



Proposal to close Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, Dunstable

Notice is given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Central Bedfordshire Council intends to close Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, High Street North, Dunstable, Bedfordshire, LU6 1NH, phased from September 2015, with full closure from September 2016.

The proposed closure of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School is due to the changing pattern of provision within the area which has impacted upon the future financial and educational viability of the school.

This notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: The Information Manager, Central Bedfordshire Council, Room DC2, Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, Beds, LU6 1LF, telephone 0300 300 5700. It can also be viewed on the Council's website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, by Monday 7 July 2014, any person may support, object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council via the on-line facility on the Council's website at www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices or by post to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5TQ.

Signed: Edwina Grant

Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Children's Services

9 June 2014

**Statutory proposal for school closure –
Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided
Middle School**

Dated – Monday 9 June 2014



**Central
Bedfordshire**

1 - Name of Proposer

Central Bedfordshire Council
Watling House
High Street North
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU6 1LF

Contact officer – Sue Barrow, Information Manager
Email: Sue.barrow@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk
Telephone: 0300 300 5700

2 –Name of school

Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School

3 - School Address

High Street North
Dunstable
Bedfordshire
LU6 1NH

4 - Implementation

The proposed closure of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School would be phased from September 2015, with full closure from August 2016.

The timeframe and process for the phased closure would be as follows. This would be subject to review based upon the actual numbers at the school.

September 2015	
Year 5	No new pupils are admitted.
Year 6	Parents of Year 6 children are invited to apply for transfer to a secondary school in Year 7 (to transfer in September 2016).
Year 7	Year 7 operates, but on a reduced size of year group.
Year 8	Year 8 operates, but on a reduced size of year group.

April 2016	
Year 5	No new pupils are admitted.
Year 6	Any Year 6 children whose parents haven't made an application to transfer to a secondary school will be sent an application to state a preference for a school. If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places will be allocated.
Year 7	Parents of Year 7 children are invited to consider making an application to transfer to a secondary school in Year 8 (to transfer in September 2016). This is known as an in-year application as it happens outside of the normal transfer point. If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places in Year 8 for September will be allocated.
Year 8	Parents of any Year 8 children remaining in the school are invited to apply for a place in Year 9 at a secondary school(to transfer in September 2016). If no application is received by the end of May a place at the nearest Secondary school with places in Year 9 for September will be allocated.

5 – Objectives and reason for closure

The proposed closure of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School is due to the changing pattern of provision within the area which has had an impact on the pupil numbers to be admitted to the school and the future financial and educational viability of the school.

There is a significant level of surplus places for Years 5 to 8 in the Dunstable area, of between 63% and 65%, and the reducing roll within Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School will impact upon the financial viability of the school, which will subsequently impact upon the education standards at the school.

The proposed closure of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School supports the Council's need to manage the supply of school places in the Dunstable area.

Further information can be found within the reports to the Council's Executive dated 4 February 2014 and 27 May 2014. These are available on the Council's website - www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/executive

6 – School size, pupil numbers and admissions

Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School provides school places for Years 5 to 8, boys and girls. It has a capacity of 620 and a published admission number (PAN) of 155.

The table below shows the numbers on roll as at 9 April 2014 and the projected numbers on roll for September 2014 and 2015.

The projected numbers are based on a number of assumptions –

- All primary schools retain all of their Year 4 pupils into Year 5.
- All of the Year 5 pupils transfer into Year 6 in 2015.
- A similar percentage of the parents with Year 6 children in 2014/2015 make a secondary application to a local secondary school for September 2015.
- All pupils in Year 7 in 2014/2015 stay on into Year 8 in September 2015, although parents could make an in year application into Year 8 in any of the local secondary schools.

Year Group	Current	Projected September 2014	Projected September 2015
5	110	40	0
6	118	110	40
7	107	25	37
8	139	107	24
Total	474	282	102
Capacity	620	620	620
% surplus places	24%	55%	84%

7 – Displaced pupils & the effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area

The tables at section 4 show the arrangements for managing student applications to a secondary school or academy in Dunstable or Houghton Regis. The displaced pupils would therefore be accommodated within other schools and academies in the town.

8 – Impact on the community

It is acknowledged that the additional services that the school provides can have an important impact on public health and be of benefit to the local community. These services will become increasingly unviable as the pupil numbers at the school fall significantly. The Council will continue to ensure that, where appropriate, services are expanded at schools and academies in the area that are increasing their capacity as a result of a change in age range.

It is also acknowledged that schools have an important role under Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 to work alongside a range of other agencies to ensure safety in their local communities.

The Council will work with the Ashton Foundation who, as Trustees of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, will need to work to ensure that community safety issues are considered and appropriate measures are put in place to mitigate any risks.

9 - Balance of denominational provision

The Christian ethos reflected in the curriculum delivered in Church of England Voluntary Aided schools is provided in the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area by Manshead Church of England Voluntary Aided Upper School and by Ashton St Peters Voluntary Aided Lower School, both schools also within the Ashton Foundation.

The change in age range of Ashton St Peters Voluntary Aided Lower School to become a primary school from September 2014 now provides an additional 30 places in each of Years 5 and 6.

Likewise the change in age range of Manshead Church of England Voluntary Aided Upper School to become a secondary school from September 2014 now provides an additional 210 places in each of Years 7 and 8, increasing the total capacity of the former upper school from 810 places with 300 Post 16 places, to 1050 places with 300 Post 16 places from September 2014.

Thomas Whitehead Primary School in Houghton Regis is also a Church of England Voluntary Aided school providing 44 places per year group and therefore contributing to the faith based provision in the area.

These are therefore places for parents who seek a faith based provision within the Dunstable and Houghton Regis area in schools that are financially viable.

10 – Travel

The balance of local provision would be sustained in primary and secondary provision in the immediate area that serves the local community, which would not impact on increased traffic.

11 - Education standards and diversity of provision

Parents and carers have a right to express a preference for a particular school whereas choices are defined by viable and popular schools that are capable of being sustained in the local area, which Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School is not. The significant reduction in pupil numbers would inevitably impact upon the ability of the school to raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.

12 - Demand

The Council's forecasts require a minimum total number of 840 places in each year group would currently allow for parental preferences to be accommodated while also balancing the negative impact of inefficient over supply of places across the area. This does not take account of new school provision which will be needed as a result of the proposed North Houghton Regis extension, which will provide the required additional local education infrastructure as part of that development but which is not currently forecast to be required before 2017 when new primary and secondary places may be required.

The table below illustrates the number of school places that are available across the area, in Years 5-8, on the basis of changes to age ranges in the area that have now been implemented.

Year	5	6	7	8
School planning need	840	840	840	840
Number of places available	1366	1366	1382	1382
Number of surplus places	526	526	542	542

13- Proposed admission arrangements

If the proposal to close Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School is approved, an application to vary the existing admission arrangements for September 2015 will be made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and there will be no Year 5 transfer to the school in September 2015 and beyond.

After September 2015 the new secondary schools in the area will focus on a single point of entry in the normal admissions round at Year 7 and therefore the Year 9 transfer point will have been removed after that date.

14 - School premises and playing fields

Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School's building and land are owned by the Ashton Foundation who would determine how it could continue to achieve its educational objectives, and also the future use of the site, if a decision is taken to close the school.

