

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Subject: The Future of Stansted CEP School

Decision No: 15/00009

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: none

Electoral Division: Malling North

**Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to close Stansted Church of England Primary School with effect from 31 August 2015.**

**Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree to:**

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Stansted Church of England Primary School**
- (ii) And, subject to no objections not already considered, implement the proposal to close the School with effect from 31 August 2015**

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Stansted Church of England Primary School (CEPS) is a small Primary school in the north of Tonbridge and Malling District with a published admissions number (PAN) of 15 pupils and a total capacity of 105 pupils. At the time of writing the school has a total of 14 pupils on roll. The Headteacher has received confirmation that another 7 pupils will leave the school after the Easter break, leaving a maximum of 7 pupils on roll from term five. Stansted CEPS is confirmed as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order, October 2014.

1.2 Due regard has been given to the presumption against closure of rural schools as set out under section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in that KCC has explored:

- Alternatives to closure including the potential for federation with another local school, or conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust, or umbrella trust to increase the school's viability.

- The scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities for family and adult learning, healthcare and community internet access have also been considered;
  - The availability and cost of transport to other schools; and
  - The likely effect of closure of the school on the local community.
- 1.3 The school was inspected by Ofsted on 3rd July 2013 and placed into Special Measures. When a school fails its Ofsted inspection it is deemed not to be providing a satisfactory education and that leadership, including Governance has not been able to deliver a good level of education to its pupils.
- 1.4 KCC put in place an Interim Executive Board (IEB) in May 2014 to replace the governing body, which was approved by the Secretary of State for Education. This followed a period in which the Governing Body was provided with the opportunity to make the necessary improvements following the unsatisfactory Ofsted inspection.
- 1.5 Since being placed in Special Measures by Ofsted, Stansted has received a high level of external support from both the Local Authority and the Diocese of Rochester. This includes but is not limited to support from both an Early Years Advisor and Senior Early Years Advisor, support and advice from the Literacy Adviser and a Primary Improvement Adviser providing fortnightly support visits, advice and guidance. The advisers worked alongside the then Interim Headteacher in monitoring improvements in the school's work.
- 1.6 The Interim Headteacher and staff at Stansted also had access to a wide range of training and briefings and additional support provided by the Diocese and other local schools. KCC has also provided additional funding towards the costs of employing teaching staff. Every effort has been made to improve this school so that parents would not lose confidence.
- 1.7 During this period the local authority explored the possible federation of Stansted with other, more successful schools. Based on the professional advice of the Senior Improvement Advisers for North and West Kent and the Diocese of Rochester, three local Primary schools and one secondary school were approached about possible federation with Stansted CEPS. All of the schools approached declined to enter into discussions about federation and expressed concerns over the future viability of Stansted CEPS on the basis of low pupil numbers. The IEB formally approached the Diocese of Rochester about the possibility of converting the school to a sponsored academy as part of a multi-academy trust. This was formally ruled out by the Diocese of Rochester Board of Education.
- 1.8 Despite significant external support the school has been in Special Measures for over 18 months. Following the fourth HMI Section 8 monitoring visit in December 2014, which found that the school was not making reasonable progress towards the removal of Special Measures, the County Council, the IEB for Stansted CEP School and the Diocese of Rochester agreed to commence a public consultation on a proposal to close Stansted CEP School with effect from 31 August 2015.

- 1.9 Due regard has been given to the presumption against closure of rural schools as set out under section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

## **2. Background**

### Leadership and Teaching Structure

- 2.1 At the time of the Ofsted Inspection in July 2013, the Headteacher had been on long-term sick leave for a number of months. The Senior Teacher managed the school for the remainder of the spring term. When the Headteacher's absence continued, two Headteachers from local schools provided day-to-day support from March 2013.
- 2.2 KCC worked with the Governing Body of Stansted CEP School until concerns about its ability to improve necessitated a request to the Secretary of State for an Interim Executive Board (IEB).
- 2.3 An IEB made up of experienced members was appointed by the Secretary of State on 22 May 2014.
- 2.4 The IEB's remit was to ensure Stansted CEP School improved its quality of provision, and its pupils achieved good outcomes. Since its inception in May 2014, the IEB has struggled to recruit to key staffing posts and has not been able to achieve a sufficient level of progress.
- 2.5 KCC recognises that a number of factors including, falling standards and pupil numbers, sickness absence and the inability to recruit staff to key posts have contributed to the decline of the school. In an attempt to attract a high calibre leadership candidate the previous Governing Body had issued a fixed term contract to an Interim Headteacher at a substantially higher grade than the substantive salary would offer. Despite this significant investment, the new leadership made insufficient progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning at Stansted CEP School. Following a period of absence, the IEB confirmed that this Interim Headteacher would not be returning to the school in February 2015.
- 2.6 Following this, the IEB and KCC officers worked together to identify an experienced Headteacher from Brenchley and Matfield CEPS to provide interim leadership until the end of this academic year.
- 2.7 The current structure of the school is such that there is now one permanent member of teaching staff and two Teaching Assistants delivering provision across all year groups from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 2.

### School Standards

- 2.8 Stansted CEP School was required to improve the quality of teaching so that it is typically good or better through the school; improve leadership and management; and improve pupils' achievement, particularly in writing.
- 2.9 There were some improvements to the phonics outcomes for six year olds in the past year, given that only 22% achieved the standard the previous year. However, following the 2014 National Curriculum assessment tests it was clear that Stansted pupils were still under-achieving compared to pupils nationally.
- 2.10 Key Stage 1: at the end of Year 2, the number of pupils achieving the expected level of achievement (Level 2B+) was considerably below the

national average on all measures. There were no pupils exceeding the expected level of achievement (L3+).

#### Key Stage 1 L2B+

<b>2014 (All)</b>	<b>Stansted (%)</b>	<b>National (%)</b>
Reading	28.6	80.6
Writing	57.1	69.7
Maths	71.4	79.9

#### Key Stage 1 L3+

<b>2014 (All)</b>	<b>Stansted (%)</b>	<b>National (%)</b>
Reading	0	30.5
Writing	0	16.1
Maths	0	24.2

- 2.11 Key Stage 2: at the end of Year 6, the number of pupils achieving the expected level of achievement (Level 4+) was considerably below the national average on all measures. The number of pupils exceeding the expected level of achievement (L5+) was also considerably below the national average.

#### Key Stage 2 L4+

<b>2014 (All)</b>	<b>Stansted (%)</b>	<b>National (%)</b>
Reading	77.8	89
Writing	55.6	85
Maths	77.8	86
GPS	55.6	76

#### Key Stage 2 L5

<b>2014 (All)</b>	<b>Stansted (%)</b>	<b>National (%)</b>
Reading	55.6	50
Writing	11.1	33
Maths	44.4	42
GPS	33.3	51

- 2.12 When visiting schools in special measures, HMI judgements take into account the progress the school has made since they last visited the school. This will include the impact of actions taken by the school to date, the most recent data on attainment and progress and the school's own monitoring of the quality of teaching.
- 2.13 In making their judgement on Stansted CEP School in December 2014, HMI looked at the school's capacity for sustained improvement. In this case, HMI felt that the progress made by the school was not sufficient. HMI noted that "there is very little evidence that the current group of children in Reception are making reasonable progress" and that "standards remained below average at the end of Key Stage 2 last year". HMI also noted the difficulty faced by staff with teaching a wide range of ages and abilities, and how this affected Key Stage 2 and Reception children.
- 2.14 The Department for Education (DFE) School Organisation Guidance for Proposers and Decision-makers (January 2014) states that the Secretary of State may direct a LA to close a maintained school requiring special measures under Section 68 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This will usually be done where there is no prospect of the school making sufficient improvements and where there is a sufficient supply of alternative school places in the area.

#### Pupil Numbers

- 2.15 Currently there are 14 pupils on roll. However, taking into consideration confirmed moves there will be 7 pupils on roll after Easter 2015. In addition the school has been advised by a number of other parents about the possibility of their child leaving the school after Easter.

- 2.16 The number of children joining Stansted CEP School each year is very small and these low numbers are not expected to increase. Pupil numbers have reduced significantly over recent years as exemplified in the table below.

**Reception Year Preference Data for Stansted CEP School:**

Year	PAN	1st	2nd	3rd	Total
2015	15	2	7	3	12
2014	15	5	8	6	19
2013	15	8	3	6	17
2012	15	10	5	3	18
2011	12	13	13	5	31
2010	12	7	4	7	18

**Number of pupils on Roll at Stansted CEP School**

Census	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Spring	74	78	67	56	56
Autumn	66	81	68	58	35

- 2.17 The consultation process to discontinue Stansted CEPS overlapped with the 2015/16 Primary school admissions round. KCC notified parents expressing a preference for Stansted for September 2015 Reception year about the proposal to discontinue Stansted CEP School. This was in line with the duty under the Admissions Code (December 2014) to ensure that admissions arrangements are fair and transparent, and ensured that parents can make a fully informed decision for the place for their child. Those parents were informed of the rights of all parents in Kent to amend their preferences until the 6th February 2015.
- 2.18 The majority of schools' funding is based on pupil numbers and the decline in numbers results in a corresponding decline in funds available to the school. In the event that the school remains open, the scale of reduction for the 2015/16 budget will further affect the school's ability to deliver the necessary improvements and to recruit and retain staff. This increases the concerns over the school's viability.

Displaced pupils

- 2.19 The local authority recognises that this proposal has caused concern to parents and carers and pupils at Stansted. In order to reduce the uncertainty KCC approached schools within the locality to identify where there were vacancies in the relevant year groups. The Admissions Code (December 2014) places a duty upon the local authority to collaborate with schools to secure provision for pupils in the area in the event of a potential school closure. Prior to the commencement of the consultation on 15 January parents and carers were provided with an offer of an alternative school place. This offer was made according to the 'nearest appropriate school' to the pupil's address. A summary of places offered is shown in the table below. Parents and carers were able to accept or reject their child's offer until 30 January 2015. Parents and carers were also free to contact any other school to seek a place and details of spaces within the locality at the time of writing were provided. Seven offers of alternative places were accepted by 30 January 2015.

## Offers made to pupils on roll at Stansted CEP School

School	Ofsted	Total	R	1	2	3	4	5	6
West Kingsdown CEPS	3 RI	23	4	4	5	2	4	2	2
New Ash Green	2 Good	3		1			1	1	
Vigo Village	2 Good	2			1		1		
Langafel	3 RI	2	1		1				
Borough Green	2 Good	3	1			1		1	
Seal CEPS	2 Good	2			1	1			
<b>Total</b>		<b>35</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>

### Travel

- 2.20 In the event of closure we recognise that there may be an impact upon the length of journeys between home to school for some pupils on roll. At the time of consultation there were 35 children on roll, of those, 10 pupils have an address within the parish of Stansted, 25 live outside the parish, at distances ranging from 0.5 miles to in excess of 10 miles. Of the 25 from outside the parish; 12 children live in West Kingsdown; 3 children live in excess of 6 miles from the school (Sevenoaks or Maidstone).
- 2.21 Home to school transport will be provided in accordance with Kent County Council's published policies, with individual cases being considered on their merits. An assessment has been undertaken of the potential transport costs for pupils remaining at Stansted CEPS.

