
BY EMAIL

Cllr David Barling

**Chairman of the Children and Young People's Services
Scrutiny Committee**

7 May 2020

Dear David

**Recommendations from the Children and Young People's Services
Scrutiny Committee – Small Schools Proposals**

Thank you for your letter containing the recommendations of the Committee made at the virtual meeting on 14 April 2020 in relation to the small schools proposals. I can confirm that I made my Cabinet colleagues aware of these in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 22 April when we met virtually to determine the small schools proposals.

Please find below my responses to the points the Committee raised:-

- 1. The Committee does not believe that the DfE threshold for closure of rural schools is met for **Clapham and Patching C of E Primary School** and that the Covid-19 crisis is placing unprecedented pressure on the County Council, schools, teachers, parents and children. It therefore recommends that:*
 - Cabinet rejects the proposal to close Clapham and Patching C of E Primary School, Clapham, Worthing*
 - The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) is asked to explore the academisation option with SDET as soon as is practical given the Covid-19 Crisis.*

Cabinet gave extensive consideration to the information provided by officers in relation to whether the threshold for closure was met and to the impact of the Covid-19 crisis on those affected by the closure proposal in determining the decision. In relation to the impact of the Covid-19 crisis, for those seeking an alternative school place, most schools in the county are open with a reduced staff cohort and are able to conduct a telephone conversation with prospective parents and carers if required, undertake a virtual tour in some instances and information about each school is available on the schools' websites.

However in recognition of the current uncertainty, and to provide reassurance for those parents who were yet to find an alternative school place for their child, should schools not return to normal opening during the summer, Cabinet agreed that the school building should remain open for the Autumn half term to allow those children without suitable school places to be supported to transition to a new school.

In relation to the second point I understand that as the position of the local authority on the viability of the school has now been determined the school governing body and academy trust are able to pursue the academisation proposal themselves with the RSC.

*2. The Committee considers that as closure of **Rumboldswyke CE Infant School, Chichester**, would make subsequent academisation impossible, and in light of the Covid-19 crisis, that now is not the time to close the school. The Committee recommends that the Cabinet should therefore decline the closure of Rumboldswyke CE Infant School, Chichester.*

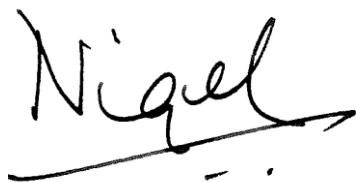
Cabinet acknowledged the uncertainty created by the Covid-19 crisis for parents and pupils at Rumboldswyke school and considered that it was appropriate to propose a similar approach to that suggested for Clapham and Patching school. In this respect should schools not return to normal opening during the summer the school building would be maintained open for the Autumn half term to allow those children without suitable school places to be supported to transition to a new school.

Similarly, as the position of the local authority on the viability of the school has now been determined, the school governing body and academy trust are able to pursue the academisation proposal themselves with the RSC.

I appreciate that closing these two schools is not the outcome the majority of the Committee would have hoped for but can assure you that the County Council will work with everyone who may be affected – staff, parents, carers and pupils in the coming weeks and months as preparations are made for the pupils to transfer to suitable alternative schools.

With regard to the final three recommendations set out in your letter I'd like to thank the Committee for their support for the proposals relating to– Stedham Primary School, Compton and Upmarden CE Primary School and Warninglid Primary School.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nigel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right from the end of the name.

CLlr Nigel Jupp
Cabinet Member for Education and Skills