15 - Equal opportunity issues

N/A

16- Capital

N/A

17 - Schools to be replaced by provision in a more successful/popular school

N/A

18 - Schools causing concern

N/A

19 – Early year's provision

N/A

20 – Rural Primary Schools

N/A

21 – Maintained nursery schools

N/A

22 – Provision for 16-19 year olds

N/A

23 - Special educational needs (SEN) provision

N/A.

24 – Consultation concerning this proposal

Members of the Council's Executive, at their meeting on 4 February 2014, approved the initiation of consultations regarding the proposed closure of Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, to be phased from September 2015, with final implementation in August 2016.

The consultation was launched on Monday 24 February and ran for 6 weeks until Monday 7 April 2014. The consultation was widely publicised via the local press and as follows; -

Copies of the consultation document were provided to –

- The Governing Body of the school
- The staff of the school
- The parents and carers of the school

And copies of the consultation document were made available to –

- The Member of Parliament for Dunstable
- Dunstable Town Council
- Neighbouring local authorities to Central Bedfordshire Council
- Local Roman Catholic and Church of England Diocesan Board
- The Members of Central Bedfordshire Council
- All schools and academies within Central Bedfordshire
- Trade Union representatives
- Voluntary Sector organisations
- Central Bedfordshire's Children's Trust Board
- The Ashton Foundation

Copies of the consultation document were also available from Dunstable Library.

Seven press releases were issued advising of the consultation and the meetings that were to be held

An on-line response facility to the consultation was available on the Central Bedfordshire Council website. Responses could also be submitted by post.

During the six week period, two meetings were held at the school; the first for school staff, governors and union representatives, and the second for parents, carers and the general public. The presentation that was given at the meeting is attached at [Appendix A](#)

Notes of both meetings which include the concerns and questions that were raised, are attached at [Appendix B](#)

In total, 166 responses were received in response to the Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School consultation. The results of the consultation are available at [Appendix C](#)

Members of the Council's Executive, at their meeting on 27 May 2014, determined to progress to the publication of statutory notices and final representation period to close Ashton Church of England Voluntary Aided Middle School, to be phased from September 2015, with final implementation in August 2016. The reports to the Council's Executive are available on the Council's website - www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/executive

25 – Procedure for responses; support, objections and comments

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (i.e. by Monday 7 July 2014), any person may support, object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director Of Children's Services via the Council's on-line facility at

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/publicstatutorynotices

or by post to Edwina Grant, Deputy Chief Executive / Director Of Children's Services, Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Chicksands, Shefford, Beds, SG17 5TQ.

Appendix A

**Consultation on the proposed
closure of
Ashton CofE VA Middle School
from August 2016**



Introductions

Helen Redding
Assistant Director School Improvement

Rob Parsons
Head of School Organisation, Admissions and Capital
Planning

Lydia Braisher
Admissions Manager

Council responsibilities

Statutory duty:

- To ensure that there are sufficient and suitable places for those who want them
- Promote high educational standards
- Ensure fair access to educational opportunity
- Promote the fulfilment of every child's potential

The ability to restructure provision and close maintained schools is one power of the Council

Council proposals to close a maintained school



- Decisions taken by the Council, not DfE
- Statutory five stage process must be followed
 - Consultation 6 weeks
 - Publication of legal notices
 - Representation 4 weeks
 - Determination within 2 months
 - Implementation
- Must ensure that those affected have opportunity to feed in comments

Council proposals to close a maintained school



- Factors for the decision maker
 - Process followed?
 - **Consideration of all views submitted**
 - Impact on education standards and diversity of provision
 - Demand
 - School size
 - Admission arrangements
 - Equal opportunity issues
 - Community cohesion and community services
 - Travel and accessibility
 - Capital, premises and playing fields

Rationale for this proposal

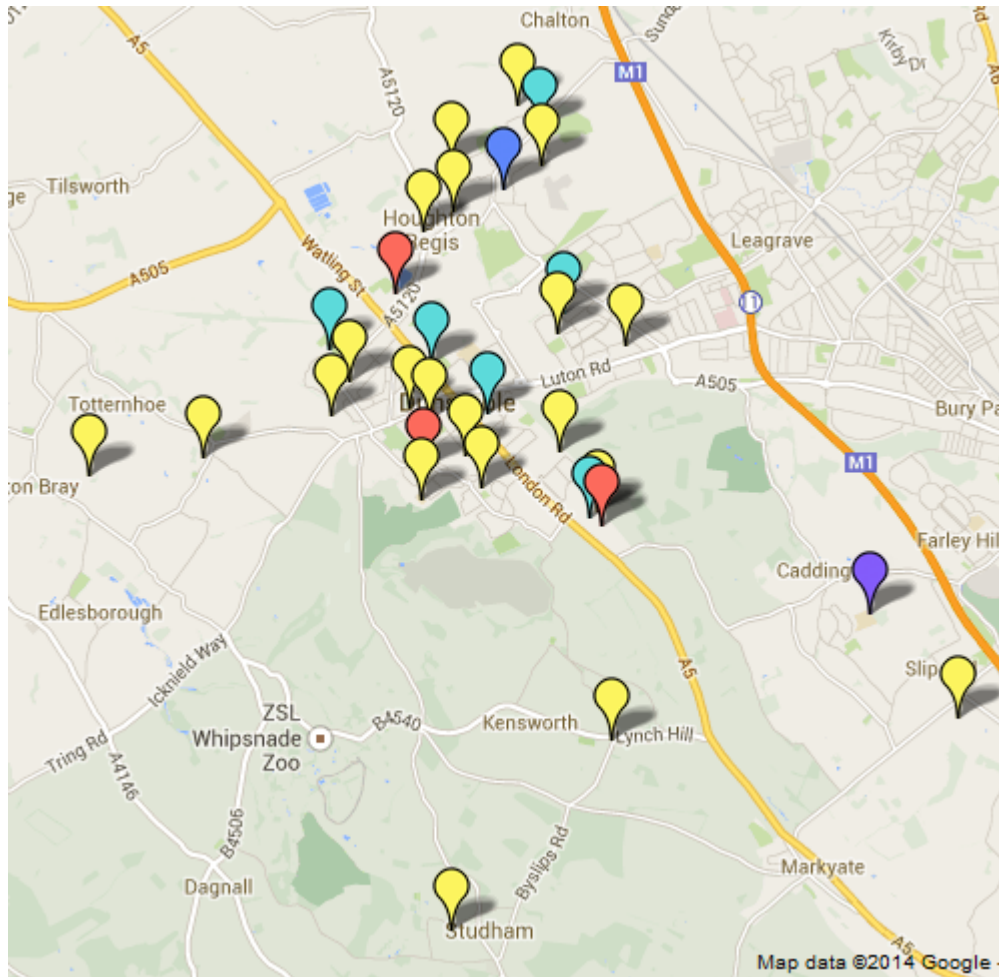
- Changing pattern of provision
- Reducing pupil numbers in the Middle Schools
- Year 5 retained in Primaries, Year 7 transfers to Secondaries
- School funding follows the child so resulting significant financial impact
- Forecast further reduction in pupil numbers will increase the financial impact

Impact of changes

- Falling pupil numbers from September 2014 with reduced admissions to Year 5 and transfers to Year 7 in Secondary

