

**Consultation on the Future of Farley All Saints Voluntary Aided
Primary School**

March - April 2005

1. Why are the Diocese, the governors and the local authority consulting with you?

We are consulting on the future of the school because the school meets several of the criteria that lead to consideration of its future, which are outlined at paragraph 3 below. In particular, two attempts to recruit a Headteacher have been unsuccessful, and without the school's future being secure from September 2005, there is the risk of further decline.

2. Who is being consulted?

This document has been circulated to:

- Parents of current pupils of Farley school
- Parents of children in the catchment areas but not yet of school age.
- Governors.
- Staff.
- The Diocese of Salisbury
- The Parish Councils
- Salisbury District Council
- The local County Councillor, Mr Bill Moss
- The local M.P., Mr Robert Key
- The county secretaries of the relevant unions.
- Primary Heads Forum.
- Wiltshire Association of Governors.
- Heads and Chairs of Governors of nearby primary schools.

Further copies are available at the school, the nearest library and on the County Council website.

3. What do the local authority and the government say about small village primary schools?

In its School Organisation Plan, the local education authority is clear on its view on small village primary schools. It contains the following:

The LEA recognises the government's presumption against the closure of village schools, and will not normally bring forward proposals to close a village school unless it can be demonstrated that one or more of the following criteria apply:

- *There is only very limited demand for places at the school from children coming from the designated area.*
- *Standards are low and there is low confidence in the likelihood of improvement.*
- *Recruitment of a headteacher has not proved possible.*
- *The necessary improvements to the school accommodation are either not possible or cost effective.*
- *The school has a deficit budget without realistic prospects of recovery.*

All proposals to amalgamate or close foundation or voluntary aided schools, will be brought forward in consultation with the governing body/ies concerned.

For all schools with fewer than 90 pupils on roll, the LEA will actively encourage the governors at the schools to consider further collaboration and, ultimately, federation with one or more neighbouring schools.

In the case of All Saints Farley, the first, third and fifth bullet points primarily apply.

The Department for Education and Skills guidance on statutory proposals for School Organisation Committees refers to rural schools as follows:

'In considering statutory proposals to close a rural school, the Decision Maker should have regard to the need to preserve access to a local school for rural communities. There is therefore a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that no rural school should ever close, but the case for closure should be strong and the proposals clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area. In order to assist the SOC, those proposing closure must provide evidence to the SOC to show that they have carefully considered:

- *The transport implications of rural school closures, including the welfare and safety of the children, the recurrent cost to the LEA of transporting pupils to school further away, the quality and availability of transport links to the alternative provision, the effects on road traffic congestion, and the environmental costs of pupils travelling further to schools.*
- *The overall and long term impact on local people and the community of closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility.*

- *Alternatives to closure including the potential for federation with another local school to increase the school's viability; the scope for Extended School or children's centre status to provide local community services and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc.'*

4. What are the likely numbers of pupils on roll at Farley?

	Apr 04	Apr 05	Apr 06	Apr 07	Apr 08
All Saints, Farley	46	37	30	28	29

These projections are based on known and projected births in the area, together with assumptions about the likely number of children, both in-area and out-of-area, likely to take up places. Generally, the LEA has a sound record in forecasting places. It is therefore likely that for the foreseeable future, Farley will be a two class school. As a consequence, pupils will have all their lessons at Key Stage 1 (aged 5, 6 and 7) in one class and all their Key Stage 2 lessons (aged 8, 9, 10 and 11) in a second class. There are many other primary schools in Wiltshire with this arrangement; some of them are very successful, while others face difficulties. While there are obvious benefits to a very small school, it is also likely that some parents will have reservations about their child being taught by the same teacher for successive years and in the same class with such a wide age range.

5. What are the alternatives?

5.1 We have been considering a range of options which we have outlined below:

Option A:

To close Farley school

Were the decision to be taken to close Farley School, places would be made available at the school nearest to Farley, which is Pitton. Parents who choose to send their children to another Primary School would be entitled to do so, provided that there was sufficient space for them in that school and that parents accepted the responsibility for transport to and from school. If Farley was to close, the Diocese of Salisbury would be responsible for the future use or disposal of the School building.

Option B:

To form a federated school with another school

In these circumstances, there would be a single school, with a single Headteacher and Governing Body, but pupils would be based in both Farley and another schools. In the appendix to this document, we have explained in greater detail what federation might mean.

