



## Report to the Leader (Education and Children's Services portfolio)

<b>Decision Date:</b>	3 July 2023
<b>Reference number:</b>	<b>EC05.23</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Closure of The Mary Towerton School, Studley Green</b>
<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b>	Cllr Anita Cranmer
<b>Contact officer:</b>	Paula Campbell-Balcombe
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	West Wycombe and Ridgeway West
<b>Recommendations:</b>	<b>The Leader is recommended to approve the closure of The Mary Towerton School, Studley Green with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.</b>
<b>Reason for decision:</b>	Following a decrease in the pupil population across the West Wycombe planning area, low pupil numbers at The Mary Towerton School are impacting on the School's financial viability and consequent ability to sustain high-quality teaching and learning for its pupils.

### **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 Mary Towerton Primary School (MTS) is a small, rural primary school for children aged 4-11. The school has a published admission number of 14 with a capacity for 98 pupils. The school has been under-subscribed for a number of years and pupil numbers fall significantly short of the school's published admission number. The school, as at September 2022, had only 33 pupils on roll with only 8 pupils across all of Key Stage 1 (i.e. Reception, Year 1 and Year 2). For September 2023, no first preferences had been expressed for a place at MTS.
- 1.2 In December 2022, following discussions with officers from the Education Directorate, the Governing Board of the MTS wrote to the Local Authority (LA)

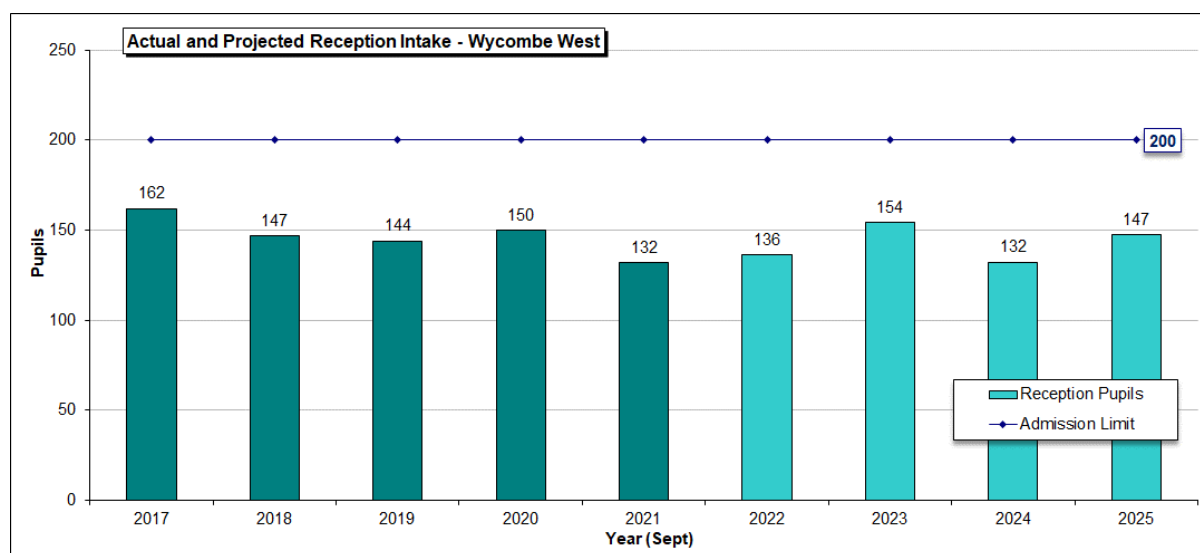
agreeing that they would support a decision by the LA to initiate a consultation process to determine the future of the school, possibly leading to closure.

- 1.3 The first stage consultation process on the future of Mary Towerton School commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and concluded on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. 51 responses were received, 24 against the proposal; 21 in support of the proposal; and, 6 didn't express a preference.
- 1.4 The second stage consultation proposing the closure of the school commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and concluded on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. 10 responses were received, 6 against the proposal and 4 in support of it.
- 1.5 **Following analysis of the responses from the consultation the Leader, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Childrens Service's, is recommended to approve the closure of The Mary Towerton School from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.**

