

# CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE



**Tuesday, 25 April 2023**

**Democratic and Members' Services**

Emma Duncan  
Monitoring Officer

**14:00**

New Shire Hall  
Alconbury Weald  
Huntingdon  
PE28 4YE

**Red Kite Room**

**New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon, PE28 4YE**

## **AGENDA**

**Open to Public and Press**

### **CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS**

**1. Change to membership**

*Councillor Michael Atkins was appointed as a member of the committee on 16 March 2023, and appointed as the Vice Chair of the Committee by Council on 21 March 2023. Councillor Atkins succeeds Councillor Maria King, who was appointed a substitute member of the committee on 16 March 2023.*

**2. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest**

*Guidance on declaring interests is available at  
<http://tinyurl.com/ccs-conduct-code>*

**3. Minutes - 8 March 2023 and minutes action log**

**1 - 24**

**4. Petition**

**25 - 28**

**5. Public Questions**

## KEY DECISION

6. **Future of Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School** 29 - 146
- DECISIONS**
7. **Passenger Transport Policy Review** 147 - 234
8. **Children and Young People Committee agenda plan, training plan, committee appointments and Local Authority School Governor nomination and appointments** 235 - 258

*The committee will be invited to appoint a representative to the Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group.*

The County Council is committed to open government and members of the public are welcome to attend Committee meetings. It supports the principle of transparency and encourages filming, recording and taking photographs at meetings that are open to the public. It also welcomes the use of social networking and micro-blogging websites (such as Twitter and Facebook) to communicate with people about what is happening, as it happens. These arrangements operate in accordance with a protocol agreed by the Chair of the Council and political Group Leaders which can be accessed via the following link or made available on request: [Filming protocol hyperlink](#)

Public speaking on the agenda items above is encouraged. Speakers must register their intention to speak by contacting [Democratic Services](#) no later than 12.00 noon three working days before the meeting. Full details of arrangements for public speaking are set out in Part 4, Part 4.4 of the Council's Constitution: [Procedure Rules hyperlink](#)

The Council does not guarantee the provision of car parking on the New Shire Hall site. Information on travel options is available at: [Travel to New Shire Hall hyperlink](#)

Meetings are streamed to the Council's website: [Council meetings Live Web Stream hyperlink](#)

The Children and Young People Committee comprises the following members:

Councillor Bryony Goodliffe (Chair) Councillor Michael Atkins (Vice-Chair) Councillor David Ambrose Smith Councillor Anna Bradnam Councillor Alex Bulat Councillor Claire Daunton Councillor Anne Hay Councillor Samantha Hoy Councillor Jonas King Councillor Mac McGuire Councillor Keith Prentice Councillor Alan Sharp Councillor Philippa Slatter Councillor Simone Taylor and Councillor Firouz Thompson Canon Andrew Read (Appointee) Dr Andy Stone (Appointee)

Clerk Name:	Richenda Greenhill
Clerk Telephone:	01223 699171
Clerk Email:	<a href="mailto:Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Richenda.Greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>



## Children and Young People Committee: Minutes

Date: Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Time: 2.00pm –5.20pm

Venue: Red Kite Room, New Shire Hall, Alconbury Weald PE28 4YE

Present: Councillors D Ambrose Smith, A Bradnam, A Bulat, C Daunton, B Goodliffe (Chair), A Hay, J King, M King (Vice Chair), M McGuire, K Reynolds (to 3.15pm), A Sharp, P Slatter, S Taylor and F Thompson.

Co-opted Members:

Canon A Read, Church of England Diocese of Ely  
Dr A Stone, Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia

Also present: Councillors S Bywater and I Gardener (to Item 6)

### 132. Change to the order of business

The Chair stated that Item 7: Finance Monitoring Report January 2023 would be considered after Item 10: Strengthening Services Board, to enable the Committee to debate the substantive proposals around strengthening services before considering whether to make a recommendation to the Strategy and Resources Committee on funding.

### 133. Change to membership

Councillor Kevin Reynolds was appointed a substitute member of the Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> February 2023.

### 134. Apologies for absence and declarations of interest

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor S Hoy, substituted by Councillor K Reynolds.

Councillor A Bradnam declared an interest in Item 9: Education Contracts. Minute 142 below refers.

### 135. Minutes – 17 January 2023 and minutes action log

The minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2023 were approved as an accurate record and signed by the Chair. The minutes action log was noted.

## 136. Petitions

A petition was received from Emma Bharmra, titled [Save Great Gidding Church of England School from being closed](#). The petition was heard under Item 6: Great Gidding Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School Consultation Update. Minute 138 below refers.

## 137. Public questions

Requests to speak were received from Huntingdonshire District Councillor Tim Alban; Christopher Jakins, parent of a child at Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School; Joanne Taylor, ex-Chair of Governors at Great Gidding Church of England VC Primary School; and Dr Julie Byard, local resident. All of the requests related to Item 6: Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Consultation Update. The questions and comments submitted in advance of the meeting are attached at Appendix 1.

## 138. Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School Consultation Update

The Committee considered a second report on Great Gidding Primary School, following its decision in January to publicly consult on the potential closure of the school. Since then, an extensive consultation process had taken place which had included an online consultation portal and four public consultation events. 86% of respondents disagreed with closing the school, but no viable alternatives had been suggested.

The Director of Education emphasised that the move to consult on the future of the school had not been taken lightly. The Department for Education (DfE) presumption was against the closure of small rural primary schools. This did not mean that this could not happen, but that there must be a strong case for closure. Appendix 4 of the report responded to this requirement in detail, including looking at the impact on education, the community, transport and journey time and capacity at other local schools.

Due to the current size and capacity of the school there were limitations to the provision available to pupils, and it was the shared view of officers and the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust (DEMAT) that a move to a two-class structure would lead to a further decline in the quality of education on offer. The interim headteacher had outlined the problems this would create, and their assessment was included in the meeting documents. For this reason, officers recommended moving to the next stage of the statutory process and consulting publicly on the potential closure of the school. If this was approved, information about transition arrangements and potential support in relation to school uniform and home to school transport costs would be included when the Committee met in April to make a final decision.

The Committee received a petition from Emma Bhamra, presented by Christopher Jakins, titled 'Save Great Gidding Church of England School from being closed'. The Constitution stated that certain petitions were not covered by the Council's petitions scheme. This included petitions in response to consultations on a specific issue or proposal. However, the Chair had decided exceptionally to exercise her discretion to accept the petition to ensure that the voices of those signing it were heard. She

thanked the petition organiser for including a link to the Council's consultation portal on the petition webpage and encouraging those signing the petition to submit their views in more detail.

Mr Jakins said that parents had been shocked to learn that the future of Great Gidding Primary was being questioned and had started a campaign to save the school. The on-line petition had been set up on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and currently had 884 signatures. These were mainly from local people, and demonstrated the reach and influence of the school. Families had distributed leaflets around the local area and the widely shared opinion was that closing the school was too easy and that it would be followed by a period of long regret. He asked that pupil unit costs should not be considered in isolation and that the school's wider outcomes should be taken into account.

Four requests to speak on this issue had been received from members of the public. These were heard in the order in which they were received. Copies of the comments submitted were published on the meeting webpage in advance of the meeting and circulated electronically to Committee members for information.

Councillor Tim Alban, District Councillor for Stilton, Folksworth and Washingley, commented that this was not just a decision which would impact on the school, its families and staff. It had the potential to impact the whole community. If the school closed other local amenities could be put at risk too. It was clear that the school was greatly valued and that this was in part due to its small size. This included those families of children with special educational needs who might not be catered for as well in a larger school. In Councillor Alban's view, keeping Great Gidding open would demonstrate that the County Council still believed that every child matters.

The Director of Education stated that a community impact assessment had been conducted which looked at the impact of potential closure on local businesses and groups.

Christopher Jakins addressed the Committee in a personal capacity as the parent of a child attending Great Gidding. Mr Jakins recognised the need to take account of all perspectives, but felt that the children were the most important factor and the least represented. The viability of Great Gidding was in question, but he questioned the viability of the system and expressed the view that funding for education was in crisis. In this case, local cuts were being proposed which he felt were in danger of discriminating against rural schools. In his view, alternative options had been dismissed before consultation and he felt there was a presumption for closure. He felt there was a need to be careful not to present the families now leaving the school as a justification for its closure. Mr Jakins commented from personal experience that the long-term effects of changing school must not be under-estimated and created life-long memories.

The Director of Education acknowledged the benefits of small schools articulated by Mr Jakins, which were recognised and understood by officers. He also acknowledged that small schools were the preference of some families. However, there must be enough children on roll to make a school viable as this impacted on the quality of education. Officers' advice was based on the 44 children on roll at Great Gidding at the time the consultation was launched. Based on that figure, there would need to be a move to a two-class structure in September 2023. Should the school close, officers were confident that there were other small schools which could accommodate the Great Gidding children. If a decision was taken to close Great Gidding officers would take all steps to

support children moving to new schools. All of Cambridgeshire's schools had the same duty of care to pupils, including supporting those with additional needs.

Joanne Taylor, ex-Chair of Governors at Great Gidding, commented that Great Gidding had never set a negative budget and had always had a carry-forward. There had been a spike in pupil numbers to 70 children some years ago, and the school averaged between 45-50 children with an optimum number in her view of 60. The governing body had spoken to the local authority (LA) about catchment, but the LA had been reluctant to change this. Parents living outside of the catchment area chose Great Gidding because of its size and the benefits offered by mixed classes. The relationship with the LA had in her view been poor over a number of years and when support had been sought this had not been forthcoming. Her experience was that the school was outstanding and that its children thrived.

Clarification was sought around the assertion at the previous meeting that the school's governing body had resigned due to the difficulties finding a permanent headteacher. Mrs Taylor stated that a previous headteacher had decided to take time away from education. One person had applied for the role who was deemed not to be suitable. When a decision was being taken to close the school an exceptional headteacher had been put in place.

The Director of Education acknowledged the dedication of the governors at Great Gidding, and confirmed that the school had not yet set a deficit budget. Officers' concern was around the ability to deliver good quality education within the resources available. Additional Government funding had been available when Great Gidding had previously operated a two-class structure in 2011/12 and at that time an increase in pupil numbers was forecast. That was not the case now. He acknowledged the concerns expressed around support provided by the LA, but stated his belief that the LA did support schools. The interim headteacher currently at Great Gidding had been appointed prior to the consultation being undertaken and was doing a very good job. He thanked Mrs Taylor for her work and her commitment in supporting the school.

Dr Julie Byard, a local resident, said that her family had primarily moved to the village because they wanted a small faith-based rural school for their child. A new school had been planned but had failed to materialise due in her view to financial mismanagement. Families continued to move into the school, some specifically for the school. The village shop was a lifeline for the village and the current proprietors would be retiring soon. The school's possible closure had cast doubt on the shop's future as potential buyers had withdrawn when the consultation was announced. The proprietors of the shop had not been approached by anyone and felt ignored. The Rt Hon Ed Davey MP had said there was a need to tackle the challenges faced by rural communities.

The Director of Education stated that an equality impact assessment had been included in the review and that planning applications in train had been included in officers' demographic calculations. Dialogue would be taking place with district councils longer term and officers would be bringing forward a policy on small schools for the Committee's consideration. Officers' focus was on the impact on education.

The Chair stated that the questions raised by the public speakers in the meeting had been answered, and that the petition organiser would receive a written response within 10 working days of the meeting.



Councillor Gardener addressed the Committee as the local member for Alconbury and Kimbolton. He urged the Committee to do all it could to keep Great Gidding school open. Rural communities were losing services at an alarming rate, and the decision taken would have an impact on Great Gidding and surrounding hamlets for years to come. Huntingdonshire District Council was updating its Local Plan, and closing Great Gidding would mean pupils travelling further to school which was contrary to the Council's climate policy. In his view, the way the process had been undertaken pointed to a decision having already been taken, and it was becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Parents would look at alternative schools when there was the prospect of closure. The Government urged that the closure of small schools should be a matter of last resort. In Councillor Gardener's view, meetings should have happened 18 months ago to look at all the options to keep the school viable and in future he felt this consultation should happen much earlier. He asked that the Committee delay its decision and visit the school to see the pride staff and pupils had in their school. The possibility of closure had caused much anxiety, and he questioned why Great Gidding could not remain open until the new school at Sawtry was available. He thanked the acting headteacher and staff at Great Gidding for the sensitive way they had dealt with this difficult situation.

The Director of Education stated that section 10.8.6 of the Committee report set out the climate impact of the proposals, including a net reduction in the amount of home to school travel as the 30+ out of catchment children currently attending Great Gidding could transfer to schools closer to home. Officers had followed the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance around the process for consulting on a possible school closure, but the Council had last done this in 1992 so he acknowledged that there was learning to be taken and valued the comments shared around the process. In relation to the new school at Sawtry, the feedback was that this would not necessarily be the natural choice for families currently at Great Gidding.

Councillor Bywater addressed the Committee as the local member for Sawtry and Stilton. Great Gidding Primary was not in his division, but 20 children from Sawtry currently attended the school. In his view the consultation process was a sham. He understood that the chair and vice chair of the Committee would have taken the decision behind closed doors if this had not been challenged by Councillor Hoy. He asked whether the £42k grant would have to be repaid through clawback. The Council had installed a new heat pump at a cost of £63k, and if the school was closed that money would be lost. In his view, details of concerns around the school's viability should have been shared much earlier. He accepted that the school faced challenges, but in his judgement work to look at a federation had not been pursued enough. He also asked why consideration had not been given to making Great Gidding a school for children with special educational needs. Councillor Bywater felt that the consultation had been the death knell for Great Gidding. He was not sure that all the children would get to attend their family's preferred school if Great Gidding was to close. He called on Committee members to think about the decision they would make if this school was in their division, and not to take the easy decision.

The Director of Education stated that the £46k grant was non-repayable.

The Chair refuted any suggestion that the decision around the future of Great Gidding school had been predetermined. The decision before the Committee on whether or not to proceed to Stage 2 of the statutory process and to give notice of a formal proposal to close Great Gidding could have been taken outside of a public meeting, but she and the

Vice Chair had chosen to take that decision in public. She thanked the petition organiser, public speakers and local members for their contributions.

Individual Members raised the following issues in relation to the report:

- Welcomed the comprehensive report and thanked all those who had responded to the public consultation.
- Noted that a large majority of those responding to the public consultation opposed the closure of Great Gidding.
- Referenced the concerns expressed around uniform and home to school transport costs if Great Gidding pupils moved to alternative schools, and asked about the position for pupils receiving free school meals. Officers stated that if a decision was made to close Great Gidding all pupils on roll on the day the consultation was launched would receive an ex-gratia contribution to uniform costs, outside of the Council's existing policy. Home to school transport costs would be considered if the Committee decided to proceed to the next stage of the consultation as part of wider work around transition support to families.
- Noted many comments in the consultation responses suggesting the LA could have done more to promote Great Gidding. Officers reiterated the statement in the report that the LA was not permitted to do this. It could have a negative impact on other schools and would not be appropriate. Officers had hoped that alternative options might be suggested during the consultation period to support Great Giddings' future viability, but this had not happened.
- Asked whether it really was not possible to find additional funding for Great Gidding. Officers confirmed they had done all they could to maximise funding for Great Gidding and acknowledged that its finances were well-managed. It was funded through the dedicated schools grant which used a national formula and the LA could not allocate extra funds.
- Commented that the national funding formula (NFF) seemed to disadvantage small schools and asked what could be done in future to further lobby Government on this issue. Officers stated that the NFF had some flaws which did not help small schools. The lump sum was fixed, and the LA did not have flexibility on that to support small schools. Minimum funding considerations did not take account of school size. This had been raised previously with Government, but the Committee might want to do so again.
- Asked for reassurance that there would be sufficient places for children locally if Great Gidding was to close. The Director of Education stated that the number of children living within Great Gidding's catchment area was quite small and there was sufficient space locally to accommodate them.
- Asked about aligning the potential closure of Great Gidding with the opening of a new primary in Sawtry, and whether an exception could be made to accept different year groups into that school if needed. The Director of Education stated that it was the Council's practice to open new schools from the bottom up if they judged there was sufficient capacity in existing schools. Some discussions had

taken place with the Trust which would operate the new school in Sawtry, but it would not be open in September 2023.