National Curriculum Key stages	EYFS	KS1		KS2				KS3			KS4		KS5	
School Years	(R)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
3 tier	Lower School ages 4 to 9					Middle School ages 9 to 13			Upper School ages 13 to 18					
2 tier	Primary School ages 4 to 11							Secondary School ages 11 to 18						

Three tier education in Dunstable and Houghton Regis



Lower Schools 5-9 year olds



Lower/Middle School 5-13 year olds



Primary School 5-11 year olds

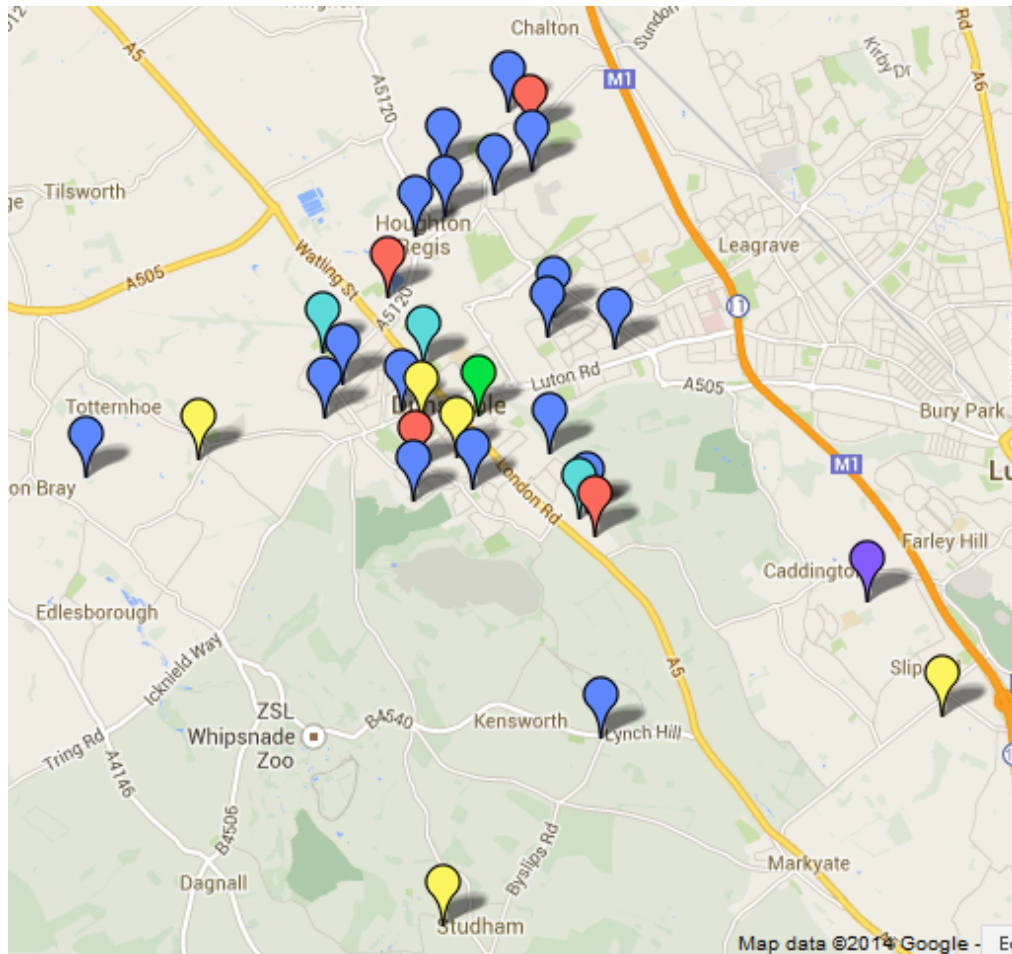


Middle School 9-13 year olds



Upper School 13-16/18 year olds

Future pattern of provision



Lower Schools 5-9 year olds



Lower/Middle School 5-13 year olds



Primary Schools 5-11 year olds



Middle Schools 9-13 year olds

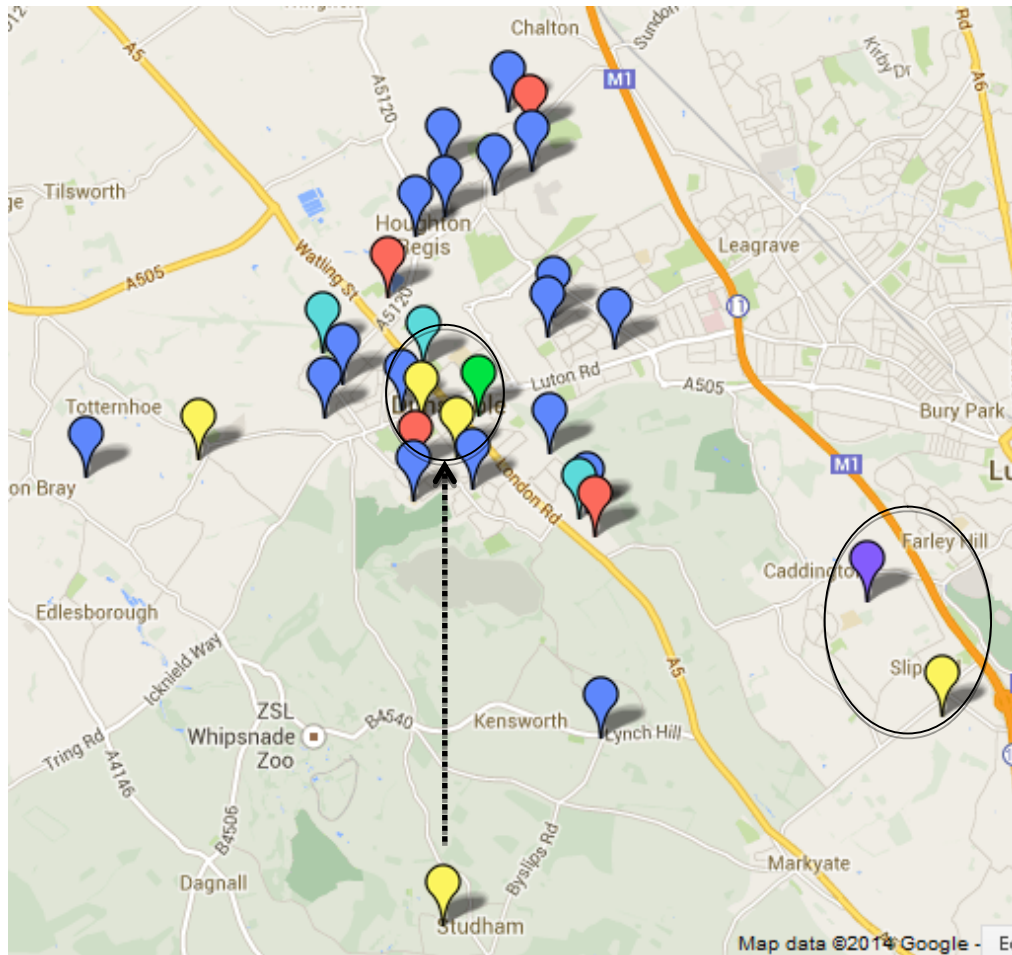








Secondary School 9-16 year olds



Secondary Schools 11-16/18 year olds

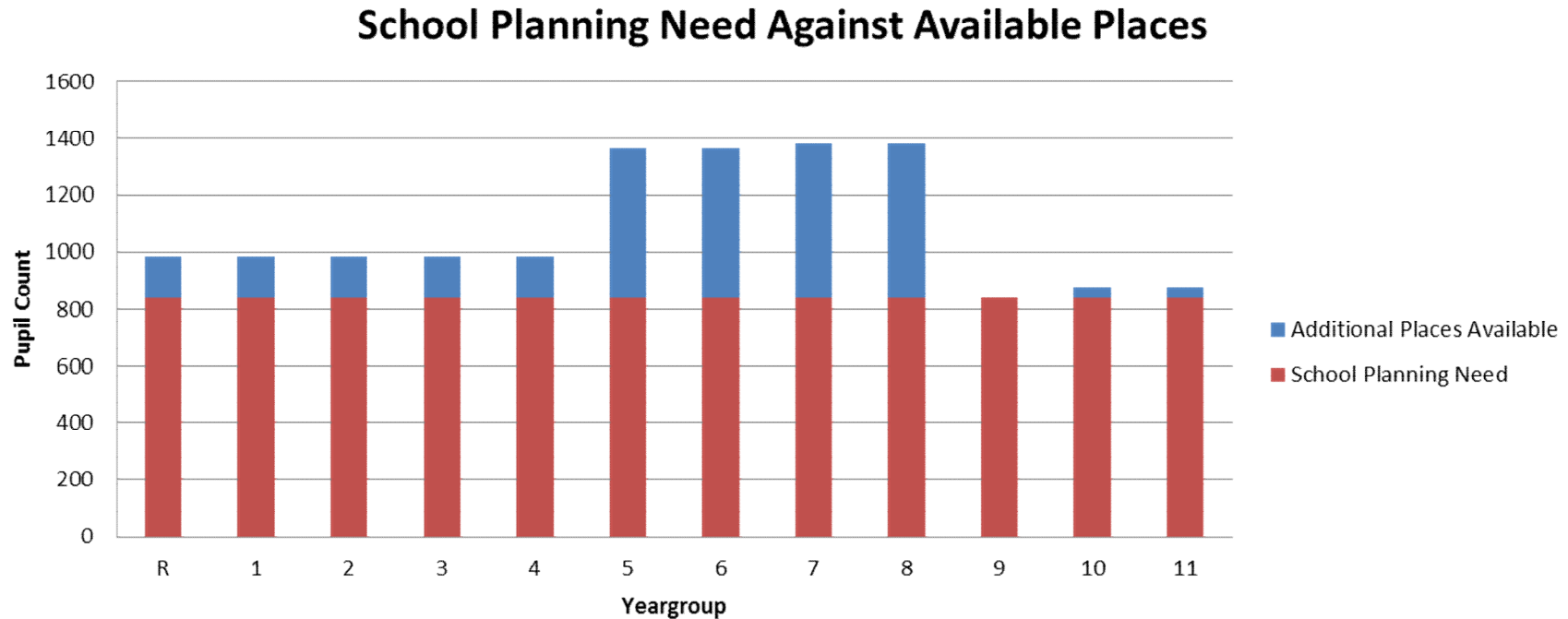
Future pattern of provision



-  Lower Schools 5-9 year olds
-  Lower/Middle School 5-13 year olds
-  Primary Schools 5-11 year olds
-  Middle Schools 9-13 year olds
-  Secondary School 9-16 year olds
-  Secondary Schools 11-16/18 year olds

Impact of changes

- Oversupply of places in Dunstable and Houghton Regis



Impact of changes on Ashton Middle School

- Current number on roll 468 vs 620 places
- September 2014 forecast - 282 pupil vs 620 places
- September 2015 forecast – 105 pupils vs 620 places

- 2013/14 to 14/15 budget implication is a decrease of £630k (29.8%)

The role of the School Admissions Team

Has a statutory duty to:

- To process and co-ordinate admission applications in the area
- To provide information on the admissions process and the entry points available to children in the area

Children due to start Year 5

- All children who are due to start the Middle school in September this year can take up their place.
- If the decision is made to close the School, then an application will need to be made in September 2015 for a place at a Secondary school in Year 7 in September 2016 as the Middle school would be closed by the end of the academic year in the summer of 2016.

Children currently at the school

If the decision is made to close the school, the following admission options will apply to children currently at the school:

Children who will be in Year 6 in September 2014	Will need to make an application in September 2014 to transfer to Secondary school in September 2015. Or: Child could continue into Year 7 in September 2015 but would need to make an in-year application in the summer of 2016 to transfer into Year 8 at an alternative school.