## **2. Content of report**

- 2.1 Following discussions with the LA, the Governing Board of MTS wrote to the LA, agreeing that they would support a decision by the LA to initiate a consultation process to determine the future of the school, possibly leading to closure. The reasons that give rise to the proposal to close MTS included:
  - (i) Low pupil numbers and availability of local places
  - (ii) Recruitment and Retention issues affecting ability to deliver high quality education
  - (iii) Limited use of the school by the community
  - (iv) Lack of alternatives to closure
  - (v) Limited transport implications as a result of closure
  - (vi) School would require financial support to remain viable
- 2.2 The main factors leading to the closure proposal are low and falling pupil numbers. Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school. Low pupil numbers are therefore impacting on the school's financial viability and consequent ability to sustain high-quality teaching and learning for its pupils.
- 2.3 Continued low pupil numbers mean the School will be unable to sustain a balanced budget and while it may be possible to identify some cost savings through efficiency, the School would not be able to achieve the scale of saving necessary without also cutting back even further on staff, which would be unacceptable in terms of the impact on the quality education provision.

- 2.4 The projections below for the Wycombe West planning area forecast significant surplus places for the foreseeable future i.e. approximately 50 surplus intake places (25%) over the next 3 years.



- 2.5 The school heavily relies on attracting children from outside the area, in particular High Wycombe, due to its small catchment population. The popularity of the school declined rapidly after Ofsted rated the school as Requiring Improvement following its inspection in October 2019. As a result of this, together with falling births in High Wycombe, the school's intake has dropped considerably and has been losing pupils in other year groups.

- 2.6 Wycombe West is in an area of Outstanding Natural Beauty with large parts in the Green Belt. There is therefore only small-scale housing allocated in this area within the Wycombe Local Plan (i.e. no sites of more than 100 homes) so little prospect that demand will significantly rise over the planning period to 2033. Government expectations are that Local Authorities manage the school estate efficiently and reduce excess surplus capacity to avoid the detriment to schools' educational offer or financial position.

## 2.7 Pupil numbers and admissions

- 2.8 The School's age range is 4-11 years, and provision is available for boys and girls. There were 33 pupils on roll at the School as of the beginning of the autumn term in September 2022. The table below shows the fall in the school's intake since September 2019 (i.e. only 1 child admitted in September 22 and the school has no first preferences for September 23) and the loss of pupils in-year (cohorts that have experienced the biggest losses have been highlighted). Despite running mixed age

classes (includes teaching across three-year groups) class sizes at MTS remain unviable i.e. Year R/1/2 class (8 pupils), Year 3/4 class (14 pupils) and Year 5/6 class (11 pupils) (Autumn 2022).

Mary Towerton Pupils Numbers								
	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Sep-18	8	12	10	8	9			47
Sep-19	14	8	11	8	9	9		59
Sep-20	3	14	4	10	5	8	9	53
Sep-21	6	3	11	6	8	4	7	45
Sep-22	1	5	2	8	6	7	4	33

2.9 Between 20d-January 2023 and the 7 June 2023 25 pupils have left the school and started at other local schools. It is expected that the maximum number of pupils that will be on roll at the school for the remainder of this academic year will be 8 but this may drop further in the summer term if parents choose to move their child. All the children currently on roll will either move to secondary education or are in the process of making applications elsewhere for September.

#### 2.10 Displaced pupils

2.11 Should MTS close on 31 August 2023, parents and carers of the children remaining on roll can express a preference for a place in September 2023 at an alternative school. Buckinghamshire Council will manage this process and due to the high level of surplus places in the area would expect to be able to place all families at a local school. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an in-year admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Buckinghamshire Council would try to meet parent and carers' preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so as it would depend upon vacancies at that time. As noted in the previous paragraph most parents whose children were on roll in September 2022 have already sought alternative school places for their children.

2.12 We will have particular focus on those vulnerable pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Any pupils that currently receive SEN support at the school, can expect the same levels of support in the school they transfer to and staff at MTS will work to support the transition to their new school as would always be the case for any pupils receiving any support.

2.13 The school has a number of pupils from the Gypsy Roman Traveller (GRT) Community. The Council's GRT Liaison Officer has worked closely with all the families affected by this proposal and has ensured that the families are fully supported throughout this process. Support has been provided to assist families

with completing and submitting the necessary paperwork to apply for a school place at another local setting ready for September.

**2.14 Presumption against the closure of rural schools.**

2.15 In bringing forward this proposal, the Council has taken account of the Government's guidance on the presumption against the closure of rural schools. The guidance does not preclude closure but does require proposers to demonstrate that they have considered all available alternatives to closure and the impact it will have on the local community and other schools.

