



**worcestershire**  
**county council**

Directorate of Children's Services

**Consultation on the possible closure of**  
**MALVERN HILLS PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
and  
**a review of school catchment areas if Malvern**  
**Hills Primary School were to close**

A Public Consultation Document

Summer 2008

Richard Hubbard  
Director of Children's Services

In this paper there is information to help you understand the issues. A public meeting has been arranged when officers from the Local Authority will be available to explain about the proposal and answer questions.

Date: **17<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

Time: **7:00 pm**

Venue: **Malvern Hills Primary School, Bluebell Close, Poolbrook,  
Malvern, WR14 3QR**

Dear Parents /Governors /Colleagues

***Consultation on the possible closure of Malvern Hills Primary School – Malvern***

The Local Authority (LA), which is the County Council, has a responsibility to consider and consult on future options for a school if that school has been identified by Ofsted as being in ‘Special Measures’ and in the case of Malvern Hills Primary School also has significant surplus places.

Considering the history of the school over the last seven years the County Council’s preference is for the school to close. However, if anyone involved with the school has an alternative option for consideration then this will be welcomed as part of the consultative process.

This document explains:

- The background to the current situation at the school;
- The closure option suggested by the LA;
- The timescales for the consultation;
- What happens at the end of the consultation period; and
- How pupils’ needs will be assessed and how they will be supported through any change.

**It is very important that all those involved have a say. After reading the information contained in this document and if possible attending the meeting, please send your comments by 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008 to:**

**Alison Cartwright  
Service Development Manager – School Systems  
PO Box 73  
Worcester  
WR5 2YA**

or e-mail to: [acartwright@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:acartwright@worcestershire.gov.uk).

**or the school office at Malvern Hills Primary, Wyche CE Primary, Malvern Parish CE Primary or Great Malvern Primary**

Your comments and suggestions will be made available to the Members of the County Council and a summary of the responses will be included in a report to the County Council Cabinet at their meeting in September when it will decide on which course of action to follow.

Yours sincerely



Colin Weeden  
Head of Raising Achievement and Access to Learning

**Responses required by 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

## **1.Introduction**

Ofsted inspected Malvern Hills Primary School on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2008. The inspector was highly critical of the school and has placed the school in 'Special Measures'. This is the third time in seven years that the school has been placed in 'Special Measures'; the first time was May 2001. Following the 2001 inspection, the Local Authority invested a significant level of support and in July 2003 inspectors from Ofsted were able to confirm that the school had come out of 'Special Measures'.

As part of the recovery plan, in September 2003 the school changed its name to Malvern Hills Primary School having been previously known as Poolbrook Primary School. Progress continued with improved SATs results in the summer of 2004. However, in the academic year 2004/05 three experienced members of staff left and the school was only able to replace them with temporary staff.

As a result of the 24<sup>th</sup> May 2005 Ofsted inspection the school was again placed in 'Special Measures' and was criticised for failing to provide a good standard of education. The leadership and management of the school were also heavily criticised. This rapid change in the fortunes of the school demonstrated how fragile the situation was despite the best efforts of all concerned.

A temporary Headteacher was appointed, and again the school was given support from the Local Authority and improvements were made resulting in the school being removed from 'Special Measures' in 2006.

The Local Authority consulted on options for the school after the 2005 inspection and a Public Notice to close the school was published. The School Organisation Committee (SOC) considered the proposal on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2005. SOC failed to agree unanimously on the closure proposal and the case was referred to the Schools Adjudicator. The decision made in February 2006 was that the school should remain open for the following reasons:

- (a) The school had begun to improve and the Adjudicator felt that it had the capacity to continue to do so.
- (b) Neighbouring schools did not have sufficient surplus places to accommodate the pupils from Malvern Hills Primary.

The school is now again in 'Special Measures'; again demonstrating the fragility of the situation despite the continued efforts of all concerned.

In addition, the school has, over the last seven years, experienced falling pupil numbers and at the time of the January 2008 census there were only 35 pupils on the roll with 105 surplus places.

The placing of the school in 'Special Measures' and the high level of surplus places means that the County Council must consider the future of the school, in particular the possibility of closure.