Children who will be in Year 7 in September 2014	Would need to make either a late application for Secondary to start Year 7 in September 2014 or apply in-year for a place in Year 8 in the summer of 2015 to start Year 8 in September 2015.
Children who will be in Year 8 in September 2014	Can continue at the school and make application in September 2014 to transfer to Upper school as normal for September 2015 or make an in-year application for a place in a Secondary school to start in the academic year of 2014/15 as a Year 8 pupil.

Council proposal – timeline

- Executive approval to commence consultation: 4 February 2014
- Statutory consultation: 24 February 2014 to 7 April 2014
- Overview & Scrutiny Committee: Wednesday 7 May 2014
- Executive consideration of responses to consultations and decision to publish statutory notices **if required**: 27 May 2014
- Representation period: 9 June 2014 to 7 July 2014
- Determination by Executive: 19 August 2014

Consultation Document

- Available from School, Council, Local Library, Council website.
- Responses either on-line (preferably) or via post
- Closing date – Monday 7 April 2014
- Frequently asked questions
- **Your questions**

Notes from staff briefing held at Ashton CofE VA Middle school on Monday 24 February 2014

Title of meeting:	Notes from staff briefing held at Ashton CofE VA Middle School	
Date/Time:	24 February 2014 at 4.00 pm	
Attendees:	<u>Central Bedfordshire Council</u> – Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning David Waller, Senior Human Resource Manager Lydia Braisher, Admissions Manager Sue Barrow, Information Manager <u>HR Provider (Bedford Borough Council)</u> – Mark Johnson Lorraine McDonald	<u>Union Representatives</u> – John Monkhouse NUT Nicky Moore – NASUWT Bridget Fordham - ATL
Venue:	Ashton CofE VA Middle School, High Street North, Dunstable	

A presentation was given by the officers of Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the proposal to close Ashton CofE VA Middle School and the consultation process that is being undertaken.

The officers advised that the proposed closure of the school was based upon the

- Changing pattern of provision
- Year 5 retained in Primaries, Year 7 transfers to Secondaries
- Reducing pupil numbers in the Middle Schools
- School funding follows the child so resulting significant financial impact
- Forecast further reduction in pupil numbers will increase the financial impact

Questions were then invited.

Below is a summary of the questions and issues that were raised by the staff.