### Religious Denomination

- 2.22 In respect of the religious denomination of Stansted Church of England Primary School under Section 18(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 it is not possible to alter the character of a maintained school if that alteration would mean that the School would change or lose its religious character. Thus, the only way to open a non-religious school on the same site as the current religious school is to close the current School and then go through the procedure for opening a new school.
- 2.23 In the event that the closure of the school proceeds and the Interim Executive Board, or the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education following its dissolution, wish to dispose of the school site, there are specific tests which would need to be followed under Schedule 22 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998. This would include the Secretary of State's determination of whether to establish an academy on the school site. It should be noted however that the Secretary of State has not to date exercised her right to issue an Academy Order which would require the conversion of Stansted CEP School to an academy within a set time frame.

### The Local Community

- 2.24 Within a radius of three miles of Stansted Church of England Primary School there are 15 alternative schools: 7 Community Primary Schools, 1 Voluntary Controlled Infant School, 1 Voluntary Controlled Junior School, 1 Voluntary Aided Primary School, 1 Voluntary Aided Roman Catholic Primary School, 1 Free School and 3 Primary Academies.

- 2.25 The Parish of Stansted has a village hall which is within close proximity of the school and local church. Community activities involving the school are listed below:
- The Horticultural Society runs three shows a year which have classes for children and has always been well supported by the School. It is most unlikely that any entries will be received if the school closes.
  - The annual May Fair and May Queen have been organised by the school. The May Queen opens the Fairseat and Stansted village fetes.
  - The School has in recent years run the village Bonfire Night celebrations.
  - On Armistice Day (if a weekday) a special service has been held at the War Memorial attended by the children and wreaths laid by the school and Parish Council.
  - The Village Hall benefits from hiring to the school for events such as the May Fair, Bonfire Night and children's parties.
  - The monthly Village Market was used by the school to teach the children how to spend money, and at Christmas they came and sang carols. The parents at the school were valued customers when they dropped off their children.
- 2.26 Stansted School building and the site are owned by the Diocese of Rochester. The playing fields are owned by Stansted Parish Council and currently occupied under licence by KCC. The site is also currently used for community facilities for a weekly Pilates class and ad hoc prayer group. In the event of school closure, the Diocese of Rochester will consider current community usage and the future usage of the school buildings.
- 2.27 KCC Officers considered the potential for an extended school offering additional community based facilities. It was the view of Officers that this would not significantly increase the viability or potential income generation of the school and it was acknowledged that the school is adjacent to the village hall, which provides a range of community facilities.
- 2.28 Section 4 of this report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 16 January 2015 and 6 March 2015.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 This is a proposal to close Stansted CEP School from 31 August 2015.

**a) Capital** – (Premises) Stansted CEP School building and site is owned by the Diocese of Rochester. The playing fields are owned by Stansted Parish Council and currently occupied under licence by KCC. In the event of school closure the licence to occupy the playing fields would cease. KCC have been made aware that the Parish Council would not permit access to the site across their land and nor would the adjacent landowner. The estimated cost of reinstating the land is approximately £132,000.

Subject to the decision to discontinue the school, KCC would enter into discussions with the Diocese of Rochester and Stansted Parish Council over the future of the school site and playing fields respectively.

In the event that the Diocese of Rochester wishes to seek the disposal of the school building or future development of the site, KCC will request that the Secretary of State to exercise his/her powers under sub-paragraph 4B of Part II of Schedule 22 SSFA 1998. These powers allow the Secretary of State, amongst other things, to direct the trustees to pay KCC as the Secretary of State may specify the whole or any part of the value, as at the date of the direction, of the whole or any part of the land. Consideration will be given as to whether KCC's previous capital investment acquires 'Enhanced Land' status, which would necessitate the Diocese to give KCC notice of any intention to dispose of the site and enable KCC to seek recovery of some or all of the proceeds from the same. Should the application be successful the monies recouped will be used to invest in other education establishments.

**b) Revenue** - The budget for Stansted CEP School for 2014/15 was based on 59 pupils. In the event that the school remains open, the budget for 2015/16 will be based on 35 pupils. This will result in a reduction to the school's formula delegated budget of approximately £70,000.

Stansted CEP School is following the standard restructuring and redundancy procedure. In the event of closure staff with over two years' service will be eligible for redundancy pay.

Subject to a decision to discontinue the school, the local authority will work with the IEB and Interim Headteacher to ensure that any residual delegated budget and resources are secured for the benefit of pupils at local schools.

**c) Transport costs** - An analysis has been undertaken of the travel to school distances for those schools which have been offered as an alternative place, including the potential impact of eligibility for transport and likely costs implications to the local authority. Home to school transport will be provided in accordance with Kent County Council's published policies with individual cases being considered on their merits.

An assessment was undertaken of potential transport costs for those pupils that remain at Stansted CEPS, based on assumptions over the likely destination school for those pupils. This analysis indicates a potential annual cost of up to £5,700 for a maximum of two years. Therefore the estimated total cost of providing transport is estimated at up to £11,400. Any actual costs would be based upon eligibility of pupils at the time of application.

### **3. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition "to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places" as set out in 'Bold Steps for Kent'.

### **4. Legal Implications**

- 4.1 KCC is aware that Stansted CEP School is considered a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order, October 2014 and recognises that there is a presumption against closure of rural schools.



This does not mean that a rural school must never close, but when formulating a proposal, the proposer must carefully consider the criteria set out under section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

- 4.2 Under section 16(3) of the EIA 2006 a proposer of a school closure must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State. The current guidance 'School Organisation Guidance for proposers and decision-makers (January 2014)' published by the Department for Education (DfE) sets out the five stage statutory process for the discontinuance of a school.
- 4.3 Schedule 2 of The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 sets out the information which must be included in a proposal to close a school.

## 5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to this proposal have been complied with including the special requirements in relation to the presumption against closure of rural schools as set out under section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 5.2 Parents of Stansted pupils were invited to an information meeting on 15 January to hear our intention to commence a consultation on the proposal to close the school. The parents of any pupils with a Statement or Education, Health and Care Plan of SEN received a specific letter inviting parents to have discussions with their child's SEN Placement Officer.
- 5.3 The consultation was carried out by KCC from 16 January 2015 to 6 March 2015. A consultation document was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment which can be obtained from KCC's website. The consultation document was distributed to statutory stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:
- The parents of all pupils attending Stansted CEP School, staff and members of the Interim Executive Board
  - The Department for Education
  - The Diocese of Rochester, Canterbury and Southwark
  - Elected Members (Kent County Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough and Parish Councils)
  - Local MP
  - Trade Unions
  - Local Children's Centres and pre-school providers
  - Schools in Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks area
  - National Association for Small Schools
  - Local Libraries in the Tonbridge and Malling area
  - KCC Community Engagement Officer
- 5.4 All stakeholders were able to access copies of these documents on the KCC website. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was provided. A consultation meeting for parents was held on 4 February at Stansted CEP School. A summary of the discussion is attached at Appendix 1.

- 5.5 Stansted Parish Council called an Extraordinary Parish Council meeting on 26 January 2014 where the future of Stansted CEP School was discussed. KCC were in attendance including the Director for Education Planning and Access, the Area Education Officer for West Kent and the Senior Improvement Adviser for West Kent.
- 5.6 Following the closure of the consultation period a total of 84 responses were received from members of the public who have multiple interests or involvement with the school including responses from parents and carers, pupils, former parents, former pupils, current and ex-residents of Stansted and Fairseat, former governors, local borough councillors and anonymous responses. In total 2 respondents were in support and 82 objected to the proposal to close Stansted School.
- 5.7 Of the 84 responses five were received from Parish Councils (four objections and one in favour). Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (TMBC) has provided a view on this proposal. In addition three local TMBC councillors expressed personal views about the proposal. A complete set of responses received have been passed to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform for his consideration. A summary of written comments received is provided at Appendix 2.

## **6. Response to specific points raised in the consultation process**

### Anticipated capital investment

- 6.1 Stansted Parish Council requested that elected members be furnished with information on the anticipated capital that will be spent on schools in the surrounding area over the next 5 years.
- 6.2 The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015-19 sets out our commissioning intentions over a five year period. The plan is reviewed every year. In terms of increasing capacity within the area surrounding Stansted CEP School there have been no projects identified within the West Kent and North Kent districts respectively.
- 6.3 Capital expenditure will be incurred by nationally funded initiatives such as the Priority School Building Programme (PSBP) which is addressing the needs of schools most in need of urgent repair; and the universal infant free school meals capital funding allocations to support schools implementing universal infant free school meals.
- 6.4 The PSBP will support improvements at the following schools within 5 miles of Stansted CEP School, Culverstone Green Primary School (PSBP 1) 1.8 miles; Platt CEP School (PSBP 2) 3.1 miles. These schemes are funded direct from the Education Funding Agency.

### New Housing

- 6.5 Throughout the consultation period many respondents expressed their view that future housing would impact positively upon Stansted CEP School roll.

Respondents made reference to housing applications in the Downs Ward and Culverstone Valley.

- 6.6 Over the period 2008-2013, 11 new dwellings were completed in the Downs Ward. There is currently planning permission for the construction of a further 108 dwellings in the ward. Of that total, 91 dwellings are on a single site in Ryarsh – these are expected to be occupied in 2019 and development contributions are secured towards the expansion of Ryarsh Primary from this site when it is required.
- 6.7 There are currently no further sites allocated for housing within the Ward by Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council; there are currently 4 applications for new dwellings within the ward for consideration by TMBC, two of these include the demolition of existing dwellings.
- 6.8 Many of the permissions in the Culverstone Valley involve the demolition and replacement of existing dwellings, the expected pupil product from these dwellings is less than 4.
- 6.9 The level of new housing, if any, is subject to further technical work and consultation. Should development be forthcoming in the Culverstone area in the future, the additional pupils generated are likely to be accommodated within Culverstone Green Primary School and others in the District.

## **7. Views**

- 7.1 The view of Interim Executive Board:  
The Board previously recommended closure of the School at the earliest opportunity and further endorses that decision.
- 7.2 The view of the Rochester Diocesan Board of Education  
The Rochester Diocesan Board of Education is aware of the impact of the proposed closure on the parents and children attending the school and recognises the sense of loss especially to a village community with a strong awareness of its local history.
- The Diocesan Board of Education does not seek to close any of its Church of England schools within the Diocese. However it does take its responsibilities for the quality of education provision within its schools very seriously. It has always stated that it will act in the best interests of the children who attend this school and for this reason and with a real sense of sadness, the Diocesan Board of Education has given its agreement for the Local Authority to move forward with publishing a proposal for closure.
- 7.3 The view of the Area Education Officer:  
The Area Education Officer for West Kent is of the view that, in the absence of other viable options, closure of the school is in the best interests of the pupils of Stansted CEPS. The school has experienced a significant decline in pupil numbers over several years and is now too small to be effective or viable. There are no realistic indications that demand for the school would increase from parental preference or population growth in the medium term.

