

# NORTHAMPTONSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

## PROPOSAL TO DISCONTINUE GREAT CREATON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Notice is given in accordance with section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Northamptonshire County Council intends to close Great Creaton Primary.

### 1. Name, address and contact details of proposer

Northamptonshire County Council, Strategic Planning Team, One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton, NN1 1ED.

### 2. Name, address and category of school

Great Creaton Primary School, Welford Road, Creaton, Northants, NN6 8NH, a community school.

### 3. Date of implementation

Northamptonshire County Council (NCC) proposes that the school would be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018.

### 4. Reason for closure

The initial period of consultation on the possible closure of Great Creaton Primary School was initiated due to long term concerns over the challenges faced by the school arising from the low number of pupils on roll and the impact this has on the school's ability to effectively deliver the curriculum to pupils. Officers within NCC's Learning and Effectiveness team have concerns over the school's ability to address the following issues;

- The school is required to teach pupils across cohorts and across Key Stages. The current cohort of Year 6 is the largest cohort in the school with ten pupils. Financially the school is able to maintain two classes for the 2018-19 academic year. However with fewer pupils expected to be on roll from September 2018 (which could be as low as 7) the budget for the following year will be based on these numbers, will mean that the school for the 2019-20 academic year will be open with just one class, i.e. Reception though to Year 6 being taught in a single class. This would lead to significant concerns about the school being able to offer the full breadth of the curriculum and experiences across the 4-11 age range all within one class. It would be a significant challenge to meet the needs of all learners with this range of ages in one class. Ofsted recently identified this as being a challenge in the current organisation of the school. Reducing the school down to one class will undoubtedly impact on the outcomes achieved by pupils educated at the school at

all ages;

- Implications around social interactions and appropriate grouping of gender/age and ability if a budget is set on one class. Some year groups will only have 2 pupils and the school will have no pupils in Year 5 leading to concerns arising from the impact this will have on pupils' emotional and social development;
- The challenge the school will have to fund sufficient numbers of experienced and capable staff and its ability to continue to run all of the managerial and additional requirements in the school such as SENCO, subject leadership, safeguarding and support for vulnerable pupils;
- The school has a very high proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs & Disability (SEND) (47% of the total roll). For a small school, the numbers of children with SEN are high and the needs of these children are complex. Because the school is small, the capacity to support all of these children with interventions and additional teaching is limited and therefore these pupils may not be not achieving as well as they could in another setting;
- The school has been judged to require improvement at the past two inspections. The school was inspected again in January 2018 and the report was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2018. The school was judged to require improvement for a third time. At this inspection, the school was judged on its 2016 and 2017 outcomes, as well as current achievement in school. Although current progress being made in school by pupils is as expected, attainment at the end of 2017 was below the national standard;
- Safeguarding concerns – with one class open, it would be difficult for the school to be able to fulfil the statutory requirement of having at least one trained designated safeguarding lead at school at all times. It is best practice to have at least two trained safeguarding leads on site at all times; this would be very challenging.

It is the belief of Northamptonshire County Council that whilst giving due consideration to the factors detailed above in conjunction with the anticipated number of pupils that will be attending the school in the future, the school is not viable from an education perspective in the long term. As such, the only manner of mitigating against the challenges faced by the school is to progress the option of closure.

## 5. Pupil numbers and admissions

Great Creaton Primary School is a co-educational setting that provides education to pupils between the ages of 4 and 11 years old. It has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 12 pupils per year group and a maximum total capacity for 84 pupils. As of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2018, the school has 25 pupils attending the school. As of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, it is anticipated that there will be approximately 10 pupils on roll at the school. This is due to the school's large Year 6 cohort (ten pupils) who are due to leave the school at the end of the academic year and other pupils submitting 'In Year' applications for alternative schools, whilst only three pupils are due to start the school in Reception in September 2018.

Whilst there are a high number of pupils on roll at the school with Special Educational Needs this is as a result of parental preference and the school should not be considered as a Special Education provision.

## 6. Displaced pupils

At the time of writing there are 25 pupils on roll at the school. As stated above ten of these pupils will be leaving the school at the end of the academic year to begin secondary school and a number of other pupils have already secured alternative school places to begin from September 2018. It is anticipated that should the school be discontinued with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> December 2018, a maximum of ten pupils would be displaced as a result.

Whilst any alternative school place secured by displaced pupils would be dictated by parental preference, there is sufficient surplus capacity in each of the four schools located closest to Great Creaton Primary to accommodate any pupils displaced by the school's proposed closure. These include;

Spratton CEVC Primary – 34 surplus places;

Brixworth CEVC Primary – 27 surplus places;

Guilsborough CEVA Primary Academy – 51 surplus places;

Pitsford Primary School – 13 surplus places.

For the purpose of clarity, each of the school's listed above has sufficient capacity in all year groups to accommodate the expected number of pupils that would be displaced by the proposed closure of Great Creaton Primary School, with the exception of Pitsford Primary.

Pupil projection forecasts compiled by NCC indicate that there is sufficient capacity within the Guilsborough Primary planning area to accommodate all pupils residing in this area, for as long as projections are available i.e. up to and including the 2022/23 academic year. It is forecast that the Planning area will be operating with approximately 20% of the total capacity of all area primary schools, available as surplus, for as long projections are available. For the purpose of clarity, this does not include the capacity currently provided by Great Creaton Primary School. There is more than sufficient capacity within this area of the county to meet forecast demand, without the capacity provided by Great Creaton Primary School.