Question	Response
Regarding the projected number of year 4 pupils who are due to transfer into the school in September 2014, have the second preferences been taken into account?	Admission preferences indicate that every child who has requested a place at a Dunstable Middle School will get their first preference so second preferences will not

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	need to be considered.
The letters that have been sent out to parents of current year 6 students regarding admissions have been misleading and parents have raised their concerns with staff. If the letter had been properly written we would not be losing so many pupils. The school should have been privy to any letters that were due to be sent out to our parents.	<p>The School Admissions service has a duty to advise parents of a change to a transfer point. We therefore needed to advise parents that there will be no coordinated year 9 transfer into Manshead or Queensbury from September 2016.</p> <p>The letters invited parents to contact the Admissions helpline. Many did contact us and we were able to assist them.</p>
What are the Council's pupil numbers based upon? We have had 38 new starters since September but have lost year 6 pupils because the letter said that parents would lose places	The forecast numbers for year 5 from September 2014 are based upon the number of applications we have received for transfer. Based upon these numbers, forecasts have been made for subsequent years. It is these low numbers that have impacted upon the schools budget from September 2014.
Who is looking after staff and their welfare? Morale is currently OK but will get worse.	<p>Bedford Borough Council, under contract to the governing body, is the school's HR provider The Diocese is the employer of the staff. With the support of Central Beds Council, the Schools HR provider and the Diocese we will ensure that staff are supported and appropriate policies and procedures followed should the Council decide to move to statutory notices.</p> <p>Trade Unions and Professional Associations are included in all consultation processes and staff are encouraged to contact their trade union for advice and support.</p>
If the Council is not the school's employer, would it benefit the Council financially to close the school?	No. The Redundancy and Reorganisation Policy of the Council outlines that the Council will contribute towards the cost of redundancy compensation payments for employees in Foundation and VA schools.
The Council is scaring parents by saying that the school will close. Parents want to keep their children at Ashton but do not know what to do. It is very unsettling, having this hanging over us.	The Council is not saying that the school will close. This is a consultation and the decisions made regarding the proposed closure will consider the results of the consultation and all of the responses received.
Will the Council accept responsibility for the low	The Council's letter to parents was clear

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numbers in the school that have arisen as a result of their letters? Will the Council write to parents to apologise and clarify?	and provided contact details for further advice should it be required. The school should refer parents to the admissions helpline number should they need support.
Lower schools have previously handed out literature to their year 4 parents but middle schools have had to fight this year to be heard.	The Council offers consistent support and advice through its admissions service to all school, parents and carers.
Are the primary schools undersubscribed?	Some lower schools that have converted to primary are predicted to have lower numbers for year 5 in September 2014. This is a trend seen elsewhere in the first few years of a school's transition to a new age range but we expect numbers to rise in subsequent years as parents grow in confidence.
Could just one middle school remain open?	There is a 65% surplus of places within the area in years 5-8. There is no demographic demand for these places to be retained in the area.
What about the additional places that will be needed for the older children under the Governments 'raising the participation age'?	Not all will remain in school – young people will have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through college, a training provider, work, volunteering or an apprenticeship. Where new places are required to meet demand for post 16 education in schools these will be commissioned through upper and secondary schools.
What about the new provision that will be needed in Houghton Regis for the new development?	This will be provided either within or adjacent to that development, providing school places local to the new communities in north Houghton Regis, when they are required
Why has the Council decided to change to a 2 tier provision?	Academies and schools within Dunstable and Houghton Regis have brought forward their own proposals to change their age ranges. They were able to justify these proposals and show evidence of parental support to the Council who is the decision maker for Council maintained schools and to the Department for Education for academies.

<p>Did the Council consider the over supply of places when it approved the change of age ranges for the Dunstable and Houghton Regis schools?</p>	<p>The Council allowed maintained schools to bring forward proposals to change their age range in order to give those schools the same opportunities as were available to academies within the area. The supply of places was one of the factors that was considered when decisions were made by the Secretary of State (for academies) and by the Council (for maintained schools).</p>
<p>Are academies allowed to do what they like? Academies appear unaccountable and Council maintained schools are therefore at a disadvantage</p>	<p>Academies are accountable to the Secretary of State who will intervene in any that are underperforming or are significantly undersubscribed and therefore unviable.</p>

At the close of the meeting, staff were encouraged to respond to the consultation.

Notes from public meeting held at Ashton CofE VA Middle School on Monday 3 March 2014

Title of meeting:	Notes from public meeting held at Ashton CofE VA Middle School
Date/Time:	3 March 2014 at 7.00 pm
Venue:	Ashton CofE VA Middle School, High Street North, Dunstable

A presentation was given by officers of Central Bedfordshire Council regarding the proposal to close Ashton CofE VA Middle School and the consultation process that is being undertaken.

Helen Redding, Assistant Director School Improvement

Rob Parsons, Head of School Organisation, Admissions & Capital Planning

Lydia Braisher, Admissions Manager

The officers advised that the proposed closure of the school was based upon the

- Changing pattern of provision
- Year 5 retained in Primaries, Year 7 transfers to Secondaries
- Reducing pupil numbers in the Middle Schools
- School funding follows the child so resulting significant financial impact
- Forecast further reduction in pupil numbers will increase the financial impact

The officers encouraged everybody to respond to the consultation.

Questions and concerns were invited.

Below is a summary of the questions and concerns that were raised

Question	Response
If the school is to close, can parents reappraise their choices?	Yes, parents can change their preference and submit a late application
This is scaremongering and nobody has been asked to vote for either 2 tier or 3 tier across the town. Nobody has voted for this closure. The council will not listen.	Academies and schools within Dunstable and Houghton Regis have brought forward their own proposals to change their age ranges. They were able to justify these proposals and show evidence of parental support to the Council who is the decision maker for Council maintained schools and to the Department for Education for academies. This not a referendum, there is no voting process. This is a consultation and we encourage everybody to submit their responses.
Parents throughout the town were not aware of the various consultations that were being	All of the schools carried out consultations regarding their proposed changes. They published consultation documents and held meetings, as required by the DfE. The consultations

undertaken by the lower schools when they were looking to convert to primary. We now have a mish-mash of provision with the children stuck in the middle. All of the schools used to work together but not any longer.	were advertised via the local press and the Council's website. All of the schools in Dunstable and Houghton Regis were aware of the consultations.
Why has the Council not driven all of the changes? Academies are competing for our children. Feeder schools are in partnership with other schools. The mess within the town is due to the lack of partnership working between schools.	The Council is no longer able to drive system wide change and schools are now largely in control of their own destinies. The Council has not been the decision maker for the changes that have happened in academies, but the Council decided to give our maintained schools the same freedoms that were available to academies. Following recent changes to school regulations by the Department for Education, all maintained schools can now change their age range by up to 2 years without any recourse to the Council. The Council retains responsibility for ensuring the provision of school places.
Why were the parents of year 4 children not advised of this proposal before they were asked to submit their choice for year 5?	Figures from the admission process, which closed on 15 January 2014, were used to confirm the numbers of pupils that were due to move to the school in September. This then gave us the information we needed regarding the future viability of the school.
Have the children from the new development north of Houghton Regis been included in the projected numbers?	This will be provided either within or adjacent to that development, providing school places local to the new communities in north Houghton Regis, when they are required
Vandyke is being expanded – is this to accommodate Dunstable children?	No, Vandyke is an academy and is carrying out this expansion to accommodate pupils as a result of existing housing development in the Leighton Buzzard area.
You are taking away our choice. By forcing children into bigger schools, with much older children, you are forcing them to grow up too quickly.	All of the schools that have proposed an extension to their age range have had to demonstrate how they will manage the increased age range and provide the pupils with a good education. If we have any concerns about a maintained schools ability to subsequently do this, we will intervene. If we have any such concerns about an academy we can take these to the DfE's Regional Commissioner.
The Council's School Organisation Plan is out of date and does not take future generations into account	The School Organisation Plan covers a five year period and is updated each year to reflect changes in school organisation. It looks at trends and likely future demand for school places based upon census data, pre-school aged children in the area and housing development
The rationale for the proposed closure is the falling numbers which is affecting the schools financial viability. This fall in	The role of the School Admissions Service is to advise parents when a transfer point is removed. The co-ordinated year 9 transfer point from middle to upper will not be available for current year 6 pupils after September 2015.