- Asked whether officers were satisfied that all had been done to look at alternative governance models. The Assistant Director for Education Capital and Place Planning stated that there had been a tireless exploration of those options alongside DEMAT, but that none had progressed. She was satisfied that every available option had been explored.
- Commented that they were struggling to understand how closing Great Gidding could be considered to be in the best interests of educational provision when it had received a good rating from Ofsted, had never set a negative budget and the DfE presumption was against closing rural schools. The Director of Education stated that officers' view was that the educational provision offered by a two class structure was unacceptable. The headteacher would need to be the midday supervisor, there would be no special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), no teaching assistants and a reduced curriculum offer. The report from the interim headteacher was clear on the detriment to children of a two class structure, and anecdotal information suggested that some families would leave the school when this structure was introduced.
- Asked about capacity in the local area. Officers stated that they had met with the headteachers of all local schools as part of the consultation exercise. They were engaged and willing to help, and if the Committee decided to progress with the consultation process they would work with those schools to try to match available places with parental preference.
- Spoke of the early warning signs around the school's viability and asked whether the governing body had been made aware of this. The Assistant Director for Education Capital and Place Planning stated that conversations had been on-going with the governing body for a number of years. The fact that the recommendation to consult on the future arrangements for the school had come as a shock to the community spoke to the discretion of DEMAT and the governing body. The Director of Education noted that some families had left Great Gidding since the consultation process began. He judged that the same thing would have happened if concerns had been voiced earlier around the school's viability, and that this could have led to an extended period of uncertainty which was in itself detrimental. It was though a difficult balance to strike, and learning would be taken.
- Questioned why smaller classes would lead to worse educational outcomes. Officers acknowledged that the school had been rated Good by Ofsted on its last visit, but that a further visit was planned because there was doubt that the rating would remain Good if a full two day inspection was carried out. A two class structure would have implications for the breadth of the curriculum which could be delivered, and if the school remained open a new substantive headteacher would need to be found. In practical terms, it would mean teaching seven to eleven year olds in the same class. No national evidence was available on the impact on educational outcomes of a two class structure, but officers had spoken to experienced headteachers, and the impact was acknowledged by them. Great Gidding had the lowest educational outcomes in the county the previous year. When a two class structure had been introduced previously at Great Gidding in

2011/12 this had been a temporary measure as pupil numbers had been forecast to increase in the short-term. In addition, educational standards had moved on since then, and greater and more complex needs were being seen.

- Asked what was being done to support pupil wellbeing during this difficult time. Officers stated that there was an absolute commitment to support pupil well-being. This included lending a SENCO to the school to support those children with additional needs, but without an education, health and care plan (EHCP). The interim headteacher was working with pupils on a daily basis to support their well-being and was putting support mechanisms in place.
- Asked where Great Gidding's current pupils came from. Officers stated that 20 travelled from Sawtry and others came from surrounding villages. A note with the exact figures was offered outside of the meeting. **Action required**
- Commented that this was a difficult issue, and that closing a school was not an easy decision but a hard one. In their judgement, two classes was not the best way to proceed, and the Government funding mechanism would not resource a higher number of classes. The Diocese of Ely did not recognise any lack of support from the LA now or previously. Closing a school was regrettable, but the process appeared fair and followed the DfE guidance and it was necessary to give access to high quality education within settings with adequate resourcing.
- Commented that they did not believe schools should be closed based on numbers and forecasts. In the previous meeting they had given an example where a reliance on forecast demographics would have suggested a new school would not be viable, but when it was built it was viable because it attracted children from outside of its catchment area.
- Challenged the language used in the report which made reference to the views of the Council, rather than making clear that these were officer views. It was important to be clear that the Council comprised its elected members, and those elected members had not yet taken a view on the matter. They further challenged the reference in the report to there being four other denominational schools within six miles of Great Gidding 'as the crow flies', as the relevant information would have been how far away these schools were by road. They would not be supporting moving to Stage 2 of the consultation process.
- Noted the impact on the local community which had been reported by public speakers and that the school was well-managed financially. They judged that if smaller classes created difficulties the school should be supported, not closed.
- Welcomed the thorough consultation and engagement which had taken place with the parish council and the local community. Their focus was on the standard of education provided to the children. If the school stayed open there would be no teaching assistants and extra duties and responsibilities would fall to the remaining staff. In their judgement the school would not be financially viable going forward.
- Commented that the school was currently financially viable and that in their view the report and consultation was biased towards closure.

- Commented that the situation in September 2023 would be fundamentally different with a move from three classes to two classes or even a single class, and no teaching assistants. Schools were funded by the DfE and the Council must deal with the system as it was. They challenged the suggestion that this was a political decision, and described the situation as heart-breaking.
- Commented that they felt that the Committee's decision in January to move to a consultation had become a self-fulfilling prophecy with 14 children having already left the school and more families considering it. They called on all members to vote in accordance with their conscience.
- Referenced the future viability of the school accommodation, noting that all of the teaching spaces were currently in temporary accommodation.

Summing up, the Chair stated that she had spent many hours at Great Gidding primary school, and that this was not an easy situation. However, the decision before the Committee now was whether or not to proceed to the second stage of the statutory consultation process.

On being proposed by Councillor Goodliffe, seconded by Councillor M King, it was resolved by a majority to:

- a) note and consider the responses to the consultation on the future of Gt Gidding Primary CE VC Primary School.
- b) consider the evidence presented in relation to the viability of Gt Gidding Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School remaining open after the end of the current academic year 2022/23.
- c) proceed to Stage 2 of the statutory process and publish a statutory notice and formal proposal for the closure of Gt Gidding Primary CE VC Primary School on 31 August 2023

## 139. Strengthening Services Board

The Committee reviewed the proposed arrangements for a new Strengthening Services Board. Nationally, similar partnership boards with an independent chair had produced positive outcomes in relation to the delivery of children's services and this board would seek to address issues brought to the Committee's attention in the Deep Dive into Children's Services and Social Care presentation at the previous meeting. It would aim to secure greater workforce retention and improved outcomes for children affected by issues of increasing complexity with pace and purpose. Officers judged that provision might still be judged as requiring improvement if an inspection took place during the summer which could draw a level of intervention, and that improvements could be delayed if the proposed board was not established.

In response to the report, individual members:

- Sought more information around the recruitment of social workers. The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services stated that individuals were being recruited into social work through the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment and

through international recruitment. An internationally recruited social worker would typically work alongside an established practitioner for six months to ensure they were working to the same standards and practice. This extended support period was also expected to enhance retention levels.

- Noted that the independent chair could be appointed by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of Council and Lead Members. The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services was confident that a strong appointment could be made. As part of the uncoupling work from shared services with Peterborough City Council she had been working with an experienced children's commissioner and was believed that this resource could be secured.
- Noted that the previous Ofsted inspection had identified the need for improvement and asked why this work had not been done sooner. The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services stated that she had only been in post since November 2022, and that improvement work was now being progressed with pace and purpose.. Strengthening services boards were successful at ensuring rigour and accountability and she emphasised the importance of self-assessment work. It was not unusual for local authorities deemed to require improvement to get the same judgement again. .
- Described the proposed timetable for the establishment of the new board as challenging. Officers acknowledged this, but stated that preparatory work had already begun.
- Noted that the proposal for the Strengthening Services Board had not been included in the budget proposals considered by Council in February because it was being proposed in response to the outcome of self-assessment work which had not been concluded by the budget deadline.
- Welcomed the proposed new board as a sensible way forward.

It was resolved unanimously to approve:

- a) The establishment of a Strengthening Services Board for Cambridgeshire, with Independent Chair, working with partners.
- b) Development of a clear, costed improvement programme and business case for Children's Services by the end of March 2023.

## 140. Finance Monitoring Report

The Committee reviewed the financial position for expenditure within its remit to the end of January 2023. This had a net overspend of £3.9m, excluding the dedicated schools' grant. There was an increasing pressure on children in care placements budget due to a relatively small number of individuals with highly complex needs resulting in increased provider costs. The forecast had been revised to reflect this from £650k to £1.2m. The position was expected to worsen to around £1.6m by year end, although mitigations were being sought. The Committee's attention was drawn to Appendix C, which set out the initial areas of investment proposed in relation to the establishment of the new Strengthening Service Board endorsed earlier in the meeting (minute 139 above refers). It was recommended that the Committee request that the Strategy and Resources Committee allocate £1.7m of new money to fund this.

The Chair asked whether the budget for children in care placements for the next year was sufficient. Officers stated that this was currently being reviewed. In June and July, the Finance Team would look at potential budget pressures and how these might be offset from savings elsewhere.

In discussion of the report, individual members:

- Noted that the Education Transport Strategy approved by the Committee sought to mitigate the impact of contract cost inflation and the turbulence caused when a number of routes were handed back by contractors. The savings strategy was focused on cost mitigation, rather than budget savings. A report on transport policies would be brought to the next meeting.
- Were informed that the overall numbers of children in care in secure or supported accommodation had increased. A lack of this type of provision locally meant children needed to be placed further afield and that placement costs were higher. The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee emphasised the importance that these children and young people were well supported and that their lives were happy.
- Clarified that the service hoped to de-escalate complex cases which would reduce the need for high-cost provision. The budget for this was monitored through a budget reset and review of current high-cost commitments against the allocated budget.
- Learned that the closure of school accounts was scheduled for 24 March 2023 to align with the earlier Easter holidays. The impact of this earlier date was not anticipated to be significant as schools' budgets were subject to carry forward and schools could continue to spend during this period.
- Thanked officers for clearer data reporting and noted that presentation of the Children and Young People Committee Finance Monitoring Report was scheduled for review in order that additional improvements could be made. It was anticipated that this would include the removal of data relating to adult services and reviewing how the phased spend of trading accounts was presented to make it more meaningful.
- Queried whether bookings for all outdoor education centres remained low. Officers understood that bookings for Graffham Water and Burwell had returned to pre-Covid levels, but undertook to confirm this outside of the meeting. **Action required**
- Requested data on the previous international social worker intake including how many of those individuals were still working for the Council, and on-going data for the new cohort. **Action required**
- Members understood that the service was looking to recruit fifteen new international social workers, although this number could be increased for exceptional candidates. It was believed that using international workers rather than agency workers would improve retention rates and children's continuity of care, as well as making long term savings. Staff retention would be aided by supporting travel, accommodation and transport needs and by providing extended support in the workplace. Officers judged that the proposals would offer significant benefits to the Council even with the increased costs of sponsorship and Home Office processing fees. A member expressed the view that local authorities should be exempt from paying these fees to

central Government. The Executive Director of Children's Services stated that the contract was robust in terms of delivery and quality and included an induction programme to familiarise staff with Council practice and the local area. She would be happy to share more information on this with Committee members outside of the meeting. Action required

- Noted that the proposals had been considered by an officer workforce programme board. If approved, a recommendation around new money would go forward to the Strategy and Resources Committee for decision. No funding had been agreed at this point.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Review and comment on the report.
- b) Request the Strategy and Resources Committee allocate £1,070k of additional funding, in order to enable the strengthening services activities set out in Appendix C, delegating authority to the Section 151 Officer to agree drawdown of those funds.

#### 141. Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme 2023/24

This key decision was added to the Forward Plan under general exception arrangements on 21 February 2023.

The Committee reviewed the proposed Holiday Voucher Scheme resourced by the fourth round of the Household Support Fund and would equate to a rate of £180 per eligible child. Funding of £4m had been earmarked for this purpose by Full Council and the contract for the provision of vouchers would need to be re-procured. Cambridgeshire's practice in this area was seen as exemplary.

The Chair welcomed the positive impact of the voucher scheme.

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Agree the scope and operation of the Cambridgeshire Holiday Voucher Scheme (CHVS).
- b) Agree to utilise up to £4m earmarked for this purpose by Full Council in order to fund the CHVS during 2023/24.
- c) Delegate responsibility for awarding and executing a contract for the provision of the holiday vouchers starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 and extension periods to the Service Director Education.

#### 142. Education Contracts

Council Bradnam declared an interest in this item as the member for Waterbeach.



The Director of Education sought approval from the Committee to award contracts for the delivery of early years provision through the second round of the pseudo dynamic purchasing system (PDPS). The Council had a statutory duty with regard to the provision for early years childcare and worked with the market to meet this. The PDPD had been approved by the Committee in October 2022 and eleven approved childcare providers were currently included, although it was hoped to increase this number through an application window for new providers. The report also sought approval for the delegation of the award and execution of education transport contracts to the Director of Education. The proposed contracts met statutory transport requirements and would cover mainstream, special school and social care contracts.

In response to the report, individual members:

- Asked whether full-time or wraparound early years provision was being considered for Northstowe. Officers stated that the Trust had been approached to see if it would consider offering full-time early years provision and that it was likely that a survey of local residents would be carried out.
- Expressed concerns about the health hazards and the environmental impact associated with the use of non-electric vehicles for home to school transport, particularly in circumstances when taxis waited with their engines left on. Officers stated that contracts included an option for the future transition to electric and hybrid vehicles, but that the Council was reliant on the district councils which licensed taxis. Operators had been advised that engines should not be left running while waiting, and this would be re-iterated. **Action required.**
- Highlighted the focus on active travel access options for the new school at Waterbeach and the limited drop-off facilities available, and the need to make sure potential operators were aware of this. Officers stated that a site plan and details of any parking restrictions would be included as part of the tender documents.

It was resolved unanimously:

In relation to Round 2 of the Pseudo Dynamic Purchasing System (PDPS) to:

- a) Delegate responsibility for awarding and executing the contracts for the provision of early years and childcare starting April 2023 – April 2024 to the Director of Education. These are listed below:
  - Early Years (EY) provision at the new primary school in Sawtry
  - EY provision at the new primary school in Waterbeach
  - EY provision at second primary school in Northstowe
  - EY provision at St John's Primary School, Huntingdon
  - EY provision at Growing Places Children's Centre, Sutton

In relation to Education Transport Contracts, to:

- b) Delegate responsibility for awarding and executing a contract for the provision of special, mainstream and child social care transport contracts for implementation in September 2023, to the Director of Education.

## 143. Establishment of a new primary school at Darwin Green

The Committee was advised that a competition had been run in accordance with the Council's established process for setting up a new free school. Additional elements had been added to the Department for Education's (DfE) process to attract the right multi-academy trusts for the area to apply. The new school would open around 2025, but officers would keep this date under review and work with other local primary schools so that it would open at the right time. The Committee was invited to endorse the assessment panel's recommendation that Discovery Schools Academy Trust (DSAT) should be the Council's preferred sponsor for the new primary school at Darwin Green. The final decision would rest with the DfE.

Councillor Rae, the local member for Castle division, had submitted written comments in relation to this item in advance of the meeting in support of the Discovery Schools Academy Trust being the Council's preferred sponsor for the new primary school at Darwin Green. These were read out on her behalf as she was unable to attend. A copy is attached at Appendix 2.

In discussion of the report, individual members:

- Noted that DSAT's schools were based mainly in Leicestershire. Officers stated that the ability of the trust to work locally and collaboratively was a key area of focus. Its representatives had impressed the assessment panel and also on visits to its existing schools and had scored higher on its understanding of the local area than other trusts already operating locally. Clear feedback had been given that officers would want to work with the trust from the start in order to establish a relationship.
- Asked whether the new school would serve Darwin Green Phase 1, or also Darwin Green Phases 2 and 3. Officers stated it would serve Darwin Green Phase 1. The expectation was that a second new primary school would be established to serve Darwin Green Phases 2 and 3.
- Emphasised the importance of early community engagement. Officers stated that a community engagement evening had taken place.
- Asked whether the composition of the assessment panel was defined in statute and whether an independent person could be included. Officers stated that the panel's composition was based on DfE guidance. The DfE observed the panel to ensure fairness and transparency, and a school improvement representative had also been involved.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Endorse Discovery Schools Academy Trust as the Council's preferred sponsor for the new primary school at Darwin Green.

