



**SURREY**  
COUNTY COUNCIL

*Children and Young People*

**OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ST. FRANCIS, WESTBOROUGH COMMUNITY  
PRIMARY SCHOOL, GUILDFORD**

A CONSULTATION PAPER

September 2005

Surrey County Council is consulting on options for the future of St Francis Westborough Community Primary School. The consultation is happening because

- the school has failed OfSTED inspections twice in the past five years, and has been designated as requiring special measures on both occasions
- the school is currently not considered to be offering a satisfactory standard of education;
- the number of empty places at the school increased from 10% in 2001 to 35% in 2005.
- there are sufficient spare places in other local schools to take all the pupils from St Francis.

The proposed timetable for the decision-making process is as follows:

- Consultation with all interested parties from September until the end of November 2005.
- Report to the Surrey County Council Executive in January 2006.
- If needed, a report to the School Organisation Committee for Surrey in April 2006.

Any comments on this consultation paper should be addressed to

Ian Beck  
Room 150  
County Hall  
Kingston upon Thames  
Surrey KT1 2DN

by Friday 25 November 2005.

An initial meeting for the school community (particularly parents and prospective parents) will be held at the school on **Thursday 6 October at 7 pm**. Further meetings will be arranged as required as the consultation proceeds.

All written comments received will be acknowledged and reported to the County Executive in January 2006 and potentially to the School Organisation Committee in April before a decision is taken. It may not be possible, however, to respond individually to every comment raised.

Comments may be sent in on the pro forma at the end of this paper, by email to [ian.beck@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ian.beck@surreycc.gov.uk) or via the SCC website at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/consultations)



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**Why is this Consultation Happening Now?**

**Standards of Attainment and Quality of Education.**

1 In September 2000, OfSTED judged St Francis Westborough Primary to have serious weaknesses. In September 2001, following a visit by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) the school was placed in special measures. In January 2003, following a visit by HMI and further inspection, the school was removed from special measures and in July 2003, the school was removed from the Local Education Authority's register of schools requiring additional support and intervention.

2 Following a further inspection by OfSTED in March 2005, the school was once again placed in special measures. The reasons given were

- underachievement of pupils,
- poor leadership by the headteacher and governing body,
- a lack of trust in the headteacher's leadership and management
- concerns amongst staff
- weaknesses in terms of the school's self-evaluation.

The headteacher resigned with effect from 31 May 2005. Appointments have been made to cover the headship vacancy for one year.

Several members of the governing body also resigned. On 18 August, the Secretary of State for Education agreed to the formation of an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to replace and assume the responsibilities of the governing body. The IEB was appointed in September.

4 Following an inspection by OfSTED prior to September 2005, every school is required to produce an action plan describing how issues for action will be addressed. The action plan for St Francis has been sent to parents, and is available from the school. In the case of a school in special measures, members of HMI directly monitor the implementation of the action plan. The action plan must be submitted for HMI approval within 40 days of the publication of the inspection report and must be accompanied by a commentary prepared by the Council.

An essential and necessary part of the commentary is a justification for keeping the school open. That justification is normally made on the grounds of the need for school places and the capacity of other schools in the locality to offer higher-quality education.

5 On 13 September 2005, the County Council's Executive committee authorised officers to carry out a wide-ranging consultation with interested partners on options for the school. Executive decided that options might include the closure of the school. Alternative educational and or community uses for the building and site might be explored, but giving up the site to any other uses was not among the options.

### Other Factors for Consideration

6 The main reason for debating the future of St Francis at this time is a concern about the quality of education provided at the school. However there are additional factors to take into account as the debate proceeds, the most important of which is anticipated future pupil numbers.

### Pupil Numbers on Roll at St Francis and Other Schools in the Area.

7 The number on roll at St Francis in each January from 2001 to 2005 is set out below. January is used rather than the start of the school year in September because this is when data is collected for calculating school budgets.

Year	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
2001	24	27	25	26	30	29	27	188
2002	24	21	22	24	26	30	29	176
2003	29	25	19	22	22	25	28	170
2004	24	28	25	20	18	26	25	166
2005	14	20	24	21	16	19	22	136

8 The proportion of surplus places at St Francis has risen from approximately 10% in 2001, a position generally regarded as viable, to approximately 35% in 2005. This is well beyond the 25% surplus that, in the view of the Audit Commission, should trigger a review, regardless of any issues of quality of education.

The number on roll in schools in north and west Guildford in January 2005 was as follows:

NORTH WEST GUILDFORD NOR JAN 2005								
	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
St Josephs	60	58	58	60	61	59	58	57
Weyfield	60	25	38	42	36	42	42	55
Guildford Grove	60	43	42	40	35	52	39	46
St Francis	30	14	20	24	21	16	19	22
Worplesdon	60	56	58	59	56	58	59	56
Stoughton Infant	60	59	60	58				
Wood St Infant	30	28	28	28				
Northmead	90				88	93	94	88
		283	304	311	297	320	311	324

(Source PLASC Jan 2005)

9 The total number of pupils in all the above schools was 2,150 and the total number of places was 2,520, a surplus of 370. This surplus is expected to rise to almost 400 in January 2006 since 324 Y6 (year 6) pupils left in July 2005 to be replaced by an anticipated 296 in YR (reception year).