Depending upon the application of parental preference for alternative schools there may be an impact on school transport budgets arising from the proposal but, given the low numbers of pupils involved and the fact that some of them already travel from other locations this impact will be modest.

## 7. Impact on the community

At the time of writing, there are 28 pupils of primary age that reside in the village of Creaton (the linked area for Great Creaton Primary School). Of these, ten pupils attend Great Creaton Primary School. As at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, there will be 21 pupils of primary age residing in Creaton, of whom it is anticipated seven will attend the local school.

It is the belief of NCC that, in practice the school is no longer serving the community it was originally intended to serve i.e. the village of Creaton. It is also the view of NCC that the village of Creaton does not have (and is not likely in the foreseeable future to have) a sufficient number of primary aged pupils residing within it to support a primary school.

The village of Creaton has a population of 503 (2011 Census data). With effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, the primary aged school population of Creaton will equate to 4.2% of the total population of the village itself. Due to the small proportion that the primary aged

population of the village comprises of the total, and the smaller number of the primary aged population that actually attend the school (1.3% of the total population of the village), it is the the view of NCC that the impact on the local community of the proposed closure of the school, will be limited.

Whilst no decision has been made to as to what will happen to the school site in the event the school closes, to avoid pre-judging the result of the ongoing consultation, in the event of closure, NCC will explore all options with regard to any subsequent use of the site. This includes any proposals put forward by any party wishing to retain the building for community use. Whilst it is not possible to confirm this at the time of writing, should a viable option be progressed, this would further mitigate against any detrimental impact experienced by the local community.

In addition to this, the Ducklings Pre-School leases part of the school building and the lease does not expire until 31<sup>st</sup> August 2019, NCC will continue to work in collaboration with the pre-school to explore the future use of the school buildings in an effort to ensure that the pre-school and local community are not detrimentally affected by the possible closure of the school.

Whilst the initial period of consultation conducted by NCC on the proposal to close Great Creaton Primary School identified opposition from the local community within Creaton to the proposed closure, it is the belief of NCC that the challenges faced by the school and the consideration that pupils attending the school would be educated more effectively in alternative settings, should be given precedence in this matter.

## 8. Rural primary schools

Great Creaton Primary School is designated as a 'rural' school and as such there is a presumption against closure. NCC have, in reaching the decision to publish this notice of discontinuance had regard to the matters specified in Section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, namely:

(a) The likely effect of the discontinuance of the school on the local community  
Please see section 7 of this proposal.

(b) the availability, and likely cost to the local education authority, of transport to other schools,  
Please see section 9 of this proposal

(c) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase, and  
Please see section 9 of this proposal

(d) any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school  
NCC officers continue to work in collaboration with both the Office of the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) and other local primary schools regarding the possible conversion to academy status of Great Creaton Primary School and forming part of a local Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). This option would require both the agreement of the other local primary schools who intend to form the MAT and the RSC (within whose remit all academy conversions fall). It is the belief of NCC that there remains significant barriers to this option proving to be viable but continues to try and facilitate this option as an alternative to closure. The outcome of these discussions will be reported on in full in the report to Cabinet

scheduled for September 2018, when a final decision on the proposed closure of the school will be made.

NCC believes that the case for closure is strong and that the closure of the school is in the best interest of pupils attending the school.

## 9. Travel

Due to the forecast decrease in pupil numbers that is due to occur between the time of writing and the new academic year that will begin with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2018, there will actually be a reduction in the number of journeys to and from school.

The length of the journeys involved will be dependent on the schools stated as a preference by parents of any pupils displaced by the closure of the school and is still to be determined at the time of writing.

At the time of writing, of the 25 pupils currently attending the school, 15 travel to the school from outside the village of Creaton. These pupils will be required to travel to alternative destinations. Should these pupils attend the school closest to their home address, this will result in a reduction in the length of journeys to and from school for these pupils. However, as stated above, this will depend on parental preference and it is not possible to confirm at the current time.

Of the seven pupils that reside in Creaton and are expected to still be attending the school at the point of closure, each of these would require transport to an alternative school and this will result in an increase in the length of journeys to and from an alternative school, for these pupils. The closest alternative school to Great Creaton Primary (Spratton CE Primary) is two miles away from the village.

Until the preferences of the current pupils are known, the potential cost to school transport budgets cannot be accurately assessed however several current pupils live nearer to alternative schools than to Creaton which may result in a reduction in cost. There may a modest increase in cost from transporting those children for whom Creaton is the nearest school.

It is impossible at this point to make an accurate assessment of any increase in use of motor vehicles arising from closure but the low numbers of pupils involved suggest that this will not be a significant amount.

## 10. Balance of denominational provision

The proposed closure of Great Creaton Primary School would impact on the balance of denominational provision available in the vicinity of Creaton. Of the ten schools located closest to Great Creaton Primary School, five have a religious denomination (all Church of England) and six (including Great Creaton are secular in character. The proposed closure of Great Creaton Primary School would reduce the balance of denominational provision in the local area to a direct 50% split.

The proposed closure of the school can be considered to have a small negative impact on the amount of choice and diversity available to parents in the local area. However, there is still sufficient choice and diversity of schools with both a religious and secular designation available within the area.

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any interested party may; support, object to, or make comment upon the proposal by sending them to:

Strategic Planning Team, Northamptonshire County Council, PO Box 216, One Angel Square, Angel Street, Northampton, NN1 1ED. Or via;

[schoolconsultation@northamptonshire.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsultation@northamptonshire.gov.uk)

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> June 2018