<p>numbers is due to the letter that was sent out by the Council. Some parents have chosen not to request a middle school place because of the uncertainty.</p>	<p>The Council's letter to parents was clear and provided contact details for further advice should it be required.</p>
<p>No allowances are being made for second preferences. Priory Academy are reducing their admission number so there will be number of children who come to the school as a second preference.</p>	<p>Priory Academy is a middle combined secondary so has one entry point in year 5. The admission number will be 112 in 2015 but for September 2014 their admission number is 125. In their consultation document under their year group projections Priory projected that they may lose children at the end of Year 6 due to parents wanting an alternative Secondary school who may be able to offer a wider curriculum choice. They expect to have 84 children who continue from Year 6 into Year 7.</p>
<p>Some primaries have very lower numbers for year 5, despite the schools being confident that year 5 children would stay.</p>	<p>Some lower schools that have converted to primary are predicted to have lower numbers for year 5 in September 2014. This is a trend seen elsewhere in the first few years of a school's transition to a new age range but we expect numbers to rise in subsequent years as parents grow in confidence.</p>
<p>Are there enough school places throughout the town?</p>	<p>There are sufficient places across the Town in all year groups. And this will be the situation for at least the next 2 years based upon a forecast of 840 places per year group. This figure of 840 includes an allowance of 10% to allow for parental preferences.</p>
<p>Can the upper/secondary schools accommodate such a large increase in number of pupils?</p>	<p>Where schools have expanded, the Governing Bodies are legally required to provide the number of places that they have committed to provide.</p>
<p>If parents want a Church of England faith based school, what would be their alternative?</p>	<p>Ashton St Peters Lower and Manshead Upper School are both faith based provisions. All Saints Academy doesn't give priority to pupils based on faith but is sponsored by the Diocese of St. Albans. Manshead School is a voluntary aided Church of England school and gives priority to children on the basis of their parents' faith as part of their admissions criteria.</p>
<p>Lower school parents are not being consulted.</p>	<p>There has been a large amount of publicity regarding the proposals and everybody has been encouraged to respond to the consultations.</p>
<p>You are making my child move from a middle school to a secondary school.</p>	<p>There is still a mix of 2 tier and 3 tier provision in the town. Priory Academy is a Middle combined Secondary school that has an intake at Year 5 and is working in partnership with Dunstable Icknield, Watling and Studham Lower schools; there is also Barnfield Vale who currently has a Middle intake. If the decision is made to close the Middle school, options are available to transfer to alternative schools as part of the annual admissions round or in-year.</p>

Does the Council consider the financial viability of all schools?	The Council reviews the finances of all maintained schools on an annual basis. Schools budgets for 2014/15 have recently been set and sent out to the schools. The funding follows the child therefore those schools that are affected by the loss of year 5 pupils are seeing a decrease in their budget.
The upper/secondary schools are too big. Queensbury has 1200 children. Leave the children in the middle schools where numbers are lower	Schools budgets are determined by the numbers on roll. The budget impacts on the staffing structure and other resources that can be afforded by the school and therefore their ability to deliver the full curriculum. All schools whatever their size are accountable for the progress that their children make. There are very successful large schools in Central Bedfordshire.
Will the Council force the lower schools that have not converted to primaries to close?	No. Dunstable Icknield, Watling and Studham lower schools in the area are working with Priory Academy and other lower schools will consider their options.
Has the Council factored in the Government's initiative for 'raising the participation age'?	Not all will remain in school – young people will have a choice about how they continue in education or training post-16, which could be through college, a training provider, work, volunteering or an apprenticeship. Where new places are required to meet demand for post 16 education in schools these will be commissioned through upper and secondary schools.
This school nurtures its children - they will not get this in a large upper/secondary.	All schools are judged on the full range of provision that they make which includes their pastoral support for pupils. Large upper/secondary schools have a range of ways in which they provide this pastoral support.
Can we wait until all of the changes in the Town settle down and see what happens?	The proposal is based upon the viability of the school both currently and for the foreseeable future.
Re the projected number of year 4 pupils who are due to transfer into the school in September 2016, have the second preferences been taken into account?	Admission preferences indicate that every child who has requested a place at a Dunstable Middle School will get their first preference so second preferences will not need to be considered.
Why are Councillors not at this meeting?	The Members of the Council's Executive approved the launch of the consultations on 4 February. It is the role of Council Officers to carry out the consultations and report the findings, and all of the responses received, back to the Executive. The Executive Members are the decision makers.
Is this a cost saving exercise? How much would the Council save if the school closes?	The Council would not make a saving - it would incur either an element of or all of the redundancy costs. School funding is ring-fenced for all schools and therefore all money is redistributed among all schools.
Please can we have your assurance that the decision has not already been made to close the school.	As per the decision making process covered within the presentation, no decision has yet been made. This is a consultation to seek the views of all stakeholders.

Ashton Middle's consultation on an alternative proposal ends today – how will this affect the Council's proposal?	The School's Governing Body will decide whether to proceed with their proposal. If the decision is made to proceed, they will have to follow the same process as the Council would – i.e. the second stage which is the publication of statutory notices. Ultimately the Governing Body will submit their proposal, with the results of their consultation, to the Council for determination.
If my child has been offered a place in an upper/secondary school for year 7, can I decide to leave my child at Ashton Middle?	Yes. The offer letters have gone out and parents can decide whether to take up the place in the upper/secondary school or leave their child in their middle school.
Could just one middle school remain open?	There is a 65% surplus of places within the area in years 5-8. There is no demographic demand for these places to be retained in the area.
Are other areas within Central Bedfordshire going over to 2 tier?	The rest of Central Bedfordshire currently remains as 3 tier but we have had approaches from various schools who have wanted to discuss pupil numbers. If schools want to consider changes, they would need to follow due process either as an Academy or as a maintained school as set out in the new School Organisation legislation
The school and the building are 125 years old. It would be a shame to lose all of the history of this school.	The schools building and land are the responsibility of the Ashton Foundation and the future of the site would be matter for them.
Can anyone attend the meeting at the Grove Theatre on 7 May?	Yes, anyone can attend, but you need to register if you wish to speak at the meeting. The instructions regarding how to do this are in the consultation document.
Comment from a pupil. She wants to come to the school. Her brother came here. She has not looked at another school.	You can still come here into year 5 in September. However if the decision is made to close the school you would need to transfer to another school at the end of Year 6.
Comment from union representative	Please feedback to the consultation with the enthusiasm for the school that you have shown today. It is not a losing battle. A proposed change to a school in London was overturned by the Secretary of State because the school had not consulted correctly. Tell the Council's elected members of your views by responding.