2.16 MTS is designated as a small rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order and so, in line with that guidance, officers have included consideration of:

- a) educational offer at the school
- b) alternatives to closure including, federation with another local school, conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust (MAT)
- c) transport implications i.e., the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues
- d) the size of the School and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g., in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available
- e) the overall and long-term impact on the local community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility
- f) wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils

**2.17 Consideration of these points is summarised below:**

**2.18 educational offer.**

2.19 The school heavily relies on attracting children from outside the area, in particular High Wycombe, due to its small catchment population. The popularity of the school has declined rapidly after Ofsted rated the school as Requiring Improvement following its inspection in October 2019. As a result of this, together with falling births in the High Wycombe and West Wycombe areas, the school's intake has dropped considerably, and it has been losing pupils in other year groups. There are small cohorts in each year group, from December 2022 the school had to operate with three mixed age classes – Reception/Year 1/Year 2; Years 3/4; Years 5/6). The Local Authority and the Governing Board believe the school to be unviable and unable to guarantee the quality of education for the pupils that they would wish.

- 2.20 **alternatives to closure including: federation with another local school; conversion to academy status and joining a MAT.**
- 2.21 The Local Authority has explored alternative options to closure which have included the opportunity for the school joining a MAT or federating with other schools. Although joining a MAT or federation could offer benefits in terms of economies of scale, collaboration across schools, shared learning and resources etc., the Council considers it unlikely that a trust would, through its due diligence, consider the school viable into the future. Despite discussions with a number of MATs and other Schools, no MATs or Schools came forward during the consultation stage to offer support to the school.
- 2.22 **transport implications i.e. the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues.**
- 2.23 A number of pupils within Studley Green already travel out of the area for their education and pupils are travelling to MTS from areas that have schools which have surplus capacity. If pupils were to attend these schools it would have a reduction in overall vehicle journeys.
- 2.24 All children would be automatically entitled to free home to school transport if they attend their nearest available school subject to qualifying distance:
- a) two miles for children under eight years of age;
  - b) three miles for children aged over eight; or
  - c) where the route to the school is not safe to walk accompanied by a responsible adult.
- 2.25 However, due to the low number of children living in the MTS catchment area and the high degree of surplus places in the area, we would not expect there to be a significant increase in motor vehicle usage/travel distances as a result of closure. The school has historically had to rely on attracting the large majority of its children to travel in from neighbouring towns to fill places.
- 2.26 **the size of the school and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g. in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available.**
- 2.27 Numbers at the school have been impacted by surplus in the local area. As a result of low pupil numbers, from September 2022 the school operated three classes across multiple year groups which makes curriculum planning and delivery challenging. Despite the best efforts of staff, there is inevitably a risk that the educational

experience of each pupil is therefore not as good as it might be in another context. The school was rated by Ofsted as Requiring Improvement in its inspection in October 2019. Since then, the school has not been successful in appointing a substantive head teacher and currently has an interim Head Teacher in post. In addition, the school has faced high teacher turnover and many pupils have left the school. Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school, as a result, delivery of a full and balanced curriculum at MTS is difficult with such a small and decreasing number of children and staff. With falling rolls adding significant financial pressures, improving the quality of education and pupil outcomes is likely to continue to be extremely challenging for the school.

**2.28 the overall and long-term impact on the local community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility.**

2.29 It is recognised that, even though local demand is low, the closure of the school in Studley Green will result in the loss of school provision in the village. This has been carefully weighed up against minimal local demand and the sustainability of delivering quality education and financial viability into the future.

2.30 While the impact on the wider community is an important consideration, the key consideration is to determine whether the proposal is in the best interests of children who are educated at the school. Studley Green has a well maintained/used community centre including youth club, leisure/adult learning, church groups, playing fields, children's play areas and ample parking. The school is currently not being utilised by the local community outside of school hours and there have not been significant school events in the current or previous academic years. A decision on the future use and purpose of the buildings will not be formally taken until a final decision on the closure is made. However, consideration will be given to the potential for the site to offer SEND provision and therefore remain within education use.

**2.31 wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils.**

2.32 There is only small-scale housing allocated in the West Wycombe planning area within the Wycombe Local Plan (i.e. no sites of more than 100 homes) so demand is unlikely to significantly increase over the planning period to 2033. There is currently c.24% surplus capacity (c.330 surplus places as at Feb 2023) in the area which can more than accommodate any children displaced through the closure of the school and projected pupil numbers from future housing.

