

# Service and Community Impact Assessment (SCIA)

## Front Sheet:

**Directorate and Service Area:**

**People**

**Sufficiency & Access**

**What is being assessed (e.g. name of policy, procedure, project, service or proposed service change):**

**Closure of Culham Parochial Church of England Primary School**

**Responsible owner / senior officer:**

**Barbara Chillman**

**Date of assessment:**

**August 2019**

**Summary of judgement:**

Oxfordshire County Council, working with the Thames Bridge Church of England Federation, proposes to merge Culham Parochial Church of England Primary School and Clifton Hampden Church of England Primary School, leading to the formal closure of Culham Parochial CE Primary School by the end of the 2019/20 academic year. This is due to low pupil numbers at Culham Parochial affecting the school's financial viability and educational standards. Displaced pupils will be offered places at Clifton Hampden, and parents may also choose to apply to other schools which have available places.

The proposed closure would have an impact on primary school provision for the local community in Culham, however this will be mitigated to some extent by the fact that there is sufficient spare capacity at Clifton Hampden and other nearby schools, and that the majority of pupils on roll at Culham School do not live in the village. Parents will be supported by OCC Admissions staff to find alternative provision for their children.

## Detail of Assessment:

### Purpose of assessment:

Due to low pupil numbers at Culham Parochial CE Primary School, the school is not financially viable and forecasts do not indicate an increase in demand for places in the future. This SCIA is intended to provide an assessment to guide the process of closing the school.

Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 (“the 2010 Act”) imposes a duty on the Council to give due regard to three needs in exercising its functions. This proposal is such a function. The three needs are:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not.

Complying with section 149 may involve treating some people more favourably than others, but only to the extent that that does not amount to conduct which is otherwise unlawful under the new Act.

The need to advance equality of opportunity involves having due regard to the need to:

- remove or minimise disadvantages which are connected to a relevant protected characteristic and which are suffered by persons who share that characteristic,
- take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and which are different from the needs other people, and
- encourage those who share a relevant characteristic to take part in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low.
- take steps to meet the needs of disabled people which are different from the needs of people who are not disabled and include steps to take account of a person’s disabilities.

The need to foster good relations between different groups involves having due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

These protected characteristics are:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- pregnancy and maternity
- race – this includes ethnic or national origins, colour or nationality
- religion or belief – this includes lack of belief
- sex

- sexual orientation
- marriage and civil partnership

## **Social Value**

Under the Public Services (Social Value Act) 2012 the Council also has an obligation to consider how the procurement of services contracts with a life value of more than £173,934<sup>1</sup> might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the area affected by the proposed contract, and how it might act to secure this improvement. However, it is best practice to consider social value for all types of contracts, service delivery decisions and new/updated policies. In this context, 'policy' is a general term that could include a strategy, project or contract.

## **Context / Background:**

The main reasons for the closure proposal are:

Consistently low pupil numbers on roll evidencing insufficient demand. There is currently no evidence that the local pupil population will grow, at least in the short to medium term.

Lack of financial viability of the school, due to the low pupil numbers.

Inability to provide the breadth and depth of educational experience required.

## **Proposals:**

Culham Parochial Church of England Primary School is now the smallest primary school in Oxfordshire, with pupil numbers falling to around 30 primary pupils on roll. As a result, the school's pupil numbers are too low to generate sufficient funding to cover the costs of staffing and maintaining the building, and the school has a significant budget deficit. Due to declining birth rates, forecasts do not suggest a significant increase in demand for places in the area in the future. While the draft SODC Local Plan proposes large-scale housing developments in the surrounding area, this is not yet confirmed, and there is no timescale for significant local housing growth.

When inspected by Ofsted in March 2017 and May 2019 it was judged as 'Requires Improvement' on both occasions. Pupil attainment data over the last three years show that pupils have lower scores in reading, writing and maths than the county or England average, and in general made below average progress.

Clifton Hampden CE Primary School was judged as 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection in February 2016. Pupil attainment data over the last three years show

<sup>11</sup> [EC Procurement Threshold for Services](#)

that pupils have higher scores in reading, writing and maths than the county or England average.

Following a previous consultation (2011) into closing the school, it instead federated with Clifton Hampden CE Primary School as part of the Thames Bridge Church of England Federation. This has not resulted in significant improvements to the educational standards at the school or its financial viability.

As pupil numbers in the area are not expected to grow significantly, conversion to academy status is unlikely to increase demand for places at the school. Conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust is not considered a realistic option, as sponsors would be reluctant to take on a school with sustained budget difficulties.