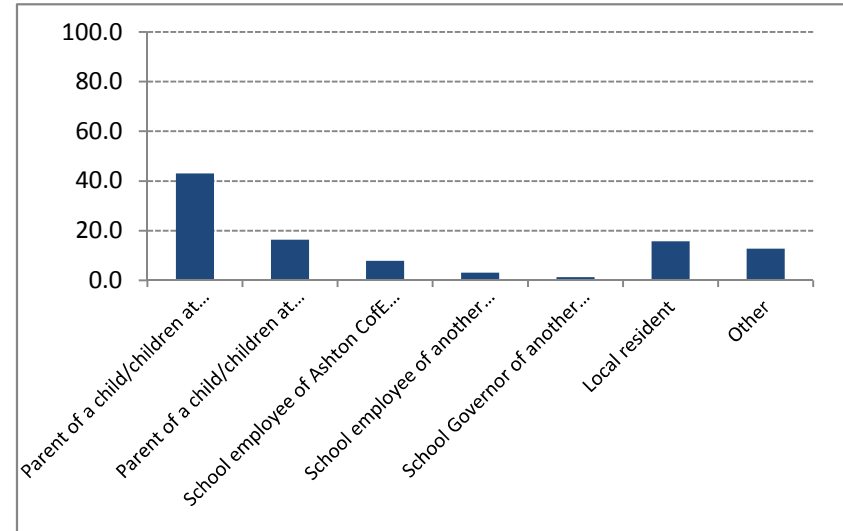
At the close of the meeting, everyone was encouraged to respond to the consultation. They were also reminded that they are welcome to attend the meeting of the Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the Grove Theatre on 7 May.

Appendix C

Ashton CofE VA Final Results Based on 167 responses

Q1 - Are you a

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Parent of a child/children at Ashton CofE VA Middle School	71	42.8	43.0
	Parent of a child/children at another school in the area	27	16.3	16.4
	School employee of Ashton CofE VA Middle School	13	7.8	7.9
	School employee of another school in the area	5	3.0	3.0
	School Governor of another school in the area	2	1.2	1.2
	Local resident	26	15.7	15.8
	Other	21	12.7	12.7
	Total	165	99.4	100.0
Missing	1	.6		
Total	166	100.0		

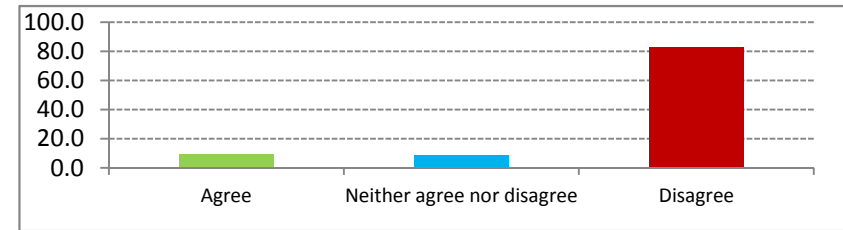


Q2 - If you are the parent of a child/children currently at another school, or the employee or governor of another school, please tell us which school

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Ashton St Peter's Lower School	5	3.0	16.1
	Currently at Hadrian Academy, but hoping to move on to Ashton	1	.6	3.2
	Dunstable Ickniel lower school	2	1.2	6.5
	Hadrian Academy	2	1.2	6.5
	I have a daughter a Lancot School, who I would wish to attend Ashton Middle	1	.6	3.2
	Lancot	2	1.2	6.5
	Lancot Lower School & Westfield Nursery	1	.6	3.2
	Lancot School	1	.6	3.2
	Manshead Upper school.	3	1.8	9.7
	parent of a child and Governor at Ashton St Peters Lower School	1	.6	3.2
	Parent of child at Ashton St Peter's Lower	1	.6	3.2
	Priory Academy	4	2.4	12.9
	Priory and Manshead	1	.6	3.2
	Queensbury	1	.6	3.2
	St Christophers Academy	1	.6	3.2
	St vincent's	1	.6	3.2
	Streetfield	1	.6	3.2
	Watling Lower	1	.6	3.2
	weatherfield academy	1	.6	3.2
	Total	31	18.7	100.0
Missing		135	81.3	
Total		166	100.0	

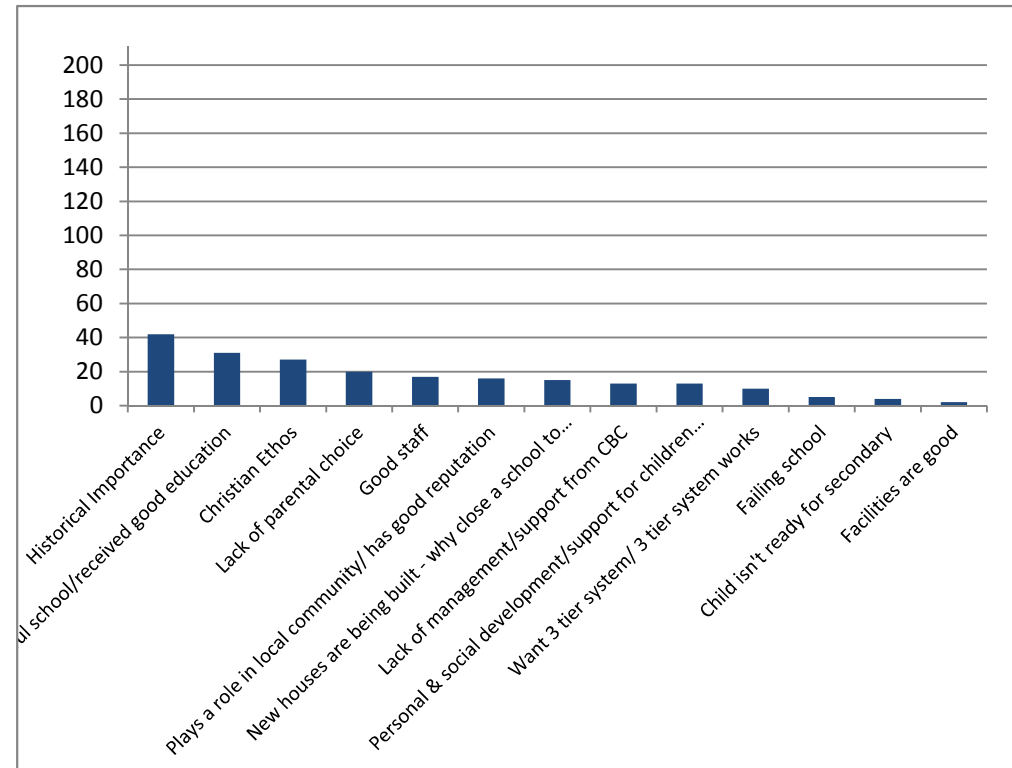
Q3 - Do you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Ashton CofE VA Middle School

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Agree	15	9.0	9.0
	Neither agree nor disagree	14	8.4	8.4
	Disagree	137	82.5	82.5
	Total	166	100.0	100.0