- 2.33 It is considered that the closure of the school will reduce overall surplus across the wider area and could strengthen numbers and viability of other schools and create a better foundation for quality education. All other schools in the planning area have an Ofsted 'Good' report or higher.

### **3. Other options considered**

- 3.1 The Local Authority has explored alternative options to closure which have included the opportunity for the school joining a MAT or federating with other schools. Although joining a MAT or federation could offer benefits in terms of economies of scale, collaboration across schools, shared learning and resources etc., the Council considers it unlikely that a trust would, through its due diligence, consider the school viable into the future. Despite discussions with a number of MATs and other Schools, no MATs or Schools came forward during either the stage one or two consultation stage to offer support to The Mary Towerton School and no other alternative proposals were brought to the Local Authority for consideration.

### **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 In taking forward this proposal Buckinghamshire Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act. The Council has complied with the DfE's published guidance: **Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers: January 2023.** [Opening and closing maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107111/opening-and-closing-maintained-schools-statutory-guidance-for-proposers-and-decision-makers-january-2023.pdf)
- 4.2 The LA is the decision maker on any proposals to close community schools and the Diocese is the only body that can object to the Schools Adjudicator on such a proposal. Following discussions with the Diocese and representatives from the Regional Director at the DfE, neither have raised any concerns to the closure proposal. They recognise the high levels of surplus capacity in the area and that the proposal would help improve the viability of neighbouring schools. It is not therefore envisaged that any objection will be made to the recommendation to close The Mary Towerton School by the Diocese.
- 4.3 The full year funding allocation for The Mary Towerton School in the 2023-24 financial year is £290,507. The school was not in a deficit position at the end of 2022-23 but is projecting a rising deficit over the next 3 years due to falling pupil numbers. Any unspent balance following the closure of a maintained school is returned to the local authority's schools block and will offset deficit balances of schools converting to academy status via the sponsored conversion route.



- 4.4 Any arrangements for the funding of pupils transferring from a closing school need to be in accordance with the Schools and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2023. Under the regulations local authorities have limited circumstances under which they are able to redetermine school budgets during the financial year. In the case of a school closure the local authority is able to add an amount to reflect the transfer of pupils to a school only where that school has been established or is subject to a prescribed alteration as a result of the closure of another school. In the case of the transfer of pupils from The Mary Towerton School this would not be the case as there are surplus places across other schools within the area.
- 4.5 Any pupils that do transfer to another school would be on the pupil census for October 2023 in that school and therefore identified for funding purposes for the 2024-25 financial year.

## **5. Corporate implications**

- 5.1 This section will need to include the relevant corporate plan priority relating to this report and make reference to any other implication that need to be taken into account such as:
- a) Property – it is proposed that the school buildings remain within the education service portfolio and consideration will be given to whether the buildings could be utilised for additional SEND provision to meet the need for additional SEND places as identified within the Council’s SEND Sufficiency Strategy published in January 2022
  - b) HR – all existing staff positions at the time of closure will be made redundant. Buckinghamshire Council HR are working with the school and all the staff regarding staff consultations, support, and redundancy procedures.
  - c) An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the consultation and decision making process. The Council will work closely with all families and staff impacted by this decision to ensure that the necessary support is provided to parents, carers, pupils and staff in moving forward with a closure proposal.
  - d) Value for money - Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school. Low pupil numbers are therefore impacting on the School’s financial viability and consequent ability to sustain high-quality teaching and learning for its pupils. Continued low pupil numbers mean the School will be unable to sustain a balanced budget and while it may be possible to identify some cost savings through efficiency, the School

would not be able to achieve the scale of saving necessary without also cutting back even further on staff, which would be unacceptable in terms of the impact on the quality education provision.