#### 144. Adoption of the 2023-2028 Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education

The Committee welcomed Julia Ewans, Chair of Cambridgeshire's Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education (SACRE) and Amanda Fitton, Religious Education (RE) Adviser for Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Rutland County Councils.

Religious education was a statutory part of the curriculum for all schools, but there was no national syllabus. The expectation was for the local authority (LA) to develop its own syllabus, and the current syllabus was due to expire. The Director of Education thanked the chair and members of SACRE for their work in collaboration with faith groups those representing other world views.

The Chair of SACRE placed on record her thanks to the members of SACRE and the Agreed Syllabus Conference for their work, and to the Religious Education Adviser for her support.

In response the report, individual members:

- Expressed thanks on behalf of the Diocese of Ely for SACRE's work in developing the Agreed Syllabus.
- Commented that it was not entirely apparent that the statutory amount of religious education teaching was being delivered. The Religious Education Adviser stated that this was something which both Ofsted and SACRE looked at and that their impression was that this was something which was being taken increasingly seriously. The Chair of SACRE stated that there was an issue in relation to schools having a specialist RE teacher as the approach to teaching RE was changing.
- Welcomed the clear commitment to the introduction of world views to the classroom, in support of wider community cohesion.
- Welcomed the input on collective worship, which was to be the next focus for work.
- Welcomed the detail and guidance contained in this iteration of the Agreed Syllabus.
- Expressed their thanks to the Chair and members of SACRE and to the RE Adviser as one of the Council's appointed representatives to SACRE. They welcomed the localised approach and inclusive framing of the new syllabus in the context of world views.

The Chair expressed the Committee's thanks to the chair and members of SACRE for their work.

It was resolved unanimously to:

Approve the Locally Agreed Syllabus for Religious Education (RE) 2023 – 2028.

#### 145. Children and Young People Committee agenda plan, training plan and appointments

A member asked why the full membership of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee was not included in the list of Committee appointments. **Action required**

Councillor Taylor had stepped down as one of the Committee's two representatives on the Cambridgeshire Music Hub. On being proposed by Councillor Goodliffe, seconded by Councillor M King, it was resolved unanimously to:

Appoint Councillor F Thompson to the Cambridgeshire Music Hub

It was resolved unanimously to:

- a) Note the agenda plan.
- b) Note the training plan.
- c) Appoint Councillor F Thompson as the Committee's second representative on the Cambridgeshire Music Hub.

(Chair)

## Public questions on Item 4: Great Gidding Church of England Primary School

	Question from:	Question:
1.	Councillor Tim Alban District Councillor for Stilton, Folksworth and Washingley	I am one of the ward District Councillors and although the County Council have consulted me and I have responded to the online consultation, I would like to emphasise my comments concerning the future of the school.
2.	Christopher Jakins Parent of child at Great Gidding	I would like to briefly provide further insight into our personal experience of the consultation process at the school since the last meeting in January. I would like to ask a couple of questions to try to clarify for me and my daughter, who attends the school, why it is that we have arrived at this point. I would like to ask about how the decision is being made, where the heart of the matter lies and whether forecasted enrolment figures are enough to make such an important and permanent change to a rural village such as Gidding. As always I want to emphasise the long term impact of this on the children at the school.
3.	Joanne Taylor Ex-Chair of Governors, Great Gidding	I am the ex-chair of governors of Great Gidding School and I would like to give my feedback in relation to the proposed closure of Great Gidding C.E Primary School. The key points I would like to focus on are. Financial position Children numbers Governors' Relationship with the Local Authority.
4.	Dr Julie Byard Local resident	To convey concerns on the negative impact of closing the village school will have, on the community of the Giddings and surrounding rural areas.

## Item 11: New Primary School at Darwin Green

Written comments from Councillor C Rae, member for Castle division

I was part of the interview panel that assessed the three shortlisted bids to run the new primary school at Darwin Green. I fully support the recommendation of the review panel that Discovery Schools Academy Trust (DSAT) be given the opportunity to establish and run this new school. We were all very impressed with the enthusiasm, energy and child-centred approach of DSAT and look forward very much to working with them to establish Darwin Green Primary School.

## Children and Young People Committee Action Log

### Purpose:

This log captures the actions recorded in the minutes of Children and Young People Committee meetings, and updates Members on progress.

### Minutes of the Meeting on 30 November 2021

41.	Free School Proposal – Wisbech Secondary School	J Lewis	The Chair endorsed the suggestion that an invitation should be extended to the new Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) to meet committee members.	<p>The new RSC, Jonathan Duff, took up post on 1 April 2022 so a meeting in Autumn 2022 would be suggested. Service Director for Education has approached the RSC's office to agree a date.</p> <p>05.07.22: The Director of Education would provide an update before the Committee's next meeting.</p> <p>14.09.22: Potential dates have been shared with the RSC's office.</p> <p>11.04.24: Director of Education to offer dates to the Regional Schools Commissioner.</p>	In progress
-----	---	---------	---	--	-------------

## Minutes of the meeting on 5 July 2022

87.	Proposed approach to developing capacity for school placements for children with SEND	J Lewis	The Director of Education offered a briefing note around teaching assistants and encouraging diversity within this group	<p>26.09.22: Director of Education to review Workforce Census and circulate briefing note. December 2022.</p> <p>22.11.22: The workforce census publication date has been delayed. A briefing note will be circulated when this is available in Spring 2023.</p> <p>15.02.23: Data currently not available.</p> <p>12.04.23: The Department for Education is expected to publish data in June 2023 (exact date TBC). A briefing note to be prepared and circulated by August 2023.</p>	In progress
-----	---	---------	--	--	-------------

## Minutes of the meeting on 11 October 2022

104.	Intensive Therapeutic Support Hub	Zoe Redfern-Nichols	To provide details of the geographic location of the 200 children awaiting specialist placements.	The Intensive Therapeutic Support Hub (ITSH) will be a specialist setting, supporting a small cohort of children/ young people in crisis in an effort to maintain their local school placement and prevent family breakdown. Given the nature of the provision and the length of time children/ young people would be supported, their existing geographical location would not impact on their ability to access the ITSH.	Completed
106.	Children's Mental Health Services	K Goose	To provide a list of schools who have taken up the offer of involvement from mental health support teams, with an indication	22.11.22: Details of the schools to be covered in the new teams for mental health support in schools which will commence in January 2023 is being finalised and the list will be shared as soon as it is available.	Completed



			of the district and division they are located in if possible.	14.04.23: Details shared electronically with committee members.	
--	--	--	---	---	--

### Minutes of the meeting on 29 November 2022

111.	Finance Monitoring Report October 2022	Fran Cox	Officers acknowledged the increasing pressure on the budget for home to school transport and offered a briefing note on this.	<p>Briefing note being developed with a view to share with committee members ahead of the 17<sup>th</sup> January meeting.</p> <p>22.03.23: Briefing note to be prepared and submitted to committee members in advance of March committee.</p> <p>14.04.23: Briefing note circulated to committee members.</p>	Completed
------	--	----------	---	--	-----------

### Minutes of the meeting on 17 January 2023

123.	Schools and Early Years Revenue Funding Arrangements 2023-24	Jonathan Lewis	Officers offered a briefing note on the change over time in pupil premium numbers.	<p>24.03.23: Briefing note to be prepared for committee members in advance of March committee.</p> <p>14.04.23: Briefing note circulated to committee members.</p>	Completed
124.	Education Capital Strategy	Elaine Redding	It was requested that variations to existing Council policy were made more visible to the committee in future reports.		

## Minutes of the meeting on 8 March 2023

138.	Great Gidding Church of England VC Primary School Consultation Update	Clare Buckingham	Officers stated that 20 children travelled from Sawtry to Great Gidding Primary and that others came from surrounding villages. A note with the exact figures would be provided outside of the meeting.	As well as the 20 children from Sawtry who attend Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School, 5 children from Holme catchment, 4 children from Yaxley, 2 from Alconbury and 1 from Stilton also attend the school. One child lives in Northamptonshire and travels to the school and 2 attend from south Peterborough City.	Completed
140.	Finance Monitoring Report	Martin Wade	Officers understood that bookings for Graffham Water and Burwell had returned to pre-Covid levels, but undertook to confirm this outside of the meeting.	06.04.23: Officers can confirm bookings at Grafham and Burwell have returned to pre-Covid levels.	Completed
		Elaine Redding	Requested data on the previous international social worker intake including how many of those individuals were still working for the Council, and on-going data for the new cohort.		
		Elaine Redding	The Interim Executive Director of Children's Services stated that the contract for recruiting international social workers was robust in terms of delivery and quality and included an induction programme to familiarise staff with Council practice and the local area. She would be happy to share more information on this with Committee members outside of the meeting.		

142.	Education Contracts	Martin Kemp	School transport operators had been advised that engines should not be left running while waiting, and this would be re-iterated.	06.04.23: A letter was sent to all operators re-iterating this request.	Completed
145.	Committee agenda plan, training plan and appointments	Richenda Greenhill	A member asked why the full membership of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee was not included in the list of Committee appointments.	<p>Political Groups are responsible for appointing the members and substitute members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee in accordance with political proportionality. The Children and Young People Committee is responsible for appointing the chair and vice chair of the Sub-Committee from within that membership. For this reason, only the chair and vice chair have been included in the list of committee appointments.</p> <p>For completeness, the names of the other Sub-Committee members will be included going forward.</p>	Completed



## Item 4: Petition

Petition from Amy Caldwell: [Review the current school transport provision from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College](#)

Petition closed on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023 with 159 signatures.

Text of petition:

**‘Petition for the County Council to formally review the current school transport provision from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College.**

The parents/carers of the children from the village of Great Gransden who attend Comberton Village College are calling on Cambridgeshire County Council to urgently review the current school transport provision for the purposes of ensuring consistency and transparency of decision-making, reducing inequality and unfair financial pressure on our families and consider the unnecessary environmental impact.

**Background Information**

- The existing position is that children from Great Gransden are not provided with free transport to Comberton Village College (a distance of 9.2 miles) despite it being a requirement for the Local Authority to provide it\*
- This means that the parents/carers of the children attending Comberton Village College are required to fund this provision themselves (in addition to their Council Tax contributions), which is fundamentally unfair and places additional financial pressure on local families, some of whom are already struggling financially.
- The cost for transport is currently £300 per child, per term (with the potential for an additional 7% increase), which seems excessive and does not appear to represent value for money. In addition, it is unclear how these costs (and any potential increases) have been determined and what, if any, negotiations have taken place with the bus operator.
- Although Great Gransden is considered by the Local Authority to be within the ‘catchment area’ for Longsands Academy (a distance of 7.4 miles), the reality is that no children from the village of Great Gransden currently attend that school. Indeed, very few children have attended in the past either, with many children from the village attending St Bede’s in Cambridge until 2013/14.
- It is our understanding that during 2013/14 an agreement was made for Comberton Village College to accept the children of Great Gransden and surrounding villages (within the catchment to Barnabas Oley Primary School) and become a ‘feeder’ school to Comberton Village College. References of this agreed status are made on documentation from both these primary and

secondary schools and it is clear that Governors from both Barnabas Oley Primary and Comberton Village College consider the primary school to be a 'feeder' school within the 'catchment area' of the secondary school.

- Data collected about the cohort of 21 children from 2021/22 Barnabas Oley Primary School's year 6 leavers identifies that the Local Authority is not providing any free transport to any Barnabas Oley Children, with:
  - 75% (16 children) attending Comberton Village College
  - 0% (0 children) attending Longsands Academy
  - 5% (1 child) attending an Independent School
  - 10% (2 children) attending Cambourne Village College
  - 5% (1 child) attending Melbourn Village College \*\*
  - 5% (1 child) attending a SEN school \*\*

### **Impact of Local Authority's decision-making**

- The decision taken by the Local Authority not to fund the bus service from Great Gransden to Comberton Village College is unequitable, and ultimately places an unfair financial pressure on families from this village (which is multiplied for those families with more than one child).
- Some families in Great Gransden are simply unable to find the money for the bus and have resorted to changing work patterns and upgrading cars so they can take their children to and from school themselves. More families are considering taking their children to and from school themselves and in the event of a further costs increase, there will very likely be more families who are unable to pay the bus fare.
- The Local Authority's decision-making around 'catchment areas and the free bus provision is not transparent and does not appear to be consistent. For example, it is unclear why the catchment area for Comberton Village College was extended to include children from the village of Gamlingay (a distance of 11.2 miles) when there are 4 other secondary schools that are significantly closer in distance \*\*\*
- Furthermore, it is unclear why the Local Authority's does not provide free school transport for children from Great Gransden, yet does provide it for children from Gamlingay. The Local Authority's decision-making is inconsistent and without any logic or transparency.
- The Local Authority must also have a duty to consider the environmental impact of their decision not to provide free school transport for Great Gransden children. Multiple vehicles taking the same daily journey to and from Comberton, will undoubtedly be contributing unnecessarily to increased carbon emissions and congestion on our roads.

\*[www.gov.uk/free-school-transport](http://www.gov.uk/free-school-transport)

\*\* Children who attended Barnabas Oley Primary School but who are outside of its Catchment area

\*\*\* Sandy Secondary School – 4.9 miles, Stratton Upper School 5.5 miles, Cambourne 6.2 miles, Bassingbourn Village College 7.3 miles





## Future of Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

To: Children and Young People Committee

Meeting Date: 25 April 2023

From: Executive Director: Children's Services

Electoral division(s): Alconbury and Kimbolton, Sawtry and Stilton, Yaxley and Farcet

Key decision: Yes

Forward Plan ref: KD2023/054

Outcome: The Committee is asked:

- a) to determine the statutory proposal to close Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School on 31 August 2023.
- b) in the event of a decision to close the school, to consider the implications of providing the families of displaced children with assistance towards the cost of:
  - i. transport (where they do not have a statutory entitlement to it) and
  - ii. school uniform at their new school

Recommendation: The Committee is recommended to:

- a) approve the closure of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School on 31 August 2023.
- b) approve, for children displaced by the closure:
  - the provision of financial assistance in the form of home to school transport or a mileage allowance
  - the provision of a single per child payment to assist with the purchase of uniform for their new school

Voting arrangements: Co-opted members of the Committee are eligible to vote on this item.