Despite extensive support from the local authority and the Diocese of Rochester the improvements in the standard of education have not been sufficient to meet the requirements of Ofsted or KCC. Further reductions in the school's budget would further impact on its capacity to drive the necessary improvements and provide a satisfactory quality of education to its pupils.

#### 7.4 View of the Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

The view of the Borough Council is that it is regrettable that the concerns relating to the school have reached the stage which could now lead to its full closure. Its primary concern is to seek assurance from the County Council, that if the closure proposals proceed, every effort is made to identify suitable and sufficient educational provision for the families directly affected and that, as far as possible, the first preference of those families regarding alternative schools can be honoured.

### **8. Proposal**

8.1 This proposal is in accordance with section 15(4), 16 (3) Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013.

8.2 The proposal is subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning.

8.3 Stansted CEP School building and the site is owned by the Diocese of Rochester. Therefore, there will be no impact on the value of KCC's property portfolio.

8.4 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been completed as part of the consultation process. The needs of pupils of SEN were considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment.

### **9. Delegation to Officers**

9.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it.

### **10. Conclusion**

10.1 Closure of a school is always the last resort; this is particularly the case with a small Primary school in a village. Nevertheless the County Council has a moral and legal duty to ensure that pupils receive a good standard of education. Stansted CEP School has been in Special Measures for more than 18 months and is not making reasonable progress towards the school providing a satisfactory quality of education. It is a matter of great regret that Stansted pupils are still under-achieving, which is a concern and cannot be allowed to continue.

10.2 Pupil numbers have been too low for some time, and are now so low that the school is too small to be effective. The future capacity of the school would be further impacted by further reductions in its delegated budget and staffing resources. Having considered the feedback from the consultation process and the alternative options, it is the recommendation of the

Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services that Stansted CEPS be discontinued from 31 August 2015. Any remaining pupils and their parents are being supported in seeking an alternative school place.

## 11. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Stansted Church of England Primary School
- (ii) And, subject to no objections not already considered, implement the proposal to close the School with effect from 31 August 2015

## 12. Background Documents

- 12.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/your\\_council/priorities\\_policies\\_and\\_plans/priorities\\_and\\_plans/bold\\_steps\\_for\\_kent.aspx](http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx)
- 12.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015-19  
[http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/16236/Commissioning-plan-for-education-provision-in-Kent-2015-2019.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/16236/Commissioning-plan-for-education-provision-in-Kent-2015-2019.pdf)
- 12.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment  
[www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)
- 12.4 The Government's Priority School Building Programme -  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/priority-school-building-programme-psbp>
- 12.5 The Government's allocation of Universal Infant Free School Meals funding:  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/399316/Universal\\_infant\\_free\\_school\\_meals\\_-\\_capital\\_funding\\_allocations\\_table\\_v....pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/399316/Universal_infant_free_school_meals_-_capital_funding_allocations_table_v....pdf)

## 13. Contact details

- 13.1 Report Author  
Jared Nehra, Area Education Officer – West Kent  
Telephone: 03000 412209  
Email: [Jared.nehra@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Jared.nehra@kent.gov.uk)
- 13.2 Relevant Director:  
Kevin Shovelton - Director of Education Planning and Access  
Telephone: 03000 416677  
Email: [Kevin.shovelton@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Kevin.shovelton@kent.gov.uk)

**Stansted CEP Primary School Parent/Carer Meeting  
Notes of Parent Consultation Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> February January 2015**

Panel	Mr Kevin Shovelton	Director of Education Planning and Access
	Mr Jared Nehra	Area Education Officer (West Kent)
	Mrs Tel German	Senior Improvement Adviser
	Mr Alex Tear	Director of Education – Diocese of Rochester

**Also in attendance:**

- Michelle Hamilton, Area Schools Organisation Officer (West Kent)
- Deborah Ledniczky, Public Meeting Recorder
- Interim Education Board Members: Jack Keeler (Chair of IEB), Diana Robinson, David Adams, Mariam Armstrong, Jean Craig
- Sarah Hohler - County Council Member for Malling North

**Introduction**

Mr Shovelton introduced the members of the panel and the Interim Executive Board (IEB) for Stansted CEP School. Mr Shovelton explained that the meeting will be recorded and that a transcript of the meeting will be presented to the Kent County Council Education Cabinet meeting in April, and will be considered when the Local Authority (LA) is looking at whether to go ahead with this proposal.

**Purpose of the Meeting**

- To discuss the proposal to discontinue Stansted Church of England Primary School by 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

**Proposal**

A presentation outlining the background to the proposal was given by Mr Nehra.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
<b>Parent</b> Could you please repeat again the sentence that states you would not respond to anything and explain what you mean by that?	<b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Mr Shovelton read out the passage. He told the room that the panel will do it's best to answer questions and will endeavour to clarify anything that they are not sure of. He explained the purpose of a public consultation adding that if someone expresses a different opinion about the process it may well be that it is not appropriate to respond to that comment but that their view will be recorded.
<b>Parent</b> Why didn't the IEB do anything about the secretary that was working here that was found to be telling parents of pupils and perspective	<b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> We are keen to tackle what is happening now. Inevitably the situation we have

<p>parents not to bring their children to this school because the school is going to close? She targeted all the families that were fighting for this school using her position to make them leave.</p> <p>I put my complaint in writing and was assured it was going to be dealt with as a serious matter but nothing happened and she got away with it. If the IEB wanted to help then they should have told the parents that the school isn't going to close. Pupil numbers were dropping because we had someone representing the school telling parents that the school was going to close. What is happening now is the result of what happened back then. If that had been dealt with correctly pupils would not have left and we wouldn't be in this situation now</p>	<p>reached is a result of a combination of past events. We will make an attempt to answer your questions about matters that have happened in the past but tonight's consultation is about the situation that we're facing as it is now.</p> <p><b>Mr Keeler - Chair of IEB</b> The complaint was investigated. Discussions were entered into at the time with the Interim Headteacher and the Diocese with regard to that particular person. As Chair of the IEB I was told that that particular person had left the employment of the school. The situation had moved on and unfortunately whatever was said was unable to be dealt with.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Mr Shovelton acknowledged that this would not have helped</p> <p><b>Mr Keeler - Chair of IEB</b> Following an enquiry with the Interim Headteacher he assured me that he had come back to you and you were satisfied that she had moved away.</p>
	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Asked people to keep to a question and answer format to ensure that as many questions as possible are heard.</p>
<p><b>Grandparent of pupil</b> Slide shows that pupil numbers at the school between 2010-2013 continue to fall. This is a small community school with various people joining and leaving and it's never going to have a 100 people join in one year but I think those figures are reasonably substantial. The fall in pupil numbers from 56-35 is when the school went into Special Measures. Why was it that this year when there were more people putting Stansted School as their first preference the school was not given the chance to get the pupil numbers up? Instead we had a letter saying that the school is closing and to please find alternative school for your child/children. To the best of my knowledge we would have had a net gain of 5 plus anyone else who expressed an interest but they were told not to join because the school was closing.</p> <p>You projected that the budget is going to</p>	<p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b> I would say that the number of reductions year on year is significant. I appreciate that in a rural primary school the numbers are quite small but a reduction well in excess of 10% year on year is quite a significant decrease.</p> <p>The budget is based on a 'per pupil' figure and that figure is based upon the head count in the previous October, i.e. October 2014 will inform the budget for the entire 2015/16 financial year irrespective of the number of pupils that join. If the pupil numbers increase at all there will be a lag before the funding increases. The year on year budget decrease is expected to be in excess of £70,000 for the year 2015/16. It is quite clear, as indicated on the slide, that there is no indication that the number of pupils at Stansted will increase significantly in future years.</p>

significantly reduce year on year to the tune of £70,000. How can that be true when by the end of next year we would have had a minimum of five more pupils to what we have this year; our budget must increase?

Those figures were known back in October and we were not informed that this school was going to close till January. Those figures were constant and nothing has changed but now the school is under threat of closure because there are not enough pupils here. We did get pupils to come here but they are now all being sent a letter saying don't turn up. This is ridiculous argument that you are using to shut the school.

**Mr Adams - IEB Member**

The current school budget will have been predicated on the 56 pupil numbers and it will drop to the 35 pupil numbers. The IEB had taken action with the Interim Headteacher to start adjusting the staffing structure down towards that new budget. The Headteacher's pay is based on the group size of the school. Mr Livingston said at the meeting "pay me what I currently get paid" which is in excess of the salary that would be paid for a school of this group size and significantly in excess of the budget figure that is sitting within the budget based on that 35 pupil roll and would cause a budget pressure so there have been actions which have already been taken. The budget we are expecting this year is at least a £100,000 lower than the current budget which is less than £400,000. It's not just about whether you can pay the salaries or have or the people you think you want but it's also around the proportion of the budget that goes into staffing versus how much goes into resources i.e. maintaining your estate, replacing IT equipment, putting in place the curriculum resources needed etc and at some point it reaches the point where too much is spent on staffing and too little spent on other things, and that is the balance we have to work through.

**Parent**

At the last meeting you told us that the school was financially viable

**Parent**

The Two Interim Headteachers from two local schools that were here stood outside the school handing out information about their own school. You prove to me that you have not had people standing outside. All of you have lied to us. Schools in this area have been told that this school will be shutting down and that has led to friends that had wanted to come to this school going to other local schools. What right did the Headteachers with no invested interest in this school have to take children away from this school and cause its demise? It's the LA's fault for not putting in a permanent member of staff and bringing it up to where it should be.

**Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning & Access**

Do not think there is a question to be answered but note your comment about the Interim Headteachers allegedly handing out flyers about their own schools whilst in post at another school.

