

Yarmouth Church of  
England Primary School  
with Little Stars Preschool

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# Who are the key people?

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**County Councillor:** Paul Brading – Politician, Decision Maker and driver of general approach to school organisation.

**Local Authority:** Brian Pope, Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion, Hampshire County and Isle of Wight Council overseeing education on Isle of Wight. Managing the overall process of school organisation. Supported by Richard Vaughan, Martin Goff, Natalie Smith.

**Diocese:** Jeff Williams, Director of Education oversees education in 160 Church Schools in the Portsmouth and Winchester Diocese. Working closely with the Local Authority. Supported by Robert Saunders.

**Community:** Our parent community as well as wider community.

**Governing Body:** Responsible for strategic leadership of both schools, educational outcomes for children, financial management.

**Legal advice:** Stone King LLP – Education specialist; advisors to the Governing Body.

# What has happened since the summer?

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We were approached in the summer holidays for a meeting.

22-8-2019 Meeting held with Local Authority: Richard Vaughan and Martin Goff – 4 options presented to us as the Local Authority's choices to progress the situation.

Contact made with Diocese. Director of Education away until 2-9-2019.

4-9-2019 Meeting with Diocese in Portsmouth – Director of Education - to discuss options and seek clarity on Diocesan position, 2 further options explored.

12-9-2019 Meeting with Local Authority in Winchester – Assistant Director of Children's Services and attended by the Diocesan Director of Education, all options explored.

17-9-2019 FGB meeting at Yarmouth School

During the week, further calls with Diocese and Local Authority

20-9-2019 Subject to consultation, agreement over next steps

*Note: Governors have held meetings prior to each of the meetings listed above, minutes of which are available on the Federation website.*

# What options did the LA present?

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1. LA to re-instate their Statutory Notice to close All Saints School and move Yarmouth School.
  - a. This means accepting the legal challenge received. This is costly and time consuming and an unlikely choice for the LA in our legal advisor's view.
2. Governing Body to propose moving Yarmouth School.
  - a. Only the Governing Body can be the proposer and decision maker as the distance between the schools is less than 2 miles.
3. LA to serve notice to close Yarmouth School and continue to build/refurbish school in Freshwater.
  - a. Under the 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools' guidance and associated legislation, the LA can propose to close a VA school following statutory process. They are also the decision maker.
  - b. Both the Governing Body and the Diocese are able to refer to the Adjudicator. The Diocese have stated they will not support this referral taking in the strategic situation in West Wight.
  - c. The referral can only be made after the final decision has been taken meaning a significant time delay, negatively affecting Yarmouth School due to reduced pupil numbers, staff insecurity, etc. This may mean a deficit budget which would give the LA additional powers to intervene in the school.
  - d. Should the Adjudicator rule in favour of the LA to close Yarmouth School, all staff employed at Yarmouth will lose their jobs and it will place Shalfleet School at risk too. Legal advice to the Governing Body has indicated that it is very unlikely for the Adjudicator to rule in favour of keeping the school open.
4. LA to serve notice to close both Yarmouth and All Saints Schools and establish a new Academy in Freshwater
  - a. This option presents the same obstacles for the Governing Body as Option 3.

# Further options explored:

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1. The Diocese proposed an option of closing Yarmouth and All Saints and apply to establish a new VA school in Freshwater.
  - a. The Diocese have the power to make this proposal with a 2 year notice period.
2. The Governing Body proposed to invite All Saints School to join the Shalfleet and Yarmouth Federation.
  - a. This option was discussed with the Diocese, who initially were supportive.
  - b. This option was then discussed with the LA who were NOT supportive and suggested they would formally block this option. The Diocese at that stage also declined to support this option.
3. Doing nothing was not an option – we asked!

# What does the Adjudicator consider?

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The adjudicator can only review a case once a final decision has been made and has been brought by a party that can make the referral – LA, Diocese or Governing Body. They consider the following aspects:

- School place provision in the area – supply and demand in medium and long term
- Likely effect of closure of the school on the local community
- Most efficient use of government resources
- Travel effect on children & families
- Maintaining of diversity in the school system
- Rural school designation and to show consideration of alternative options
- Diocesan and LA position on a proposal

# What is the Diocesan position?

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- The Diocese have taken a strategic view on school place planning in the West Wight area and are supportive of the Local Authority plans.
- This means that they will not automatically refer the LA decisions to the Adjudicator.
- This also means that the Governing Body has very little chance of being successful with a referral to the Adjudicator.

# What are the risks?

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- Lengthy delays in processes
  - pupils leaving due to uncertainty of outcome
  - Smaller intake due to reduction in pupils in the area and uncertainty of outcome
  - Staff leaving due to school under threat of closure.
  - Staff needing to be made redundant due to reduced budget
  - Education provision reduced due to above factors, making the school less popular, etc.
  - Reminder that there are 63 children expected in Year R in 2021 and 2022 in the West Wight area.
- Weight of evidence in favour of LA proposals including the overall reduction in pupil numbers in West Wight and low numbers of children in the vicinity of Yarmouth School.
- Financial uncertainty for Yarmouth School; high possibility of deficit budget resulting in reducing staff, resources, educational opportunities, risking the 'Good' rating.
- If we lose, Yarmouth will close and parents will have to send children to schools which have spaces. Staff will lose their jobs. The Federation will be broken up.



# What are the positives for children, parents/carers?

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- Significant input in the process of change – LG to lead implementation group, financial and other support as well as an ‘absolute commitment to making this work for children’ from the LA
- Securing long term future of the school and Federation with known high quality leadership and staff team
- Securing future of Little Stars provision and high quality staff, giving children the best start in Education
- Children educated closer to home:
  - Less transport, potential for growing pupil independence
- Significant Government investment for the West Wight
- Up to date facilities

# What now?

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- Following due consideration the Governing Body feels it should propose and consult on the move of Yarmouth CE Primary School and Little Stars Preschool to Freshwater to secure its long term future
- Meeting with LA and Diocesan representatives for parents
- Expect the proposals to go to Cabinet in October
- Governing Body to consult over a period of 4 weeks
- Implementation of transition plans should the proposal be confirmed
- Legal advice:
  - ‘The Governing Body has a particular role of acting in the best interests of the school. In the context of Yarmouth and Shalfleet Federation, and the demographic realities, the Governing Body would be acting responsibly by agreeing to the move’.