

Peasenhall and Yoxford Primary Schools Consultation on the Future of the Schools

Foreword

Since July 2015, the Interim Executive Board (IEB) of the Bramfield, Middleton, Peasenhall and Yoxford Federation (BMPY) and Suffolk County Council (SCC) have been reviewing the position of its schools in the light of Ofsted's judgement that 3 of the 4 schools within the Federation are providing a standard of education that is inadequate.

Recently, it was agreed that Bramfield Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School would leave the Federation and join the St Edmundsbury and Ipswich Diocesan Multi-Academy Trust. Since that decision, the IEB has been considering what it can do to ensure that young people in the area receive the best possible education in its remaining three schools. The IEB's priorities are:

Immediate

To continue to raise standards of teaching and learning for every child at its schools.

Medium Term

To agree a way forward which protects the education of children in the three schools and offers the best opportunity to:

- concentrate the strengths of the Federation to support pupil outcomes
- allow support for the school/s to be delivered most effectively
- provide stability through a period of uncertainty for pupils, parents, staff and governors.

Long Term

This document sets out the issues considered by the IEB and puts forward proposals for the long term future of the schools for consideration by the wider community. We would like to hear your views.

Tom Brooke
Chair of the IEB
Bramfield, Middleton, Peasenhall and Yoxford Federation

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Reviewing the position of Peasehall, Middleton and Yoxford Primary Schools

This document sets out:

- Factors considered as part of the review
- The IEB and SCC's conclusions
- Future provision for young people in the area
- The consultation process
- The decision making timetable
- Details of how you can respond to the consultation

Background

In 2007, a Federation was formed with Peasehall and Middleton Primary Schools. This Federation was expanded in March 2015 to include Bramfield CEVC and Yoxford Primary Schools (BMPY) with the aim of providing a more sustainable structure for the schools into the future. Each of the schools is considered small in terms of pupil numbers and all are designated as rural primaries in the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) 2015 Order. The rationale was that by joining together, expertise could be shared across the schools which would both support improvements in teaching and learning and might bring about a more efficient use of scarce resources.

Between January and June 2015 Ofsted inspected all four schools judging Bramfield, Peasehall and Yoxford as Inadequate and Middleton as Requiring Improvement. These judgements reflected the view that the schools had not continued to improve or kept pace with changes in Ofsted's expectations.

In response to these judgements, a number of changes were made including the appointment in July 2015 of an IEB to take over governing body responsibility for the 4 schools. The immediate priority for the IEB was to improve standards at all of the schools. A new Interim Executive Headteacher was appointed to lead the Federation and a Teaching and Learning Consultant post was created to support improvement across all schools.

In early 2016, Bramfield CEVCP School decided to leave the Federation and join the Diocesan Multi Academy Trust (MAT) with effect from 1 August 2016. In April this year, the Interim Executive Headteacher left the Federation and was replaced by Mr Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne from the Waveney Valley Partnership (founding schools within the Consortium Multi-Academy Trust to be launched in August 2016). With pupil numbers falling in Middleton, Peasehall and Yoxford Primary Schools, the question of how best to protect the future of education in the area has now become the key priority for the new Interim Head, the IEB and SCC.

The Present Position: Standards

Peasehall was visited by Ofsted on 19 April this year as part of its monitoring of schools in special measures. It found that although there are some signs of improvement these were not sufficient to indicate that the school was taking effective action to come out of special measures.

Yoxford was visited by Ofsted on 11 May. The inspector's report is due imminently and will be made available publicly when it is received. The IEB's own view is that standards of teaching and learning are improving at the school.

The Education and Adoption Act 2016 requires The Secretary of State for Education to make an Academy order in respect of a maintained school in England which requires significant improvement or special measures. An order has been made for Yoxford Primary.

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Middleton: While the school has not had a recent monitoring visit, the IEB remains concerned about standards of teaching and learning at the school. The IEB is now consulting on a proposal for Middleton Primary to convert to academy status and, in due course, join the Consortium Multi-Academy Trust. Andrew Aalders-Dunthorne, presently Interim Executive Headteacher of Middleton, Peasehall and Yoxford will become the Chief Executive/Principal of the Consortium MAT when it is established later this year. The final decision on academisation will be taken by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) on behalf of the Secretary of State for Education.

The Present Position: Pupil Numbers

Peasehall Primary PAN 10/Yoxford Primary PAN 10

Year Group	Peasehall 14/04/16	Yoxford
Reception	4	9
1	3	13
2	5	9
3	2	5
4	3	9
5	1	2
6	5	4
Total	23*	51**

*In Peasehall, 27% of pupils live outside the catchment area for the school.

**In Yoxford 33% of pupils live outside the catchment area for the school.

There are only 9 allocations for reception in September 2016: 2 for Peasehall and 7 for Yoxford.

The numbers on roll at Peasehall are expected to reduce in September by at least 4 pupils leaving the school in an unsustainable position if it remains open. Joining the schools would create a more viable and stable school with benefits for all children.