**Parent**

Disagree that there is no progress being made by the children in the reception class. My son is making very good progress and the other 4

**Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer**

Think we are talking about different figures e.g. 2014, there were five 1st preferences for the school and six children took up an



<p>parents feel the same. That needs to be looked into because it's not true.</p> <p>Our PAN intake used to be 12 and was increased to 15. No figures noted for 2011 or 2012 because there was 31 interested and 12 places taken. Figures for 2012/13 are incorrect; you say 10 but 12 took up places, as per the FOI request. Figures for 2014/15 are incorrect, there are 6, 1 is on a dual role. Your consultation paper is incorrect and you need to check. A child had to appeal for a place when 5 were taken.</p>	<p>offer for the school.</p> <p>We believe that no child has had to appeal for a place in the last three years. All first preferences received were allocated Stansted.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>The parent of the child claiming they had to appeal for a place declined the offer to talk on record.</p> <p>There is obviously a misunderstanding because the LA knows of all appeals from the records. If the parent believes that is different and would like to discuss the point I am quite happy to stay behind afterwards and have that discussion. I acknowledged that highlighting an individual in this forum is difficult.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>Your roll shows 35. There were 7 siblings due to start before you started ringing round everyone so our roll would have increased which is one of the main points of the consultation. You are also giving the impression that we are already in a deficit budget. We asked our Headteacher that question and he assured us that he has saved over £20,000 this year. We accept that we might not be able to afford Mr Livingstone but that doesn't mean that you would not be able to afford another Headteacher that would fit the budget. The budget obviously would increase if those 35 were still here and the Headteacher assured us the budget would work on 39.</p> <p>One of the main points of the consultation that the roll with further decline is completely untrue. You've made it true by ringing round everybody and got them to remove Stansted but it was not correct when we went into consultation.</p>	<p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b></p> <p>As you know from the Parish Council meeting we are not at this point going to reveal the exact number of first preferences. However, I can tell you that the number is very low and as it says on the slide there is no indication that low numbers at Stansted are going to change in future years and there have been very few changes to preferences following the publication of the consultation paper.</p> <p>I entirely refute that I have suggested at any point that there is a deficit budget.</p> <p><b>Mr Adams - IEB Member</b></p> <p>There is an in year surplus in this year's budget because it's based on 56. Assumptions at the moment are that there will be an in year deficit next year based at the time on a higher forecast number of 39. That will be a greater in year deficit next year if the school continued. That is not saying that that is where we will end up, what it is saying is, if you do not take action to reduce your costs more than that, it is the position the school will be in.</p>
<p><b>Grandfather</b></p> <p>Nothing can be done to rectify and change what's happened, that's history. How we can move forward when everything we have done to improve this school has been sabotaged by the IEB, KCC and the Diocese?</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>Thank you for your comments.</p> <p>The situation in other schools in this area is that children are achieving more highly, we wouldn't be in this situation if this wasn't the</p>

<p>All of the figures shown differ totally from what we were told in October when the IEB said we had a viable school. At the Parish Council meeting it was worked out that you had put in 10 hours over the last 2 years; that is not huge resources. I dispute your figures showing the percentages of pupils at this school falling below the national average. We have figures that differ and show Stansted to be viable against alternative schools that are not better than the school we were leaving. The Headteacher at an alternative school that I visited told me that my grandsons learning ability was 80% higher than the other children in their reception class. How can you then tell me this school is failing its reception children when they are far better in all areas than the children in other local schools?</p>	<p>case.</p> <p><b>Tel German - Senior Improvement Advisor</b></p> <p>When looking at individual snippets of data there are some things that have improved and some things that have declined. We are looking at the overall picture of the school. The children enter early years at this school above average and leave under-achieving, that means that they are not making good progress and that was the judgement of the HMI inspector having looked at the children's learning, spoken with the children and looked in their books. Achievement for children by the end of Yr2 found the school was the lowest performing school in the district for reading, writing and science. By the end of Yr6 the school is in the bottom 7% of schools in the district i.e. bottom 3 or 4 for spelling, punctuation, grammar, reading, maths, writing for the more able and the worst performing school in the district for writing. Looking at the broad picture the school is not providing the quality of education that the children need in the majority of areas of learning.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>I have been offered West Kingsdown as a place, a school that is at the bottom of the achievement table. Stansted is above West Kingsdown for reading, writing and math and in December 2014 league table Stansted achieved 56%, West Kingsdown achieved 38%.</p> <p>You talk about there being no girls in reception but because they are in a joint class they all interact together. Both my children are happy and very sociable, more so than probably children who attend a larger school.</p> <p>Do we know who is going to head our school when Mr Livingstone's contract ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March?</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>We will accept what you are saying.</p> <p><b>Tel German - Senior Improvement Advisor</b></p> <p>Explained that Stansted comes under the 'district' of Tonbridge &amp; Malling and the 'area' covers Tonbridge &amp; Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone. West Kingsdown comes under the area of Sevenoaks. I am not disputing the West Kingsdown data but within this school's district and those schools in this area Stansted is lowest in those specific areas.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>I think the issue is the rate of improvement at West Kingsdown has been palpable.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>I don't think that decision has been taken and that is a matter for the IEB. I recognise that this is a particular concern and as soon as a decision is taken you will be informed.</p>

	<p><b>Mr Keeler - IEB Chairman</b> IEB have approached the Local Authority and are awaiting a reply about an interim head. As soon as that happens we will make the announcement.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> Neither parents nor the panel will see eye to eye about the future of the school. The situation has upset the children and they feel they are being made out to be failures when they are not. A year ago my daughter's father passed away and I asked for him to be buried in the church because she is here. This school is her safe haven. She has done so well but could have gone completely the opposite way. If the current Headteacher had been here a few years ago we probably wouldn't be in this situation. Just think about the children.</p> <p><b>Parent</b> The father was buried at the church to keep an eye on his daughter and would not have been buried there if the family knew this was going to happen</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Thanked the parent for sharing that with the meeting and recognised the heartfelt nature of the comment adding that the relationships within the school were something that was mentioned as positive in the Ofsted inspection.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> I think the HMI visit is null and void. On the day of the inspection my son, who is a statemented child with special needs, was asked by the inspector to read. She turned away his support worker and then grilled him for not being up to standard. The Headteacher confronted her about this and told her that he has a statement and explained the situation. Her attitude was that he should be at the expected level of every other Yr3 child. I made a complaint to HMI and in return I have received emails, a phone call and an apology from the HMI for the way my son was treated. They are now investigating what went on that day so I don't know how you can bring that report in to the closure of our school.</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Thanked the parent for their comments and said that he was not aware of the incident.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> Eldest daughter flourished when she joined Stansted from West Kingsdown and went on to do fantastically well at secondary school and college. You can't say that there is a problem for the children when leaving the school. Tel German told Mrs Matthews she was doing a good job but she had followed the wrong curriculum which kick started the problem with this school so I am not interested in what you</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> I have not heard that the school is in the top 6% and have not seen any information coming to the authority formally from the Headteacher.</p> <p><b>Mr Adams - IEB Member</b> Some of the comments that have been made in relation to data are correct. You</p>

<p>have to say because if she'd followed the right curriculum we wouldn't be in this position. The turbulent few years where we have not had the right people in place have led to a lack of confidence for this school. The IEB haven't done anything to stop that and we are all here now trying to justify why this school should be kept open. You don't want to answer the questions that we are asking because you have whatever answers you want to project on the power point slides.</p> <p>Why can't the facts and figures that Mr Livingston had that showed Stansted school in the top 6% of primary schools in Kent for some of the results we have had be shown alongside those on your slide? The HMI inspector that totally insulted H's child spent 2.5 minutes standing in a hallway monitoring the children. How can she justify what she has reported? We are never going to be great in an HMI report because it goes on statistics. Mr Livingston's figures justify the school remaining open. My daughter jumped 2 sub levels in 2 weeks.</p>	<p>are talking about very small cohorts, about children who are here and some who have left. I think some of the figures Mr Livingston was talking about were the 'value added' figures so, if you look at this cohort of children and their progress they have made in a particular subject, they progress some distance and that puts us in the top 6%. This data is disputed and that's in the HMI report. The really important thing for the IEB is how the children who are here at this moment in time are progressing. As a member of the IEB I can say we have the school development plan which has targets in it around the progress that pupils would be making, the targets that the Headteacher has set in that plan and they are 'rag rated' red because the children have not made the progress that the Headteacher has said they should be making</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>How is it that my daughter who is Year 6 will be going to the secondary school with a grammar stream if she is doing that poorly? She failed the 11+ but the Headmaster can justify why she would thrive in a grammar stream. How can you flag red when there are only 2 children in Yr 6?</p>	<p><b>Mr Adams - IEB Member</b></p> <p>We are looking at the progress the children are making and that would be different for different cohorts and different pupils. HMI obviously commented on the progress that she understood it to be for YrR. Key Stage 1 pupils were making better progress, Key Stage 2 pupils at the moment in some year groups have not been making the progress that we would want, so there are mixed patterns within the school. The HMI, LA and the IEB consider that there are still challenges in making the progress that we need to make both in terms of quality of teaching and the quality of learning and that is the bit that is really important for us.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>You can manipulate your data and go over things that have happened. No one here is taking into consideration in what is happening to the children, the parents and the community. I moved my daughter here from a school in Tonbridge where she had struggled and showed no interest in education. Within a week of being here I noticed a difference and she has gone up to levels that I would never have expected. I don't drive. If my child is hurt at the school you are not going to provide transport for me to get to my child. You are going to isolate the people who rely on the</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>Thank you for most of the comments. It was not necessary to insult the IEB. I believe that when we go back in history and look at all the circumstances and the reasons we shouldn't try to blame anybody, the situation has developed to where it is now and that's the point we have to face what is happening now.</p>

<p>school as a support network and the community. People who have lived here for generations and hold it dear to their heart. I don't agree with you that our children are not getting educated properly here. We have had letters from Headteachers saying that they wish they had more pupils like those coming from Stansted. The IEB are a disgraceful bunch of people and I hope that no other school falls in your hands.</p>	
<p><b>Parent</b>  The Year 6 figures you are using in your consultation document include those of a stated child. Because of the small class that represented 11% of that figure. If you take that child out we would have been above in every single subject apart from the writing that was under appeal. The IEB prematurely signed that off without the agreement of the Headteacher which is why the writing falls below in Year 6  We were forced by the LA to have an Interim Headteacher who was proven not to have performed, that is why the HMI report made the governors replace him. The LA and IEB have not done what they should have done to stabilise the situation. At the only meeting we had with the IEB they reassured us that they would not close the school. Since then they have not done anything. We have had no communication from them just this unstabilising influence.  What I will ask Tel German as Senior Improvement Advisor is, we have had Cathie Aldis, (IA) for 5 years. If you think we are not making the improvements and progress that we should be making why have you still let her come into this school? We don't want her here, she is not improving the school</p>	<p><b>Tel German - Senior Improvement Advisor</b>  The school has had 21 school improvement support visits over the last year that has included 2 Early Years Advisers support. Visits have been subject specific support from specialist advisors for maths and literacy and for assessment and moderation. In addition the Headteacher has been allocated a mentor, been offered significant support for teaching and learning together with briefing and guidance around the new curriculum and assessment. Since taking over the leadership of the area in September we have looked at the support and found that it was better for the school to have continuity of the Improvement Advisor and to continue to offer the school access to a wide range of support and additional advisors which the Headteacher then agrees to or declines</p>
<p><b>Sarah Hohler - County Councillor for Tonbridge North</b>  The community have raised a lot of money to extend and improve the church due partly because of its close links with this school. There are a lot of people who can't drive and the school is a life line for them. It is the heart of the community and I think it is extremely sad that this school has to close. I understand that the roll, which is low, will have an impact in the future however, in September if we were to get more children that would begin to improve. A lot of people have mentioned that parents have been rung up and told to take their children off the applications forms and my question is, is</p>	<p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b>  I dispute that anyone has been called and instructed to change their preferences for Stansted CofE Primary School. It is a matter of record from the previous meeting that a letter was sent to all parents that have expressed a preference for Stansted for September 2015 reception round giving all those parents the opportunity to amend their preference data until the 6<sup>th</sup> February. Every parent has this right, it is not something specifically extended to the prospective parents of Stansted. We are duty bound to inform parents so that they can make a fully informed decision for the</p>

