

Consultation on the proposed closure of Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, Bleasdale, Preston, PR3 1UY



January 2019

A consultation event in connection with this proposal will be held on Monday 28 January 2019 at the school. Further information is provided inside.

Produced by
Lancashire County Council



Lancashire
County
Council 

Consultation Document

What are we proposing to do?

This consultation document is about the future of Bleasdale Church of England Primary School, Bleasdale, Preston, PR3 1UY, including its proposed closure, with effect from 31 August 2019.

This document outlines the main reasons for proposing the closure. This is due to the low number of pupils on roll and concerns around financial viability.

This document also identifies the opportunities available in the area for children currently attending Bleasdale Church of England Primary School to continue their education.



Foreword

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to provide primary and secondary school places to every child of school age living in Lancashire who request one. In achieving this, Lancashire, like many other authorities, faces challenges. Changing demographic factors mean that we must constantly review the number and location of the school places we provide and ensure that schools remain educationally and financially viable. We must also respond to national policy change and to the voices of our communities.

Lancashire is a large, diverse authority served by some superb schools and we are committed to improving this excellence by continuing to raise standards and opportunities

The county council, dioceses and schools work together with parents and other service providers to help our children to be safe, to enjoy and achieve, to be listened to, to belong to the community, and to achieve economic well-being. We want all children and their parents to have pride in their local school and cultivate an appetite for lifelong learning.

Whilst Lancashire County Council and Blackburn Church of England Diocese aim to provide schools that meet the needs of our communities wherever possible, on occasion this must be balanced with the educational and financial viability of maintaining a very small school. Unfortunately, this sometimes means we must propose a school closure.

We hope that you will take a little time during this consultation period to let us know your views on what the diocese and Lancashire County Council are proposing to do. We will not make a decision until we have carefully considered all responses to this consultation.

Please help us to improve educational provision for Lancashire children.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susie Charles".

County Councillor Susie Charles
Cabinet Member for Children,
Young People and Schools

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Whittaker".

Director of Education Stephen Whittaker
Church of England Blackburn Diocese

PART ONE

Our vision and what we would like to achieve

Education is a powerful means of transforming and enriching lives and communities. Future success and well-being depends on strong creative partnerships, new ways of working, high expectations and a belief that we all have a part to play and can make a difference together.

Lancashire County Council is committed to improving the quality of educational provision to help raise standards for all learners.

We know that schools can face challenges in meeting pupils' needs, particularly where pupil numbers are falling and that in some cases changes to the pattern of school organisation in an area can help secure the viability of schools, improve opportunities and raise standards.

On the 3 December 2018, Cabinet gave their approval for a public consultation to take place on the proposal to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School with effect from 31 August 2019.

If the proposal is approved, existing pupils will be assisted to find places at alternative schools.

PART TWO

Proposal

The proposal is to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School in Wyre, with effect from 31 August 2019.

Pupil numbers and forecasts

Bleasdale Church of England Primary School is a small, voluntary aided rural primary school within the Diocese of Blackburn. The school has seen a reduction in the number of pupils on roll from 16 in January 2014 to two in September 2018. There are no pupils in Reception, Year 1, Year 2 or Year 3 and there were no admissions to the school in September 2018.

September 2018 Pupil Number on Roll:

Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
0	0	0	0	1	0	1	2

Current numbers

Whilst the pupil numbers have declined in this rural area, the school's numbers have fallen to a greater extent than those in the other schools. With only two pupils currently on roll and one of these pupils set to leave at the end of 2018/19 academic year and no significant housing planned for the area, this position is unsustainable.

Alternative provision

A vitally important feature of any consultation on the possible closure of a maintained school is the availability of alternative provision for the pupils. Consideration must be given to the types of schools available, the distances that pupils will need to travel and the standards of provision offered by any receiving schools.

