

Peterborough Diocese Education Trust (PDET)

BUSINESS CASE FOR SCHOOL CLOSURE

CONFIDENTIAL

Name of School: Easton Garford Endowed Primary School

DfE Number: 928/3313

Pupil numbers at Easton Garford Endowed School have been consistently falling.

In 2013, the school changed from a lower school to a primary school before local reorganisation. The reason given by the school leaders at the time was the school of 40 pupils could face closure if it did not attract more pupils and therefore, more funding.

In 2014, the school went through a turbulent period and received a requires improvement judgement from Ofsted. Pupil numbers fell.

Efforts to attract more pupils have included appointing an experienced executive headteacher, improving the facilities and joining the Diocesan multi-academy trust for greater support.

There were 28 children on roll in 2016/17 and the academy was forecasting a year on year reduction.

The recent restructure of education provision in the area added 168 places across the primary phase. NCC pupil projection forecasts indicate a decline in both the number of pupils starting school and the total number of pupils attending primary schools in the area.

The additional capacity caters for future growth and takes into account new housing in Oundle and Thrapston. Whilst there is one large housing development that has been granted planning approval in Thrapston and other smaller in-fill developments planned across the rest of North-East Northamptonshire, the pupil yield from these developments will be accommodated in existing area schools, using the increased accommodation already added. The level of provision is expected to over provide for the predicted pupil numbers for as long as projections are available.

The nursery adjacent to Easton Garford Endowed School closed in 2016/17, this is believed to have contributed to the falling pupil numbers.

Due to the low pupil numbers in 2016/17 and a predicted reduction each year in future years, Peterborough Diocese Education Trust, which includes the governors and leadership team at the academy, determined that the academy was not financially viable. The in year deficit for 2017/18 was forecast to be £48,000. This would rise each year and would result in a forecast cumulative deficit of £350,000 in five years time.

Parents and carers were consulted on a proposal to transport the children on roll at Easton Garford Endowed Primary School to the neighbouring PDET academy, Ryhall CE Academy on a daily basis from the first day of the new academic year.

Parents were concerned about the proposal and wanted to visit Ryhall CE Academy. Following their visit, the majority of the parents and carers of the 28 children on roll at Easton Garford Endowed School chose to leave and apply for a place on the roll of Ryhall CE Academy.

Ryhall CE Academy achieved a good Ofsted rating in September 2017.

Unfortunately, only 1 child has returned to Easton Garford Endowed CE Primary School for 2017/18. The academy continues to forecast no growth in pupil numbers.

The revised forecast shows a forecast cumulative deficit of £289,000 in five years time.

One child on roll means that the school is not financially sustainable. Of equal importance is the quality of the educational offer and Peterborough Diocese Education Trust, which includes the governors and leadership team at the academy, believes that the educational offer in a school of one child does not meet the needs of the whole child.

For all of the reasons above, Peterborough Diocese Education Trust proposes to close Easton Garford Endowed CE School.

The land and buildings belong to Garford Educational Foundation.

Other options considered

- a) Reduction of staff at Easton Garford CE Endowed School to a minimum.

PDET Directors feel that the academy is not currently meeting the educational needs of the single child on roll and does not believe that there will ever be sufficient demand for the academy.

- b) Transport the single child on roll at Easton Garford CE Endowed School to Ryhall CE Academy.

PDET Directors do not believe that there will ever be sufficient demand for Easton Garford CE Endowed School to be sustainable so believe that this would just delay an inevitable closure. We consider it best to close the school with one child and minimise disruption.

- c) Approach other academy trusts to see if Easton Garford Endowed CE School could join them.

All were sympathetic to the plight of the school community but could not take on the responsibility.

Attachments

Summary page from 5 year budget planning tool