



## **Consultation on the proposed closure of Westcott Church of England School**

**Open date:** 31 January 2024

**Close date:** 13 March 2024

**Name:** School Commissioning

**Email:** [westcottceconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:westcottceconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)

### **Overview**

**We want your views on the proposed closure of Westcott Church of England School, Westcott.**

It is with deep regret that we, on behalf of the Governing Board of Westcott Church of England School and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE), are seeking the views of parents and carers, staff and other stakeholders on the proposed closure of the school.

If a decision is taken to close the school, it is proposed that this would take effect on 31 August 2024.

### **Why is this being proposed?**

Westcott Church of England School is a small, rural primary school for children aged 4 to 11. The school has a published admission number of 15 with a capacity for 105 pupils.

The school has been under-subscribed for a number of years. Pupil numbers fall substantially short of the school's published admission number. As of October 2023 the school had 34 pupils, with 7 pupils across Key Stage 1 (i.e. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2).

School admissions for September 2024 currently show one first preference for Westcott Church of England School.

Ofsted's inspection in June 2022 and May 2023 recognised the school as 'Inadequate'. Since then, the school has had high teacher turnover and many pupils have left the school.

Schools are mainly funded by the number of pupils attending the school. As a result, delivery of a full and balanced curriculum at Westcott Church of England School is difficult with the small and decreasing number of children and staff.

Based on these factors, and despite the best efforts of governors, staff and the support of the Council and ODBE, we are consulting on behalf of the Governing Board on the proposal to close Westcott Church of England School.

### **What would this mean for pupils at the school?**

Should Westcott Church of England School close on 31 August 2024, parents and carers would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school.

We would manage this process. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an in-year admissions application form. Up to three preferred schools can be named.

We would aim to meet parent and carers' preferences wherever possible, but cannot make guarantees as this will depend upon vacancies at the time.

We will have a focus on pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and ensuring the right levels of support continue to be in place for pupils who need it.

### **Support with the in-year admissions process**

Our Admission Officers would be available to support families with completing in-year applications for school places for start in September 2024.

The earliest window to complete an in-year admissions application form for a September 2024 start is from 7 May to 3 June 2024.

All applications would be considered together and not on a first-come, first served basis. Applications can be made and places held before the final decision whether to close the school or not is made.

## **What would this mean for staff at the school?**

The staff group is aware of the circumstances and the recognised trade unions have been notified of the consultation.

Staff are invited to submit responses to this consultation. There will also be a separate consultation for staff from 8 February to 14 March 2024.

Staff can join the Employee Transfer Register. All affected staff will be provided with support and further information.

## **Closing a rural school**

There is a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area.

There must be evidence to show the following factors have been carefully considered:

- availability of places across the wider area
- educational offer at the school
- the impact on the community
- alternatives to closure including collaboration with other schools / trusts
- admissions and transport implications

**We have considered all these factors which are outlined in our consultation document.**

## **Related documents and links**

Before you respond to this activity, please have a look at the following document. This is available at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/westcott-ce-school](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/westcott-ce-school):

- Westcott Church of England School Consultation Document and Printed Survey

## Events to find out more

The Governing Board, with the support of the Council and the ODBE, are hosting two public meetings to find out more about the proposal on:

- **Thursday 8 February 2024 at 2pm and 6:30pm**
  - at Westcott Church of England School, High Street, Westcott, Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, HP18 0PH

Representatives from the Governing Board, Buckinghamshire Council and the ODBE and will be present.

You do not need to book to attend this event.

## How to have your say

You can tell us your views in one of the following ways:

- Complete the online survey at [www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/westcotte-school](http://www.buckinghamshire.gov.uk/westcotte-school)
- Complete, and return, the printed version of the survey
- Email us at [westcotteconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:westcotteconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
- Write to us at The School Commissioning Team, Buckinghamshire Council, 1st Floor, Walton Street Office, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1UZ

If you have any questions about this activity, please email us at [westcotteconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:westcotteconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

**Please tell us your views by 11:59pm on 13 March 2024.**

## What happens next

Westcott Church of England School Governing Board, together with the Council and the ODBE, will consider all the responses and take a decision on whether to proceed to the next stage and publish a statutory notice to close the school.

## Statutory notice and representation period

When the statutory notice is published, there is a four week period in which you can make any further representations to the Council. We would expect the representation period to run from 24 April to 22 May 2024.

## Final decision on proposed closure

The Leader of Buckinghamshire Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, will take into consideration any representations made before making a decision on the final outcome. We would expect this decision to be made in July 2024.

If the decision is taken to close the school, it is proposed that this would take effect on 31 August 2024.