Whilst pupil numbers in the area have declined over recent years, the capacity within the other two schools in the planning area would provide sufficient capacity for the Bleasdale Church of England Primary School pupils (one of whom will leave at the end of the 2018/19 academic year). The combined

capacity of the other two schools is 119, compared against total number on roll of 58 pupils. Based on current and projected pupil numbers, there should be sufficient places in all cohorts of the other two schools to accommodate the pupils if Bleasdale Church of England Primary School were to close. One of the alternative schools is also a Church of England school. The nearest school is over two miles away so there may be a transport impact for future pupils in the area.

The admission numbers and numbers on roll for the two closest schools are as follows:

	Admission No	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
Calder Vale St. John CE	10	3	5	0	5	5	0	5	23
St. Mary's Catholic Primary, Claughton-on-Brock	7	6	4	7	4	5	3	6	35
Totals	17	9	9	7	9	10	3	11	58
Available places		8	8	10	8	7	14	6	61

There are sufficient places in all of the year groups at neighbouring schools to admit pupils from Bleasdale Church of England Primary School. Calder Vale St John is a voluntary aided Church of England school and places are currently available in each of its year groups for any children that wish to continue with a Church of England education.

Should Bleasdale Church of England Primary School close, Lancashire County Council will work with parents to identify preferred alternative school provision.

The standards of education offered by neighbouring schools, as judged by the most recent Ofsted reports are as follows:

St. Mary's Catholic Primary, Claughton-on-Brock – Outstanding
Calder Vale St. John CE - Good

Financial viability

The school has sufficient funding to continue to operate in 2018/19 but, with only two pupils, would go into an irrecoverable deficit from 1 September 2019. Staff numbers are already at floor levels and minimal non-staffing costs are already at the lowest practicable level.

Without adequate funding, the educational provision in the school would decline.