## **2.The School**

Malvern Hills Primary School is situated in the south east of the town of Malvern. A map of Malvern showing the location of the school and the other schools in the town is provided on the last page of this consultation document. The school is in an area of Malvern with high levels of social need. Currently the school has 19 children who have recognised Special Educational Needs (SEN). There are no children with a statement of Special Educational Need.

The LA funded Nursery Class at the school closes on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2008.

It is not unusual for schools going through difficult times to experience falling pupil rolls. This is true of Malvern Hills Primary School. The table below shows the pupil numbers on roll as at January in each of the last five years with the number of surplus places. Even during the years when Ofsted considered the school to be making good progress, pupil numbers did not increase.

**Table 1: Pupil numbers on roll at Malvern Hills Primary School 2001 –2008 (January)**

	Rec.	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total	Surplus Places	% of Surplus Places
<b>2001</b>	11	7	7	12	16	20	20	<b>93</b>	47	34%
<b>2002</b>	15	8	8	7	10	17	20	<b>85</b>	55	39%
<b>2003</b>	3	13	8	6	8	13	17	<b>68</b>	72	51%
<b>2004</b>	9	3	14	11	5	7	14	<b>63</b>	77	55%
<b>2005</b>	6	9	4	13	10	4	8	<b>54</b>	86	61%
<b>2006</b>	0	3	6	4	10	8	3	<b>34</b>	106	76%
<b>2007</b>	8	0	4	6	3	13	9	<b>43</b>	97	69%
<b>2008</b>	2	4	1	5	6	4	13	<b>35</b>	105	75%

The school has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 20 and if full the total pupil population could be 140 with the capacity of the building capable of accommodating 150 pupils.

There are currently four pupils expected to start in the reception class for September 2008 and with 13 pupils moving on to high school the total pupil population is expected to fall to below 30. As at January 2008 the school had 75% surplus places. The DCFS set a level of 25% as being benchmark for concern and the current surplus is three times this figure.

#### Demographics

Until two years ago the pupil numbers in Malvern Town were such that there were very few surplus places in the primary schools. Over the last two years, in line with national trends, there has been a small decline in pupil numbers. This school has seen a much steeper decline in pupils starting in the reception class with parents choosing to state a preference for other schools. With fewer pupils overall, those parents have been able to secure a place in an alternative local school.

This slow decline in pupil numbers is anticipated to continue and in the area around Malvern Hills Primary School this trend is not expected to be offset with any significant new housing.

The forecast pupil numbers for the school, prepared in May 2008 is given in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Total pupil numbers forecast for Malvern Hills Primary School from 2009 – 2012**

Year (January)	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Forecast pupil numbers</b>	25	25	20	20

The following tables show the number of pupils forecast for all Malvern primary schools for the next three years compared with the total number of places available.

**Table 3: Forecast pupil numbers in Malvern Town from 2009 – 2011 and surplus places**

Year	Forecast	Total number of places as at Jan 2008 (including Malvern Hills)	Surplus places	Surplus as an average per year group
<b>2009</b>	2167	2576	409	58
<b>2010</b>	2107	2576	469	67
<b>2011</b>	2102	2576	474	68

**Table 4 Forecast pupil numbers in Malvern Town from 2009 – 2011 and surplus places, excluding Malvern Hills Primary**

Year	Forecast	Total number of places as at January 2008 (excluding Malvern Hills)	Surplus places	Surplus as an average per year group
<b>2009</b>	2167	2436	269	38
<b>2010</b>	2107	2436	329	47
<b>2011</b>	2102	2436	334	48

In 2001 there was a clear need to retain the school, however, given the forecast pupil numbers, Malvern Hills Primary School will have to work very hard to re-establish itself in a general climate of declining pupil numbers. The South Worcestershire Regional Spatial Strategy has indicated where housing developments are likely to be. Proposed developments are to the north and east of Malvern and are unlikely to impact on Malvern Hills Primary.

### **3. Consultation**

#### **1. *The County Council's preference is for closure***

This is when the school is permanently closed and the pupils are offered places at other local schools. This option must be considered by the Local Authority following an Ofsted inspection that places the school in the 'Special Measures' category.