There is not expected to be sufficient local demand for use of the school site to provide services such as childcare to increase its viability. Culham Parochial CE Primary School hosted a pre-school for many years and subsequently offered their own nursery places for two years but these did not prove permanently viable.

Having exhausted other alternatives, closure of the school to fully merge it with its Federation partner, is considered the best option.

### **Evidence / Intelligence:**

Annual pupil forecasts are calculated, based on demographic forecasts and planned housing growth, to identify where additional school places will be needed. These show that pupil numbers in the area are not expected to grow.

School admissions data provide evidence of parental preference for schools, and show low numbers of first preference applications received for Culham Parochial CE Primary School in recent years.

Ofsted reports on inspections of Culham Parochial CE Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School assess the educational standards and effectiveness of provision at the two schools.

Financial information on Culham Parochial CE Primary School's budgetary position demonstrates the school's lack of financial viability.

Initial consultation in June/July 2019 provided feedback from the local community which has been used to inform the proposal and judgements about impact.

### **Alternatives considered / rejected:**

Doing nothing (i.e. leaving the school open and remaining in the Thames Bridge Church of England Federation with Clifton Hampden CE Primary School) would lead to continued issues with the financial viability of the school, as forecasts do not

indicate an increase in demand for places in the area, at least in the short to medium term. This in turn would lead to continued issues with educational standards at the school.

Conversion to an academy (with the school joining a multi-academy trust) would not have a significant impact on increasing pupil numbers at the school (due to a lack of forecast demand for places), and so would not help improve the school's financial viability in the long term.

Keeping Culham Parochial CE Primary School open, and merging with Clifton Hampden CE School to form a split site school (i.e. with infant and junior sites) would have a negative impact on the financial viability of both schools, as by becoming one school only one lump sum payment would be due, however two sites would need to be maintained.

Similarly, keeping the school site open as a 'dormant' site until demand increases sufficiently to readmit pupils would result in the need to maintain an empty building, which would again present funding issues.

Using part of the site for private nursery provision is not expected to improve the school's financial position, as there is not expected to be sufficient demand for this facility going forward (Culham Parochial CE Primary School's nursery closed in May 2019, due to insufficient demand).

## **Impact Assessment:**

### **Impact on Individuals and Communities:**

#### **Age**

Culham Parochial CE Primary School provides places for pupils aged 4-11. It previously had a nursery, however this closed in May 2019. Primary school pupils (aged 4-11) will have the opportunity to transfer to Clifton Hampden CE Primary School, or to other primary schools in the area with places. Some activities are already carried out jointly by Culham Parochial CE Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School in order to maintain the educational opportunities for pupils, which has increased social contact for pupils attending these two schools.

If pupils living outside of Culham village choose to move to a school closer to where they live, this may increase their social contact with peers.

In terms of early years provision in the area, there are nurseries based at Culham Science Park and Europa School, as well as childminders based near the village. Nearby schools with nursery classes include Abbey Woods Academy in Berinsfield, Sutton Courtenay CE Primary School, and a number of primary schools in Abingdon. At the time of its closure, Culham School's nursery only had 4 pupils on roll, so demand for places was not high, and due to declining birth

rates there is not expected to be a significant increase in children requiring nursery provision in the area.

**Disability**

Culham Parochial CE Primary School is a mainstream school. Children with disabilities and Special Educational Needs attending this school will be supported in transferring to an alternative school (whether this is Clifton Hampden CE Primary School or a different school) and Education Health and Care (EHC) Plans will be implemented at the new schools.

**Religion/belief**

Culham Parochial CE Primary School provides faith-based education, so the closure of the school would reduce of the number of Church of England schools in the county. However, as Clifton Hampden CE Primary School also offers Church of England faith-based education, and pupils have been offered the opportunity to transfer to this school as part of the proposed amalgamation, there is not expected to be a significant impact on the provision of faith-based education in the local area. Other nearby schools in Abingdon and Berinsfield offer secular education, so parental choice in the area will not be affected.

**Sex**

Both Culham and Clifton Hampden Schools offer coeducational provision, as do other nearby primary schools (the only single sex schools in the county are two secondary schools in Didcot), so the closure is not expected to have an impact in this respect.

**Rural communities**

As a rural school, the closure of Culham Parochial CE Primary School would have an impact on families living in Culham village, who would no longer have access to a school within walking distance of their home (the Europa Free School in Culham offers specialist bilingual education). Therefore, children living in Culham will face a longer journey to an alternative school (either Clifton Hampden or another school).