Options considered by the IEB

1. Keep things as they are.
2. Close Peasehall and expand Yoxford on its present site.
3. Close Yoxford and expand Peasehall on its present site.
4. Close Yoxford and Peasehall and establish a new school on one of the two sites.

Option	Pros	Cons
1. Keep things as they are	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change for pupils • Keeps valued provision in villages • No change to transport costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not educationally viable – pupils will not receive a high quality education or enjoy the social/sporting opportunities available in a larger school • Not financially viable – low pupil numbers mean that one or both of the schools may not be able to survive • Hard to recruit and retain high quality staff to a small school • Could lead to decline and closure of one or both schools leading to poor outcomes for pupils • Difficulty of attracting an academy sponsor

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Option	Pros	Cons
2. Close Peasehall and expand Yoxford on its present site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical mass of pupils attend Yoxford Primary • Provides a sustainable educational model with greater pupil numbers • Size of a combined school would be more attractive to an academy sponsor • Yoxford is centrally located and there is potential for expansion • The Yoxford site is accessible for pupils and staff with physical difficulties • Pupils from Yoxford have already worked with their peers at Peasehall • Pupils currently attending Peasehall could be accommodated on the Yoxford site immediately. • Capital cost is affordable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the Peasehall community of losing its school • The Yoxford site is smaller than Peasehall • Transport costs increase overall • Would need a plan to accommodate bus drop off
3. Close Yoxford and expand Peasehall on its current site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peasehall site is large enough • Provides a sustainable educational model with greater pupil numbers • Size of school would be more attractive to an academy sponsor • Pupils currently attending Peasehall have already worked with their peers at Yoxford 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impact on the Yoxford community of losing its school • The site is situated up a steep slope from the road making access problematical • Not centrally located for majority of pupils and for pupils from future new housing e.g. from Darsham • Capital cost of expansion are high because of access • Higher transport costs than Option 2 because more children would have to move schools
4. Close Yoxford and Peasehall and establish a new school on one of the two sites.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps a school in one of the villages • A completely new build might prove attractive to parents/academy sponsor • Schools treated equally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capital cost (about £4m) not affordable • Would require closure of 2 schools which would be disruptive and exacerbate uncertainty for staff and parents • Impact on business case if out of catchment pupils move back to catchment schools • Pupils would need to stay in their existing schools until a new build was completed. This might not be until 2019.

Conclusion

In coming to their conclusion the IEB and SCC have had regard to the matters listed in Section 15(4) of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 in respect of rural primary schools. With great reluctance the IEB and SCC have concluded that in the best interests of current and future children their preferred option would be that Peasehall Primary School should close and provision made available for all the children at Yoxford Primary School (Option 2). This option would:

- locate a school centrally in the area where the greatest number of children live
- provide a school which could be expanded in the future to take pupils from the wider area

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- enable pupils to be educated within a larger school community which would bring educational, social and sporting benefits
- create a strong staff structure on one site and build on the improvements already being made.

The proposal to close Peasenhall Primary and merge as a single school on the Yoxford Primary site would mean that Yoxford Primary would be enlarged from a pupil admission number (PAN) of 10 to 15. This is the number of pupils who can be admitted to the school in the entry year each September. Although additional accommodation would not be required immediately at the school we have undertaken feasibility studies and confirmed that there is sufficient room on the site to locate additional classrooms when they are needed.

There is no route considered safe for children to walk to school from Peasenhall but transport would be provided in accordance with County Council's Home to school transport policy.

Alternative provision

Parents/carers would of course retain their right to express a preference for a school but sufficient places would be available at Yoxford Primary School for pupils currently at Peasenhall Primary if the school were to close. Places at other local schools would be dependent on availability.

The consultation process

The consultation period will run from Monday 6 June until Friday 15 July 2016. The Secretary of State for Education lays down regulations indicating those who should be consulted and the IEB will of course comply with these.

The timetable

- Monday 6 June at 6.00 pm at the Peasenhall Assembly Rooms: Meeting for parents and carers and other interested parties.
- Tuesday 7 June at 6.00 pm at Yoxford Primary School: Meeting for parents and carers and other interested parties.
- There will be meetings for staff at Peasenhall at their primary school at 4 pm on Monday 6 June and for Yoxford staff at their primary school at 4 pm on 7 June.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet will consider the responses to the consultation and decide whether to make a formal proposal. If so, it would publish statutory notices on 30 September 2016. These are legal documents setting out the precise detail of what is proposed. There would then be a formal statutory period of four weeks to allow any further responses to be made to Suffolk County Council.

On 6 December 2016 Suffolk County Council's Cabinet would meet to consider any representations and make a final decision on the schools.

How to have your say

You can give your views on this proposal, including options that may not have been considered *either*:

1. by completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it in the pre-paid envelope provided
2. by letter addressed to Peasenhall and Yoxford Consultation, Children and Young People's Services Schools Infrastructure Team, Suffolk County Council, Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX.
3. by email at the following address: schools@suffolk.gov.uk

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4. by on-line survey at www.suffolk.gov.uk/consultations

All responses must be received by Friday 15 July 2016.