

## Buildwas Primary School Consultation - FAQs

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The consultation on the proposal to close Buildwas Primary School with effect from 31 August 2016 runs from Monday 7 September 2015 to Sunday 18 October 2015. This FAQs document seeks to address the questions that are being raised by consultees during this period, some of which are common to a number of consultation responses. The intention is that these questions, and the answers provided, are put in the public domain – via the Council website - for all stakeholders to have access to, rather than restricting the responses to individual consultees.

The FAQs will be updated and refreshed throughout the consultation period. The final FAQs list at the end of the consultation period will be referenced within, and appended to, the report going to Shropshire Council Cabinet on 28 October 2015. It is worth noting that all of the consultation responses - emails and letters in their original form - will be made available to all Cabinet members and will form an important part of the decision making process.

1. What has the trend in pupil numbers been at schools which have been judged by Ofsted to be inadequate, but have subsequently made rapid and significant improvements?

**It is not possible to identify a clear and consistent pattern or trend in pupil numbers for Shropshire schools in the period after they have come out of this Ofsted category. There is evidence, among the schools examined, of pupil numbers both declining and increasing in this period. The factors and local circumstances influencing such trends will vary significantly from one school to the next. Equally it is difficult to determine any long term trends among the Shropshire schools examined given that the time lapsed since coming out of the Ofsted category is only a few years.**

2. As acknowledged in the consultation document, Her Majesty's Inspector has recognised that the school's post-Ofsted plan is fit for purpose and there is an indication that the school will move out of special measures when next inspected. This being the case, do you not consider that the school needs to be given time to implement its plan and for the next Ofsted inspection report to be an indicator in influencing the future of Buildwas Primary School?

**Overall standards in the school have declined over a number of years. In April 2013 the school was judged by Ofsted as Requires Improvement. A further Ofsted inspection in January 2015 judged the school Inadequate and requiring special measures. The overall effectiveness of the school is not yet good.**

**Both the Local Authority Commentary and Statement of Action and the school's Action Plan have been written to secure rapid improvement in the school. For every school that is judged to require special measures, Ofsted requires the local authority to give consideration to closure and, if the school remains open, the Department of Education's expectation is that the school becomes an academy through sponsorship arrangements.**

3. What evidence does Shropshire Council have that the opening of the new primary school in Lawley, in the Telford & Wrekin Council area, will have a negative impact on Buildwas Primary School or change the pattern in pupil numbers that have been in place for a number of years?

**There is no evidence that the new primary school opening in Lawley will impact on the pupil numbers at Buildwas Primary School. However, it is important to present for consideration the impact of this additional provision in Telford & Wrekin, which will present an alternative option for pupils whose families are resident in the catchment area of what is their host local authority.**

4. How far from Buildwas is the new primary school in Lawley, the number of school places for each year group it will have available when it opens and what the catchment area will be?

**The new school in Lawley – Lawley Village Academy - is approximately 4.4 miles from Buildwas by road. Enquiries to Telford & Wrekin Council have established that the school will have a Published Admission Number of 30 for each year group. The school opened for Reception children in September 2015. Other Key Stage 1 groups will take up places in January 2016 and all year groups in September 2016.**

**The catchment area maps for Telford & Wrekin Council primary schools can be found on the council's website at [www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3477/primary\\_school\\_information\\_booklet\\_20162017\\_complete\\_booklet](http://www.telford.gov.uk/downloads/file/3477/primary_school_information_booklet_20162017_complete_booklet) .**

5. How were pupil numbers attending Buildwas Primary School affected by the opening of Lightmoor Village Primary School in September 2010?

**The numbers on roll at Buildwas Primary School, since September 2010, have been as follows (using the October school census figures):**

<b>2010</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>(doesn't include full reception intake)</b>
<b>2011</b>	<b>82</b>	
<b>2012</b>	<b>89</b>	
<b>2013</b>	<b>88</b>	
<b>2014</b>	<b>72</b>	

**It is not possible to determine whether the opening of Lightmoor Village Primary School has had any impact on the pupil numbers at Buildwas Primary School in the subsequent years.**

6. In the event that the decision is made to close the school, will pupils be able to be placed in local non-denominational schools where they will be appropriately challenged?

**The consultation document notes that the closure of Buildwas Primary school would remove 84 non-faith primary school places in this area of**

**Shropshire (based on the school's capacity). However, neighbouring local authority maintained non-faith schools have unfilled places. Further non-faith places are available within Telford & Wrekin local authority area.**

7. In the consultation document you make reference to the point that around half of the pupils come from outside the catchment area. Given that this raises funds for pupils across Shropshire through the Dedicated Schools Grant, brings additional people into Shropshire and boosts the local economy, could this be viewed as a positive thing?