However, data for pupils on roll at Culham Parochial CE Primary School for the 2018/19 school year shows that less than half of the pupils on roll at this time lived within the school's designated ("catchment") area. Pupils mostly travel from Abingdon, Sutton Courtenay and Berinsfield, where school places are available. Therefore, while there will be an impact for families living in Culham village itself, this does not represent a large proportion of the children on roll at the school.

No specific impact has been identified on the following groups:

- Gender reassignment
- Race/nationality
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Sexual orientation
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Areas of deprivation

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
There may be insufficient school places at Clifton Hampden CE Primary School and in the local area more generally to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School.	Clifton Hampden CE Primary School is expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School. The wider Abingdon East planning area (which includes Culham Parochial CE Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School) has spare primary school capacity. Due to declining birth rates, forecasts do not suggest a significant increase in demand for places in the area in the future. School places are available in Abingdon, Sutton Courtenay and Berinsfield, where most Culham pupils live.
Pupils in Culham will have further to travel to school, resulting in increased traffic and transport costs.	The majority of pupils on roll at Culham Parochial CE Primary School do not live in the village, so the closure of the school is unlikely to have an impact on traffic or transport costs. In some cases, travel distances may decrease if pupils choose to attend a school closer to where they live.

**Impact on Staff:**

**Staff**  
The closure of Culham Parochial CE Primary, and the need to source alternative school places for displaced children, may lead to Admissions staff experiencing stress, and negative behaviour from angry and upset parents.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
There may be insufficient school places at Clifton Hampden CE Primary School and in the local area more generally to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School.	Clifton Hampden CE Primary School is expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School. The wider Abingdon East planning area (which includes Culham Parochial CE Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School) has spare primary school capacity. Due to declining birth rates, forecasts do not suggest a significant increase in demand for places in the area in the future. School places are available in Abingdon, Sutton

	Courtenay and Berinsfield, where most Culham pupils live.
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**Impact on other Council services:**

**Other council services**

Transport – closure of Culham Parochial CE Primary School will lead to children living in the villages being allocated places beyond walking distance. This will lead to the county council needing to fund transport, and may also result in more parents driving their children to school, exacerbating traffic problems.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
Pupils in Culham will have further to travel to school, resulting in increased traffic and transport costs.	The majority of pupils on roll at Culham Parochial CE Primary School do not live in the village, so the closure of the school is unlikely to have an impact on traffic or transport costs. In some cases, travel distances may decrease if pupils choose to attend a school closer to where they live.

**Impact on providers:**

**Providers: schools**

The closure of Culham Parochial CE Primary School may lead to increased pressure for places at other schools in the area, particularly Clifton Hampden CE Primary School.

Insufficient school places in the area following the closure could require schools to take additional intakes at short notice, with negative organisational and financial impacts.

<b>Risks</b>	<b>Mitigations</b>
There may be insufficient school places at Clifton Hampden CE Primary School and in the local area more generally to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School.	Clifton Hampden CE Primary School is expected to have sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils from Culham Parochial CE Primary School. The wider Abingdon East planning area (which includes Culham Parochial CE Primary School and Clifton Hampden CE Primary School) has spare primary



	school capacity. Due to declining birth rates, forecasts do not suggest a significant increase in demand for places in the area in the future. School places are available in Abingdon, Sutton Courtenay and Berinsfield, where most Culham pupils live.
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**Social Value**  
*If the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 applies to this proposal, please summarise here how you have considered how the contract might improve the economic, social, and environmental well-being of the relevant area.*

**How might the proposal improve the economic well-being of the relevant area?**

N/A

**How might the proposal improve the environmental well-being of the relevant area?**

N/A

**Action plan:**

Action	By When	Person responsible
Statutory notice on closure consultation	16 September 2019 - 14 October 2019	Barbara Chillman
Decision on closure consultation	19 November 2019	Cabinet
Closure of the school (if approved by Cabinet)	31 July 2020	Barbara Chillman

**Monitoring and review:**

Try to be as specific as possible about when the assessment will be reviewed and updated, linking to key dates (for example when consultation outcomes will be available, before a Cabinet decision, at a key milestone in implementation)

**Person responsible for assessment:**

Version	Date	Notes
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		(e.g. Initial draft, amended following consultation)
2019.1	August 2019	Initial draft
2019.2	November 2019	Review following statutory representation period