Officer contact:

Name: Clare Buckingham

Post: Strategic Education Place Planning Manager

Email: [clare.buckingham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:clare.buckingham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223 699779

Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Bryony Goodliffe and Michael Atkins

Post: Chair/Vice-Chair

Email: [bryony.goodliffe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:bryony.goodliffe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) [michael.atkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:michael.atkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223 706398 (office)

## 1. Background and reason for the closure proposal

- 1.1 On 8 March 2023 the Committee considered a report on the [outcome of a Stage 1 statutory consultation on the future of Great Gidding CE \(VC\) Primary School](#), including the possibility of closure. The decision to consult (taken by Committee on 17 January 2023) was taken following longstanding concerns regarding the future viability of the school, in particular:
- falling pupil numbers, which were forecast to be below 40 in September 2023,
  - increasing financial constraints, generated by the low numbers on roll, very likely to harm the school's future capacity to provide educational provision in a structure and format consummate with modern expectations
  - the associated impact upon educational outcomes for children
  - the decision by 7 other primary schools/multi academy trusts approached to explore the possibilities for academisation or federation, not to pursue collaboration because of their concerns about the future viability of the school.
- 1.2 The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance '*Opening and closing maintained schools*' (January 2023) sets out the reasons for closing a maintained school. These include but are not limited to, where:
- *there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;*
  - *it is to be amalgamated with another school;*
  - *it has been judged inadequate by Ofsted and the Secretary of State has revoked the academy order;*
  - *it is no longer considered viable;*
  - *it is being replaced by a new school*
- 1.3 The school currently operates 3 classes. On 31 January 2023, there were 44 pupils on roll. Subsequently, 14 applied for, and 9 took up places elsewhere. In addition to this, 10 Year 6 children will leave the school at the end of the current academic year to transfer to secondary phase. Consequently, at the time of the 8 March Committee meeting there was expected to be a maximum of 20 pupils on roll in September 2023. This would have necessitated the move to a 2-class structure and the associated onerous demands upon a headteacher who would, by necessity, also need to teach full-time. Numbers have dropped further since then – see paragraphs 1.4 and 3.0.1 below. Officers and the Diocese of Ely have been clear that they could not support that structural solution and would have significant concerns about the impact on educational outcomes for all children.
- 1.4 Numbers on roll have continued to fall such that there are only expected to be a maximum of 17 pupils on roll at the start of the summer term in April 2023, of which 10 are Year (Yr) 6 pupils.

<b>Class</b>	<b>Year group (Summer term 2022-23)</b>							
	<b>Rec</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Total</b>
1	1	2	3					6
2				1	0			1
3						0	10	10
<b>Total Roll</b>	1	2	3	1	0	0	10	<b>17</b>
<b>PAN:</b>	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	98
<b>Spaces</b>	13	12	11	13	14	14	4	81

- 1.5 The Local Authority (LA) recognises that the consultation on the future of the school closure led some parents to seek to move their children from Great Gidding ahead of a decision being made via the DfE process. However, a steady downward trend was already established prior to 2022/23 as referenced in the previous committee reports (January and March 2023) and, with it, the increasing concern that due to the size and capacity of the school there are limitations to the educational provision which could be offered to pupils. Officers' conversations with parents also suggested a number would have sought alternative school places had the school moved to a 2-class structure. For these reasons, officers consider that Great Gidding CE VC Primary School is no longer viable.
- 1.6 Having taken account of the feedback received during the consultation and the evidence provided by officers, the Committee, on 8 March 2023, approved the publication of a statutory proposal for the closure of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School on 31 August 2023.

## 2. Statutory Proposal

- 2.1 In accordance with the Education & Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, a statutory proposal was published on the Council's website on 13 March 2023. The full proposal can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 2.2 The following groups and organizations' have been consulted on the statutory proposal:
- The DfE
  - The governing body of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School
  - Parents and carers
  - Staff
  - Trade Unions
  - The Diocese of Ely
  - The Roman Catholic Diocese of East Anglia
  - Secretary of State for Education
  - The local MP
  - MPs for constituents who are impacted in the local area
  - Local Cambridgeshire County Councillors

- Local District Councillors
- Neighbouring local authorities
- Local Schools
- Local Academy Trusts
- Local Early Years settings
- Local SEND services

2.3 A notice was published in the Hunts Post on 15 March 2023 and was also displayed at the school and on the local Parish Council notice board giving the website address where the full proposal could be accessed as well as the following information:

- how copies of the proposal could be obtained
- that anybody could comment on, or object to the proposal
- the date the representation period ended
- the address to which comments and objects could be submitted

2.4 As part of the communications plan starting in January 2023, seven press releases have been issued, resulting in 19 articles in the local media, plus eight social media posts across the Council's four social media channels reminding people about the consultation and how to respond.

2.5 In addition, a 30-day staff consultation began on 20 March 2023 (ends 3 May) to ensure that all staff at the school are fully aware of the implications and to minimise, as much as possible, the impact on staff employed by the Council to work at the school, if the decision is made to close it.

2.6 The publication of the statutory proposal triggered a four-week period of representation when anybody could comment on or object to the proposal in writing. By the end of the representation period at midnight on 9 April 2023, 3 responses had been received. A few individuals, mainly current parents, also emailed or telephoned officers and Members separately with regard to implications for their specific circumstances. Great and Little Gidding Parish Council also made a request to be informed and involved with any potential future developments of the school site.

2.7 The main themes arising from representations to the statutory closure proposal were largely similar to those raised during the consultation period, namely:

- Accuracy of pupil forecasts
- Capacity in local schools
- Preference for small schools
- Preference for schools with a designated religious character
- Provision for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND)
- Impact on pupils' wellbeing

- Impact upon the local community
- Presumption against the closure of rural schools
- Travel / transport arrangements

2.8 In addition to the points above, respondents also referred to:

- National funding rates – *One response made reference to the national funding rate as one of the reasons for the school's closure. Whilst it is acknowledged that it is the highest funded school in the county, it is not the reason for its closure. Its reference was included within the previous committee report to make clear to both councillors and members of the public, that all resource available has already been invested into the school and even at this level the education outcomes were being impaired by the size of the school.*
- Costs associated with new uniform – *This has been addressed in Section 7 of this report.*

2.9 Copies of responses received can be found in **Appendices 2a and 2b.**

2.10 In addition to the issues raised above, the DfE Guidance sets out a number of factors which the decision maker, that is the CYP Committee, should take into account when determining proposals to discontinue (close) a school. These are set out below.

*The decision maker should:*

- *(a) be satisfied that there is sufficient capacity elsewhere in the local area to accommodate displaced pupils, and the likely supply and future demand for places in the medium and long term*
- *(b) take into account the overall quality of alternative places in the local area, balanced with the need to reduce excessive surplus capacity in the system*
- *(c) have regard for the local context in which the proposals are being made, taking into account the nature of the area, the age of the children involved and, where applicable, alternative options considered for reducing excess surplus capacity*
- *(d) Equal opportunity issues must have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which requires them to have due regard to the need to:*
  - *eliminate discrimination;*
  - *advance equality of opportunity; and*
  - *foster good relations between people with a protected characteristic and those without that characteristic*
- *(e) consider whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times or increased travel costs for local authorities or families, as well as any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase.*
- *(f) adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This does not mean that a rural school will never close, but the case for closure should be strong and a proposal must be clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area*
- *(g) consider the effect that this will have on the balance of denominational provision in the area, as well as taking account of the number of pupils currently on roll, the medium*

*and long term need for places in the area, and whether standards at the school have been persistently low.*

2.11 The issues and factors set out above are addressed in sections 3.0 to 3.6 below.

### 3. Displaced pupils

3.0.1 Since the first report, considered by the Committee on 17 January 2023, pupil numbers at Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School have dropped over the spring term from 44 on 31<sup>st</sup> January, as parents have taken the decision to move their children, to the current position of 10 Year 6 pupils and 7 other pupils on roll after Easter.

3.0.2 Children have moved to a range of different schools taking places at Abbots CE Ripton Primary, BrinGreaton CE Academy, Alconbury Primary, Ashbeach Primary, Elton CE Primary, Folksworth CE Primary, Holme CE Primary, Sawtry Infant, Sawtry Junior Academy and William de Yaxley CE Junior. Out of 30 applications, it has been possible to offer all but 3 children a place at their 1<sup>st</sup> preference school.

#### **3.1 The capacity of local schools to accommodate pupils displaced from Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School**

3.1.1 The LA has assessed the current capacity at the school and other schools in the surrounding area. Pupil numbers across the 11 schools listed below show a surplus of 180 places or 8.3%.

Table 1: Actual pupil numbers on roll (January 2023)

Name of school	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total (R-Y6)	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus
Sawtry Infant School	60	63	61	60					184	180	-4
Sawtry Junior Academy	65				58	57	56	83	254	260	6
Folksworth CE Primary	15	13	8	11	17	17	12	16	94	105	11
Stilton CE Primary Academy	30	27	15	19	18	28	25	26	158	210	52
BrinGreation CE Primary	17	16	12	15	17	12	19	15	106	119	13
Holme CE Primary	17	23	18	15	16	15	15	15	117	119	2
Yaxley Infants School	60	52	41	38					131	180	49
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	64				53	56	60	58	227	256	29
Fourfields Primary School	60 (90 Yr3)	59	60	60	90	60	61	58	448	450	2
The Ashbeach Primary School	20	19	12	21	14	19	19	18	122	140	18
The Elton CE Primary School	20	16	19	21	20	22	20	20	138	140	2
<b>Combined total on roll</b>		288	246	260	303	286	287	309	1979		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>		299	299	299	348	308	308	308		2159	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus</b>		11	53	39	35	22	21	-1			180

Data Source: Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) January 2023

3.1.2 As referenced above in section 1.4, there were expected to be no more than 7 pupils remaining on roll at Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School at the start of the summer term who would require alternative primary school places if the school closes. As shown in the table above, it would be possible to offer places to all these children in other local schools.

3.1.3 10 of these 11 schools are graded 'Good' by Ofsted and one as 'Requires Improvement' which may influence parental choice. Even if we discount the latter, there are sufficient places amongst the remaining 10 schools to accommodate displaced pupils, with a remaining surplus of 151 or 7.9%.

3.1.4 The Council's Business Intelligence Service produces two sets of forecasts. The first set focuses on children resident in the catchment area only and does not take into account patterns of parental preference. The second focuses on forecasting the number of pupils if previous patterns of parental preference were to continue. All forecast data shows a continuing decline in forecast pupil numbers within the catchment served by Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School.

3.1.5 Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full, especially in the context of small schools. To this end, the LA seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally



accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of surplus capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts. A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

*“It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools”.*

- 3.1.6 In the longer term a new primary school is planned for Sawtry, with a proposed opening date of September 2024. A key developer planning application will be submitted in May 2023. This school would serve children arising from new developments in Sawtry and would also mitigate the impact of displaced pupils wanting to take up a place in a Sawtry school. The new school is proposed to open with 1 FE/210 places and increase to 2 FE/420 places in line with demand. This would increase the overall level of surplus capacity available within local schools. Furthermore, there are classrooms in both Sawtry Infant and Sawtry Junior Schools which will be brought into use in 2023/24. Officers recognise that some of the schools in the table above have grown in numbers as a result of children who have already moved from Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. In particular, growth funding has already been agreed for Sawtry Infant School as the LA requires it to operate an additional class in September 2023.
- 3.1.7 In summary, officers are satisfied that there is sufficient capacity elsewhere in the local area to accommodate displaced pupils, and the future demand for places in the medium and long term.
- 3.1.8 Parents may express a preference for their child to attend any school, but if Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School closes, Sawtry Infant and Junior Schools, and in due course the new primary school in Sawtry, would, for the purposes of school place planning and entitlement to transport assistance, become the designated catchment schools for children living in the villages currently served by Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. The respective admission authorities, namely the LA for Sawtry Infant Schools and Meridian Trust for Sawtry Junior and the new primary school, would formally consult on this and include the proposed revised catchment proposals in the next Annual Consultation on Admission Arrangements for determination in February 2024 and implementation in September 2025. In the meantime, children resident in the villages currently served by Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary would qualify for transport assistance to attend schools in Sawtry because they are the nearest schools and beyond the statutory walking distances.

## 3.2 Equality of Opportunity

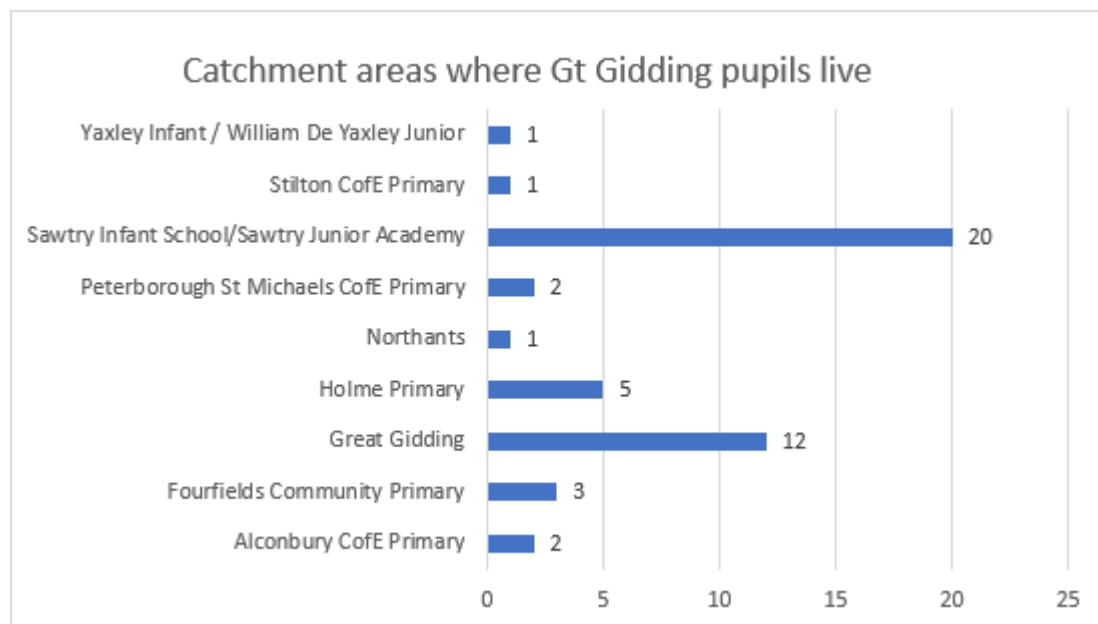
3.2.1 The Council, as decision maker, is required to have ‘due regard’ to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty) in considering the proposal to close Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out during the initial consultation period and was appended to the report which the Committee considered on 8 March 2023. The EqIA has been reviewed to take account of responses received during the representation period. An updated EqIA is provided at **Appendix 3**.

3.2.2 In summary, officers are confident that proper consideration has been given to the Equality Act implications of the proposed closure and that any detrimental issues can be successfully mitigated against as per the Equality Impact Assessment.

## 3.3 Impact on journey times, use of motor vehicles and transport costs for families and the local authority

3.3.1 Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School has always attracted parental preference applications from outside its designated catchment area (See Figure 1 below). The October 2022 Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) recorded 47 pupils on roll. Only 12 (25%) of them resided in the Great Gidding catchment compared to 35 (75%) living in areas served by other schools.

*Table 2: Catchment areas where Great Gidding Pupils Live*



- 3.3.2 Of the 18 children living in the area served by Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School attending state funded schools in Cambridgeshire, 5 of them (28%) attended other state funded schools in the surrounding area.
- 3.3.3 From this information it is evident that the majority of pupils attending the school already face journeys to and from school each day. Given the large proportion of children who attend Great Gidding CE VC Primary School as a parental preference rather than a catchment placement, it is envisaged that displaced pupils would continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers and, given that the majority of pupils would be able to attend a school nearer to their home address, it is unlikely there would be a noticeable increase in car usage and that it might even be expected that car usage would reduce. Based on in-year applications received to date, many families have opted not to apply to their local school, as was the case when they expressed a preference to go to primary school in Great Gidding. As a result, car usage is likely to remain at a similar level.
- 3.3.4 For children living within the school's catchment area, it is acknowledged that closure of the school would result in a longer travel time. Parents may express a preference for their child to attend any school, but if the school closes, Sawtry Infant and Junior Schools would become the designated catchment school for children living in the villages currently served by Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School and children living in that area would be entitled to transport assistance to Sawtry as the nearest schools are located there and the distance is over the statutory walking distances. The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) to Sawtry would be approximately 30 minutes depending on the number of pick-up points.
- 3.3.5 It is acknowledged that some pupils living in villages currently in catchment for Great Gidding VCE (VC) Primary and attending the school might face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day, but the proposal will not result in unreasonably long journey times. Journey times would all fall well within the DfE's best practice of 45 minutes maximum for primary age children as set out in its *Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* which states at paragraph 34: "*As a general guide, transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time. Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.*" [Department for Education](#).
- 3.3.6 In September 2023 the remaining 6 children living within the catchment area of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School roll will be comprised of 2 pupils in Year 6, 1 in Year 3 and 3 in Year 2. Estimated transport cost, based on current quotes, for them to attend primary provision in Sawtry (the nearest to Great Gidding and its feeder villages) is £134 daily/ £25,460 per annum. The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of

children) would be approximately 30 minutes depending on the number of pick-up points. This is well within timeframe of 45 minutes for primary age pupils. The transport route will be required for between one (for Yr 6 pupils) and four years (for current Yr 3 pupil) for displaced children. Table 2 above indicates that there are forecast to be 2 children in Reception in catchment in 2024 and 1 in each of the following years. The transport estimates include costs for transporting these children. As catchment children reduce in number it is envisaged that a smaller vehicle (taxi rather than minibus) will be required and this will be reflected in reduced costs.