<p>that true? And if so why has it been done? Because if so it looks as though it has been done deliberately to disadvantage the roll of this school starting in September</p>	<p>place for their child and the Admissions Code under which admissions happen within the LA is very clear. We are duty bound to inform parents. We could not in good faith not advise parents that there was a potential that the school may close before their child was even admitted.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> Have you got any evidence with regards to preparing students for going into secondary school because as a parent I opted to keep my son in a very small school? I know that will impact him when he moves to secondary as there will be more pupils. As far as I am concerned that is my responsibility as a parent to prepare my child for that as well as school but it is my choice to keep him in a small primary school. Have you got any statistical evidence to support that because you have put that in the consultation document and I would like to know?</p>	<p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b> That information is based predominately upon our professional judgement as educational professionals. There is research about preparing pupils appropriately for secondary school but this is based on our professional judgement. We do have concerns about the social groupings in the school as previously referred to and as referenced on the slides and as you have already alluded to transferring from a cohort of 2 in Yr6 to potentially a cohort of 240, with possibly classes in excess of 30 is quite a significant change but I understand your views.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Being a small school doesn't necessarily equal children not achieving highly as we have other small schools in Kent, smaller than Stansted if it were full, with a smaller admissions number who are doing very well. In my view the best basis on which children transfer into their secondary setting is to do so with substantial achievement and to be doing the best. Small schools do achieve good outcomes, do the best for their children's progress and achieve well but sadly that has not been the case at Stansted, that's the point. It's not necessarily just the small size, it's the connection with the low pupil numbers, standards, the budget, it's the whole picture.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> Last year I wrote to admissions because my son was due to start in the September and I was concerned about the IEB being bought in the school possibly closing. I wrote again and emailed them asking if places could be held in a school of my choice if case Stansted closes. Linda Mellor from KCC called back to say that she didn't know anything about our school but she said that the fact that we had all been given letters that the writing was on the wall. The fact that letters had been sent with places</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Comments are noted</p>

<p>more or less spoke for itself, the school was going to shut.</p> <p>I have emails to Roger Gough about my worries that the IEB are going to shut our school and can he promise that when my son starts that within 6-12 months the school will not close. Roger Gough said I can assure you the IEB have no remit to shut your school it is to improve standards. Not even 5 months later the IEB are proposing to close the school.</p>	
<p><b>Grandfather</b></p> <p>One of the other children that the HMI tested was my grandson who suffers with Irelens disease and reads with acetate over the top of the page. The inspector refused to let him have the acetate. That was not taken into account and he was one of the children where the reading was specified from.</p> <p>I have no idea how or what the IEB have done to enforce or improve this school. Previous HMI report in January said there was a vast amount of improvement then at the parents evening the IEB said that they were as shocked as we were that the school had gone backwards. At the Parish Council meeting the IEB then said that they were not shocked at all. It seems to me that they are covering their backsides and the help that this school has had is zero. The people that are suffering are our children. You have just made the point about children moving from a small school into possibly one of 200 and we are talking about taking children at 8 or 9 that are a lot more mature than children of 4 years old who like my grandson are probably going to have to leave this school and go to a school where there are 200 pupils, how do you expect my grandson to cope with this</p> <p>You have not answered my question about how you expect them to cope</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>Thank you for your comments but it is a shame that the IEB continue to be insulted and they don't deserve to be. The July - December report lists what the IEB have carried out and the Ofsted HMI would not have written that without seeing the evidence. I know the enormous amount of contact there has been with this school, very often on a day to day basis. You may wish to disbelieve what I or the IEB are saying but that is a fact.</p> <p>Apologies, I didn't take that as a question I took it a rhetorical comment</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>If the school closes my daughter has to move school. She is not going to the school named in your letter. Considering what she has been through she is doing very well at the moment. What support am I going to get from KCC if she goes backwards? How are you going to help me with her?</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>The Immediate response to individual children and their anxieties will be in school. The school will be the first line of recognition in identifying any issues or difficulties that a child might have particularly where children are moving school and especially when they have had the experience of their school closing. We will make it clear to the Headteachers of the receiving schools that they have to make a particular effort to ensure that those children are assimilated</p>

	<p>into school and work through the different teams within KCC for support for children with specific problems. If the difficulties are very significant then the school may be able to bring extra help. Any good school would be able to respond to concerns from a parent about what their child is feeling and the difficulties that they might have attending school and assimilating properly into a new school</p> <p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b>  We do recognise the uncertainty that is created through potential closure. Parents were told that there would be individual discussions with admissions colleagues to talk about individual circumstances and we did also say that through the Interim Headteacher. We had to make a firm offer that was according to the nearest appropriate school but there is no requirement to accept that offer. There are a number of other available spaces within the area. If anyone wishes to look and consider those now or at any point in the future, or indeed if the school does close, admissions we will be prepared to have that consultation with you on a personal basis and talk about the individual circumstances of your child to support you in identifying a school that is appropriate for your child and there particular needs.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b>  You refer to your duty of care and informing parents of Stansted School in consultation how about informing us that West Kingsdown is currently in consultation to become an academy which, if it does become an academy, is happening at the end of this school year? I have seen the paper work that has been sent to all West Kingsdown parents. Do you not think that was relevant to let us know because academies are not everyone's choice? Also they are just coming out of Special Measures and although I hear that the Headteacher is doing a great job she will then possibly have extra children forced upon her. Can you really say that is best for my child to go to a school that is under performing Stansted at the moment with all those extra strains on a Headteacher which at the end of the day is all about?</p> <p>When we have asked admissions if there is</p>	<p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b>  I don't think I or anyone else from the County Council would pretend that we are best placed to decide what is best for your child; that is parental preference. We think there is the need for a proposal to consider the closure of this school as we have significant concerns about the unsatisfactory quality of education as we have set out. We would be happy to support parents in considering alternative schools whether that's West Kingsdown or anywhere else in the area.  There are a number of alternative places available.</p> <p>In terms of the individual circumstances of individual schools what we have done is to encourage parents to speak with the school that they are potentially going to take their child to. Visit that school to discuss your child's individual circumstances to see</p>



<p>anything we should know we were told no. These letters went out to the parents of West Kingsdown last June telling them about the academy proposal.</p>	<p>whether your child would be best served by admission to that school. You are referring to a separate consultation process which I acknowledge. They two are separate processes.</p> <p>West Kingsdown has been judged by HMI to be on an upward improving trend and the school is out of Special Measures whereas Stansted is not. Despite the fact that West Kingsdown is relatively low on their published admissions number they do have a significantly higher number of pupils than in Stansted. That leads them to have additional resources which are not available to the school that has very low numbers and the financial impact on the budget and staff trying to deliver the standard of education across the wide age range as we have talked about.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> For those parents who have been allocated West Kingsdown because it is the nearest geographical school we are not being consulted and don't know how becoming an academy will impact the school. I know you say we have a choice but some of us don't. I would like to know if we will be part of a consultation in West Kingsdown and are we going to know how it will effect a school just coming out of Special Measures, how the budget will be effected and how our children's education will be effected? We do not want to make a decision on sending our child somewhere where we don't know what's happening</p>	<p><b>Mr Tear, Director of Education - Diocese of Rochester</b> The two consultation processes are completely separate but I do take the point in terms of how you connect one with the other. I think the consultation process which is running for West Kingsdown to become an academy was officially launched last week after a delay in June. The background to that school seeking academy status was because when it was in Special Measures the Department of Education said to the Diocese that they wanted an academy solution. I think that I am on record in several meetings about the options for this school in that area and the Department have made it clear to the Diocese that it feels that it would not be sensible to take a another school in Special Measures into the Diocesan Trust. As a prospective parent you wouldn't be included in the consultation for the existing academy. If you choose to send your children to West Kingsdown then of course you will be included within that consultation but actually the two consultation processes are separate</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b> Clarified that when Mr Alex Tear referred to the 'Department' he was referring to the Government not the County Council</p>
<p><b>Parent</b> In the Ofsted report of July 2013 when we first</p>	<p><b>Mr Keeler - IEB Chairman</b> We have made a request to KCC for</p>

went into Special Measures one the main points was 'taking a concerted action to ensure the long term and leadership and management of the school'. We are now in 2015 and still have no Headteacher and still do not know who will be the Headteacher in a couple of weeks. What did KCC do to put a Headteacher in place or the IEB?

You are talking about 2014. We have not had a Headteacher since 2013. KCC did nothing. I understand that we are a designated rural school, are you following the government guidelines?

Was the community consulted about the closure of this school? because the head of the Parish Council didn't know it was closing until we as parents informed him.

The consultation says that the decision makers must also consult parents, district and Parish Councils, they were not consulted

support. I spoke about it last evening and made the enquiry today.

#### **Mr Adams - IBM Member**

The circumstances that the IEB came in have shifted. We were put into a position of having to work around the contractual arrangement that the outgoing Governing Body had provided the existing Interim Headteacher with. The solutions that we would be looking at were around Federation and Academy status to see if those options provided solutions for the long term viability of the school and a solution for the school which would provide a leadership solution. Those solutions were not available to us. We were in a process and we had set for a substantive Headteacher and the reason that we did not do that was because we got to the point with issues around pupil numbers, the HMI report and pupil progress and instead made the recommendation for closure. Having made that recommendation it is clearly totally inappropriate for us to be seen to be looking for a substantive Headteacher with the process in motion.

#### **Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning & Access**

Yes

That was not the case. The Parish Council is one of many consultees that we circulate information to and therefore they would have been informed.

