

Consultation Paper – October 2006

Future of Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School

Background Information

Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School is located on a restricted site on High Street in the village. This is a Church of England Controlled primary school with no nursery provision attached to it. The school buildings date from 1835 and have limited teaching and ancillary spaces. There is one full sized classroom and two very small teaching areas. There is no school hall. Office and staff facilities are under-sized. Outdoor accommodation is very limited.

The previous Headteacher retired in July 2006. The Governing Body has advertised the post twice but has failed to shortlist and has therefore been unable to interview for a new Headteacher.

Current and Forecast Pupil Numbers

The Net Capacity of the school is 47. This indicates that the premises could provide facilities for the education of 47 five to eleven year olds.

Currently, the school has 21 pupils on roll. This can be analysed by year groups thus:

	R	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
No of Pupils (projected Jan 2007)	1	1		5	7	2	3

The projections for the next five years indicate a marginal decline on the present numbers.

	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Pupil Projections	20	21	17	15

The current number of surplus places is 26 (or 55%).

Future Housing Developments

The potential for growth of the school in the near future, analysed through planning applications for developments within the normal area of the school, has been assessed. There are no significant planning applications which would affect the pupil projections for the school.

Educational Considerations

Educational outcomes are the result of a complex interplay of various factors including educational resources available, the nature, make-up and commitment of the staffing of a school, and the quality of leadership and management within a school.

It has been difficult to recruit a head teacher to this very small school; at the last attempt there were no applicants for the post.

The accommodation places practical limits on some aspects of learning, notably physical development for all pupils, and especially for those in the Foundation Stage. The school is due for OfSTED inspection.

Despite the intensive support of the Local Authority, the governing body has been unable to recruit a permanent Head Teacher for this school. The projected further reduction in pupil numbers is likely to place greater pressure on the school in terms of its potential to provide pupils of all ages and abilities with a good quality of education and the opportunity for pupils to interact with other children of their own age.

Personnel Issues

The existing staffing establishment of the school is Headteacher plus 1.6 full time equivalent (FTE) Teachers, 15 hours of Teaching Assistant support, 20 hours of administrative support, 8 hours of ICT Technician support and 2 Midday Supervisors. At present there is a vacancy for the Headteacher post.

Other Schools in the Stoney Middleton Area

The two nearest schools to Stoney Middleton are Eyam CE(C) Primary School and Curbar Primary School, both within two miles. Grindleford Primary School is approximately three miles from Stoney Middleton.

	Net Capacity	Number of pupils	Projected number of pupils		
		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10
Curbar Primary	70	49	47	47	40
Eyam CE (C) Primary	70	55	55	59	63
Grindleford Primary	70	51	48	43	42

Options Appraisal

In addressing the position of the school there are two clear options:

i) **Status Quo**

The Governors of the school could try for a third time to appoint a new Headteacher and sustain the existing numbers on roll in anticipation of a new direction and impetus from the new appointment to take the school forward and improve standards. This does not address the issue of very low pupil numbers at the school and the pressure this places on staff to deliver a broad, balanced and well-resourced curriculum;

ii) **Closure**

The closure of a school is a significant step and one to be assessed very carefully before such action is taken. However, the number of pupils on roll at Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School and the projections for the future suggest that this school will struggle to improve its current position. The resource implications in sustaining this school are serious. There are two alternative schools with spare places both within two miles of Stoney Middleton. Therefore, this is the preferred option proposed by the Local Authority.

If this school were to close it is suggested that the School's normal area (sometimes referred to as the catchment area) should be transferred into that of Curbar Primary school. Parents of existing and future pupils would still have the option of expressing a preference for their child to attend either of the neighbouring schools or, indeed, any other school of their choice.

Financial Considerations

The annual budget for Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School is £123,075 (excluding rates). The cost per pupil is £5,678 whilst the average cost per pupil for the County is approximately £2,640. This includes specific weightings for small school management, small school and very small school protection. It is clear that there would be budgetary savings if the School were to be closed. Any budgetary saving would be recycled into the Individual Schools' Budget and distributed to all Derbyshire schools.

The Legal Framework

The statutory procedures relating to school closures are contained within the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act and advice issued to Local Education Authorities in the form of DfES Guidance 0396/2003 relating to the 'Organisation of School Places'. Any proposal to close and replace schools must be preceded by a process of public consultation with all interested parties lasting at least one month following which the Authority will determine, in the light of reaction to the proposal, whether or not to proceed with publication of formal statutory notices. There follows a statutory six week consultation period during which written objections or letters of support to the proposal may be sent to the Local Education Authority. If there are no objections, the County Council may determine to proceed with the proposals.

If a formal notice is published and objections are received, the Local Authority is required to forward such objections together with any letters of support to the School Organisation Committee, along with its own observations within one month of the end of the statutory notice period. The School Organisation Committee will consider the proposal in relation to the Authority's School Organisation Plan in reaching its decision - a decision that must have the unanimous agreement of the represented groups. The School Organisation Committee is made up of representatives of the Local Authority, Schools, the Church of England and Roman Catholic Dioceses, and the Learning and Skills Council (the latter only takes part in decisions involving post-16 education). In the event that a unanimous decision of the groups is not reached by the School Organisation Committee, the proposal will be referred to an independent adjudicator, appointed by the Government, for a decision.

Conclusion

The closure of a school is a serious decision requiring long and detailed consideration of all issues. The current quality of education at Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School is a consideration in this proposal as is the school's ability to appoint a good quality Headteacher and the small number of pupils on roll. The viability of the education curriculum must be called into question with the further predicted decrease in pupil numbers. The Local Authority must also give due consideration to achieving value for money for all Derbyshire pupils. The cost per pupil is significantly higher when there are so few pupils and cannot be justified when there is alternative provision close by. Therefore, the Authority would propose to close Stoney Middleton CE(C) Primary School with effect from 20 July 2007.

The Next Step

The County Council would like to receive the views of all interested parties concerned prior to determining whether or not to proceed to the publication of a formal notice on the proposal.

As part of this consultation, arrangements are being made to hold consultation meetings with staff, Governors, and parents/members of the community at Stoney Middleton CE Primary School on the date below:

2 November 2006

Staff	3.30 pm
Governors	5.00 pm
Parents and Members of the Community	6.30 pm

All responses should be addressed to;

Strategic Director for Children and Younger Adults (ref. DEV/DAH),
Development Section,
Chatsworth Hall,
Chesterfield Road,
Matlock
DE4 3FW

Responses by email should be addressed to dee.hill@derbyshire.gov.uk

The closing date for receipt of letters is 27 November 2006