

**Cabinet – 9 January 2020**

**Written question from Ieuan Jehu to the Leader, Isle of Wight Council**

Paragraph 41 of Paper B says “The council intends that most children will be admitted to schools where places had existed in the classes that support the year group. However, if any year groups are full across all West Wight schools, the Council may ask schools to admit above their preferred maximum class size”; this, along with the absence of any plans to increase capacity at neighbouring schools from the full proposal report, illustrates that it is proposed that the children displaced by the closure of All Saints’ should be dispersed across West Wight, filling the surplus places which exist in the remaining Schools.

In October St Saviours had 2 surplus places, Shalfleet had none (and is oversubscribed), Yarmouth had 13 and Brighstone had 91. Therefore, the overwhelming majority of the 74 children displaced by the closure of All Saints’ must be expected to move to Brighstone.

Extensive studies show that a decline in pupil achievement can be expected at receiving schools as a result of the influx of new children when another school closes. The more pupils who move to a school and the lower the standard at the receiving school, the greater the decline in achievement for all pupils which can be expected.

Brighstone is currently rated as “Requires Improvement” by Ofsted and recent SATs results have not been as good as those achieved by All Saints’. This proposal can therefore be expected to have a substantial negative impact for all of the children in Brighstone school next year.

Under the proposal described in Paper B, Implementation Groups will be formed to work with the Governing bodies of Yarmouth and All Saints. What consideration has been given to the impact which this proposal will have on the children of Brighstone and what support is being offered to help that school cope with the proposed influx of displaced Freshwater children?

***Response***

The local authority cannot assume the destination of any children attending a school that is closing. Admissions rules apply and parents must have an opportunity to express a preference for their child’s school place. The local authority wants to meet as many parental preferences as possible, but they cannot guarantee to do that; we must wait until handling applications in the second summer half term (in the event of closure of All Saints’ Primary School) to be certain of how many preferences can be met.

The number of places available, should we begin the exercise of relocating All Saints’ pupils, will include any additional provision that comes about from the ongoing consultation and decision making for Yarmouth Primary School. Also, whilst Shalfleet Primary School year groups are up to the admission number of 24 all classes, except for one, are running with fewer than 30 children. So, there is a possibility for further admissions at Shalfleet.

Therefore, we do not agree with the assertion that the overwhelming majority of pupils are expected to move to Brighstone Primary School.

The local authority will ensure where children are moving school that induction arrangements within the receiving school are first class so that no learning is lost. Officers have significant experience in this area through dealing with military troop movements in Hampshire over many years and it is worth noting that this cohort still goes on to outperform the national average for all children.

In regard to standards at All Saints’ and Brighstone both schools were above average for 2019, this was achieved with very small cohorts, but highlights that with strong local authority support positive progress can be achieved.

It remains our priority to ensure all schools secure high attainment and we continue to ensure the schools in the West Wight receive bespoke support to that end.