- 3.3.7 In summary, some families who do not qualify for transport assistance under the Council's policy may be impacted by additional travel costs and travel time if they move their children from Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School to other parental preference placements. Car usage is likely to remain at a similar level. For in-catchment children, journeys will not be an unreasonable length.

### 3.4 Impact on the Local Community

- 3.4.1 The Community Impact Assessment (**Appendix 4**), undertaken as part of the initial consultation, identified a number of possible areas where the proposal could have some negative impact on a small number of local families and the local community, but also some mitigating factors which limit the impacts. These are set out in the table below.

Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigating Factors	Conclusions
Impact on pupils	Coping with change to a new school environment. This impact may be greater for children with SEND.	The local authority and schools would work to minimise disruption of transition. Additional transition support will be available for children with SEND.	Initially negative; later potentially positive in terms of widening peer groups and accessing different facilities. Overall: Neutral
Impact on parents and families	Loss of clubs and events.	All the alternative schools provide a range of clubs and events.	Neutral - Home to school transport is only provided at the start and end of the school day and not for wraparound care. This would be parental responsibility, in line with current policy.

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Potential Impact</b>	<b>Mitigating Factors</b>	<b>Conclusions</b>
Impact on wider community	Reduced bookings in community venue.	Great Gidding village hall hosts events not linked to the school and is likely to continue to do so. The impact of bookings for children is unlikely to be significant as the number of children residing in Great Gidding is unlikely to significantly change.	Potentially negative.
	Local shop losing trade	None	Potentially negative
	Reduced access to, and use of, the church for children, families. Reduction in the church community and the resulting impact on sustainability.	Community support will aid the Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit purposes.	Potentially negative
Access to a school with the same designated religious character	A number of pupils could be offered places at non-denominational schools.	There are other denominational schools in the area with places available (see section 5 above). Parents can express preference for a denominational school.	Neutral
Impact on neighbouring schools	Neighbouring schools would offer places to pupils currently at Great Gidding.	Work will take place to increase capacity and ensure sufficient places at surrounding schools to take all the pupils from Great Gidding.	Neutral or potentially positive due to the increased numbers on roll and associated increased per pupil funding, which would improve viability.

Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigating Factors	Conclusions
Impact on pupil travel arrangements	Some families may experience increased costs and travel time to school; others may experience reduced costs and travel time to school.	For the majority of pupils there are alternative schools nearer to their home address. Some pupils living in the Great Gidding catchment might face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day. However for many their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance. Free home to school transport would be available for eligible pupils in line with the Council's statutory duties and its published policy.	<p>Potentially negative for pupils living in the Great Gidding catchment who might face longer journeys to and from school each day.</p> <p>Approximate minimum travel times each way, to and from school in Sawtry are below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Great Gidding, 10 mins</li> <li>○ Lt Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>○ Steeple Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>○ Winwick 12 mins</li> <li>○ Hamerton 10 mins</li> <li>○ All villages 21 mins</li> </ul> <p>The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) could be approximately 30 minutes if there were pick-up points in all the feeder villages.</p>

Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigating Factors	Conclusions
Impact on community demographics	Closure of the school may impact the balance of community.	The birth rate in the village is low and projected to remain so. Very few pupils arising are from new housing. The majority of new homes are likely to be in school admissions areas served by other schools. Assessment of settlements similar to Great Gidding indicates population stability regardless of there being a school.	Neutral

3.4.2 In any small community, the loss of one institution or business will be felt proportionately more than in a larger community and the closure of a school in a village community will undoubtedly impact. Good schools engage parents in their children's education and reach out to the wider community for support, as well as providing community facilities. However, these must be considered beneficial side-effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, budget deficits and quality of education must be the considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close, this cannot be the overriding determining factor.

3.4.3 The DfE Guidance refers to the fact that some schools may be a focal point for family and community activity providing extended services for a range of users, and their closure may have wider social consequences. The DfE Guidance states: *Where the school is providing access to extended services, provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means.* There is no Early Years provision on the school site or elsewhere in the village. The school used to provide wrap-around care before school, after school or during the holidays. It ceased providing this in autumn 2022 when the lack of interest made it unviable. A dance club and a PE club are offered after school one day per week for approximately 1 hour and if the school closes these will cease. However, schools in the local area have a greater offer. The Community Impact Assessment covers this in detail. The LA would not provide transport assistance to enable children to attend wrap-around provision at their new school in the event of the closure of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School.

### 3.5 Presumption Against the Closure of Rural Schools

3.5.1 Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022. Officers carefully considered the factors set out in section 15(4) of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 during the initial consultation and reported the outcome to the Committee on 8 March 2023. The report published in response to the Presumption Against the Closure of Rural Schools can be found in **Appendix 5**.

3.5.2 With numbers on roll in April 2023 at 17, the case for the closure of Great Gidding continues to be strong and in the best interests of local educational provision and the benefit of children.

### 3.6 Balance of denominational provision

3.6.1 Great Gidding CE Primary is a Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) school. The school has strong links with St Michael's church, into the grounds of which it has direct access from the school site.

3.6.2 Huntingdonshire, the district of Cambridgeshire in which Great Gidding Primary school is located, is well provided for in terms Church of England primary schools. Currently there are 19 Church of England primary schools providing a total of 3,747 denominational places in Huntingdonshire.

3.6.3 In the event of closure the number of denominational primary schools would reduce to 18 and the total number of places to 3,649. In summary, the impact of closure on the balance of denominational provision would be minimal. The chart below lists the other Church of England primary schools closest to Great Gidding. 3 of them are within 6 miles of Great Gidding via nearest road route.

*Table 3: Distance to Denominational Primary Schools*

Denominational Primary Schools in the area	Distance from Great Gidding CE VC Primary School in miles (Google Maps)	Published Admission Number (PAN)
BrinGreation CE VC Primary	6.2	17
Elton CE VA Primary	9.3	20
Folksworth CE VC P	6	15
Holme CE Primary Academy	5.7	17
Stilton CE Primary Academy	5.8	30
William de Yaxley CE Junior Academy	9.3	64

## 4. Quality of Education



- 4.1 The local authority has provided a high level of engagement with, and range of support to, the school in recent years for teaching and learning and leadership and management. This has ranged from between 10 to 19 visits per year between 2015 and 2018 from the School Improvement Service (SIS) and 8 visits annually since 2018/19, all well in excess of the usual entitlement of 5 visits annually from the SIS. These numbers do not include visits from other services such as the Early Years' Service and the SEND Service.
- 4.2 In September 2015, Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School was rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement (RI). In October 2017, the school received an overall rating of Good, although the Outcomes for Pupils remained as RI. The school was inspected again in November 2022. This was a section 8 ungraded inspection by Ofsted. The outcome of the inspection was that: *There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.* The school can expect to receive its next section 5 graded inspection within 12 to 24 months of November 2022.
- 4.3 The key findings of the November 2022 inspection were that:
- *Leaders and teachers have worked together to bring about improvements to the curriculum. They have made sure that it is better suited to the mixed-aged classes in the school. The curriculum is designed to complement leaders' vision of 'growing great learners'.*
  - *In too many subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils practice key knowledge until they are fluent. This means that those pupils who most need to be secure in crucial component knowledge struggle unnecessarily to complete complex tasks. Leaders should ensure that teachers thoroughly teach the most important knowledge and concepts that pupils need before they move on to new content.*
  - *Leaders do not consistently provide teachers with up-to-date information about pupils with SEND to inform their teaching choices. This means that teaching to support these pupils is not as precise as it should be. Leaders should ensure that teachers have, and use, detailed information about pupils with SEND to adapt their teaching appropriately.*
- 4.4 The report considered by the Committee on 8 March explained in detail the challenges and risks of operating a school with fewer children on roll such that school improvement advisers are of the opinion that the school would find it hard to retain its current Good grading when Ofsted returns to undertake a full section 5 inspection.

## 5. Alternatives to closure

- 5.1 As referenced in section 1.1 above and in more detail in the report to [Committee of 8 March 2023](#), a number of alternative options were considered by the local authority before the Committee agreed to consult on the proposed closure of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. Attempts to identify primary schools willing to federate with the school were unsuccessful. In each case, following due diligence, the potential partnership school decided not to progress given the concerns around the viability of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. The option for the school to academise with a Church of England Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) was also unsuccessful due to reciprocal concerns as to whether such an arrangement could provide for medium to long term sustainability. The school governors withdrew from the process. A discussion with a non-church MAT also confirmed that the low pupil numbers would pose too great a financial risk for the trust to consider the school joining it.
- 5.2 Neither federation or academisation would address the low pupil numbers and related budgetary challenges the school faces.
- 5.3 Officers have considered very closely the option of dropping from a 3-class to a 2-class structure. The report considered by the Committee on 8 March 2023 covered in detail the challenges posed by a 2-class structure which are enormous in terms of the responsibilities which would fall to just two teachers with regard to leadership (including curriculum leadership), safeguarding, training and development, health and safety, finance/ budgeting, the role of SENDCo in addition to full time teaching responsibility. It would risk jeopardising the pupils' entitlement to a broad curriculum offer and risk poor educational outcomes, particularly for pupils at KS2:
- a single class across all four KS2 year groups would require a bespoke curriculum for the school and potentially for the individual children
  - the teacher (who may be the headteacher) would have to have extensive knowledge of the KS1, KS2 and year 7 curriculum.
  - planning would need to take account of the sequence and progression of learning across three curriculum frameworks.
  - the developmental needs, physical and emotional maturity and level of independence of the pupils across this age range vastly differ.
  - the 2014 curriculum and the expectations around progressive sequence of key knowledge makes four year groups in a class much more challenging than in 2011.
- 5.4 If the Committee takes the decision not to close Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School on 31 August 2023, the school would remain open in September 2023 with a 1-class structure, with all 7 children (maximum likely number on roll) being taught in one class and a budget of £328,489. This may appear generous compared to £365,832 for the academic year 2022/23, given the low pupil numbers there would be. That is because the academic year and the financial year do not align. Consequently, 7/12ths of the academic year 2023/24 funding is based on the 2022 pupil census (when pupils numbers were in the 40s) and 5/12ths of it will be based on the 2023 census. From 2024/25 the budget would drop to

£226,611. Whilst there is a budget difference of £37,000 between 2022/3 and 2023/4 the difference in pupil experience in a two or one-class structure (as evidenced in the formal closure proposal at Appendix 4 and in sections 4 and 5.3 and 5.4 above) would be vastly different and more limiting and limited than in the current 3-class structure. There would be some staff redundancy. In summary, it would not be possible to provide quality education to such a reduced school population and their needs would be better served within the existing primary school capacity in the local area.

- 5.5 Officers and the Diocese of Ely were clear in March 2023 that they would not support a 2-class structure and would have significant concerns about the impact on educational outcomes for all children. Those conclusions were arrived at when the September 2023 pupil numbers might have been as high as 20 on roll. Now, the numbers on roll at the start of the summer term are 17 maximum of which 10 are Yr 6 pupils who will transfer to secondary phase in September 2023. Consequently, whilst it would be technically possible to afford a 2-class structure in September 2023, this would not be sustainable beyond the academic year, nor would it deliver the breadth of educational provision children are entitled to.
- 5.6 If the school were to remain open in September 2023, officers would come back to the Committee in October 2023 to request that it approve re-starting the statutory closure process. If that was approved, officers would ask the Committee to decide in late January 2024 to publish a closure proposal notice and Committee would determine closure in March 2024 to take effect on 31 August 2024. In addition, there would need to be a fresh consultation undertaken with school staff and it is highly possible that staff retention may be an issue.

## 6. Summary

- 6.1 The low level of pupil numbers, alongside the future educational offering and budget available have required officers to follow a statutory process to consider and ultimately recommend the closure of Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School. A thorough consultation has been undertaken with all parties from staff, pupils, parents and the wider community. The statutory process which requires officers to assess the viability of the school against a range of factors set out in this report makes the compelling decision to recommend closure unavoidable. Notwithstanding the impact on the children attending the school and the community it serves, there will also be some benefits, for example:
- the additional Key Stage 1 provision opening at Sawtry infants will have reduced class sizes meaning a more favourable pupil:teacher ratio for those Yr 1 and Yr 2 pupils
  - increased numbers on roll at Folksworth CE (VC) Primary will make that school more viable
  - the range of wrap-around, holiday and extra-curricular experiences and opportunities available at the local primary schools compared to those which Great Gidding CE (VC) has been able to offer pupils

- 6.2 In reaching the recommendation to close the school, the local authority has followed the statutory process set out in part 4 of the DfE Guidance, in accordance with Section 15 of the EIA 2006, as updated by the Education Act 2011 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
- 6.3 If the Committee decides to close the Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School, officers will contact the parents/ carers of all those still on roll to explain next steps with regard to applying for and securing a new school place for their child(ren) for September 2023 and to clarify what transport assistance they can expect.

## 7. Proposal to support the transport and uniform costs of displaced pupils

- 7.1 In section 8.4 of the report the Committee considered on 8 March, officers indicated that if the Committee decided subsequently to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/ carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 10 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with associated transport and uniform costs. This will not include assistance for younger siblings who might subsequently have attended the school had it still been open.

### 7.2 Assistance with transport costs

- 7.2.1 Section 3 of the Council's Transport Assistance policy states: *"The Council reserves the right to make exceptions to the policy in circumstances where the Executive Director of Children, Families and Adult Services (CFA) considers it reasonable to do so and where it would be in the best interests of the child or young person concerned. Such exceptions are normally limited to those children/students attending their designated school"*. Officers have taken legal advice which concluded that *"this would provide the basis for the LA to be more generous than provided for under the transport policy where it was in the best interests of the children concerned"* and that *"there is a strong argument for this to happen here given that it is a LA decision to close the school"*. In addition, the approach in the statutory guidance on closures is about arrangements for displaced pupils overall. There is no distinction made in Section 3 of the Transport Assistance Policy between catchment and non-catchment pupils. The discretion in the policy would allow Members to make the same arrangements for all displaced pupils, or to differentiate the offer for catchment and non-catchment children.
- 7.2.2 In light of the above, officers are seeking the approval of the Committee to offer transport assistance to the parents of all children who were on roll at Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School on 10 January 2023 (it will not apply to any child who left the school before that date) and have subsequently moved their child(ren) to a different school, where the child's

new school is more than 2 miles walking distance or, if less than 2 miles, there is no available walking route to the school. It is proposed this will operate as follows:

- a place on a Council contracted route where the child will attend their catchment or nearest available school. This may be an existing route and may combine primary and secondary age children in the same vehicle. Safety of all children would be assessed and managed as required.
- for all other children a mileage allowance of 45 pence per mile for two return journeys per day **or** a place on a Council contracted route where such a route exists, whichever is the most cost efficient for the Council to a school of their parents' preference.
- where parental mileage is paid, it will be capped at 10 miles each way/40 miles total per day.
- effective from 2 May 2023 following the child's registration at that school
- transport will be provided until the child completes the primary phase at the end of Yr 6 **or** until the child moves to a school other than that attended immediately after leaving Great Gidding.