This decision would not be taken lightly as transfer between schools can be disruptive for some children. However, the pupils at Malvern Hills Primary School are not currently receiving the standard of education that the Local Authority expects or desires in its schools and things must change.

The consultation response form gives two alternative dates for closure;

**31 December 2008**

or

**31 August 2009.**

#### **Impact on pupils**

If the school were to close all pupils at the school would be allocated to another Malvern Primary School. The Local Authority admissions officer would liaise with parents as soon as possible after the Cabinet's decision in order for parents to express their preferences for alternative schools. The Local Authority would strive to meet first choice preferences if at all possible. If required, pupils would be allocated a uniform grant to cover the initial cost of uniform.

#### **Impact on staff**

An officer from Human Resources would consider all staff contracts on an individual basis.

#### **2. *Options expressed by consultees***

As part of the consultation those being consulted may put forward other options. All options put forward will be reported to Cabinet at the end of the consultation period.

### **4. Immediate action in response to the Ofsted Report**

The school will open in September 2008 for the pupils on roll. An action plan to support the school will be implemented from the start of the Autumn Term 2008 as an immediate response to the Ofsted report. This plan will have initial targets for the school to meet in relation to the areas for improvement given in the report. The school will be given the necessary support to implement the plan in order that the pupils' best interests are served while the future of the school is considered.

# Consultation on the proposed closure of Malvern Hills Primary School and a review of school catchment areas if Malvern Hills Primary School were to close

## Response Form

**A.** Please tell us how you are involved with this consultation

I am a parent/carer of a child at Malvern Hills Primary School

I am a member of staff at Malvern Hills Primary School

I am a governor at Malvern Hills Primary School

I am a parent/carer of a child at .....School

I am a member of staff at .....School

I am a governor at .....School

Other (please state) .....

**B.** Please give contact details to allow us to acknowledge your response. This information will only be used to acknowledge your response and to inform you of the outcomes of the consultation.

Name
Address
Post Code

**C.** Please return this response form either to your child's school or to Alison Cartwright Service Development Manager – School Systems PO Box 73 Worcester WR5 2YA by 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008.

**1.** I agree that Malvern Hills Primary School should close.

Yes  No

**2.** If the school were to close which of the two options below would be your preferred date? (Please tick one box).

December 2008  or July 2009

**3.** The box below is for you to comment on the proposals in this document and / or to offer an alternative option.

**4.** Do you agree with the changes to catchment areas that would be put in place if Malvern Hills were to close?

Yes  No

**5.** The box below is for you to comment on the proposed catchment area changes.

**6.** We welcome the views of children and young people and if you feel it appropriate the box below is for comments from the children and young people in your care.

**7.** Do you feel that the consultation document has given you all the information you needed?

Yes  No

**8.** Any other comments?

Thank you for your response to this consultation



## 5. Every Child Matters

The Local Authority must have regard to the quality of education being provided and the sustainability of that education provision over the long term. Within the context of the Children Act and within the philosophy of 'Every Child Matters' the needs of the pupils will be considered as paramount in any options suggested. The Authority will make an assessment of individual needs within the requirements of the Act, focusing on the five key requirements that each child should be healthy, safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being. This consultation process is part of the process to understand the views of the parents on the future options for their children's education.

## 6. Malvern Hills catchment areas

Malvern Hills Primary School has a catchment area, which would need to be allocated to other schools were it to close. The map on the last page of this document indicates the proposed catchment areas for the three schools closest geographically to Malvern Hills Primary School. The revised catchment areas would apply if the decision is made to close Malvern Hill Primary School. The revised catchment areas would be effective from the date of the final decision to close the school.