#### **Sarah Hohler - County Councillor for Malling North**

The chairman of the Parish Council is my son-in-law and a lot of conversations go on between us so therefore he would have been informed. He had not had sight of the 'consultation document' because it went to the clerk who then passed it to him prior to the meeting. I represent 8 other local parishes and I can confirm that they have been consulted and I have been urging them to give their support to the parents of Stansted School to keep the school open and reply to the consultation document. My parishes only meet at the beginning of every month, the consultation goes on till the

	<p>beginning of March and I have been trying this week to get to all my parishes.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>The information was sent out by post to all consultees that we are required to consult with, which can be found on the DfE website. There is no requirement for a public consultation meeting, there is a requirement to publicly consult and that is what we have done and we were happy to come along to the Parish Council meeting. That is not unusual for that to happen and we are confident that the local community has been given every opportunity to make its views known.</p>
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>Parents have been distributing public consultation documents to the residents of the village, something the KCC should have been doing.</p>	
<p><b>Parent</b></p> <p>IEB have destabilised the school by the fact that they haven't corrected the issue about leadership. They should have done that before everybody knew that his contact ended at the end of March. Maybe you were waiting for something to happen such as the HMI report? When my daughters attended this school transition was brilliant. This is not a problem for families. You're making it out to be an issue when it isn't. We have letters from all previous students that left in July to say that the process was handled brilliantly. I have a huge list of the opportunities that the children have here that they would not get in a larger school that have driven by the Headteacher not the IEB. I will put this list in my consultation document because I don't agree with what you are saying. In the consultation document it states the LA, IEB and Diocese will work closely with parents to provide support at this time. I believe that 3 weeks on none of us have been contacted by the IEB, diocese or LA to offer any support whatsoever. You have allocated a school to my 9 year old daughter that is 10 times the size of this school. How do you expect her to cope with that? It is also not the nearest school with vacancies, so yet again you seem to be wrong with your information. What support have you offered to the parents of the 7 children who have accepted places within the time limit that</p>	<p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>Mr Nehra has explained about the support for transfer to other schools.</p> <p><b>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</b></p> <p>The Primary School admissions manager for KCC and a colleague of his spent an entire day at Stansted Primary School. They asked the Interim Headteacher to co-ordinate a booking system for parents to book on. They spent a significant amount of time here to allow those parents that wished to come for an individual consultation to do so. Following that it was agreed that the Interim Headteacher would inform parents of their ability to have an individual consultation by telephone, email or meeting so there is the ability for those conversations to be had. I do not know whether that has been taken up or not but that is an offer of support that has been made.</p> <p><b>Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning &amp; Access</b></p> <p>The IEB role has the overall oversight of the school and to support you through the Headteacher and staff of the school.</p> <p><b>Mr Jack Keeler - IEB Chairman</b></p> <p>We have made the recommendation and it is a recommendation that we stand by and</p>

you have put on us and why haven't any of you offered us any support in this time?

it's now out to consultation, your consultation. It's quite right that you should feed back your views and it has been emphasised more than once that it is so important that you do so, not only here but on those forms that go back to the Cabinet Member so that he knows exactly how you feel and can then assess alongside our recommendation exactly what should be happening here at Stansted.

As far as the school support is concerned, following our last meeting with you all I then visited the school the next day to see the staff and the children. I did see happy smiling children, children in KS2 engrossed in writing a story and in Reception the Early Adviser had made changes to that format in that class area. I have been back again since and there have been further changes, things are still happening to improve what's going on.

**Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning & Access**

The IEB are supporting the parents and children through the work they do with the school with the Headteacher and with the staff

**Parent**

I feel we are being pushed to make a decision. We need to know what the plan is when Mr Livingston's contract ends on the 31<sup>st</sup> March. The IEB say they are supporting us by offering to buy uniform. That's telling us to go. Certain parents like me have to find 2 places which is more difficult and because of this I have provisionally accepted a place but I am waiting until I know the school is definitely going to close. My children have said that they do not want to move but I have no choice because I have to do what is best for their education. Because you are not giving us any positives this will result in less and less pupils on roll and then you will say we are just going to close it. For the last 2 years we have been told support the school and every parent feels their child is progressing. Everyone is standing firm because they believe in the school but everything you are doing is just making people go.

**Mr Tear, Director of Education - Diocese of Rochester**

I was in the school last Monday afternoon and I spoke with Andrew Livingston and gave assurances that the Diocese would give him, the school and also the local community and parents support in managing what we acknowledge and all recognise to be a difficult situation. I think in addition to that it has been mentioned the level of support that has come from the LA officers but also the Diocesan advisers have also been visiting in school within that time. I think I am very open to parents if they want to share their concerns with us about some of the issues around movement of children and places and would be happy to listen to you. I don't think the Diocese has a responsibility for allocation of local places that falls to the LA but I am very happy to listen and do what I can and help in what is a difficult situation.

I did reply to Mr O'Brien and I would hope that he would share that response with you.

I emailed Jared Nehra who forwarded my message to the Diocese and three weeks on I have not received a reply	
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**Mr Shovelton - Director of Education Planning and Access**

The messages have been very clear and strong and if anything occurs to you that you haven't said then please use the written consultation to express your opinion.

The timescales for the consultation process were read out as detailed on the presentation and Mr Shovelton reiterated that no final decision will be made until the consultation process has concluded. People were reminded to complete a response form and return it before the closing date for public comment which is the 6<sup>th</sup> March.

**What happens next?**

Following meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> April the Cabinet Member considers all the responses and decides whether to go ahead and if so he would go ahead with publishing a Public Notice proposing that the school is going to close so you would know at that point what the decision was and that it has got to that next stage. After that meeting if there's a decision not to go ahead that will be very clear to everyone. This is a consultation process that we have to go through nationally. Public notice gives another 4 week period and there has to be a public notice in a public place proposing closure and it would be at the end of that period that would be the final decision

Approximately 26 people attended the meeting.

**Proposal to discontinue Stansted CEP School**

**Summary of written responses**

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 500

Total responses received: 84 – 2 in Support, 82 Against

A total of 84 responses have been received from respondents who have various interests/involvement with the school, including responses from parents/carers, pupils, former parents, former pupils, current and ex-residents of Stansted and Fairseat, former governors, councillors and anonymous responses.

Of the 84 responses five were received from Parish Councils (four against and one in favour of the proposal); three from TMBC councillors who were also against the proposal.

**IN SUPPORT**

**Parish Council**

- Addington Parish Council - At the Parish Council meeting held on 4 February 2015 Members discussed the consultation and although it was considered to be a very sad situation Members resolved to support the KCC proposal to discontinue Stansted CEP School.

**Member of Staff**

- Have worked at this school for the past 5 years in different positions.
- Also had three children who have attended this school, over the last couple of years I have seen changes happening, none of which were good.
- I removed my children in June 2014 due to falling standards.
- The standard of assessing children's progress is wrong, as I found out with my youngest child when starting new school.
- The cleanliness of the school declined to a standard which is appalling.
- The teaching and level of education these children receive is way below standard, I have seen a drop in worshipping religion to now it is non-existent.
- The standards have dropped, children are rude and have no manners and no discipline is put into force. It is like the kids run this school not the staff.

**AGAINST**

**General comments**

- Stansted School has been part of the community for 150 years and is a way of life for all people that have lived here and live here now.
- To shut this school is a very sad and unnecessary step to take.
- Reconsider the closure of the school, if not for the children's sake alone, the impact it will have on this beautiful and idyllic village and its way of life.
- Concern that school closure will lead to depreciation in the values of properties in Stansted.
- The school is a Church of England School and has a very strong bond with the village church. The school promotes the upmost Christian family values which are the reason for having C of E schools so those traditions can be kept alive in our country for years to come.

- Concerned about the emotional wellbeing of children and the effects to the learning and progress already made.
- Recognition that teachers within the school work extremely hard to do the best for all the children.
- Significant investment made in the school over recent years - £600k+ of taxpayers money.
- Anger that funds raised to improve the facilities will be passed to the Diocese.
- Housing in Stansted/Downs Ward and 500 houses in Culverstone Valley expected which will impact on Stansted CEP School roll
- Lack of transparency, misinformation
- Anger over timing of the consultation and meaningful engagement – lack of public meeting.
- Dispute about performance data provided by LA and DfE summary of data provided by respondents.
- Concerns about standards and performance of named receiving schools.
- Concerns about lower performing schools and environment of surrounding schools.
- LA and IEB comments about concerns around transition to secondary school disputed by current and former parents.
- Unsatisfactory support from the Local Authority, including the same Improvement Adviser for 5 years.
- Inconsistent leadership and management of the school resulting in a deterioration of standards and decline in school roll.
- Dispute over LA statement that current 2 class structure has a negative effect on teachers' ability to deliver the curriculum with wide age range/small roll.
- Disputed legitimacy of recent (December 14) HMI Inspection report of Stansted CEP School.
- Lack of support provided by the Diocese
- Disputed effectiveness and disappointment of the IEB
- Concerns about transport implications for alternative school places.
- Freedom of Choice – believe that closure of the school will significantly reduce choice for those parents who wish to send their child to a smaller school or one with a Christian ethos.

### **Parent/carer**

- We have had several visits from Ofsted who reported we as a school were making improvements and progress towards coming out of special measures. We had in inspection in December and were all excited about the results coming out in January. We were totally unaware of the report being so bad and we were not making progress even though the last two reports were very encouraging and we all as parents could see the dramatic improvements in all of our children's progress.
- Every child has a place in the hearts of every member of the teaching staff being such a small school it is almost as if they are all one family, the older children look after the younger ones and every child knows each other's name.
- I hope you renew the current headteacher's contract in March because anyone else would not care about the school like he does.
- If the school does close it will be for some reason to benefit the council not the children.
- The children are learning more than other schools in the area.
- The headteacher has done a first class job.
- It is appalling that you would close a school just because of numbers.

- My child is the 5<sup>th</sup> generation of my family to attend the school and I wanted to send my child there because of the community feel it has. The caring nurturing side of the school is second to none as is its location. The environment the children are being raised in is phenomenal.
- My child enjoys school every day and has friends in all year groups.
- Despite Ofsted report my child has made good progress both educationally and socially.
- Not impressed at the consultation meeting where we were hand at the offer of a new place at an alternative school at the end.
- The school I was given was at a lower performing school. I did not accept the offer of a place so if the school does close there is no place for September.
- I have felt bullied into making a decision about taking my child to another school.
- Under the Equality Impact Assessment under potential/positive impact. I have to disagree being in a larger school will not enable individual needs of children to be met but probably the reverse where individual needs will be missed and problems missed as there will be more children in a class. At least at Stansted you know things will be picked up and dealt with quickly,

### **Pupils**

- I think it is a bad idea because I was at Stansted school for almost 6 years and had to move schools. I am very upset about this and if Stansted School does close part of my life would be missing.
- I don't want the school to shut because I do not want to leave my friends. We play in the park every day after school. I do love my school and I feel safe.

### **Staff**

- Unnecessary school is under threat of closure. It is due to the blunders of leadership, constant changes led to unsettlement of staff and pupils.
- Despite changes Stansted has remained a solid place in the community utilising its traditions e.g. May Fayre.
- Why was an inexperienced headteacher appointed for a school in special measures? Only someone with experience would rectify any problems.
- More houses are being built in the area and places at local schools are limited so where will these children go?
- Stansted is a lovely new building surrounded by countryside and farm animals, other local schools are inadequate.