## Privacy

We will use the information you provide here only for this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details. For more information about data and privacy, please see our [Privacy Policy](#).

If you have questions about data and privacy, please email us on [dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@buckinghamshire.gov.uk). Or write to our Data Protection Officer at Buckinghamshire Council, The Gateway, Gatehouse Road, Aylesbury, HP19 8FF.

## Printed consultation survey

### 1. Do you agree with the proposal to close Westcott Church of England School?

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**Please tell us the reasons for your previous answer:**

**2. Do you understand why the proposal to close Westcott Church of England School has been made?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**If 'No' or 'I don't know', please tell us why:**

**3. If you think there is anything that has not been considered when developing the proposal to close Westcott Church of England School, please tell us here:**

**4. If you have any other comments about the proposal to close Westcott Church of England School, please tell us here:**

## About you

We will use the information you provide here only for the purpose of this activity. We will store the information securely in line with data protection laws and will not share or publish any personal details.

### 5. Which of the following describe you?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- I am a parent or carer of a student at Westcott Church of England School
- I work at Westcott Church of England School
- I am a Governor / Trustee for Westcott Church of England School
- I am a student at Westcott Church of England School
- I live near Westcott Church of England School
- I work at another local school in the area
- I represent or own a business in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a community or voluntary group in Buckinghamshire
- I am an elected representative in Buckinghamshire
- I represent a Parish / Town Council or Town Committee in Buckinghamshire
- I work for Buckinghamshire Council
- Other (please give details below):

### 6. How did you find out about this consultation?

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Letter from school
- School staff briefing
- Local media (newspaper, radio or TV)
- Buckinghamshire Council website or Your Voice Bucks website
- Buckinghamshire Council newsletter
- From Buckinghamshire Council staff
- Through working at Buckinghamshire Council
- Word of mouth
- Local Community Board
- Local Councillor
- Local Parish / Town Council or Town Committee

Other (please give details below):

**7. Are you responding as an individual or on behalf of an organisation (e.g. a business or a voluntary group)?**

Please tick (✓) one option

- As an individual (go to question 9)  
 On behalf of an organisation

**On behalf of an organisation**

**8. Please provide the following details:**

Name of organisation:

Your job title:

**End of survey if responding on behalf of an organisation**

**More about you**

We want to hear from as many people as possible to understand the views and needs across Buckinghamshire. The following questions help us see if the communities we serve have had the opportunity to be heard through this activity.

All questions are optional. You can skip any questions you do not wish to answer, or you can skip all the questions by clicking 'Continue' at the bottom of the page.

**9. What is your postcode?**

We want to understand the views of people living in different areas. You don't have to provide your postcode, but it helps us plan and make considered decisions.



## 10. What is your age?

**Why we ask this:** We want to understand the experiences and views of different age groups.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Under 16
- 16 to 24
- 25 to 34
- 35 to 44
- 45 to 54
- 55 to 64
- 65 to 74
- 75 to 84
- Over 85
- Prefer not to say

## 11. Are you:

**Why we ask this:** We want to understand the experiences and views of different sexes.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

## 12. Do you consider yourself to have a disability / disabilities, impairment(s) or long term health condition(s)?

**Why we ask this:** We want to understand the experiences and views of disabled people, people with impairments and people with long-term health conditions.

Please tick (✓) all that apply

- Disability / disabilities
- Impairment(s)
- Long term health condition(s)
- No
- Prefer not to say

### 13. How would you describe your ethnicity?

**Why we ask this:** We want to understand the experiences and views of different ethnicities.

Please tick (✓) one option

- Asian - British
- Asian - Bangladeshi
- Asian - Chinese
- Asian - Indian
- Asian - Pakistani
- Any other Asian background - Please give details below
- Black - African
- Black - British
- Black - Caribbean
- Any other Black, African or Caribbean background - Please give details below
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Asian
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black African
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black British
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - White and Black Caribbean
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups - Mixed or Multiple Ethnic backgrounds British
- Any other Mixed or Multiple ethnic background - Please give details below
- White - English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British
- White - Irish
- White - Gypsy or English traveller
- White - Irish Traveller
- White - European
- Any other White background - Please give details below
- Other ethnic group - Arab
- Other ethnic group - Arab British
- Other ethnic group - Please give details below
- Prefer not to say

Please give other details here:

## **End of the survey**

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.**

Please return your completed survey by 11:59pm on Wednesday 13 March 2024. You can:

- Email it to [westcottceconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:westcottceconsultation@buckinghamshire.gov.uk)
- Post it to The School Commissioning Team, Buckinghamshire Council, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Walton Street Office, Aylesbury, Bucks, HP20 1UZ