

Clapham and Patching C of E Primary School Consultation Analysis Summary report

1. Summary Data

Question 1	How do you think the closure of Clapham & Patching C of E Primary School will impact on the local community?
High	232
Medium	25
Low	30
Not Answered	14
Total responses to each question	301

Question 2	In your opinion why are so few children from the local community attending Clapham & Patching C of E Primary School?
Perceived poor education standards	21
Alternatives that enable a better work/life balance (commute to work, etc)	50
Private education	15
Home schooling	7
Other	196
Not Answered	12
Total responses to each question	301

Question 3	Do you agree with the proposal to close Clapham & Patching C of E Primary School?
Agree	24
Disagree	275
Not Answered	2
Total responses to each question	301

2. Commentary

- 2.1 Written responses to the on-line and paper consultation exercise were overwhelmingly in support of maintaining the school open. The vast majority of responses suggested that closure would have an adverse impact on the local community. However, the rationale and statements

made in support of this view were rather narrow in considering the impact. Some made reference to local events that the school supported at times through the year, for example supporting local churches through fund raising, the twice yearly singing at the local care home, the school's summer and autumn fayres and the school's use of the local woods. A number of local residents made reference to the age range and the value young children brought to the village life whilst at the school. One resident said:

'The presence of the school is important for many reasons, not least that its closure would impact on the viability of the village and discourage families with children from moving into the area'

However, some other local residents were more pragmatic:

'Local housing provision means that to live in Clapham and Patching, you'd need to be bigger income earners. The current age of village residents is beyond school age.'

'Because of the nature of the catchment area, there are very few primary school aged children living in the villages.'

'The school adds nothing to the village either culturally, socially or economically. The number of village children is very small.'

'As a neighbour of the school for 23 years, we have never been invited to any event in the school. The school feels a very isolated institution, fine if your children attend, but certainly not part of the wider village community.'

- 2.2 The issue of low pupil numbers in the local area was a common feature across many consultation responses. Even those who did not wish to see the closure of the school, there was a general acceptance that there are insufficient local children to fill the school and that there was limited sense that this would change in the future. To a few, this in itself created challenges, particularly with regard to the traffic that inevitably came with the majority travelling to the school from outside the catchment area.

'Traffic flow and the effect of school traffic on residents and pedestrians creates a real safety concern. Careless and indiscriminate driving and parking, loading and unloading children, can block access to residents.'

- 2.3 A significant factor for a number of parents was the issue of how the school caters for pupils with Special Educational Needs. However, comments on this were mixed. Even where respondents were not in favour of closing the school, there was a recognition among many that the nature of the school did potentially limit the school's attraction to parents. In response to the question on why there were so few children from the local community attending the school, the following responses were reflective of many:

'The school has a reputation of being a special school and to put your child there means that their options are limited.'

'Bullying is not dealt with and high functioning SEND are not adequately supported'

'Too many special needs children requiring extra attention means that there is less time for 'mainstream' children.'

'The school seems to attract kids with special needs. This means teachers are focusing on them when they should be sharing their attention equally among all the children.'

Much has been made of the SEND provision being one of the strengths at the school. However, the mixed range of comments from current parent carers, from residents and those ex-parents who had chosen to move their child away, provide a balance that was not necessarily heard at the public meeting.

- 2.4 One of the key strengths and reasons for supporting the school and campaigning to keep the school open was that of the school being a small and nurturing school. Many responses made reference to this. The following comments were indicative of many:

'The school provides an important and unique setting for children who may otherwise fail to thrive in a larger mainstream school.'

'The small school environment is a perfect school for children who need more nurture in a smaller and quieter setting. The smaller mainstream setting means that they can flourish as their sensitivities are reduced and their needs are met in the way of a smaller setting.'

'We need more of these sanctuary schools.'

'The school is the only one in the county that gives the support my family need.'

However, this was not a consistent view, even where respondents were against the closure of the school.

'Bigger schools provide more opportunities'

'Some parents may feel that a small school does not offer the breadth of opportunities that a larger school can offer.'

'It is just too small. Children will never cope going to secondary school after being there.'

- 2.5 All this creates a conundrum and a mixed picture. Even where parents and residents do not wish to see the school close, there is a recognition among many that the high proportion of pupils with SEND rightly, or

wrongly, creates a perception that the school is a special school facility in its own right. For some respondents, the very strength seen by some parents is actually a perceived weakness among others. For a few respondents, they themselves consider the school to be a special provision and make reference to the small class sizes which, below 30, are not achievable in larger schools. However, this in itself fails to recognise that these class sizes are not financially viable in any school.

- 2.6 Very few respondents make any reference to the proposed academisation proposals. It is unclear why other than parents and local residents are relatively unsighted on any detail or what the academisation would bring or what differences in the operation of the school such an academisation would create.