## 7 Principles when considering changes to the catchment areas

In preparing new catchment areas for the primary phase of education for the area currently covered by Malvern Hill Primary School, the following has been taken into consideration:

- A balance of demand against the number of places to ensure, as far as possible, pupils living in an area will be able to secure a place at their local school;
- Keeping changes to a minimum;
- A close geographical relationship to the new school to avoid young children having an unnecessarily long journey or having to travel through another school's catchment area to reach their own school. (Recognition will be given to the current statutory walking distances of 2 miles for pupils under 8 years of age, and 3 miles for pupils aged 8 or older. New changes to school transport regulations extended the entitlement from September 2007, for pupils from low-income families aged 8-11 from 2 to 3 miles.)
- Avoidance of shared areas;
- Use of recognised geographical boundaries such as rivers, canals, railways and main roads. (It may include parish boundaries which define local communities);
- Catchment areas that follow existing patterns of parental preference;
- Travel routes that encourage walking, as far as possible avoiding young children having to cross busy roads and mainly pass through residential areas;
- As far as possible, taking into account the issues listed above, a mix of pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds;
- The desirability of keeping dwellings with the same post code within the same catchment area;

Within the Admissions Policy for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools, protection already exists for siblings where changes are made to school catchment areas. It is the intention that this will apply to this situation. This policy is set out in the 'Information for Parents, Admissions and Transfers' booklet published each year. The policy as currently approved states: -

*"In the event of a school catchment area change being approved, pupils who would still have a **sibling connection** (as defined in the Information for Parents book) at the time of admission and who are identified as living at the same address in the previous catchment area for a school, (but not within the revised catchment area), at the time the change was approved, are included in the catchment area category."*

## **8.What happens next?**

It will help us to have your views on the proposal that the school should close, and in particular any needs you or your child may have if the decision is that the school will close. We will also welcome the views, not only of parents, carers and those with an interest in the school, but most particularly the children who are currently attending the school.

It will help us if your child's views are recorded on your response form. It may be that you feel your child is too young to give an opinion and we are therefore leaving the decision to you as to whether or not your child should respond. Your child's response could be in writing or could be a picture. Any response from a child will be acknowledged separately and reported to Cabinet.

The Local Authority wants to hear from all those involved in the school to listen to opinions and ideas for the future. It is for the benefit of everyone that this is considered quickly, yet carefully, so that long-term plans can be made.

Views on the options for the future and possible timing of any change are sought.

**Responses required by 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

## **9 Expressing your views**

Your views are sought in two ways.

1. By sending in a response to the County Council. While this is not a 'ballot', it will enable your views to be presented to the Cabinet Member for Children's Services and then the Cabinet of the County Council. Responses may be made on a response form, by letter or by e mail.
2. By attending the public meeting detailed on the front page of this document, at which your questions and comments will be invited and answered.

Meetings are also being held separately for the staff and governing body. These are also being held on 17<sup>th</sup> September, the same day as the public meetings, but will start earlier.

- The meeting with staff will start at 4:00pm.
- The meeting with governors will commence at 5:30pm.

## **10 Those being consulted**

Copies of this document are being sent to:

- Parents and Carers of pupils at Malvern Hills Primary School, with a request to consider if it is appropriate for a response from their child to be included
- Staff and Governors of the school
- Parents and carers of pupils at the Wyche Primary School, Malvern Parish Primary School and Great Malvern Primary School
- Governing Bodies of all the other schools in Malvern
- Diocesan Boards
- Early Years Providers in the area
- Members of the County Council Cabinet
- Member of Parliament
- Local Councillors (County, District, Town and Parish)
- Worcestershire Association of Governors
- Trade Unions and Professional Associations

## **11 Decision making process**

### **1. Consultation Phase**

When anyone with an interest can express his or her views on what is being suggested.

**This document and the meetings form part of this consultation.** All responses to the consultation are made available to the Lead Member for Children's Services and other members of the County Council, and a summary of the responses is presented as part of the report to the Cabinet at the end of the consultation period.

**Objections raised during this consultation period do not automatically go forward to any further stage.**

### **2. Statutory Phase**

If, at the Cabinet meeting in September, the decision is that the school should be closed a Public Notice to this effect will be published. Notices are published in the local paper and displayed outside the schools. People have six weeks from the first appearance of the notice to make representation (either objections or support). At the end of the six-week period the representations will be referred back to Cabinet for a final decision.

<b>Consultation Phase</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> August 2008 – 18 <sup>th</sup> September 2008	Cabinet receive results in September 2008
<b>Statutory Phase</b>	If required, to be agreed following Cabinet decision in September	

**Responses required by 18<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