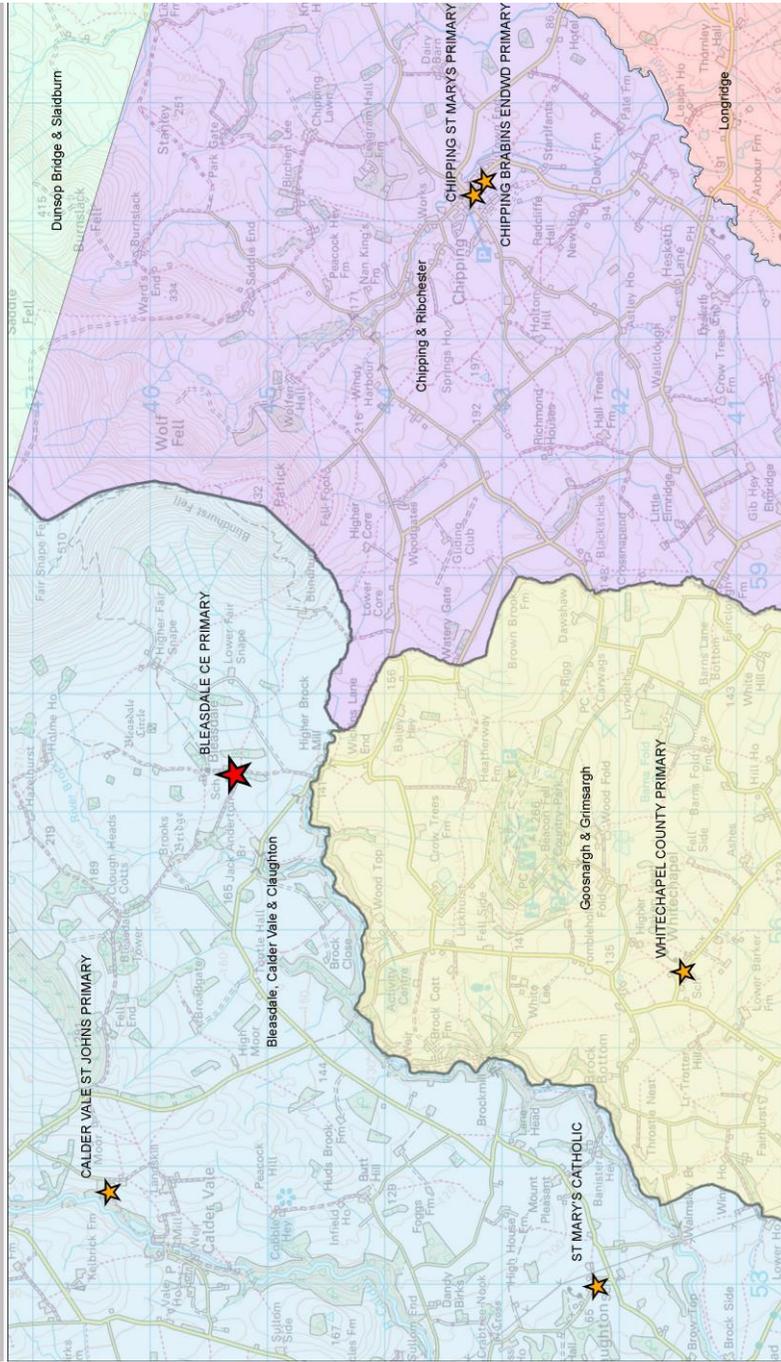
School governors and Blackburn Diocese

In recent months, local authority officers and officers representing Blackburn Diocese have been in discussion with school governors over the future of the school. After considering all options, the governors agreed to proceed with a proposal to close the school. Federation and collaboration with other schools was also considered but this is not considered to be a viable option with so few pupils on roll.

Bleasdale Church of England Primary School

Map created : 30/10/2018

Map scale : 1:40,000



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Closure of Schools and the School Organisation and Governance Regulations

There is a defined statutory process in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 which must be followed before making a decision on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education.

There are five stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

Consultation

The issue of this document marks a period of consultation during which the views of any interested parties are sought and which will be considered before any move to the more formal stages of the process.

Publication

Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, a decision to proceed to issue a statutory notice must be made by Cabinet.

Representation

Statutory notices for school closure define a minimum four week period for anyone to submit their written comments on the proposal. This enables people to express their views in the form of objections or comments on the proposal.

Decision

Within two months after the statutory notice period ends, the local authority must make a decision on the proposal.

Implementation

If the proposal is approved, Bleasdale Church of England Primary School will close with effect from 31 August 2019.

PART THREE

The consultation and decision making process

Timescales

7 January 2019 to
15 February 2019

Stage one – Consultation

April 2019

Cabinet meeting to consider the results of the consultation and decide whether to publish a Statutory Notice on a proposal to close the school or not

IF REQUIRED:

April/May 2019

Stage two – Publication of Statutory Notice

April/May 2019

Stage three – Statutory Representation Period
(four weeks during term time)

July 2019

Stage four – Final decision by Cabinet

31 August 2019

Stage five – Implementation (if approved)

Consultation event

You are invited to express your views on the proposal at an event organised at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School on:

Monday 28 January 2019 from 3pm to 8pm.

Please note that this will be an appointment-led event, requiring interested parties to make a booking prior to the event. This will allow us to manage the process effectively, minimise waiting times and ensure that appropriate officers are available to offer advice and guidance relating to specific matters of interest. You can attend the event without an appointment but those with one will have priority. This could mean that you wait longer if you don't have an appointment.

Bookings can be made by telephone or email by contacting the School Improvement Service on 01772 531853 or email:

Heather.Warburton@lancashire.gov.uk

The closing date for booking an appointment is Wednesday 23 January at 5pm.

Who we will consult

This consultation document will be provided to people and organisations who may have an interest in these proposals. These include the following:

- Staff, parents/guardians, governors, trustees and pupils of Bleasdale Church of England Primary School. The views of the pupils at the school will be sought through the school
- Headteachers and chairs of governors of other Wyre schools within a five mile radius of the school
- Voluntary and private nursery providers in Wyre within a five mile radius of the school
- Chief Executive, Leader and members of Wyre Borough Council
- Local church authorities and faith groups
- Members of the Education Scrutiny Committee at Lancashire County Council
- Lancashire County Councillors for Wyre
- Bleasdale Parish Council
- Local Members of Parliament for Wyre
- Trade Unions and Associations
- Lancashire Association of School Governing Bodies
- The Secretary of State
- Regional Schools Commissioner
- Ofsted: Her Majesty's Inspector for the area
- The wider community – through Wyre libraries and Wyre Borough Council.