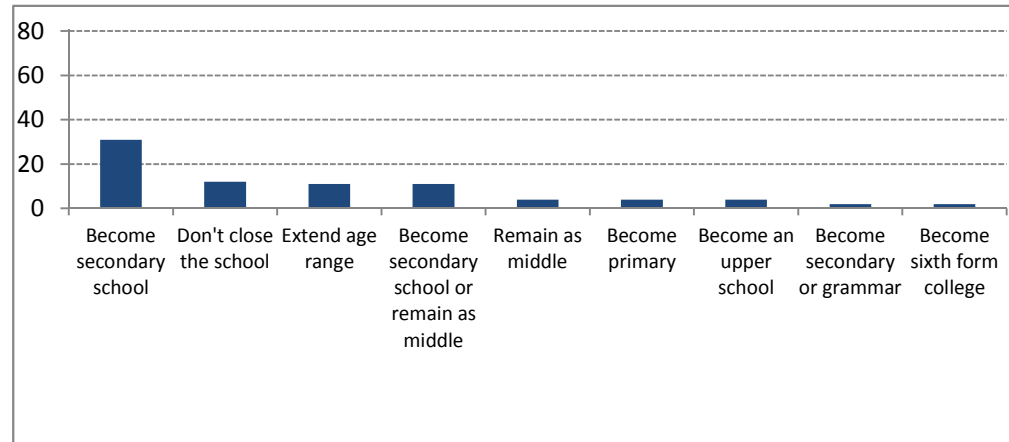
Q4 - Please give your reasons why you agree or disagree with the proposal to close Ashton CofE VA Middle School.

Topic		Frequency
Valid	Historical Importance	42
	Successful school/received good education	31
	Christian Ethos	27
	Lack of parental choice	20
	Good staff	17
	Plays a role in local community/ has good reputation	16
	New houses are being built - why close a school to build another	15
	Lack of management/support from CBC	13
	Personal & social development/support for children at Ashton	13
	Want 3 tier system/ 3 tier system works	10
	Failing school	5
	Child isn't ready for secondary	4
	Facilities are good	2



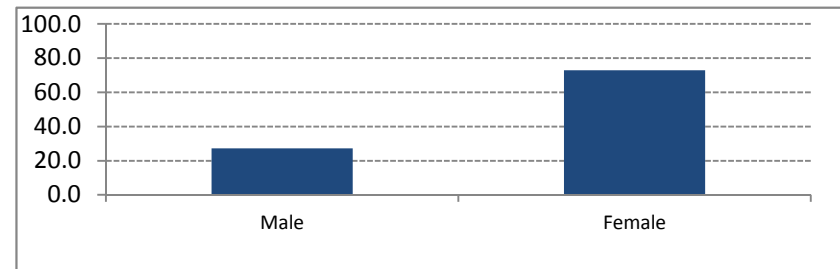
Q5 - Please use the space below to suggest any alternatives to closing the school or make any other comments you would like to make about this proposal.

Topic		Frequency
Valid	Become secondary school	31
	Don't close the school	12
	Extend age range	11
	Become secondary school or remain as middle	11
	Remain as middle	4
	Become primary	4
	Become an upper school	4
	Become secondary or grammar	2
	Become sixth form college	2



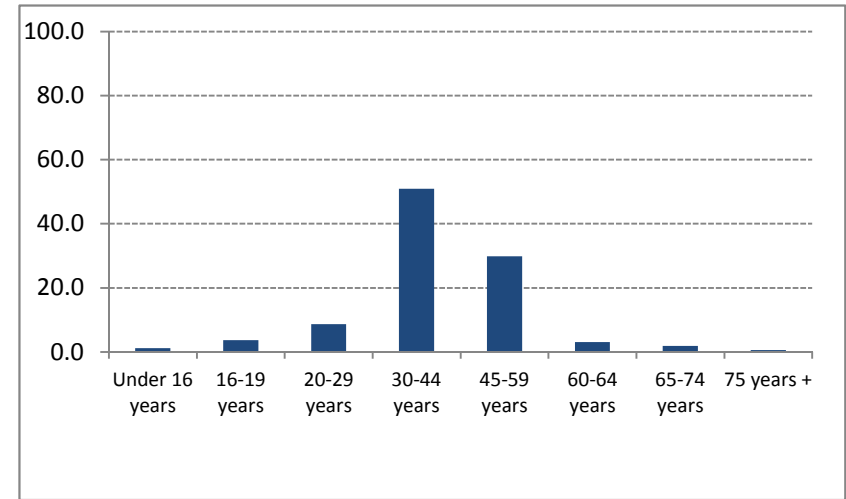
Q6 - Are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Male	44	26.5	27.2
	Female	118	71.1	72.8
	Total	162	97.6	100.0
Missing		4	2.4	
Total		166	100.0	



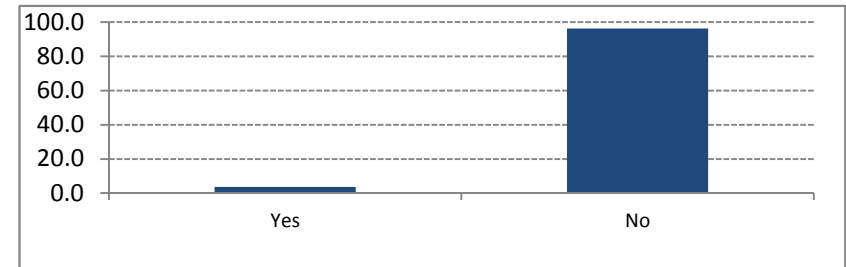
Q7 - What is your age?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Under 16 years	2	1.2	1.2
	16-19 years	6	3.6	3.7
	20-29 years	14	8.4	8.7
	30-44 years	82	49.4	50.9
	45-59 years	48	28.9	29.8
	60-64 years	5	3.0	3.1
	65-74 years	3	1.8	1.9
	75 years +	1	.6	.6
Total		161	97.0	100.0
Missing		5	3.0	
Total		166	100.0	



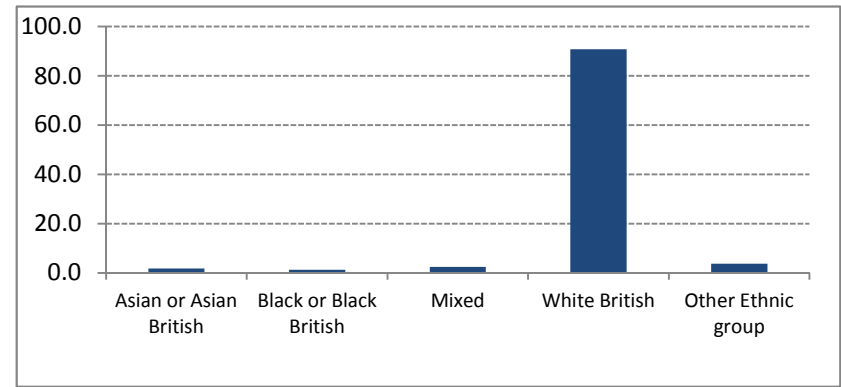
Q8 - Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Yes	6	3.6	3.7
	No	155	93.4	96.3
	Total	161	97.0	100.0
Missing		5	3.0	
Total		166	100.0	



Q9 - To which of these groups do you consider you belong?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Valid	Asian or Asian British	3	1.8	1.8
	Black or Black British	2	1.2	1.2
	Mixed	4	2.4	2.5
	White British	148	89.2	90.8
	Other Ethnic group	6	3.6	3.7
	Total	163	98.2	100.0
Missing		3	1.8	
Total		166	100.0	



Q9a - Other
not supplied
Not supplied
Romanian
white english
white european