

Consultation Analysis

**Proposed 6th Form closure at The Priory Church
of England (Aided) School, Dorking**

(Informal Consultation and Statutory Notices Analysis)



Consultation Analysis - Proposed 6th Form closure at The Priory Church of England (Aided) School, Dorking

Introduction

This report is an analysis of responses gathered during the informal consultation for the proposal to close the sixth form at The Priory Church of England (Aided) School.

Surrey County Council published an informal consultation from Monday 22 February 2021 to Monday 19 April 2021.

Consultation Summary

The informal consultation was open from 22 February to 19 April. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively email or post responses.

A public meeting was scheduled on Wednesday 10th March 2021 but there were no attendees.

An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the informal consultation period and statutory notice period and responses to the consultation will contribute to this.

Key points from the consultation responses:

- 70% of respondents disagreed with the closure. 26% agreed with the proposal. 4% of the respondents didn't know.
- The majority of the responses were from parents of a child at the school (77%). Out of these responses 14% agreed with the proposal, 58% disagreed and 5% did not know.

Part 1 – Informal Consultation

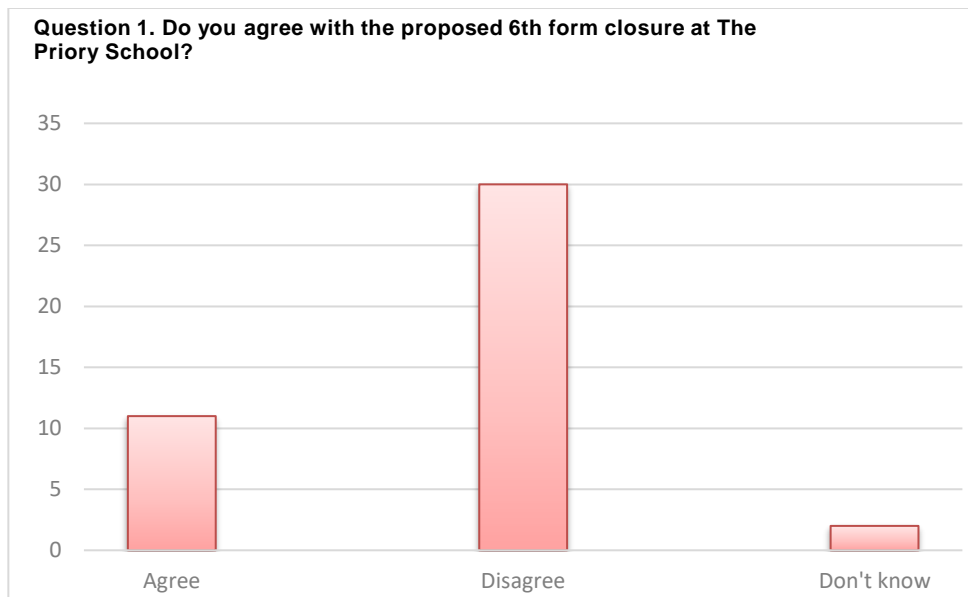
Quantitative Analysis

There were 43 responses to the consultation. Respondents were asked "Do you agree with the proposed 6th form closure at The Priory School?" and were given the option to select Agree, Disagree or Don't know.

26% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 70% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 4% of respondents said they didn't know.

Figure 1 below shows the distribution of responses to the consultation.

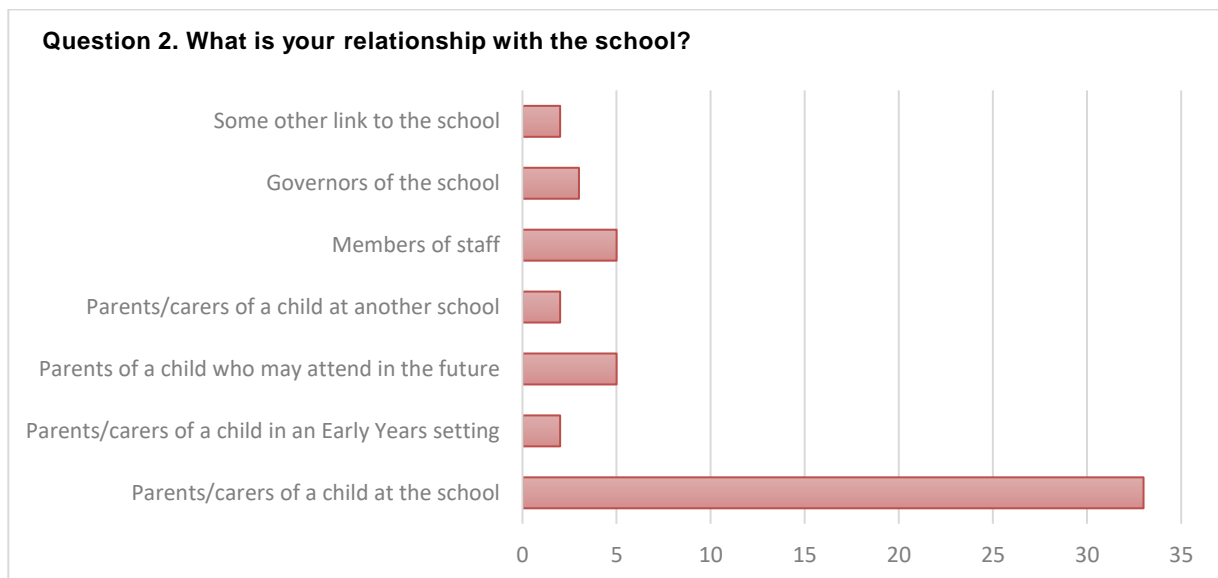
Figure 1



Who responded to the survey?