7.2.3 The forecast cost of applying the above exceptional transport assistance based on the placements of the children who have already moved from Great Gidding CE (VC) Primary School would be £65,132 per annum for the duration of the 2023/24 academic year. This is £44,232 more than the current spend per annum for transporting children to Great Gidding. The cost will decrease year on year due to reduction in the number of children for whom it is required. The cost for the 3 x Year Reception to Year 5 children who have not indicated a preference for an alternative school is not yet known. The cost may also be subject to change depending on a number of factors including changing transport costs and whether first preference schools can be offered.

7.2.4 This remains a discretionary decision of the Committee and if the Council provided its statutory requirements around transport, the cost would be significantly less for those children to access their nearest school place or for those displaced in the Great Gidding catchment.

### **7.3 Assistance with uniform costs**

7.3.1 Given that the statutory guidance on school closures refers to displaced children as a whole, officers seek the approval of the Committee to make a single payment to parents/ carers of all children displaced from Great Gidding CE (VC) as a contribution towards the cost of purchasing uniform for the school to which the parent has moved their child(ren).

7.3.2 Officers request that the Committee agrees a one-off payment for each child displaced from Great Gidding who resides in Cambridgeshire, is in Yr R to Yr5, and was on roll at Great Gidding on 10 January 2023.

### 7.3.3 The costs have been calculated on the basis of:

- generic items available from a major supermarket chain where they are deemed acceptable by the school and specific school uniform suppliers where items are specified.
- 3x each item of everyday wear (or 4x items where generic items are sold in 2-packs),
- 2x shorts/summer dress,
- 2x tie (where needed)
- 1x each PE item (or 2 if they only come in 2-packs).
- All prices for age 10-11. Smaller sizes may be cheaper.
- PE bag/book bag only specified where a particular colour / logo is required.

*Table 4: Cost of school uniform as at March 2023*

School	Cost of boys uniform	Cost of girls uniform
Folksworth CE Primary School	£140.54	£147.09
Sawtry Junior Academy	£146.30	£150.30
Sawtry Community Infant School	£96.50	£98.50
Abbots Ripton CE Primary School	£108.25	£112.25
BrinGreation CE Primary School	£108.00	£110.00
Holme CE Primary School	£175.75	£182.90
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	£107.05	£115.85
Ashbeach Primary School	£96.50	£98.50
The Elton CE Primary School	£96.50	£98.50

7.3.3 The total cost is not yet known as the destination school of all eligible children is not yet known. However, if we use information about the destination school where it is available, and an average cost where it is not, the approximate cost would be £3,909.82. The funding for these costs will be met from the closing balance of the school.

7.4 If these proposals outlined in 7.2 and 7.3 are agreed, officers will write to parents in May to outline the process for accessing this support.

## 8. Alignment with corporate priorities

### 8.1 Environment and Sustainability

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- Given the geographical location of the school there is no opportunity for the use of public transport services for pupils living in the communities served by Great Gidding Primary School who would be displaced to other schools

### 8.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 8.3 Places and Communities

The village of Great Gidding has a number of other focal points apart from the school, including the church and a modern village hall where community activities and events take place.

### 8.4 Children and Young People

This corporate priority is explicit throughout the report as it relates to school provision for primary-age children. The key themes and considerations are set out in sections 3 – 5.

### 8.5 Transport

The report sets out the implications for this priority in section 7.2.

## 9. Significant Implications

### 9.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- The current national funding formula (NFF) only allows funding to be allocated via factors defined within the NFF. As a result, there is no flexibility to subsidise smaller schools other than by the application of the sparsity factor which supports small schools in remote areas. Despite Great Gidding being the highest funded school in Cambridgeshire (either maintained or academy) and qualifying for this factor the maximum allowable allocation is not sufficient to support long term sustainability.
- There will be financial costs to closing the school, in particular in relation to staff redundancy costs and the decommissioning of the buildings and the site. Initial estimates of these costs are £18k for redundancy and between £100k and £150k for decommissioning the buildings and site, including the removal of mobile accommodation
- If the school closes the level of unspent Dedicated Schools Grant, as at the 31<sup>st</sup> August, would be calculated and used to fund assistance with uniform costs for displaced children, costs associated with closure and decommissioning of the site and growth funding for schools opening additional classes required by the LA to take displaced children.
- There will also be financial implications for transporting pupils displaced by the closure. These are set out in section 7.2 of the report. These transport costs will be an additional pressure on the home to school transport budget.
- The school is in contract with the Council's energy project contractor Bouygues

Energies & Services for delivery of the works to install an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP). The ASHP was delivered to the school site in March 2022 and is in situ awaiting pipework and electrical connections. Bouygues have invoiced the school £63,579 for the equipment and works delivered so far and the full grant of £42,596 has been claimed. The project has been delayed since then due to complexities in upgrading the site's electrical supply for the ASHP. These complexities have now been resolved but no further work is to be progressed until a final decision has been made by CYP Committee on the future of the school. In the event of a decision to close the school, the external funding partner is content for the project to be completed and the building handed back to the landlord with a decarbonised heating system. However, if the CYP Committee decides to proceed to Stage 4 and close the school, the Council's Climate Change & Energy Services team together with property services will review the scheme to determine the best option in relation to the ASHP.

## 9.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

## 9.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

## 9.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and shared with an EDI Super User (CCC499470646). A copy of this can be found at Appendix 3.

The report sets out details of significant implications identified by officers in section 3.2 above.

## 9.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

There are no significant implications. Full consultation and engagement with the stakeholders including parents/carers of pupils at the school and the local community have been undertaken before and at every stage during the statutory process.

## 9.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

Officers engaged with and briefed the Local Member at every stage of the statutory process and also shared relevant information with the Members of the wards where displaced pupils have already been, or will be, offered new school places. The Local MP has also been informed of the content of the report ahead of the Committee.

## 9.7 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

## 9.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas



The overall balance of implications is neutral and the completion of the following paragraphs in this section has been undertaken in discussion with, and the approval of, the Council's Climate Crisis Strategy Manager.

9.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status:

9.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status:

Explanation: except for the very small number of children who live in the village of Great Gidding and can walk to school and who will be displaced and need to travel to a new school, those living in the other catchment feeder villages already travel to the school. Secondly, of the 30+ out-of-catchment children who have been traveling to Great Gidding 6 have applied to attend the school in their home catchment. 4 of them will no longer need transport. These children live in either Holme, Fourfields or Sawtry catchment. A further 15 have expressed a preference to attend a school which is not their catchment, as many did when they enrolled at Great Gidding CE VC Primary School.

Of the out of catchment children attending Great Gidding, 14 will have a shorter journey to school each day and 1 will have a journey the same length. Only 6 will travel a greater distance to school and in all cases, this is due to parental preference for a school outside of their catchment.

The cumulative distance travelled to school each day will increase by 33.8 miles for all children, by 43.4 miles for Great Gidding catchment children. It will decrease by 24.8 miles for out of catchment children. The average distance travelled to school will increase by 1.1 miles for all children, by 4.8 miles for Great Gidding catchment children. It will decrease by 1.2 miles for out of catchment children.

9.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status:

9.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral Status:

9.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status:

9.8.6 Implication 2: Air Pollution

Neutral Status

Explanation is as implication 2 above (para 9.8.2)

Positive/neutral/negative Status:

Explanation:

9.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure, and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral Status:

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes

Name of Officer: Clare Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Josette Kennington

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Jonathan Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman

If a Key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

## 10. Source documents

10.1 [Children and Young People Committee Report \(17 January 2023\)](#)

10.2 [Children and Young People Committee Report \(8 March 2023\)](#)

- 10.3 [Opening and closing maintained schools Statutory guidance for proposers and decision makers](#)
- 10.4 [Pre-16 school transport](#)
- 10.5 [Home to school travel assistance policy](#)



## Appendix 1: Proposed Closure of Gt Gidding Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School

### **SECTION 15 OF THE EDUCATION & INSPECTIONS ACT 2006 (AS AMENDED BY THE EDUCATION ACT 2011) AND THE SCHOOL ORGANISATION (ESTABLISHMENT AND DISCONTINUANCE OF SCHOOLS) REGULATIONS 2013**

#### **PROPOSED CLOSURE OF GT GIDDING CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL**

##### **Introduction**

In accordance with regulation 12 of the Discontinuance Regulations 2013 copies of this proposal may be obtained from the website of Cambridgeshire County Council (full postal address below) at:

[School changes and consultations - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

Within four weeks of the date of publication of these proposals (13 March 2023) any person may object to, or make comments on the proposals by sending them to Cambridgeshire County Council at:

[School.consultations@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:School.consultations@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and put **Gt Gidding Closure Proposal** in the subject line.

Any objections or comments must be received by midnight on 9 April 2023 when the formal representation period closes

##### **1. Contact Details**

###### **Name and address of the local authority making the proposal**

Cambridgeshire County Council  
Box ALC2607  
New Shire Hall, Emery Crescent, Enterprise Campus, Alconbury Weald, Huntingdon PE28 4YE

###### **Name, address and category of school**

Gt Gidding CE Primary School  
Main Street, Gt Gidding, Huntingdon, PE28 5NX

The school is a Church of England, Voluntary Controlled, school

##### **2. Implementation**

The proposal is to discontinue Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School ("the school") with effect from 31 August 2023

##### **3. Reason for closure**

Cambridgeshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places for every child living in their area of responsibility who is of statutory school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state-funded sector. The School Organisation Plan 2022-23 (

[Strategies for schools and learning - Cambridgeshire County Council](#) ) sets out the LA's approach to the organisation arrangements of schools to maintain the efficiency and effectiveness of provision to ensure that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their communities and makes best use of public funding.

The decision to consult on the closure of the school was taken for a number of reasons which include:

- (a) the continuing steady downward trend of numbers on roll and pupil forecasts and
- (b) associated impact on funding which in turn has
- (c) increased concern that due to the size and capacity of the school there are limitations to the educational provision which can be offered to pupils
- (d) the challenge of recruiting a headteacher

**(a)** The school is a small, rural voluntary controlled primary school with a published admissions number (PAN) of 14 and capacity for 98 pupils (14 x 7 year groups).

It is staffed as follows:

- Teachers - 3 full time equivalents (fte) (2 Full-time (f/t) and 2 Part-time (p/t))
- Teaching Assistants – 2 f/t
- 1 Office Administrator
- 1 p/t Midday Supervisor
- 1 Cleaner
- 1 Interim Headteacher

The school has been undersubscribed for several years. In the last 10 years pupil numbers at the school have dropped from 75 to 47. 35 pupils, 74.5% of those on roll (at time of October 2022 Pupil Lead Annual School Census (PLASC)), live outside the catchment area of the school. In September 2021 there were 8 offers for Reception, 4 were in catchment and 4 were out of catchment. In September 2022 there were 4 offers for Reception, all out of catchment and 3 children took up a place.

The school will lose its largest cohort of 10 children when the current Yr 6 pupils move to secondary school at the end of the summer term 2023.

Pupil forecasts for the number of primary age children living in the school's catchment continue to be low. In September 2023 we would expect 2 in-catchment children going into Reception and after that the numbers drop to 1 per year. See Table 2 below. In addition, there are no planned housing developments identified in the Huntingdonshire Local Plan within Great Gidding's catchment area.

The Council's Business Intelligence Service produces two sets of forecasts. The first set focuses on children resident in the catchment area only and does not take into account patterns of parental preference. This has dropped from 60 in 2018/19 to 39 for 2023/24.

The second set focuses on forecasting the number of pupils if previous patterns of parental preference were to continue. This has dropped from 24 to 14 over the same period.

The October 2022 School Census also showed that of the 18 children living in the area served by Gt Gidding Primary School attending state funded schools in Cambridgeshire, 5 of them (28%) attended other schools in the surrounding area.

**(b)** The falling pupil numbers has had a corresponding impact on the school's budget. When the proposal to consult was first brought to committee, the five-year budget forecast showed a deficit of - £150,500. However, now based on just 22 pupils maximum on roll in 2023/24, this is further exacerbated, and revised forecasts suggest a deficit of -£252,000 by 2026/27.

Sparsity funding is a compulsory funding factor within the National Funding Formula, designed to provide additional funding to schools that are both small and remote. Gt Gidding is currently in receipt of the maximum sparsity funding value as defined by the ESFA (£56,300 for the 23/24 financial year).

Despite receiving the highest level of per-pupil funding in Cambridgeshire at more than £8,000 per child, compared to the median of £4,400 per child, the current budget is not sustainable and would require organisational change to balance.

The school ran a two-class structure just for the 2011-12 academic year when numbers on roll were 47 at January 2012 census (down from 59 in 2011) and it could afford then to provide some non-teaching support in both classes.

Pupil numbers then increased to allow the school to revert back to a three-class structure in September 2012. Numbers on roll at the time of the October 2012 census were 64.

Up until the end of the academic year 2012/13, Infant Class Size Funding operated which supported schools with low numbers in Reception and KS1 and the school benefited from this, e.g. in 2012/13, it received an additional £8030 in its budget.

Such are the financial challenges with the further reduction in pupil numbers (35 pupils on roll as at 20 February 2023 and 10 Yr 6 children leaving in July 2023) that a move to a 2-class structure would be inevitable in 2023/24 but by 204/25 it would not be financially viable to employ any Teaching Assistants and all the KS2 children would be taught by a single teacher. Likewise, Cherry Class (Yrs R, 1 and 2) would have a single teacher and no support staff.

(c) The LA has provided a high level of engagement with, and range of support to, the school in recent years for teaching and learning and leadership and management. This has ranged from between 10 to 19 visits per year between 2015 and 2018 from the School Improvement Service (SIS) and 8 visits annually since 2018/19, all well in excess of the usual entitlement of 5 visits annually from the SIS and does not include visits from other services such as the Early Years Service and the SEND Service.

In September 2015 the school was rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement (RI). In October 2017, the school received an overall rating of Good, although the Outcomes for Pupils remained as Requiring Improvement (RI). The school was inspected again in November 2022. This was a section 8 ungraded inspection by Ofsted. The outcome of the inspection was that:

*There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.* The school can expect to receive its next section 5 graded inspection within 12 to 24 months of November 2022.

The key findings of the November 2022 inspection were that:

- *Leaders and teachers have worked together to bring about improvements to the curriculum. They have made sure that it is better suited to the mixed-aged classes in the school. The curriculum is designed to complement leaders' vision of 'growing great learners'.*
- *In too many subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils practise key knowledge until they are fluent. This means that those pupils who most need to be secure in crucial component knowledge struggle unnecessarily to complete complex tasks. Leaders should ensure that teachers thoroughly teach the most important knowledge and concepts that pupils need before they move on to new content*

- *Leaders do not consistently provide teachers with up-to-date information about pupils with SEND to inform their teaching choices. This means that teaching to support these pupils is not as precise as it should be. Leaders should ensure that teachers have, and use, detailed information about pupils with SEND to adapt their teaching appropriately.*

The challenges posed by a 2-class structure are enormous in terms of the responsibilities which would fall to just two teachers with regard to leadership (including curriculum leadership), safeguarding, training and development, health and safety, finance/budgeting, the role of SENDCo in addition to full time teaching responsibility. It would risk jeopardising the pupils' entitlement to a broad curriculum offer and risk poor educational outcomes particularly for pupils at KS2:

- a class across all four KS2 year groups would require a bespoke curriculum for the school and potentially for the individual children
- the teacher (who may be the headteacher) would have to have extensive knowledge of the KS1, KS2 and year 7 curriculum.
- planning would need to take account of the sequence and progression of learning across three curriculum frameworks.
- the developmental needs, physical and emotional maturity and level of independence of the pupils across this age range vastly differ.
- the 2014 curriculum and the expectations around progressive sequence of key knowledge make four year groups in a single class much more challenging than in 2011

In summary, a two-class structure is not viable on any level.