### **What are the options?**

The options are:

1. Increase support for the school in the short and medium term with the objective of making it viable in the long term;
2. Federate the school with one or more others under a single governance and management structure;
3. Amalgamate the school with one or more others and operate on a split-site basis;
4. Transfer the children to other local schools, close St Francis as a primary school and use the site and buildings to meet alternative educational or community needs.

### **What are the pros and cons of each option?**

#### **Increased Support.**

10 A project team from Surrey County Council is already working with the acting headteachers and IEB to help the school implement its action plan. This work is quite separate from any discussions about the future of the school.

11 On the previous occasion, additional local authority support succeeded in helping the school restore standards to a satisfactory level. These standards were not maintained. Providing additional resources, as is being done again, does not guarantee success given the low and declining pupil numbers at the school and the ample opportunities parents have to find places in alternative schools. Additional resourcing cannot be continued indefinitely and would be withdrawn as soon as the school was taken out of special measures.

#### **Federation.**

12 Federation allows two, three, four or five schools to be managed by a single governing body. The schools would continue to operate as separate entities, and the governing body would have the opportunity to pool resources and share them across the different sites as it saw fit. The governing body could, for example, decide that one headteacher could take executive responsibility for all sites. Specialist teachers could be appointed to work in all the schools in the federation and it would be possible to have a single administration centre.

13 Forming a federation is a development that depends entirely on schools wishing to participate and promoting the option. It is a solution that cannot be imposed by the local authority or central government.

## **Amalgamation**

14 Amalgamation involves the closure of more than one school and is normally associated with the simultaneous opening of a new school. In Surrey, this happens most commonly where separate infant and junior schools on adjacent sites come together to form a new, all-through primary school, often in the same buildings.

### **An alternative use for the site**

15 Closure as a primary school and transferring the pupils to other local schools would open the way to establishing alternative educational or community provision in a good-quality building that has benefited from substantial improvement in recent years. The option could remain to reopen the building as a school if pupil numbers in the area increased sharply in future.

16 Surrey County Council has no plans to give up the St Francis site or to use it for anything other than educational or community use. If closure as a primary school were to be the outcome, the County Council would consult with the community about what services for children and families would be provided on the site.

### **What happens next?**

17 From now until the end of November, officers from the County Council will be seeking views on all the options described above. These views will be presented to the Council's decision-making Executive in January 2006 and the Executive will decide what approach to adopt.

18 If the Executive were to opt for closure, a legal notice would be published and the matter would be passed to the School Organisation Committee for the Surrey Area (a body independent of Surrey County Council). This body would take the final decision, in April 2006.

### **What happens to St Francis while this is going on?**

19 A separate team of Council officers and consultants has been appointed to support the school with the implementation of its action plan. This team includes the acting headteachers, and consultants who provide support for teaching and learning in the classroom as well as support for the work of the Interim Executive Board and advice on personnel and financial management. This team is totally focused on support for children and staff at St Francis.

### **If the school were to close, what would happen to the children?**

20 Parents would be contacted individually with information about alternative schools and asked to say where they would like a place. In the first instance, every effort would be made to accommodate those wishes. In cases where this was not possible, factors such as the distance from home to the nearest school with vacancies would be taken into account.

### **If the school were to close, what would happen to the staff?**

21 Well established procedures are in place to ensure that, wherever possible, staff are slotted in to suitable alternative posts. Whilst this process can be the cause of anxiety, compulsory staff redundancy is very rare.

**CONSULTATION ON OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF ST FRANCIS WESTBOROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL, GUILDFORD.**

**Response Form**

Please use this form to respond if you wish. You may also respond online via the council's website at [www.surreycc.gov.uk/consultations](http://www.surreycc.gov.uk/consultations) or email [ian.beck@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:ian.beck@surreycc.gov.uk)

*All responses will be acknowledged. All will be given to the Council's Executive Committee and (if closure is to be pursued) passed to the School Organisation Committee before a decision is taken. However, because of the volume of responses anticipated, it may not be possible to reply fully to every point raised.*

I think the best option for St Francis is <i>(please tick your choice)</i>					
Support	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Amalgamation	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	Alternative use	<input type="checkbox"/>
My interest in the matter is as a <i>(e.g. parent, pupil or former pupil, staff member etc)</i>					
My comments are:					
(Please continue on additional sheets if you wish. but to help with copying, please do not write outside this box)					
Name and Address					
(Optional)					

Responses should be submitted no later than **Friday 25 November 2005.**

These pro formas or letters may be delivered to St Francis or any other school or posted to Room 150, County Hall; Kingston upon Thames KT1 2DN