### **Potential Parent**

- I live in the village next to Stansted and have no desire to send my child to school New Ash Green or West Kingsdown.
- School is not just about passing tests and attaining academic levels, although that is important. Stansted School engages the community over a cross section of ages and backgrounds promoting community spirit.
- Not every child will thrive in a large school, parents are best placed to choose the type of school which will enable their children to learn and become confident, helping their transition to secondary school. A local rural village school offers many children the right environment to thrive and should be an option available to parents.
- The management of Stansted School by KCC has been (at best) poor, or (at worst) there has been deliberate manipulation of events to ensure the closure of this rural school. This needs to be investigated.



- As a prospective parent I have been scared to choose Stansted due to the fear of closure and then being forced to send my child to one of the alternatives which have spaces. West Kingsdown is currently rated as inadequate and needs improvement and Culverstone is not fit for purpose.
- Rural communities need to be protected.
- Expecting twins and hope that the school will stay open.

### **Ex pupils**

- Would like to register disgust at the current proposal to close the school.
- What is to happen should the school close? Are parents then to send their children to other already oversubscribed primaries in the area? Surely those same primaries will suffer the same fate as Stansted, with intakes becoming unsustainable and performance dropping as a result?
- With a population of the South East increasing each year, closing schools seems counterintuitive.
- KCC need to acknowledge this proposal is a short term cost cutting exercise and nothing more.
- Deeply saddened about the proposal to close the school. My father who is still a resident in the village was a school governor for many years and was one of the many people who fought hard to keep the school open when it was threatened with closure back in the 1970s. I feel closure of the school will not benefit the village or the closer community.
- What will happen if the school is not there? It will be knocked down and houses built – where will those extra people send their children to school if there is no school there? The school is a big part of the Stansted Community, and I feel that by closing it Stansted will be lost without it.
- With no local school the village will not attract new blood and this will be a disaster to a lovely place to live.
- Would like to see KCC's help in the current situation instead of trying to close this resource.
- Why have 8 five-bedroom houses been allowed to be built when we need affordable homes. Too many barn conversions.
- Do not agree, can only express what a wonderful school and environment it was for my primary education. If there is anything that can be done to stop the closure so future pupils don't have to travel to other more built up schools.
- We have no facilities in Stansted and are fast becoming a dormitory village. Our nearest chemist, grocers, doctors and anything else you can name are all at least three miles away with no buses.
- We have a wonderful building that is waiting for somebody to come and help lead it through this difficult time. We have local villagers that could and would use this resource again. I am sure the threat of closure and the mismanagement of it in recent years could soon reverse its fortunes. Please consider reversing its future instead of closing a much needed village asset.

### **Ex Parent**

- My children attended Stansted between 1990 and 2000. The school was very effective in providing the children with solid primary education, helping all three to gain places at what are now called 'super-selective' grammar schools in Tonbridge. In addition there was strong community spirit within the school, extending out into the surrounding villages.
- As a member Friends of Stansted School, I could always rely on local businesses and individuals to support our fund-raising activities. The annual May Fair was always very well supported and profitable. There were bonfire

nights with firework displays, Christmas concerts and summer concerts combined with family picnics which were all very well attended. The money we raised provided the school with many extra resources such as playground equipment and library materials.

- As a community we cared about the school and assumed some responsibility for its continued success. We worked to ensure it and contributed as much as we were able to. It was a lovely school, beautiful setting and it provided a caring and nurturing environment and a great education for our children. It could do so again.
- I appeal to KCC, IEB and the Diocese of Rochester to explore every option in an attempt to keep this school open and restore it to the success it was.
- Sorry to hear the school is being considered for closure, my three children attended the school and came away with a very good education. I hope the school can continue to stay open and children within the vicinity can prosper as my three children did.
- School accommodation has improved over the years and part of its accommodation is protected as a Grade II listed building. It would be tragic to lose this local provision when population in Kent is rising sharply.
- Why does the Rochester Diocese wish to abandon education in Stansted after its 150 year long association with the community? Having looked at the DfE regulation I can find no reason that would cause a school in Special Measures to close, policy seems to indicate that the school should transfer to an academy. Surely it can only be the Diocese that prevents this transition? There seems to be a very deep injustice in all of this and I urge KCC to find ways to secure improvement and protect it from closure including possibility of removing from CofE designation and connecting its organisation with another.

### **Resident**

- This closure will directly impact the life of the village and will result in depreciation in the values of our properties.
- My children went to Stansted School during 1999-2007 when it was a two-classroom school with about 35 pupils in total. Both children thrived and gained an early love for learning. Both passed 11+ and went to grammar school. One attended Christ Church, Oxford and gained a double first in Biology. Both have extremely fond memories of the school and feel that it gave them an excellent start in life both academic and social.
- The IEB say that the new curriculum makes it very difficult to operate on a two-class basis. This may be so, but it doesn't make it impossible. The small school/pupil roll issue applies to small rural schools up and down the country. The presumption in the Rural Primary Schools Order is to protect such schools not to close them.
- This school is an essential part of village life. It helps with the church, village fete and horticultural society.
- There is no bad school only bad management. This school has been rebuilt in recent years to a high standard but the running of the school has been let down by the constant changing of staff.
- The present head started to reverse this and a good Ofsted report in March 2014 but not enough time has been given for this to continue.
- The IEB have not been helpful to the present headteacher (Andrew Livingstone) and have not taken the school forward as was their remit.
- There is widespread belief that there has been unlawful procedures taken to close this village school, these are being challenged.

- Having recently attended a Parish Council meeting where this proposal was discussed with representatives from KCC, Diocese and Ofsted, it would seem that residents of Stansted have not been consulted or contacted.
- KCC is blinkered, there is in the local area, plans for a large building project of affordable homes and primary school places will be at a premium in a few years time. The school in Stansted is modern, bright and airy and was refurbished seven years ago when a considerable sum of money, our money was given to the school. This money will be wasted if the school is knocked down for housing or left derelict. Nothing would be recouped for villagers.
- About 7 years ago KCC invested over £650k of public money into upgrading the premises with the effect that they are now of an excellent standard. If the school closes it appears that the value of this investment will revert to the Church of England. I object to this very strongly, how on earth can the passing of such a sum to the Church be justified?
- Some local schools have offered places to Stansted parents teach from poor quality temporary accommodation. Stansted has top-notch premises that will revert to the Church and, no doubt, be sold as residential accommodation – thus bringing to a sad end a fine record of over 100 years of educating youngsters in Stansted. If it happens what an abject failure by all concerned.
- Devastated that a school with such a fine previous record of educating our children is in such a pickle.
- This is a little rural gem that should be cherished and given every possible support by outside education professionals.
- In the 1970s numbers were low and the school's future was in doubt. Fortunately a good number of new pupils were enrolled from nearby New Ash Green which formed a fresh cohort who brought their siblings to the School in following years. The school only ran two classes (Infant and Juniors) whilst our children attended and the quality of teaching from The Head and her Assistant Teachers was superb. We are forever grateful to them for helping us to rear three well-rounded citizens and I urge that you do not deny future generations of local children the same opportunities.

### **Ex Governors**

- I understand the fact that the school is no longer viable with only thirty odd children on roll (when my child was there were fewer children at the school and two teachers and two classes). However, the school buildings are in excellent shape and a great deal of money has been spent. The school is in a lively position and there are many advantages for young children in attending a small school where there have the opportunity to thrive.
- At the meeting, the report on the children's progress seemed to contradict the very unfavourable Ofsted report, in which no mention was made of how well the children settled into their senior schools and were able to cope with the transition to a more demanding environment.
- Suggest that the Education Authorities and Diocese follow the example of successful businesses and actually promote the school, making the most of all its advantages, with an enthusiastic and encouraging head. We keep hearing there is a shortage of primary school places and a demand everywhere for more houses, which in turn will lead to a demand for more schools. It seems very short-sighted to close a school with such potential instead of making the best use of the very valuable asset.

- Freedom of Choice – I believe that closure of the school will significantly reduce choice for those parents who wish to send their child to a smaller school or one with a Christian ethos.
- Education Standards – I do not feel that the school has been given sufficient time to improve standards. Much damage was done to the schools as a result of poor management and leadership of the previous headteacher. I was on the Governing body at the end of this period and saw first hand how the delay in dealing effectively with this situation by the KCC led to the loss of staff morale, parent confidence and pupil progress. I firmly believe the KCC has a moral duty to give the school more time to recover from this position. Those parents who have kept their children at the school are committed to it for their children and future siblings.
- Pupil transition – It has been stated that smaller schools like Stansted do not prepare pupils for the transition to secondary education. I have not seen any evidence of statistics to support this claim. In spite of being a pupil at a very bleak time in the schools' recent history, my grandchild achieved a grammar school place in 2013. His transition was smooth, as was the case with all of this peer group. I think this claim is without foundation.
- Value to the community – The school has always been a central and important part of the life of the village. We have already lost our village shop, post office and post office bus service. The school brings life to this rural area and the absence of these vibrant young people at the heart of our community would be a tragedy.

### **Parish Councils**

- Stansted Parish Council - The Parish Council formally objects to the closure of Stansted School. The Key reasons for maintaining Stansted School are outlined below:
  - a) The basis for making the decision to consult on the closure
  - b) The efficient use of the school asset
  - c) The demand for places
  - d) The effect on the Parish
- Due to the instability caused by the current consultation and poor management by all parties over the last two years, we believe that a moratorium should be placed on closure by KCC issuing a public pronouncement that the school will be kept open for at least two years. This would provide time to rebuild the pupil roll from the bottom up. It would also provide the opportunity to obtain input from Stansted's parish community which is willing and able to provide resources to ensure the survival of the school.
- Stansted School is one of the most modern small schools in the district owing to the amount of money invested by KCC into the school to ensure its viability (over £600,000 in the last 10 years). Other village schools of a similar size (Ryarsh and Trottiscliffe to name but two) have old buildings that require significant investment in order to make sure they are fit for the 21st century.
- In a period when the government and KCC are having to make significant savings and cuts in essential services, it would be a scandal to close a modern

school whilst pouring money into other facilities that require significant capital investment. As part of the consultation, it is important that the elected members are provided with information on the anticipated capital that will be spent on schools in the surrounding area over the next 5 years, to create environments fit for the modern student. We will be checking with our elected members that they have been furnished with these facts when the recommendation is put forward to the head of education.