## 6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views

6.1 As part of the statutory process on the future of the school two consultation stages were undertaken. A summary of both of consultation stage responses is provided within this paper and more detailed responses are provided in ANNEX C and D

### Stage 1 Consultation on the Future of MTS

6.2 The first stage consultation process on the future of MTS commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023 and concluded on Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2023. In line with statutory requirements the consultation letter (see ANNEX A) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks:

Consultees	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children’s Services</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local Councillors</li> </ul>
<b>West Wycombe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcus Angell (Con)</li> <li>• Darren Hayday (Ind)</li> <li>• Orsolya Hayday (Ind)</li> </ul>
<b>Ridgeway West</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade Adoh (Con)</li> <li>• Robert Carrington (Con)</li> <li>• Carl Etholen (Con)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents/Carers</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils at the School</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Staff</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local MP – Rob Butler MP and Steve Baker MP</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teaching associations and Unions</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northampton Roman Catholic Diocese and Oxford Diocesan Board of Education</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Councils:</li> <li>• Stokenchurch PC</li> <li>• Radnage PC</li> <li>• Piddington and Wheeler PC</li> <li>• Wycombe Town Committee</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Schools</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buckinghamshire Council Officers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Residents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Local Community Centre</li> </ul>

6.3 Local councillors from the West Wycombe and Ridgeway West Wards were invited to a briefing session on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 the day ahead of the consultation going live such that they were aware of the forthcoming consultation and could respond to constituents' questions should they be approached. In addition to Cllr Cranmer, Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services, the following Councillors were able to attend the briefing:

**West Wycombe Cllrs:**

- Orsolya Hayday (Ind)

**Ridgeway West Cllrs (Stokenchurch):**

- Shade Adoh (Con)
- Robert Carrington (Con)
- Carl Etholen (Con)

6.4 All Councillors present at the meeting understood the reason behind the proposed consultation and the challenges facing the school.

6.5 The consultation was also shared with the Community Board Manager for North West Chilterns.

6.6 A meeting was also held with the staff at the school on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> February to inform them of the consultation and to also inform them that there would be a separate statutory redundancy consultation commencing with staff from 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023.

6.7 A meeting was held on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 with the head teachers from all local schools, The Director of Education from the Oxford Diocese (four of the eight local schools are Voluntary Aided CofE Schools) and a representative from the Great Learners Trust who sponsor West Wycombe Primary School to talk through the consultation; the rationale behind it; and, to answer any specific questions arising.

6.8 Two public meetings were held at the school on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March at 2.30pm and 7pm which were attended by 42 people (across the two sessions) attendees included staff, parents/carers, local residents, representatives from other local schools and governors from Mary Towerton School. The meetings included a formal presentation by Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement & Learning, followed by the

opportunity for attendees to ask questions about the proposal to help inform their consultation response.

- 6.9 The Council received 51 responses to the consultation proposal. 44 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 7 came directly to the email consultation mailbox.
- 6.10 In summary of the 51 who responded 21 (41%) were in agreement with the proposal to close the school from 31st August 2023; 24 (47%) did not agree; and, 6 (12%) didn't know or didn't say:

Agree/Disagree Proposal	Responses received via Your Voice	Responses received via Consultation Mailbox	Total
Agree with proposal to close	18	3	21
Disagree with proposal to close	21	3	24
Don't Know/didn't say	5	1	6
	<b>44</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>51</b>

- 6.11 Of the 51 responses received 45 (88%) said that they understood why the proposal had been made to consult on closure of the school. 3 (6%) said that they didn't understand the proposal and 3 (6%) that they didn't know.
- 6.12 See ANNEX C for full details of the Stage One Consultation Responses and the responses from the local MPs.

### Stage 2 Representation Period on Proposal to Close MTS

- 6.13 The second stage representation period on the proposal to close MTS commenced on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and concluded on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2023. In line with statutory requirements a Statutory Notice was published in the Bucks Free Press on Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April and the consultation letter (see ANNEX B) was sent to the following consultees and also promoted via a dedicated webpage and survey on Your Voice Bucks:

Consultees
• Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services
• Local Councillors

<p><b>West Wycombe</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marcus Angell (Con)</li> <li>• Darren Hayday (Ind)</li> <li>• Orsolya Hayday (Ind)</li> </ul> <p><b>Ridgeway West</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shade Adoh (Con)</li> <li>• Robert Carrington (Con)</li> <li>• Carl Etholen (Con)</li> </ul>
• Parents/Carers
• Pupils at the School
• School Staff
• Local MP – Rob Butler MP and Steve Baker MP
• Teaching associations and Unions
• Northampton Roman Catholic Diocese and Oxford Diocesan Board of Education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parish Councils:</li> <li>• Stokenchurch PC</li> <li>• Radnage PC</li> <li>• Piddington and Wheeler PC</li> <li>• Wycombe Town Committee</li> </ul>
• Local Schools
• Buckinghamshire Council Officers
• Local Residents
• Local Community Centre

6.14 The Council received 10 responses to the consultation proposal. 9 of these came in via the Your Voice consultation page and 1 came directly to the email consultation mailbox. See ANNEX D for full details of the Stage 2 Consultation responses.