**(d)** Strong and permanent leadership is essential to the ongoing educational outcomes for any school. The recruitment and retention of both a Headteacher and governing body have been of concern to the Council and the Diocese over the past 9 months following the resignation of the previous Headteacher. The governing body, working the Diocese and Council were unable to source any appropriate candidates for interview in early Spring 2022. Equally, there were great challenges in securing an interim Headteacher, with the school having had 2 interim Headteachers in the Autumn Term 2022.

The recruitment challenge would be even greater now given the role a headteacher would be expected to fulfill, teaching full time in the context outlined in the bullet points at the end of section c) above whilst also undertaking all the leadership responsibilities as head of the school.

### Summary

The majority of respondents to the consultation, which ran from 23 January to 21 February 2023, object to closure; there is a clear strength of feeling that the impact on current pupils and the local community would be significant. However, the challenges of delivering a full educational offer to those remaining on roll remains and will worsen with the reduction in pupil numbers at the school since the consultation was launched. As of 28 February 2023, the number of pupils on roll at the school was 35 and a further 16 pupils had applied to move school now. No solutions or actions have been identified in the consultation process to address these critical issues.

While recognising the level and nature of objection to the proposal, the case for the closure of Gt Gidding continues to be strong and in the best interests of local educational provision.

## **4. Pupil Numbers and admissions**

The school is a small rural co-educational school with an age range of 4-11 years.



The school has a published admissions number (PAN) of 14 and capacity for 98 pupils (14 x 7 year groups)

As of 20 February 2023 there were 35 pupils on roll, as illustrated in the table below.

Gt Gidding Primary								
	YEAR	2022-23						
CLASS	Rec	1	2	3	4	5	6	Totals
1	2	5	7					14
2				5	1			6
3						5	10	15
<b>Total Roll</b>	2	5	7	5	1	5	10	<b>35</b>
<b>PAN:</b>	14	14	14	14	14	14	14	98
Spaces	12	9	7	9	13	9	4	63

17 pupils are male and 18 female.

34 of the pupils are of compulsory school age and 1 of them is below compulsory school age.

Gt Gidding currently has no children with an Education Health & Care Plan (EHCP). There are 7 children in receipt of SEN Support, whose needs can be met through ordinarily available provision at any mainstream school.

## 5. Displaced pupils

Should the school close, it is proposed that, for admissions and transport purposes, the catchment area for primary schools in Sawtry would be extended to incorporate the area currently served by Gt Gidding Primary school namely the villages of Great, Little and Steeple Gidding, Winwick and Hamerton.

If, at the end of the statutory process, the Committee decides to close the school, in the week following that decision, a separate admissions round would open for parents/carers of children attending Gt Gidding Primary School in the current Yrs R to 5 to apply for new school places for September 2023. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend and the LA would work collaboratively with the schools concerned to meet preferences, where possible, but cannot guarantee to do so. If it is not possible to offer a place at one of their preferred schools, a place would be offered at the nearest school to their child's home where a place is available. The allocation of places would be made in line with the *School Admissions Code 2021*. Parents would be notified, on 12 May, of the new school places allocated to their child/ren for September 2023.

The LA has assessed the current capacity at the school and other schools in the surrounding area. Pupil numbers across the nine schools are forecast to decrease by 27 to 1,706 in October 2023, with surplus places increasing from 6.3% to 7.7%.

### Provisional pupil numbers within 7.5 miles of Gt Gidding (October 2022)

Name of school	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total (R-Y6)	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus
Sawtry Infant School	60	82	57	60					199	180	-19
Sawtry Junior Academy	65				59	60	56	83	258	260	2

Folksworth CE Primary	15	9	15	8	13	16	15	11	87	105	18
Stilton CE Primary Academy	30	11	29	14	13	13	26	23	129	210	81
Brington CE Primary	17	13	17	18	16	21	19	20	124	119	-5
Holme CE Primary	17	13	17	17	16	16	16	17	112	119	7
Yaxley Infants School	60	52	53	45					150	180	30
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	64				43	50	53	60	206	256	50
Fourfields Primary	60	55	61	60	59	89	58	59	441	420	-21
<b>Combined total on roll</b>		235	249	222	219	265	243	273	1706		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>	388	259	259	259	268	268	268	268		1849	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus</b>		24	10	37	49	3	25	-5			<b>143</b>

Data source: Pupil forecasts October 2022

If Gt Gidding's forecast of 39 pupils on roll for 2023/24 were to be absorbed by the nine schools, there would be 1,745 pupils and a remaining surplus of 104 places, or 5.6%.

It is acknowledged that William de Yaxley CE Junior School is currently graded by Ofsted as Requiring Improvement which may influence parental choice. Even without this school, there are sufficient places amongst the remaining 8 schools to accommodate displaced pupils, with a remaining surplus of 54 or 3.4%.

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of surplus capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts. A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

*"It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools".*

In this case, an overall capacity of 5.6% leaves surplus at the bare minimum and the capacity is not evenly spread across all year groups.

In the longer term, a new school is planned for Sawtry, with a proposed opening date of September 2024. This will serve children arising from new developments in Sawtry and will also mitigate the impact of displaced pupils wanting to take up a place in a Sawtry school. The new school will open with 1 form of entry (1FE) and will increase to 2FE in line with demand. This will, therefore, increase the overall level of surplus capacity available within local schools.

Until the new school opens, there are classrooms in both Sawtry and Infant Junior Schools which could be brought into use in 2023/24. Both schools have given in principle agreement for this if required.

## 6. Impact on the community

The Community Impact Assessment, undertaken as part of the Stage 1 consultation, identified a number of possible areas where the proposal could have some negative impact on a small number of local families and the local community, but also some mitigating factors which limit the impacts.

In any small community, the loss of one institution or business will be felt proportionately more than in a larger community and the closure of a school in a village community will undoubtedly impact. Good schools engage parents in their children's education and reach out to the wider community for support, as well as providing community facilities. However, these must be considered beneficial side-effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, budget deficits and quality of education must be the considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close this cannot be the overriding factor.

[The LA's Community Impact Assessment is available here.](#)

## 7. Rural primary schools

The school is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022.

The LA has carefully considered the factors set out in section 15(4) of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 as detailed in its report on the presumption against the closure of rural schools. The Presumption report is available as an Appendix to the Committee report of 8 March 2023 and can be read [here](#).

## 8. Balance of denominational provision

Gt Gidding CE Primary is a Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) school. The school has strong links with St Michael's church, into the grounds of which it has direct access from the school site. Huntingdonshire, the district of Cambridgeshire in which Gt Gidding Primary school is located is well provided for in terms Church of England primary schools. Currently there are 19 church of England primary schools providing a total of 3747 denominational places in the Huntingdonshire. Were the school to close the number of denominational primary schools would reduce to 18 and the total number of places to 3649.

The chart below lists the other Church of England primary schools closest to Gt Gidding. 4 of them are within 6 miles of Gt Gidding

Denominational Primary Schools in the area	Distance from Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School in miles (as the crow flies rounded)	Published Admission Number (PAN)
Folksworth CE VC P	4.5	15
Stilton CE Primary Academy	4.7	30

Brington CE VC Primary	5.1	17
Holme CE Primary Academy	5.5	17
The Elton CE VA Primary William de	6.8	20
Yaxley CE Junior Academy	7.2	64

If the school were to close, primary provision in Sawtry, 3.1 miles away (as the crow flies) from Gt Gidding would become the catchment for admissions and transport purposes. None of the schools in Sawtry have denominational status.

The October 2022 Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) recorded 47 pupils on roll. Only 12 (25%) of them reside in the Gt Gidding catchment while 35 (75%) lived in areas served by other schools. The 2022 School Census also showed that of the 18 children living in the area served by Gt Gidding attending state funded schools in Cambridgeshire, 5 of them (28%) attended other state funded schools in the surrounding area.

In summary, there are a number of alternative denominational schools which families will be able to apply to and for many pupils currently attending the school other denominational schools might be nearer to their home address than Gt Gidding Primary School. The availability of places at these other schools is set out in the table in section 5 above

In short, closure of Gt Gidding Primary School would not have a negative impact on parental choice.

## 9. Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable

## 10. Sixth form provision

Not applicable

## 11. Special educational needs provision

Gt Gidding Primary School does not have any provision recognised by the Local Authority as being reserved for children with special educational needs.

As such no response is required to this point.

Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigating Factors	Conclusions
Impact on pupils	Coping with change to a new school environment. This impact may be greater for children with SEND.	The local authority and schools would work to minimise disruption of transition. Additional transition support will be available for children with SEND.	Initially negative; later potentially positive in terms of widening peer groups and accessing different facilities. Overall: Neutral
Impact on parents and families	Loss of clubs and events.	All the alternative schools provide a range of clubs and events.	Neutral

Impact on wider community	Reduced bookings in community venue.	Gt Gidding village hall hosts events not linked to the school and is likely to continue to do so. The impact of bookings for children is unlikely to be significant as the number of children residing in Gt Gidding is unlikely to significantly change.	Potentially negative.
	Local shop losing trade	None	Potentially negative
	Reduced access to, and use of, the church for children, families. Reduction in the church community and the resulting impact on sustainability.	Community support will aid the Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit purposes.	Potentially negative
Access to a school with the same designated religious character	A number of pupils could be offered places at non-denominational schools.	There are other denominational schools in the area with places available (see section 5 above). Parents can express preference for a denominational school.	Neutral
Impact on neighbouring schools	Neighbouring schools would offer places to pupils currently at Gt Gidding.	Work will take place to increase capacity and ensure sufficient places at surrounding schools to take all the pupils from Gt Gidding.	Neutral
Impact on pupil travel arrangements	Some families may experience increased costs and travel time to school; others may experience reduced costs and travel time to school.	For the majority of pupils there are alternative schools nearer to their home address. Some pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment might face longer journeys to and	Potentially negative for pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment who might face longer journeys to and from school each day. Approximate minimum travel times each way, to

		from an alternative school each day. However for many their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance. Free home to school transport would be available for eligible pupils in line with the Council's statutory duties and its published policy.	and from school in Sawtry are below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Gt Gidding, 10 mins</li> <li>○ Lt Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>○ Steeple Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>○ Winwick 12 mins</li> <li>○ Hamerton 10 mins</li> <li>○ All villages 21 mins</li> </ul> The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) could be approximately 30 minutes if there were pick-up points in all the feeder villages.
Impact on community demographics	Closure of the school may impact the balance of community.	The birth rate in the village is low and projected to remain so. Very few pupils arising are from new housing. The majority of new homes are likely to be in school admissions areas served by other schools. Assessment of settlements similar to Gt Gidding indicates population stability regardless of there being a school.	Neutral

## 12. Travel

The majority (75%) of pupils attending the school are from outside its catchment, while a number of children living within the catchment (5 out of 18) travel to other schools. See section 3a) above. The majority of children, therefore, already face journeys to and from school each day.

Parents may express a preference for their child to attend any school, but in the event of closure of Gt Gidding Primary School, Sawtry Infant and Junior Schools would become the designated catchment schools for children living in the villages currently served by Gt Gidding Primary School and children living in that area would be entitled to transport assistance to Sawtry as the nearest schools are located there and the distance is over the statutory walking distances. The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) would be approximately 30 minutes, depending on the number of pick-up points.

Analysis in January 2023 showed that of the 37 Reception to Year 5 pupils on roll at the time likely to be affected by the proposal, approximately 73% lived nearer/the same distance to an alternative school, with approximately 27% living further away. However, for many on roll at the school, their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance of their home address. Given the large proportion of children who attend Gt Gidding as a parental preference rather than a catchment placement, it is envisaged that displaced pupils would continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers and that, given that the majority of pupils would be able to attend a school nearer to their home address, it is unlikely there would be a noticeable increase in car usage. On the contrary, it would be expected that car usage would reduce.





## Appendix 2a: Stage Two Consultation Feedback

### **Consultation response: 1**

To: School Consultations Inbox, Jonathan Lewis

Date received: 8<sup>th</sup> March 2023

*[Reason for redaction in full: Response relates to individual family circumstances and is specific to child's experience]*

### **Consultation response: 2**

To: School Consultations Inbox

Date received: 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Good Afternoon,

Our son attended Great Gidding CofE Primary School and it was the absolute making of him.

*[Redacted]*

Moving our son to Great Gidding meant additional travelling time and cost for us, as we lived *[redacted]* where *[redacted]* had attended happily *[redacted]*.

However the move to Great Gidding turned out to be the single most, best decision we have ever made for him to date.

He entered Gidding a broken, shell of a child always ill, as *[redacted]*. To which end I had to collect and bring him home for lunch every single day whilst there.

Great Gidding with its smaller class sizes, family type atmosphere, and staff that genuinely cared for the children brought him on, his appetite at lunchtimes returned and he started to run INTO school each morning, rather than the running AWAY he did at *[redacted]*.

He grew close to his teachers, and teaching assistants- particularly *[redacted]* who genuinely cared for him, and who brought him out of his shell and gave him confidence, to the point he actually called her 'Mum' by mistake one day! Even after *[redacted]* she continued to see him after school for additional tutoring after covid and to assist him before he made the step up to senior school at *[redacted]*

Our son entered Great Gidding school, lacking confidence and self esteem, and left there having been elected House Captain, Head Boy & School Prime Minister, by his friends and fellow students there, and we will be eternally grateful to the School for instilling that confidence in him, and the popularity that came with it.

He also more often than not returned 100% attendance each term at Gidding rather than in the low 80's at *[redacted]*.

The problem you have had with Gidding School is that it has been poorly run and managed, as there should always be a need for smaller village schools, smaller class sizes, and more personal tuition to bring on those children that need it, and I believe the school could survive with a certain level of mixed ability children attending, as it has done for many years.

I gave the [redacted] several suggestions on how to sustain the intake numbers of children attending each year at a constant level. Such as checking the local authority planning portal for any new build housing developments within a certain radius of the school, then trying to arrange meetings with the developers to request placing promotional material for the school in their brochures, on their websites and in their show homes using money from the schools budget. Also visiting the local playgroups with a view to promoting the 'family orientation ethos' of the school to parents with children of pre-school age. Sadly, none of this was followed through to my knowledge. Even my suggestion of the promotion the schools 'family' atmosphere during school events and activities free on social media platforms was rather half hearted.

The closure of this school would be a very sad day, and a huge mistake in my humble opinion.

You would only have needed to sit and watch the amount of parents like us that were prepared to spend their time and money travelling from nearby villages with their own primary schools such as Sawtry, Holme, Stilton, Folksworth and even as far as Yaxley [redacted] to understand the schools importance to the local communities. There is however one guarantee if you continue with the proposed closure of Great Gidding, is that you will 'lose' many children into the system of bigger class sizes in the future.

We all know children learn at differing levels and speeds, bigger class sizes, simply means more children not receiving the attention they may require, to help with their personal development and education, and being far less prepared for the transition to senior school.

Bigger, in the scenario of children's education, really is not better, and the fact is, that as a Primary School, Gidding really is Great!

Kind Regards  
[Redacted] (Parents)

*NB: Written permission was provided to publish this response.*

### **Consultation response: 3**

To: School Consultations Inbox  
Date received: 21<sup>st</sup> March 2023

Dear CCC,

Further to and notwithstanding my previous consultation response (attached for your information) and following subsequent E-mail correspondence with Jonathan Lewis, I would like to re-iterate the following;

1. Transitional programme and Transport Arrangements

*[redacted]*

2. Transitional Support

Due to the inevitable disruption and mental stress *[redacted]*, please confirm what mental support provision will be provided *[redacted]* and what additional resources will be provided to him to ease the transition?

3. School uniform costs

It is wholly unreasonable for the council to expect us to finance additional school uniform for the new school that my son would be required to attend (likely to be £100+), especially as this is only for one academic year (30 weeks) or put him at a disadvantage by not having the required uniform. Please confirm what the council's provision for this will be?

