walking route is two miles or more for pupils aged five to seven years and three miles or more for pupils aged eight years and over. Transport can also be provided if the nearest available route is exceptionally hazardous or if parents qualify under the low income family policy.

These measures will reduce the need for private car journeys from home to school and it is not anticipated that the closure of Camerton is likely to result in any significant increase in the use of cars.

The next closest schools to Camerton are St Mary's in Timsbury and Peasedown St John. Both of these schools are approximately 1.7 miles via walking route from Camerton village.

The Council does not currently provide transport for any pupils living in Camerton. If the school was to close, the Council would incur transport costs for the seven pupils currently on roll at Camerton and being educated at Shoscombe if they choose to remain there. It is also possible that costs for home to school transport could increase in the future for children starting school if they qualify for transport assistance to their preferred school.

Procedure for responses

Anyone can support, object to or comment on the proposal. If you would like to submit a representation about this proposal, you can do so by completing the online consultation form on the Bath and North East Somerset Council website at:

www.bathnes.gov.uk/CamertonSchool

Or by writing to:

Bath and North East Somerset Council,
Schools Capital & Organisation Team,
People and Communities Department,
Lewis House,
Manvers Street,
Bath,
BA1 1JG

Continued.....

In order to ensure that every representation response counts, please could you state **your relationship to the school** e.g. parent/carer, member of staff etc.

In accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 your personal details will not be used for any other purpose, will not be made public or shared with any other organisation.

This full proposal is also published on the Council's website at:
www.bathnes.gov.uk/CamertonStatutoryNoticeProposal

Copies of the full proposal can be obtained by sending an email to:
schools_organisation@bathnes.gov.uk or by calling 01225 395169 or by writing to the above address, requesting a copy.

Date representation period ends

The representation period commences on Wednesday 7 February 2018 and ends on Tuesday 6 March 2018. The deadline for responses to be received by Bath and North East Somerset Council is **23.00hrs on Tuesday 6 March 2018**. All responses received by the deadline will be made available to the Council Cabinet. We regret that we will be unable to enter into any correspondence regarding responses received.

What happens next?

At the public Cabinet meeting on 11 April 2018 the Cabinet will consider the rationale behind the proposal to close the school and all representation responses received during the representation period and decide whether to go ahead with the proposal. If the decision was made to proceed, the school would close on 31 August 2018.