- The financial obligation is to Kent taxpayers, in protecting the £600,000 investment KCC made to the school to make it one of the most modern in the district. Should the planning use of the school buildings change then there will be a significant cost in reinstating parish land which should be factored into any costing calculations.
- Trottiscliffe Parish Council. In our view the importance of a school to a small rural community is of utmost importance. Although we acknowledge that the school is presently unviable as well as being in Special Measures for an unacceptable period of time, we would like to see every effort made to utilise this wonderful facility for the benefit of the local children and the community as a whole.
- Borough Green Parish Council does not support the proposal to discontinue the school by 31 August 2015. There is serious concern about the location of alternative schools available and the inevitable consequential increase of traffic to travel to alternative schools. The council supports the retention of the existing school.
- Platt Parish Council - object to the above proposal, This appears to be a knee jerk reaction to an Ofsted Report. Unfortunately, quick turn arounds are expected these days without a long term view taken into consideration. Catch 22 situation - a bad Ofsted with panic reaction by parents taking away their children thus reducing the number of children attending the school which has led to a two-class structure being implemented. The latter is not necessarily a detrimental situation and has gone on in the past for many years with no adverse affect on children.
- It is vitally important that villages have their own schools to provide a well-balanced community. No village school means no young families thus creating an imbalance of residents. A village school plays an active part in the community and benefits all ages. Closing Stansted School puts pressure on other nearby village schools and could, long term, affect their respective intakes and possibly mean that parents are forced to send their children to another village school. It can also put financial strain on to parents who have to take their children to another village school..
- It should be acknowledged that some things take time and confidence has to be restored. In view of the fact that Stansted has received financial investment in the buildings in recent years, Platt Parish Council urges you not to rush into discontinuing Stansted School. It is hoped that KCC will not be looking at this proposal in terms of finance. Alas it seems an easy solution without too much effort being made by KCC but it will have a long term impact on Stansted and the surrounding area for many years. Closing Stansted School is very short sighted and we urge KCC to reject this proposal.

## **The view of the Local Member for Malling North: Sarah Hohler**

I am deeply saddened that the committee is today considering a proposal to close Stansted CEP School. I have represented Stansted for 26 years, and lived here for nearly 40.

The school is at the heart of the community, between the church and the village hall, with a large recreation ground linking all three. Closing the school, which has seen so many of our current residents' children and grandchildren (mine included) flourish, and which has been serving the community for over 150 years, would be a severe blow to this and neighbouring villages.

This consultation comes at a time when the community is about to celebrate the conclusion of the improvement works to the church, much used by the local school, and the result of a successful local fund raising campaign. At a time, when the parish council, having first consulted the school children about new equipment, has managed to raise £10,000 for the recreation ground. At a time when new houses, to attract young families, are being built in both our villages. And soon after the completion of a modernisation programme which has turned the school from a draughty Victorian building to a larger modern school with great facilities, the envy of its neighbours.

So what has gone wrong, and why are we facing this situation? The first that I, and the parish council, heard that the school was faltering was in July 2013. A governor came to see me and told me that the head teacher had been on leave since February, was resigning at the end of August, and that head teachers from outside were running the school. A replacement head had not been found. Rumours were circulating that the school would close. Parents started looking for other schools.

At about this time, Ofsted put the school in to special measures but this was not made public until the start of the new academic year when an interim head, recruited by the LEA with difficulty, was also announced. The head was popular but standards did not improve and he left early in 2014. This did nothing to improve confidence in the school, rumours still circulated about closure, and more parents, reluctantly, withdrew their children, concerned they would not find suitable alternative schooling if they did not act quickly.

Another interim head was recruited and the governing body gave him a contract until the end of March 2015. Sadly, the anticipated improvement did not occur with the new head and he left early this year, before his contract expired. The governing body was replaced, at the end of summer 2014, by an Interim Executive Board. Standards still failed to improve and more children left. A visiting head has now been appointed to look after the remaining pupils.

I think we have failed our pupils. Professional skills and resolve have not been in place to improve their attainment. With so many changes of leadership and management, the school has not been given a fair chance. Other local schools have bounced back after similar setbacks and reduced rolls. We know we have a very sound building. We know that there is a demand for a small rural school in a community such as ours. A recent village survey tells us that there are families with young children who are hoping to attend the school. Our population is growing. As is the demand for primary places.

This community needs a school, whether an academy or a free school or an infant school. If the diocese really cannot take this church school in to its own academy trust then we should find one that will. Young children in the vicinity should be able to benefit from the same quality of provision and resource that so many of us valued when our own children arrived and grew. Successive generations of children surely deserve no less. Closing the school will damage this close knit community and must be avoided.

I urge members to read and consider the heartfelt letters which have been sent in response to this consultation exercise, and please advise the cabinet member to save our school. Thank you.

### **Ann Kemp – Local Borough Councillor**

- Small rural schools are very important in our small village communities, having a real impact on village life and the total wellbeing of the community.
- The school buildings are in good condition and the position idyllic – many parents feel their children benefit from starting their education in such surrounds, as well as being in small classes.
- With the right leadership a school here could thrive and prosper – closing it without finding that leadership would be premature.
- I understand the school, at present, is unviable – but feel strongly that the impact on the community from its closure should be considered when making your decision.

### **Matthew Balfour – Member and TMBC Councillor**

- I am, along with being a county councillor, currently one of the Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council members for the village of Stansted until the next election when there is a boundary change. I am not standing again for election for the village of Stansted.
- I entirely endorse the views of my ward colleague, Mrs Ann Kemp, which I understand have been sent to you.
- I would however say that I have a firm belief that a village and the community living in and around it, of the nature of Stansted both deserves and needs a thriving “village” school.
- Stansted School has, I believe, suffered a series of problems caused by a number of individuals over the last five to six years that have put the school into the state that it is in now. This I believe to be unfair on the school itself, the village and, particularly, the children of the area. This, in itself is unfair and could, with the right help and regulation, have been avoided.
- I would urge the authority to resist now closing the school for ever and consider how with real help and support it can be reinvigorated and continued.

### **Cllr Martin Coffin – TMBC Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Innovation**

- It would be virtually impossible to recover the reputation of the school from its current position. There is a record of poor decision making from a number of the parties involved – each has conspired to make the school a poor proposition for prospective entrants.
- The school has been a part of the village social structure for over a hundred and fifty years. It has a valuable contribution to both the education of children and for village cohesion.

- If the school has been put into a position whereby it is decided to close, then I would ask that it be shut for a year – mothballed. I agree that the reputational damage has been done to the school. Mothballing the school to allow the investigation of a 'free school' and in my opinion would be the best solution to the current crisis. The poor image of a school in special measures could be shrugged off, a team of dedicated people could be involved and the school allowed to thrive and prosper.
- I do not believe that the closure and disposal of the school is in the best interests of either the County Council, the Church or the residents of the local area. The investment into the facilities is such that this school could become a beacon for small rural education.

### **Other**

- For a village that is so close to the centre of London, Stansted is unique. It has a great community spirit and Stansted school is an integral part of the whole. At our monthly Farmers' Market, the school children will often come over to spend a few pennies and learn how to add up and subtract with real money. They will come with a clipboard and interview the stallholders which is good for the communication skills and at Christmas they come to sing carols.
- The school has an active fund raising committee and the villagers always support these events. I have had the opportunity to meet a number of the children during the choosing of the May King and Quest. It seems extraordinary that a child who passed 11+ with a 100% mark can have come from a failing school.
- It is on record that Kent is short of 8,500 primary school places, so why do you feel it necessary to close this school as opposed to West Kingsdown which apparently has a lower educational standard?
- There was no emotional input from the 'consultants' who came to the Parish meeting, nor did they have the facts to hand. It beggars belief that a thriving community can be split in such an impersonal way and one wonders why we voted for these people to represent us.
- A parent of two ex pupils who attend Stansted School several years ago, resident in neighbouring village of Ash. Carefully researched Stansted School and never regretted sending children there. Both are successful.
- Difficulty of staff teaching subjects to a range of ages and abilities. It has always been the case at Stansted and with excellent teaching staff who aim for each child to reach their individual potential, this can be and was achieved. In fact, with smaller classes, a child's potential can be easily drawn out. The two class structure certainly worked brilliantly before. I feel that with such small numbers, each child can have their abilities catered for and encouraged and their education can be tailored to their individual needs, which is so difficult to do in a large school.
- Low Numbers – it is a small village school, whose annual intake should be expected to fluctuate from year to year. I cannot emphasise the advantages of small numbers, in that pupils become happy, secure, well known to all the staff and with the right input should do well. Stansted children become good all rounded, well-grounded and confident children through the security gained from their first experience of education where they are valued and treated as individuals.



- Object to the statement that low numbers restrict the school's ability to suitably prepare children for transition to secondary school. When people heard that my children when to a tiny village school, they intimated that they would find the transition to secondary school traumatic. In fact, it is my experience that all the children from Stansted School settle admirably and easily in their secondary schools precisely because they had gained self-confidence and self-belief from the excellent caring environment of their small school. A small school can involve all the children in so many ways that encourage them to blossom, from encouraging their individual strengths and talents to allowing them to become caring role models for the younger children.
- Appreciate that there are many things and possible opportunities that a very small school cannot provide as well as a larger school but believe the advantages gained more than compensate for this.
- A comprehensive list of the loss to the village community as a result of the school closure:
  1. The Horticultural Society runs three shows a year which have classes for children and has always been well supported by the School. It is most unlikely that any entries will be received if the school closes.
  2. The annual May Fair and May Queen have been organised by the school. The May Queen opens the Fairseat and Stansted village fetes.
  3. The School has in recent years run the village Bonfire Night celebrations.
  4. On Armistice Day (if a weekday) a special service has been held at the War Memorial attended by the children and wreaths laid by the school and Parish Council. There will be little point in holding such a service with only 2 or 3 Parish Councillors present.
  5. The Village Hall benefits from hiring to the school for events such as the May Fair, Bonfire Night and children's parties.
  6. The monthly Village Market was used by the school to teach the children how to spend money, and at Christmas they came and sang carols. The parents at the school were valued customers when they dropped off their children.
  7. The local pub enjoyed the patronage of teachers, parents and governors after meetings.
- If the school could be resurrected I would strongly support it.
- Lack of choice at other schools
- In rural areas schools bring communities together and it is important for children, parents and villagers.
- Children need to have friends in the area they live.
- In this area schools are generally oversubscribed and village school places have been at a premium as is the case at Fawkham School.
- The school had a good Ofsted last July it needs time to consolidate the good work with strong substantive HT and without so many changes.

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,  
Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO:

For publication

**Subject: Proposal to discontinue Stansted CEP School, Malthouse Road, Stansted**

Decision:

**As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:**

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Stansted Church of England Primary School, Malthouse Road, Stansted, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 7PH

And, subject to no objections to the public notice not already

- (ii) Determine the proposal

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal in order to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

Reason(s) for decision:

In reaching this decision I have taken into account:

- the views expressed by those put in writing in response to the consultation;
- the views of the District and Parish Councils, the local County Councillor; Governing Body of the school, the Staff and Pupils;
- the Equalities Impact Assessment and comments received regarding this; and
- the views of the Education Cabinet Committee which are set out below

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Any alternatives considered: - None

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:  
None

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_