The Governors of Farley School have expressed a clear preference for this option, but at the time of writing no neighbouring school has indicated its willingness to form a federation.

Option C:

Any other proposal that comes forward during the period of consultation

The inclusion of this option allows for other proposals that have not been considered to be brought forward during the period of consultation. It must however be noted that the continuation of a separate school on the Farley site could only be considered under this heading were such a proposal to address all of the issues raised above. It is of course perfectly possible for you to have an alternative idea and put that forward to us. If you wish to do this, then please complete the relevant section on the attached document.

6. What are the pros and cons of the different options ?

6.1 Forecast pupil numbers in the area

The forecast number of pupils on roll at neighbouring schools is a significant factor in these considerations. Numbers at Pitton are forecast to rise by up to 20 over the next five years. Numbers at Whiteparish are stable, those at Winterslow falling marginally (but not affecting the overall class structure of the school) and those at Alderbury and West Grimstead falling, by up to 40 pupils over the period 2004 to 2009. In summary, consultees should take account of a static/falling number of pupils across the area as a whole.

6.2 Transport implications

Under Option A, if free transport were granted to all children in Farley and East Grimstead (which is in Farley's designated area) to attend school in Pitton this would require a new bus to be contracted at an additional cost of approximately £150 per day or £28500 pa.

Option B would also incur transport costs, but the amount of these would depend on the federation model and location identified. Start and finish times would need to be organised so that the same bus could be used to transfer children to both sites, rather than hire two buses going in opposite directions at the same time.

6.3 Educational standards

Farley was judged by Ofsted to be in need of Special Measures in 2004. Since then, progress has been made to address the key issues identified by the Inspectors, and both Her Majesty's Inspectors, for Ofsted, and Local Education Authority evaluations have reported positively on the progress that the school has made. It is expected that Farley will be removed from special measures in the summer of 2005, but this is in part dependent on Ofsted being satisfied that the future leadership of the school is secure.

6.4 The ownership and future use of Farley school buildings

The Diocese of Salisbury is the trustee for the buildings and site of Farley School and it would rest with the Diocese to determine what would happen to the site in the event of it not being used as a school.

6.5 The financial implications of federation

Under the current Wiltshire scheme, federated schools receive two lump sum elements to their budgets (ie they are treated as two school buildings). In addition the School Standards Grants (SSG) Regulations provide that SSG remains at a similar level to the grant paid to the two former schools. At the point of federation, any residual standards funds from the two schools are retained by the federation itself. The Diocese has to date also been sympathetic to the federation retaining any devolved capital funding from the two schools.

From April 2005 a single one off-sum of £22,000 is also available to support start up costs. In addition, a federation will retain any small school curriculum protection elements (for schools below 35 in number), on a tapered basis, for two years. On current numbers Farley is slightly above this threshold.

The experience of schools that have previously federated is that the County's scheme is sufficient to meet the needs of the schools once they are set up, and that economies of scale can be achieved through the higher school roll.

6.6 The pros and cons of the options.

Taking account of these and other factors, some of the pros and cons of the two main options outlined above can be summarised as follows:

Option	Pros	Cons
A Close Farley School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is potentially space for the likely number of pupils from the designated areas at neighbouring schools • In a larger school, the likelihood of single age (or at most two mixes of age) classes is greater • It is cost effective to work in this way 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One community no longer has a school, with consequent effects upon it • Loss of school buildings and facilities in Farley • Other school sites and buildings may require expansion
B Form a federated school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A school remains in the Farley community • Use continues to be made of Farley school site, providing good facilities for the pupils • Retains a small village school ethos in each community but has economies of scale of a larger school • Potential for shared resources, expertise and responsibilities • Better career structure for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some Governing Bodies and Headteachers regard it more difficult to run a federated school than a single site school • It is potentially more expensive, especially if numbers do not justify the two sites • Road travel can present a difficulty • No other school has expressed a willingness to federate with Farley

7. The process of change.

Following a period of up to six weeks (March 1 – April 8) during which you are asked to express your views on these matters, including through a public meeting, a statutory notice will be published outlining the intended future of Farley All Saints Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School. This proposal will take account of the views that are expressed both at the public meeting and in correspondence received.

