

Frequently Asked Questions

November 2016

Please find below the questions addressed at the recent consultation meetings. We hope they will help you when you make your responses to the Borough Council. If you have any further questions, do not hesitate to contact either school.

Organisation

The document refers to Willington School closing. What does this mean?

The discontinuance of one school is merely a paper exercise and effectively means that the DfE reference number for the Willington Lower School will cease to exist as the merged school will only require one number. In effect, both schools will cease to exist in their present form and one Primary school with a new name and identity will operate across both villages and current school sites.

Who will be the Headteacher?

Helen Johnson has been appointed as the executive headteacher for the federated schools. Her role this year will be the planning and preparation towards Primary status for September 2017. Elizabeth Dun remains in post as headteacher of Willington Lower School until the end of the Summer term. They will be working together throughout this year to a common goal.

Where will the headteacher be?

From September 2017, it is intended that she will spend at least two days based on each site, but will be in contact with both sites every day. The staffing structure is yet to be finalised, but there will be a nominated senior member of staff on each site available when the headteacher is not present. When the days have been finalised you will be told who will be available when.

Which age group will be on which site?

Ultimately, years R to 2 will be based on the Willington site and years 3 to 6 on the Cople site. However, in order to avoid unnecessary disruption, there will be a staggered change, explained on the document sent out with the consultation.

How will this be different to the current system, as the children will still change schools twice?

This will be one school with one identity, ethos and values, it is not just about a name. I do not intend to let it feel like two schools. We will do things together, pupils will have opportunities to take part in activities on both sites. Staff will visit both sites.

Could Cople be a standalone primary school, as it has the space and land?

In theory, yes it could. However, we believe that Primary education will be best served by merging. The sustainability of any school is down to funding, which is

based on numbers. To keep the numbers, we need to offer an attractive provision based on space, facilities and curriculum delivery as well as our ethos. A merger gives us not only the ability to offer single age classes, but also provision on each site geared to the needs of specific age ranges. There would be more limitations on the space available for older pupils whilst maintaining the appropriate space and provision for the youngest. We are in a changing educational landscape and even a Primary School of 200 is considered small. Small schools are at a distinct disadvantage in terms of buying power for essential services.

We believe that by merging, we are helping to secure the future of education in our villages.

How will Year R admissions work for 2017?

At the moment the two schools are still separate, each with an admissions number of 15. Parents of children due to start school in September 2017 should apply in the usual way. We would recommend that parents name both schools as choices in whichever order they wish. Places allocated at either school will be transferred to the merged school. In the event that the merger is not agreed, places will be available at both schools.

How will pupils get a place and transfer from their current schools?

All pupils currently in either school will automatically be on the role of the merged school. There will be no need for any application at any point.

Where will the children go in Year 7?

During Year 6, parents will need to apply for a secondary school place and will have a range of schools to choose from, each with their own admissions criteria. We would recommend visiting different schools to decide which you feel is best for your child. We are continuing to work closely with Mark Rutherford to offer a clear educational pathway up to and including Sixth Form. They have confirmed that they plan to adjust their catchment area to include our villages and to name us as a feeder school. Discussion is ongoing to secure transport provision from our villages to Mark Rutherford.

Part of our work with Mark Rutherford will be to create an effective transition programme in both years 6 and 7 to support this important change for the children. If your child is likely to transfer to a different secondary school, we will liaise closely with that school to arrange a smooth transition. We will give extra support for children who may need it due to individual circumstances.

What will happen to staff?

A new staffing structure is being developed. This will be subject to its own consultation where HR and the Unions will support the processes involved. We do not currently envisage any need to reduce the current number of teaching or other staff positions as there will be more children on both sites.

Provision

How the school will deliver years 5 and 6? What extra facilities will be offered to years 5 and 6?

All Year 5s would start together on the Cople site in Sept 2017, becoming the Year 6 Class in Sept 2018. As discussed at our Parents' Meeting – we are preparing the Upper KS2 curriculum this year, including establishing content as directed by the government and ensuring we have met any further training needs. Information about what the children will be learning will be shared with you in the usual ways at the start of the autumn term. Prospective Year 5 parents, currently with children at Willington are welcome to visit the Cople site and find out more.

In terms of facilities, areas that have been mentioned include PE, Science, ICT, Music and Cookery. These are all covered within the Primary Curriculum and will therefore be appropriately resourced to cover the programmes of study in Upper Key Stage 2. Science and Music will be taught in the normal classroom environment, with opportunities to use the outdoor areas or hall space respectively. For ICT, we are moving towards the use of more mobile technology and will be developing the use of ICT across the curriculum as well as delivering Computing. I would like to see Year 5 as the first class to have dedicated tablets or laptops in the classroom as part of this development. Cooking (as part of Design and Technology) can be done in small groups using our Curriculum kitchen, which we are lucky enough to have in Cople. For PE, we are planning to develop our outside space, in order to provide dedicated games areas, which can be marked out appropriately. We also now have the advantage of access to the BGS fields.