**The fact that pupils from outside the area draw down Dedicated Schools Grant for Shropshire schools is welcomed. The issue for Buildwas Primary School is that because the school is failing to provide a good standard of education for its pupils, it does not provide value for money.**

**If the decision is ultimately taken to close the school, and parents of out-of-area pupils express a preference for a place in another Shropshire school, the retention of the Dedicated School Grant in Shropshire schools will make these schools more cost effective by taking up unfilled spaces.**

8. The consultation document fails to acknowledge that Telford & Wrekin children will also be affected by the proposal. Why are you positively discriminating against Telford & Wrekin children by failing to recognise that they are going to be impacted by the decision to close Buildwas Primary School? Can you please explain why it feels that you have given up on us and are only considering parents in Shropshire?

**Shropshire Council has a duty to provide education places for school-aged children who are resident in the county. This responsibility does not extend to children resident in the Telford & Wrekin Council area. The consultation document is required to therefore state how Shropshire Council will meet this statutory responsibility for its own residents.**

**However, parents of pupils at the school resident in the Telford & Wrekin local authority area will, as with the Shropshire based parents, have the opportunity to apply for places in alternative schools in Shropshire in the event that the decision is taken to close the school.**

9. Shropshire Council's own childcare sufficiency assessment states that when the early years entitlement is extended to 30 hours in 2017, the local authority will be unable to meet its statutory duty to provide places to all children. It further states that this pressure will be particularly felt in rural areas and that the Broseley area has already been identified as currently having a shortage of places. How can the local authority justify closing a high performing nursery when a report to the Young People's Scrutiny Committee on 15 July 2015 states that more places will be needed than can be provided?

**At present the Department for Education requires every local authority to secure early education places for every child. The government has announced its intention to increase the free early years entitlement from**

the current level, 15 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year, to 30 hours each week for 38 weeks each year.

Local authorities are awaiting confirmation of the eligibility criteria for this increased free early years entitlement. The entitlement is likely to be limited to families meeting certain criteria in relation to their earnings or the number of hours they are working. Until such time as the criteria is clarified then it is difficult to assess the likely level of demand for additional places which will result from the extension of the entitlement from September 2017. Shropshire is not included in a pilot scheme running in some areas of the country from September 2016.

Broseley is one of a very small number of places around the county where there is pressure on the number of available places. While currently fulfilling statutory duties in the town, it's recognised that further places may be required prior to 2017 in order to continue to do so. The local authority is working closely with the schools and the existing early years providers in the town to develop a plan that meets current statutory duties in the short term and will help ensure that this is continued when the entitlement is increased.

Not all parents will see Broseley as being the most convenient alternative early year's provision for them. There is early years provision based at other Shropshire schools which may be more accessible to some parents including:

- Much Wenlock Primary School Nursery
- Little Acorns Montessori Nursery, Barrow 1618 CE Free School
- Childrensworld Nursery, Cressage CE Primary School.

When assessing the future of the nursery at Buildwas Primary School the local authority has considered the number of Shropshire children currently regularly accessing the nursery (three in the Summer term 2015), the predicted future numbers of children who may attend and the additional sustainability funding which is having to be provided to the school over and above the income generated by pupil numbers. With the developing plans it is believed that the overall demand for early years places from Shropshire children in the local area can be met and every child will have access to a good quality childcare place.

10. Do you agree that given sufficient time Buildwas could make the improvements required to come out of special measures and be rated 'Good' by Ofsted once again, that this may attract more pupils to Buildwas Primary School in the future and secure long term sustainability?

For a school judged to be Inadequate and requiring special measures the local authority has to make clear what action it would take to rapidly improve the provision and outcomes for children currently at the school. It also has to give careful consideration to the longer term plans for securing effective and sustainable provision for children in the area.

**Both the Local Authority Commentary and Statement of Action and the school's Action Plan have been written to secure rapid improvement in the school. For every school that is judged to require special measures, Ofsted requires the local authority to give consideration to closure and, if the school remains open, the Department of Education's expectation is that the school becomes an academy through sponsorship arrangements.**

11. Should we as parents not be able to choose the primary school we feel is right for our children to be educated in?

**The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (SSFA) allows parents to express a preference regarding the school they would like their child to attend. However, this does not give an absolute right to choose a school because the law states that the local authority need not meet the preference if to do so would 'prejudice the provision of efficient education or the efficient use of resources'.**

12. What alternative local authority maintained nursery provision is available which is comparable to the one provided at Buildwas Primary School (graded 'Good' by Ofsted in January 2015) as this is the only one in the catchment area?