6.15 In summary of the 10 who responded 4 (40%) were in agreement with the proposal to close the school from 31st August 2023; 6 (60%) did not agree:

Agree/Disagree Proposal	Responses received via Your Voice	Responses received via Consultation Mailbox	Total
Agree with proposal to close	4	0	4
Disagree with proposal to close	5	1	6

	9	1	10
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- 6.16 From the table above it can be noted that the overall response rate was very low and is perhaps reflective of the fact that those consulted during the formal representation period felt that they had made their comments as part of the Stage One consultation and did not therefore feel that they needed to repeat them. Of those who responded in the formal representation stage 5 were local residents of whom 4 were against the proposal and 1 was in support. No respondents identified themselves as being parents/carers of pupils currently at the school. One respondent confirmed that they were a staff member at the school and that they were against the proposal.
- 6.17 Having looked at response rates for a similar statutory proposal undertaken by Hertfordshire to close Wareside CE school in 2022 their Cabinet Report states that they received no objections to their statutory proposal. It doesn't state if they received any responses in support. The School closed on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2022.
- 6.18 In contrast when Surrey CC consulted on a proposal to close Ripley CE School in 2018 they received 256 responses to their statutory proposal of which 98% of respondents were against the proposal. Despite this significant objection to the proposal Surrey CC still proceeded with the proposal to close based on the fact that they could not find a MAT to take on the school, numbers were too low to make it viable and the quality of educational outcomes was low. The school closed on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2018.
- 6.19 It is clear therefore that other LAs have closed schools where there has been either no response during the formal representation period or a much higher response rate and objection to a closure proposal. DfE Guidance states that Decision Makers should not simply take account of the numbers of people expressing a particular view when considering representations made on proposals. Instead the Decision Maker should give the greatest weight to representations from those stakeholders likely to be most directly affected by the proposals. The responses submitted to both consultations did not present any alternative proposals to closure from external organisations such as MATs or other local schools to help address the underlying issues associated with falling rolls.
- 6.20 Local Councillors and MPs were consulted on the proposal and whilst no formal responses were submitted during the formal representation stage, the Director of Education and Head of Achievement and Learning at the Council met with representatives of the two local MPs (Sue Hynard attending on behalf of Steve Baker and Elliott Banks attending on behalf of Rob Butler) on 10<sup>th</sup> May. They discussed the business case proposing the closure and both confirmed that they understood the rationale for the closure.

- 6.21 No formal response during the representation stage was received from 1.45 - 1.701 any elected representative. However, both Steve Baker and Rob Butler did respond to the first stage consultation (the response from Rob Butler MP was unfortunately emailed to an incorrect email address and therefore the response was not received during the stage one consultation period. Following the meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> May his response was forwarded to Simon James). In their responses to the first stage consultation both MPs acknowledged and understood the reason for the proposal to close the school but suggested that the Council give some consideration to the potential future use of the site for SEND provision should a decision be taken to close the school.
- 6.22 An email was sent on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 to the local Councillors who had previously been briefed on the proposal asking if they wished to add any further comments to the paper. No responses were received.

## **7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 Please refer to Section 6 above and Annexes A - D for full details of the consultation process that has been undertaken.
- 7.2 As noted in the section above, the proposal has been widely consulted upon and has followed the DfE guidance in relation to the closure of schools. A communication plan (see Annex E) was produced and kept under review throughout the consultation process.
- 7.3 Once the decision is taken as to whether to close the school all relevant parties will be formally notified of the decision and Officers from the Council will continue to work with the School to ensure that full support is provided to staff, pupils, parents and all those who are affected by the proposal.

## **8. Next steps and review**

- 8.1 If the recommendation is supported by the Leader of the Council, the School will close on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2023.

## **9. Background papers**

- 9.1 Annex A: Consultation documents February 2023 [Consultation on the future of The Mary Towerton Primary School - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)
- 9.2 Annex B: Consultation documents April 2023 [Statutory notice for the proposed closure of The Mary Towerton Primary School - Your Voice Bucks - Citizen Space](#)

- 9.3 Annex C: Stage One Consultation Report
- 9.4 Annex D: Stage Two Statutory Proposal Outcome Report

## **10. Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

- 10.1 If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