To understand who responded to the survey, respondents were asked what their relationship to the school is, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2



Qualitative Analysis

Respondents had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey and 17 out of 43 respondents left a comment. Comments left in reply to free-text questions were tagged drawing on 5 possible tags. Each response could have more than one tag attached. The overall frequency of each of the tags provides an indicator of respondent’s main concerns regarding the proposal.

Key theme	Tag	Number of responses	Prevalence (% out of 43 total responses)	Prevalence (% out of 17 responses with comments)
1. Negative impacts	Negative impact for children and young people and disadvantaged families	8	19%	47%
	Negative impact on the community	4	9%	24%
	Negative impact on the school and staff	3	7%	18%
2. Positive impacts	Positive impacts	2	5%	12%
3. Ideas	Ideas	6	14%	35%

Key themes from the consultation

There were 3 key themes that emerged from the consultation response.

1. Negative impacts

Negative impacts for children and young people and disadvantaged families

Respondents expressed their concerns about the impact the closure would have on children and young people, particularly the pupils in year 10 upwards.

“The current years 10, 11, 12 upwards have had a very difficult year and many will need help to build their confidence and to navigate the world during and (hopefully) after the pandemic”.

Another respondent also expressed how the closure would impact families on low incomes.

“This will limit children's options in families on low incomes. Particularly larger families with limited incomes and non-driving”.

Negative impacts on the community

In addition, concerns were expressed about the proposed closure having a negative impact on the popularity of The Priory in comparison to other local schools.

“I am also concerned that the lack of a 6th Form will damage the attractiveness of the Priory to parents of potential Year 7 pupils - it will make it seem like a 2nd class choice.”

Negative impact on the school and staff

“Closure of the school's sixth form will reduce the school's profile in the local community and make the Priory an even less attractive prospect for teachers. The school is already suffering problems with attracting staff into positions and this will make the situation even worse”.

2. Positive impacts

Respondents who left positive comments felt the closure would benefit the school financially.

“If the sixth form does not have the pupils it means that there are resources being put into the 6th form that would be better used to focus on the main school. Having no 6th Form will not have any impact on my decision that my child will come to The Priory”.

One respondent felt there could be a benefit to some pupils in a smaller school without the 6th form.

3. Ideas

Some respondents provided their ideas and thoughts to keep the sixth form open.

“There is a need to promote and increase the numbers attending the sixth form at The Priory, and within the school’s community, many of the skills required exist. Therefore, Surrey County Council and the Education and Skills Funding Agency should not close the Sixth form, and the school should seek within its community a task force to help reduce the burden on the school”.

“The 6th form should be closed in September 2021, the remaining small number of students currently in year 12 should be offered placement elsewhere”.

A suggestion was made regarding current pupils in their GCSE years to be able to finish their A levels.

“If the school does have to close because of lack of funding, then it would be best to extend this so the children who currently attend the Priory and are doing their GCSE years have finished their A-levels”.

Public Meetings

A public meeting was scheduled on the 10 March at 6pm. There were no attendees for the meeting.

Part 2 – Statutory Notices

Quantitative Analysis

Key points from the responses to the statutory notices:

There were 4 responses to the statutory notices. 100% of respondents disagreed with the proposal.

Quantitative Analysis

50% of the responses were from parents and carers of children attending the school and the other 50% were from respondents with another link to the school.

Respondents also had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey.

One respondent left a comment about the school’s low numbers and suggested this may be down to *“insufficient course offerings”*.

“Whilst we accept Priory 6th Form numbers have been low recently, I would suggest this is more likely to be because of insufficient course offerings and insufficient marketing or resources being put in place to attract the children”.

In addition, the respondent also suggested other qualifications could be introduced into the 6th form’s curriculum.

“How about hands on qualifications? Building, Plumbing, plastering, carpentry, garden services etc- all in great demand in our area. How about Digital Marketing, e-commerce and other digital services- also huge demand. How about carers, nursing, NHS, teaching etc.....”.

Another respondent felt it would have a negative impact on the next cohort of year 7 pupils who will be attending the school. The respondent also felt they might not have chosen to send their child to the school without the 6th form.

“As much as numbers are low, I do not feel it should not close before the current year 7 are leaving as it doesn’t feel as though parents and students have been given a fair option. I cannot say I would have still made the decision to send my child to the school without the 6th form as I always look for schools with a longer education option”.

A respondent also suggested if it is decided to close the 6th form the next steps could be to have a feeder college or 6th form.

“If this decision is upheld – next steps must be to have a feeder college or 6th form regardless of GCSE results.....Otherwise I foresee less children choosing The Priory as an option as us parents know the difficulty it is to gain places on courses at colleges anyway. With more housing being built in the area, less places will be available for children aged 16-18 so to make this huge decision a natural, secured place must be made available at nearby colleges.....”

All representations will be reviewed before a final decision is taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Learning on 6th July 2021.