The statutory notice will then be published for a period of six working weeks during which views on the proposal can be sent in writing to the governors and diocese.

Finally, the Wiltshire School Organisation Committee will consider the proposal, the outcome of this consultation and the responses to the public notice. The Wiltshire School Organisation Committee is a body independent of the County Council which has the power to make the final decisions on statutory proposals. This Committee is made up of representatives of the County Council, Church of England, Roman Catholic Diocese, Foundation and Community School governors and the Learning and Skills Council. In the event that the Wiltshire School Organisation Committee is unable to come to a unanimous view on the proposal, a final decision will be made by the Schools Adjudicator, who is appointed by the Secretary of State.

8. How to express your views

We want to receive your views on this matter as fully as possible. You can do this by completing the attached reply slip to the consultation document or by attending one of the public meetings detailed in the next section.

Summary – Next Steps

You are invited to:

- Consider the information and options set out in the document.
- Attend the meeting to be held at **7.00pm on Thursday March 17 at Farley Primary School** to ask for more information and to make your views known. (Meetings will be held for staff and governors of the school at 5.30pm on the same date)
- Identify any further options which should be considered.
- If you want to respond in writing do so by no later than noon on Friday April 8 2005, identifying which option you support and why.

Debbie Reed, Chair of Governors, All Saints, Farley

Simon Tong, Director of Education, Salisbury Diocese

Bob Wolfson, Director, Department for Children and Education, Wiltshire C.C.

Response to a Consultation on the Future of Farley All Saints CE VA Primary School

Please give your name and your interest in the future of the school (e.g. current parent, parent of pre-school child, village residents).

1. Are there any other options which should be considered? If so, please give details of your suggestion, continuing overleaf if necessary.

2. Which of the options set out in the consultation document do you support? Please circle your preferred option:

A B C

If you wish to give your reasons for supporting this option then please do so below.

Please return this to:

Director, Department for Children and Education (Ref. GK/Pn/Fh)
Education Department
County Hall
Trowbridge
BA14 8JB

to arrive no later than noon on Friday April 8 2005.

APPENDIX ON SCHOOL FEDERATION

1. What do we mean by Federation ?

Two or more schools coming together to form a single institution, with one Governing Body, one Headteacher and leadership team, on separate sites and normally in different communities.

2. When and why do Governing Bodies consider federation ?

Federation can be considered at any time as a positive move to secure and enhance a school's situation, providing a better education for all the pupils.

Often – and perhaps unfortunately – federation is considered only when things are difficult. Some of the following circumstances often apply:

- Recruitment problems – it is hard to find a new Head and/or staff and/or governors.
- There is a range of mixed age-group classes and educational standards could be improved by changing these.
- The workload on the Headteacher and teachers is excessive.
- There are budgetary pressures, leading especially to a lack of flexibility
- Pupil rolls are showing signs of falling, perhaps leading to a reduction in the number of classes – often, Governors and Headteachers are concerned by reducing from three classes to two, with the likelihood of a mixed key stage class following
- Class size may be seen as too small to be educationally and/or socially effective
- There may be accommodation issues, such as suitability, adequacy, inability to meet National Curriculum or health and safety requirements.

3. What are the potential advantages of federation ?

- Federation can stabilise the school population and prevent the shrinkage or even closure of a village school, thereby guarding the village's identity
- More access to teacher specialist expertise to support curriculum coordination and planning – teachers don't have to be coordinators for so many subjects. At the same time, a larger team of teachers can support each other better for planning and assessment.

- Fewer mixed age and/or cross-phase classes. Because the size of each year group ('cohort') is increased, classes are more likely to have fewer age groups in them.
- The larger budget and consequent economies of scale mean that more resources can be targeted to particular age groups
- There is an increased likelihood of high quality recruitment of a Headteacher, teachers and other staff, and governors. Simultaneously, it is likely that a reduced teaching commitment for the Headteacher will enable her/him to concentrate on leadership and management, including monitoring and evaluation of standards
- There are social advantages for the pupils. They will have more opportunity to play and work with peers, and are less likely to be part of a very small year group.

And what about the disadvantages ?

- It may prove more difficult for children to establish a whole school ethos
- It is not so easy to manage two sites
- There are advantages – especially in the sense of a 'family atmosphere' to a very small school that may be lost – for example, there could be less interaction with other age groups