What will be the advantages of having single aged classes?

It will be easier to deliver the specifics of an age appropriate curriculum, especially as the children approach the end of key stage 2 and are preparing for SATs. Having more children in their peer group will give a wider social network. Having more children will give us the ability to access wider opportunities in such areas as sport and music.

What opportunities will there be to engage in activities with children from other schools?

We will build on existing links such as sports partnerships and the strong relationships we have with other local schools. There will be increasing opportunities to work with the secondary schools, especially in Year 6.

What will happen to Care Club?

Based on current take up of before and after school care, we will continue to offer wrap around care on each site. We are working on bring the current provision at each school closer together so that from September the club will operate as one entity. We envisage that parents can use care club on either site regardless of which site their child(ren) are based during the day as we plan to organise a shuttle service between sites at the beginning and end of the school day. We will monitor

the provision and may decide at a later date that it would work better to offer different activities and environment for different age groups.

What about Friends associations?

We hope that FOWLS and FOCL will be able to organise at least one joint event during this year in preparation for becoming one organisation working to the benefit of all our children and families.

Facilities

What building work is planned?

A new classroom on the Cople site has been agreed, though this will not be needed until September 2018. We are in discussion with the Borough planners and architects to increase and adapt the classroom spaces at Willington and funding has now been secured to proceed with this in readiness for September 2017.

Are there plans to acquire new land and how would this be used?

There is currently a planning application in place surrounding the purchase of a piece of land at the rear of the Cople site (change of use from agricultural to educational) and we await the approval of this application before further plans for development can be made. There is no current availability of further land for the school's use in Willington.

Logistics

How will I get two children to school on time if they are on different sites? What time will each school be opening and closing? Will there be transport between the sites? How are parents expected to get children to two different sites and still be able to walk/bike safely? Are there plans to provide safer routes between the villages?

We plan to adjust timings to allow parents with children on both sites to drop off and pick up more easily. The details of this will be finalised nearer the time.

We are looking into having a school minibus that can provide the shuttle service at the beginning and end of the school day as well as transport between sites for joint activities.

There are a number of initiatives under discussion in each village associated with the council's local neighbourhood plans, which cover footpaths and other sustainable travel routes. We have also met together with the council representative drafting School Travel plans. The hope is that we can establish a safe route, including safe crossing to enable those who wish to walk/scoot/cycle to do so. Within the villages, we will look at offering 'walking buses' if there is demand, support and volunteers available.

How will the whole school get together for events?

We would hope to have whole school assemblies at least once a half term using either one of the churches or village halls. There will also be opportunities to organise appropriate whole school outings from time to time. In addition, there will be activities organised to have classes from each site working together whilst we still have parallel classes and for the older children to have the chance to work with the younger ones. We will look at how to organise after school clubs to best meet the needs of the children.

We would also want to accommodate the options for children living in either village to participate in community events, regardless of which site they attend, such as Willington's remembrance service or Cople church fete.

What about parking?

We recognise that parking is already an issue in both villages as it is with all schools. We are looking at ways to address this through the travel plans previously mentioned. We hope to alleviate some of the problems through staggered start times and the offer of a shuttle service. We continue to ask that parents park with due regard for safety and respect for our neighbours and to make use of alternative parking provision where possible.

We also plan to continue to promote park and stride opportunities and look at extending these.

Identity

What will the school be called?

We would like to involve children, staff and parents in helping to develop the identity of the new school, including suggestions for a name. This would start to happen in the Spring Term if and when a merger is agreed.

Will there be a new uniform?

Yes, there will need to be a new uniform as part of the new identity, including an appropriate logo. Again, parents' and children's views will be sought in the Spring term

Finally

How and when will the decision be made?

The public consultation ends at noon on the 13th December. Please respond by that date in writing or by email to the addresses supplied on the consultation document. If you prefer to drop your response form back to school, please do so by 3.30pm on 12th December, so that they can be delivered to Borough Hall in time.

The consultation is then reviewed by the education portfolio holder on the council and he will take the decision whether or not to publish the statutory proposal to effectively close one school and extend the other.

The statutory proposal would then have a four week representation period from 3rd to 31st January.

The council executive would then consider whether to enact the proposal. They are due to meet on February 8th.

The decision will be communicated to you as soon as possible thereafter.