This document is available on the county website at www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews but we can also provide copies of the consultation document to members of the local community on request.

How to share your views

We welcome your views on this proposal and all comments and objections will be considered very carefully before any decision is made to progress any further with this proposal.

The consultation runs until 5pm on 15 February 2019 and you can respond by completing the questionnaire in this document or writing separately.

Post to

Business Intelligence, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston PR1 0LD

Email to

haveyoursay@lancashire.gov.uk

Online at:

(Use the link below to complete the questionnaire contained in this document online)

www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews

A hard copy can be returned to the general office at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School. This will be returned to Lancashire County Council on your behalf.

This document can also be accessed through:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews

Please submit one response per person to this consultation

This consultation forms stage 1 of the process required when a school closure is being considered. The information provided in this booklet and at the consultation session is intended to be sufficient in order for people to form a view on the proposal. Lancashire County Council will consider views and concerns arising from the consultation process to contribute to the detailed proposal supplied later in the process.

We are sorry that, due to the volume of responses we receive when consulting on proposals for schools, we will not be able to acknowledge written responses nor enter into correspondence with interested parties during or after the consultation period. It is important to attend the relevant consultation event if you require clarification or more information on the proposal.

Thank you

Who should complete this questionnaire?

- Staff, governors, current or prospective parents/guardians of pupils at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School.
- Any other interested member of the community.

Please complete one form per person

You can complete and submit your questionnaire online by following the link provided on page 12

Alternatively send written responses to:

Business Intelligence, Lancashire County Council, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston PR1 0LD or to the general office at Bleasdale Church of England Primary School. This will be returned to Lancashire County Council on your behalf.

To arrive no later than 15 February 2019



We are proposing to close Bleasdale Church of England Primary School.

How strongly do you agree or disagree with this proposal?

Please tick one option only

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

Why do you say this?

Please write in below

**And if Bleasdale Church of England Primary School was to close, how would this affect you?**

Please write in below

**Is there anything else you would like to tell us?**

Please write in below



About you

This final section is about you. It's a little more personal, but is really useful to us. By answering these questions you will help us to understand the views of different groups of people. If there are any questions that you'd rather not answer, please tick 'prefer not to say', or leave it blank and go on to the next question.

Are you responding to this proposal as...?

Please tick as many as apply and where appropriate write in the name of the school

- A parent/carer of a pupil currently at: _____
- A parent/carer of a future pupil at: _____
- A member of staff at: _____
- A school governor at: _____
- Other: _____



What was your age on your last birthday?

Please tick one option only

Under 16

16-19

20-34

35-49

50-64

65+

Prefer not to say

Are you...?

Please tick one option only

Male

Female

Other

Prefer not to say

Are you a deaf person or do you have a disability?

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Please tick as many as apply

Yes, learning disability

Yes, physical disability

Yes, sensory disability

Yes, mental health condition

Yes, other disability

No

Prefer not to say

Are there any children or young people in your household aged under 18?

Please tick as many as apply

No, but expecting

Yes, aged under 5

Yes, aged 5-11

Yes, aged 12-15

Yes, aged 16-17

No children aged under 18

Prefer not to say

Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

Please tick one option only

White

Black or black British

Asian or Asian British

Mixed ethnic background

Any other ethnic background

Prefer not to say

What is your home postcode?

Please write in below

Important Information

Lancashire County Council may be required to publish consultation responses as part of the reports for consideration by its cabinet either as appendices to those reports or as part of the background papers referred to in those reports and available on request. Please be aware that your responses to this consultation may be made available on the county council's website as part of this process.