**The local authority currently funds places at the following local providers rated by Ofsted to be at least of a 'Good' standard:**

- **Puddleducks Nursery, John Wilkinson Primary School, Broseley**
- **Little Owls, Broseley CE Primary School**
- **Much Wenlock Primary School Nursery**
- **Little Acorns Montessori Nursery, Barrow 1618 CE Free School**
- **Childrensworld Nursery, Cressage CE Primary School.**

**This list does not include details on providers in the Telford & Wrekin Council area, as Shropshire is not statutorily responsible for this provision.**

13. If Buildwas Primary School closes where will my children meet their friends and neighbours?

**It would not be appropriate for the local authority to advise parents where their children should meet their friends and neighbours. As with any change children will have the opportunities to continue to meet with existing friends, as well as being able to form new friendships in other school communities**

14. What will be the financial impact on Buildwas village as a result of a possible closure of the primary school?

**The amount of income the pupils and parents of the primary school bring into the local economy of Buildwas village is not known. The Buildwas Village Hall Committee has advised that 'just under half the income that we receive comes directly from the school or indirectly via parents of pupils at the school who book the Hall as a venue for children's parties'. Any**

**information that can be provided, via the consultation process, to inform this issue would be welcomed.**

15. Do you accept that the constant use of the words 'could', 'might' and 'may' in the consultation document could also be applied to confirm the hugely positive prospects for Buildwas Primary School?

**We consider the language used in the consultation document to be balanced and objective. Words such as 'could', 'might' and 'may' confirm potential based on current information regarding the school.**

16. The consultation document makes reference to a number of environmental factors relating to the school such as the size of the buildings and grounds. Can you please clarify whether statutory guidance dictates that these measures apply to old school buildings or just new builds?

**The current premises guidance document for primary schools is the Department for Education Building Bulletin 103 (Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools), which is based on provisions contained within the Education (Schools Premises) Regulations 1996, School Standards and Framework Act 1998, Education (School Premises) Regulations 1999 and School Premises (England) Regulations 2102.**

**The latter regulations 'apply to all schools maintained by local authorities in England'. The Building Bulletin states that the 'guidance is generally written to apply to new buildings in primary and secondary schools. However, the principles apply to all type of mainstream schools.....and most of the details can be used when considering schools with existing buildings, whether they are remodelled or unaltered'.**

17. In your consultation paper you state that declining pupil numbers will impact on the school budget and ability to deliver effective education. Has there been any issue with the school not having a balanced set of accounts?

**While the school reported a modest deficit budget at the end of March 2013, it has reported a surplus budget in each of the last two years ending March 2014 and March 2015. In the current financial year, including brought forward reserves, the school is planning for the budget to break even in March 2016.**

18. Do you recognise any catalyst effect that the Council has had on any potential falling numbers since the announcement?

**Consultation on the future of a school has to involve key stakeholders, in particular parents, and it is recognised that this can inevitably lead to concern. Shropshire Council has acted to support and advise parents to avoid a potential outflow of children. Since the decision on 13 July 2015 to consult on the proposal that Buildwas Primary School should close, parents of children on roll at the school who have enquired about the availability of places at other Shropshire schools, have been provided with**

advice and an information sheet emphasising the importance of not moving their child at this time.

The information provided explains that there are various stages before a decision would be made about the future of the school. The leaflet also explains the timescales involved, the financial impact on the school if pupils transfer prematurely, that children transferring out of the school at this stage could potentially make the school unsustainable and that if the decision is ultimately taken to close the school, that the children would experience a smoother transition if they move at an appropriate time with their friends and fellow pupils.

19. Could you clarify whether the proportion of children within the catchment area/ outside the catchment area has changed compared to previous years because if there has been no change why has this been raised as an issue? What is the actual split between pupils living in Shropshire and Telford & Wrekin?

Year	Shropshire		Telford & Wrekin	
	Pupils	%	Pupils	%
2010	35	55.56%	28	44.44%
2011	41	50.00%	41	50.00%
2012	43	48.31%	46	51.69%
2013	43	48.86%	45	51.14%
2014	33	45.83%	39	54.17%

20. In relation to the declining pupil numbers referenced in the consultation document, Department for Education information shows that there are other schools in Shropshire with fewer pupils on roll. At what level does Buildwas Primary School become financially unviable in relation to its pupil numbers?

**There is no exact number on roll at which Buildwas Primary School, or any other school, becomes financially unviable. The smaller a school gets the less flexibility it has in managing its non-fixed expenditure.**

21. Pupil attendance at Buildwas Primary School is amongst the best in Shropshire. How does this compare to the other schools that will take pupils in the event that the decision is taken to close the school?

**Based on data provided by the Shropshire schools in summer term 2015 school census, Buildwas Primary School ranks 69<sup>th</sup> highest out of 121 primary schools in terms of attendance. Of the neighbouring schools, John Wilkinson Primary ranks 7<sup>th</sup>, Broseley CE Primary ranks 18<sup>th</sup>, St Lucia's Primary ranks 29<sup>th</sup>, Much Wenlock Primary ranks 84<sup>th</sup> and Christ Church CE Primary ranks 115<sup>th</sup>.**

22. Can you list for me ANY school within Shropshire that hasn't a high traffic volume in and around the school at the beginning and end of the school day? What are the Shropshire statistics per school of complaints and accidents due to start and end of school day traffic?

**No comprehensive data in respect of this is held by the local authority. Individual schools may keep records of such statistics.**