Kind regards,

*[redacted]*

**Consultation response: 4 (see Appendix 2b)**

To: School Consultations Inbox

Date received: 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023





HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Bryony Goodliffe  
Chair of the Children and Young People's Committee  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
New Shire Hall  
Alconbury Weald  
PE28 4YE

31 March 2023

*Dear Cllr Goodliffe,*

**Proposed closure of Great Gidding Church of England School**

I write to object to the closure of Great Gidding Church of England Primary School in Great Gidding, Huntingdonshire ("the school"). Many of my constituents have approached me with serious concerns about the impact that the proposed closure will have on children, parents, and the local community. I share those concerns.

Since its founding by the Church of England in 1845, the school has played a crucial role in the village and surrounding area. The school educates children not just from Great Gidding, but also from Little Gidding, Steeple Gidding, Hamerton, Winwick, Sawtry, and other villages further away.

I object to the proposal for the following reasons:

- Closing the school will have a severe, detrimental impact on its pupils. This is especially true for those who benefit from smaller class sizes and more nurturing environments, for whom alternative schools may not be appropriate, such as the school's relatively high proportion of students with special educational needs and disabilities. Pupils will inevitably face anxiety about their futures, impacting their learning and disrupting their development.
- Parents will be negatively affected by the closure. For many, this will mean reorganising childcare and travel arrangements, which will at best inconvenience and at worst incur additional household costs at a time of great economic anxiety.
- Teachers and support staff will lose their jobs, and may not be able to readily find alternative employers given the rural nature of the area. This may well be detrimental to their wellbeing, and may reduce the total number of teachers in Cambridgeshire.





- The closure of this rural school, which is being carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council, is in direct opposition to statutory guidance issued by the Government. That advice, issued in January 2023 by the Department for Education (DfE), states that: “Proposers should be aware that the department expects all decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools.”

- The DfE’s guidance further states that, in relation to rural primary schools, proposers must have regard to the discontinuance of the school on the local community. This includes the availability of other schools, the associated costs of relocating pupils, as well as the overall long-term impact of the closure and loss of the building as a community facility. These factors clearly have not been considered by the Council.

- Parents know their children best, and are well placed to make decisions about what is best for them. Parents should be provided with as much choice as possible to ensure that they can send their children to the school that they think will be most suitable to their children's needs and interests. Removing a school from their list of options completely goes against this important principle.

- Parents should not be deprived of access to a Church of England school, particularly when the Council accepts that places at alternative denominational schools may not be available.

- The school is at the heart of the local community, and its closure will negatively affect local businesses and community groups, such as the village shop and St Michael’s Church, both of which have close links with the school.

- Closing the school will mean the loss of an important “pull factor” encouraging families to move to the area. Young, economically active people with children are an asset to local communities and economies, and that is especially the case in rural areas such as Great Gidding.

- The Council’s demographic forecasts fail to take account of future housing developments which will likely increase the number of school-aged children living in Great Gidding and the surrounding area.

- These demographic forecasts also fail to factor in the “expectancy effect” that announcing the probable closure of the school will have on the pupils attending it; it is understandable that parents would seek to withdraw their children from an educational setting at risk of closure, thereby giving false weight to the Council’s argument about a “downward trend of numbers on roll.”

- The Council cites concern about the governing body’s difficulties in recruiting a Headteacher. However, former governors have said that the Council provided insufficient support in this endeavour. In the autumn of last year, many governors resigned over the matter. It is totally unfair to punish pupils, parents, and staff for what is ultimately a failure by the Council.



- The Council argues that the school's "per pupil" cost of £8,750 is the highest in the county, and suggests that this is one of the reasons for closure. However, it is inevitable, in any context, that one school's costs will be the highest. Were Great Gidding school to close, it would simply be the case that another school would take its place; by the Council's logic, that school should then potentially face closure too.

- Schools are not businesses, and should not be run on business principles, especially in rural areas where they not only provide education for children but also serve as the bedrock of communities.

I strongly believe that Great Gidding Church of England Primary School should remain open, and object to its proposed closure.

*Yours sincerely*



Rt Hon Shailesh Vara MP





## Appendix 3 – Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)

### Key service delivery objectives and outcomes \*

Describe the objectives the service is working towards and the current outcomes being achieved, to give context to your proposal. If this is a new service and these needs/objectives have never been met before, please state this instead of describing the current outcomes.

The Council, as the local Children's Services Authority, has a statutory duty to provide a school place for every child living in its area of responsibility who is of school age and whose parents want their child educated in the state funded sector. To achieve this, the Council keeps the number of school places under review and to take appropriate steps to manage the position where necessary. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 also requires local authorities to adopt a strategic role, with a duty to promote choice, diversity, and fair access to school provision.

In 2022/23 the Council detailed how it would bridge a projected £22.2m gap in budget with efficiencies, savings and the one-year government finance settlement – as well as working to bridge a projected gap of more than £80m over the next five years. Since then, inflationary pressures have further compounded financial challenges which the Council must work to mitigate. Equally schools are facing additional financial pressures, the like of which have not been seen in recent years.

The Council's statutory duty to provide school places in a way which promotes choice, diversity and fair access must be balanced against financial pressures to ensure a viable and sustainable future for our schools.

### What is the proposal \*

#### Describe what is changing and why

The Council has concerns on several fronts, as to the future viability of Great Gidding (Church of England) Voluntary Controlled Primary. These include, but are not limited to, demographic and in particular, financial issues.

To assess the school's overall viability a position statement was compiled which included details of the current and forecast financial position, staffing leadership and governance, actual and forecast pupil numbers, pupil outcomes and building condition. The conclusion of this position statement is that, given the weight of evidence, the Council should move towards closure of the school, effective from 31 August 2022 on the grounds that it is no longer considered to be viable.

A subsequent paper was provided to the Cambridgeshire Children and Young People's Committee, on 17 January 2023, at which the committee voted in favour of commencing a public consultation regarding the future viability of the school.

Following the public consultation, a further paper was provided to the Cambridgeshire Children and Young People's committee on 8 March 2023. The committee voted in favour of publication of a statutory proposal to close the school.

It is noted that there are 203 primary, infant, and junior schools across Cambridgeshire and that this is the first time since 1992 that the Council has proposed closure of one of the county's schools.

What information did you use to assess who would be affected by this proposal? \*

e.g. statistics, consultation documents, studies, research, customer feedback, briefings, comparative policies etc

- Actual data regarding the children on roll at the school and their year group (2018 - 2023).
- Actual data regarding the home catchment location of pupils on roll in the current academic year.
- Actual data regarding children on roll at neighbouring schools to determine capacity (2022)
- Demographic data (2022) including:
  - The number of children of primary school age forecast to be resident in the Great Gidding catchment area.
  - Child Health Information Service data regarding reducing birth rates which are resulting in falling school rolls
  - Planned housing developments in the area
  - Census data regarding the gender and ethnicity of children on roll
- 2022 data regarding children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) including
  - The number of children on roll with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
  - The number of children on roll in receipt of SEND Support
- Financial information (2022/23 and forecast up to 2025/26)
  - The current and 3-year budget forecast for the school.
  - The cost of redundancies, should they be required
  - The cost of decommissioning buildings
  - The cost of transport to provide access to alternative schools for displaced children
- Performance data (2021/22)
  - SATs pupil outcomes at the school for reading, writing and maths
  - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes
  - Year 1 Phonics outcomes
- Exploration of the potential impact of running a 2-class structure on the education offer and pupil outcomes.
- Leadership and governance information including
  - The outcome of a Strategic Leadership and Governance Review undertaken in October 2019
  - Vacancies and interim positions
- Information related to nearby schools including distance from Great Gidding and appropriateness for relocating Great Gidding pupils
- Demographic data regarding small settlements in Cambridgeshire.
- Responses to the consultation on the future viability of the school received via multiple means:
  - Smart Survey

- Consultations email inbox
- In writing
- During parent one to one meetings (where specified that it can be used for this purpose)
- During 5 consultation events – for parents, staff, public, parish council and local Headteachers
- Community Impact Assessment
- Input from church representatives

Which particular employee groups/service user groups will be affected by this proposal? \*

e.g. all staff in 'X' team, all staff in 'y' location, all customers receiving 'x' service, all customers in 'y' area

Of the 44 children on roll at Great Gidding Primary School in January 2023 10 will transition to secondary school in September 2023. Of the remaining 34 children, only 10 reside in the Great Gidding catchment area.

Forecast birth rates in the catchment are very low, with only 1 child predicted to be reaching school age each year.

Great Gidding has a small population with 322 residents recorded in 2020.

Those affected include:

- Children on roll
- Children on roll subject to Special Educational Needs (SEN) support.
- Children on roll eligible for free school meals
- Children in Gt Gidding catchment
- Children in other catchments
- Families living in the catchment area
- Staff working at the school
- The local community
- Local business owners

N.B. There are currently no children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) attending the school, though this may change between now and the potential closure of the school.

What is the significance of the impact on affected persons? \*

The aim here is to focus your mind on the lived experiences of the people impacted by our decisions, understanding they are part of these people's wider lives. Think about how serious the impact of this change will be, not by itself but as part of wider cumulative impact. For example, disabled people's lives cost more, and disabled people are often poorer, than non-disabled people.

So, a cut to a service that disabled people use is likely to be part of a cumulative experience of financial difficulties and challenges to living as full a life as possible

## **Age**

Children on roll at the school who reside in the Great Gidding catchment area and those who have recently been/will be born in the catchment will no longer have access to a school in their local community. It is of benefit to children to be able to walk to school and to attend school with peers who live locally to facilitate social development with peers outside school.

The main changes for pupils currently on roll, in Reception to Year 5 would be:

- A new school
- A new routine
- A new route to school
- A new uniform
- New teachers and support staff
- A new learning environment
- Changed friendship groups

Children in other catchments but on roll at Great Gidding are, in some cases, attending the school due to parental preference. The consultation feedback indicates that this preference is often related to it being a small school or to it being a church school. Parental preference will again be a primary consideration in applications for alternative schools and will be met where possible, in accordance with the school admissions code. Parents will be able to express a preference for another small/church school. It is possible that not all preferences will be met and some children will be offered places in their catchment or nearest school. Whilst it is possible that there will be detrimental impact of relocating such children to their local catchment school, it is also possible that they will benefit from attending school in their local community.

School communities, especially in small schools, develop close knit bonds. All children at the school will be impacted socially and emotionally by the closure of their school and by the breaking up of peer and friendship groups during the relocation of children to alternative schools. This is strongly reflected in the consultation feedback. They will also be impacted by the loss of the trusted adult relationships they have developed with staff at the school. Childhood is a period of fast paced social and emotional development and it is likely that there will be impact. Support will be needed to minimise detriment to wellbeing and to ensure positive transition to alternative schools.

Great Gidding has an aging population. Small villages often form close communities which are dependent on each other for quality of life. It is possible that the relocation of school children will have an emotional impact on elderly residents.

## **Disability:**

Children with SEND have the right to access education provision which meets their educational, health and care needs, and which promotes the best life outcomes.

As part of the duty under the Children & Families Act 2014, the Council has a legal duty to identify and assess the special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) of children and young people for whom they are responsible. The Council becomes responsible for securing appropriate educational provision for a child/young person in its area when it becomes aware that the child/young person has or may have SEND. The Council must then ensure that those children and young people receive a level of support which will help them “achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.”

There are currently no children on roll at Great Gidding Primary School who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There are children on roll accessing SEN Support.

Whilst the needs of children accessing SEN Support are met through ordinarily available provision within mainstream schools, it is possible that the issues highlighted as affecting all children on roll will disproportionately impact children with SEND. Children with SEND can be more reliant on trusted adult relationships and more susceptible to trauma resulting from upheaval.

Additional support for the transition of children with SEN to new schools will be required and particular attention paid to engagement with their parents/carers.

### **Families with children**

Whilst families may indicate a preference for relocation to a particular school, they may not be offered their first preference and/or they may not wish for their child to attend the nearest available school. It is possible that this will pose challenges in terms of travel to and from the relocation school as transport may only be provided where parents express an interest for and take up the place offered at the catchment school or nearest school with places available.

Parents and carers of children at the school are likely to have developed supportive relationships with each other. These relationships may cease and there may be a resulting social and emotional impact.

There are/have been events both inside and outside of school hours organised by the school. If the school closes, these events will cease. Events include but are not limited to:

- Summer and Christmas Fayres (though the last of these was in 2019)
- Harvest Festival during which the whole school go to church and family members are invited to attend
- Book week events during which parents are invited to an assembly
- Christingle church service followed by a Christmas Mingle
- Discos and quizzes have been held in the past but are not regular events

A dance club and a PE club are offered after school one day per week for approximately 1 hour. Previously, 2 PE related clubs and an art club were offered.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

There is a small possibility that those with young children, current pregnancy or who plan to have children will choose to move away from the village or will not opt to move to the village at all.

### **Religion or belief**

Gt Gidding CE Primary is a denominational school (Church of England). The school has strong links with the church, into the grounds of which it has direct access from the school site.

Currently there are 19 church of England primary schools providing a total of 3747 denominational places in Huntingdonshire. Should Gt Gidding close the number of denominational primary schools would reduce to 18 and the total number of places to 3649. Whilst there are other denominational schools in the area surrounding Gt Gidding, places being available at those schools cannot be guaranteed and transport may not be provided for parental choice placements, in accordance with CCCs transport policy. Some pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding might be offered places at non-denominational schools.

The church community may suffer detriment from the loss of the primary school children within their church community.

The children may suffer detriment through reduced access to the place of worship.

Parents may have selected the school as their preference due to it being a Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character and be unhappy that this option will now be closed to them locally. Whilst some schools that children may be relocated to are also Church of England schools, some are not. Should parents express a preference for a school which is not their catchment/closest school on the basis of the school's designated religious character, they may be responsible for transporting their children to and from that school. This is due to the Councils policy that transport is only provided where a child attends their catchment school or the closest school with places available.

Great Gidding Church of St Michael is led by a visible, popular and active lay and ordained church team. As a typical and important rural church, it has 2 'minister led' services a month on Sundays, and one early morning midweek communion. In addition, individuals regularly use the church as a spiritual haven at any part of the day. The closure of the school will naturally likely impact on participation in such activities, particularly in relation to those individuals and families whose presence in the community is a consequence of being at, or having children in, the school. In short, the school closure will reduce the wider impact of the church's Ministry, and the reciprocal resourcing of it.

For Christmas, Harvest, Remembrance Day and for choral evensongs (2 or 3 a year, with visiting choir), the congregation increases considerably as a consequence of school participation. The school come into church every month for a service and are a welcome and important part of the congregation. Due to their regular attendance, the staff and pupils have made a 'qualifying connection' to be married in the church, should they wish. The school has 3 services in the year when parents also come.

Without the school, participation could be significantly impacted, not least in terms of children, young people and families. The community will need to further support the excellent Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit purposes.

The Grade 1 listed building is increasingly in need of support, and funding. The closure of the school then, like any major village service, will thus further put pressure on the long term sustainability of such essential spiritual provision, for those of faith and for anyone seeking pastoral care and support.

### **Rural isolation**

Residents of rural communities are often socially connected with children and school activities being a central aspect of social activities. The number of children living in the area is already low and there may be an impact in terms of fewer children attending local village events and further declining numbers of children residing in the village.

During consultation, concern was expressed that local amenities may be affected by closure of the school. Specifically, concerns were expressed about the impact on the village shop, the village pub and the village hall in respect of lost trade and lost bookings for events such as children's parties and the potential impact on the local Church and Church community due to the loss of services attended by school.

Whilst it is possible that there will be an impact in terms of declining demand for housing in the village and associated impact on house prices, data provided by the Business Intelligence team indicates that villages with similar demographics and no local school have stable populations.

### **Poverty and socio-economic status**

The number of children on roll at Great Gidding (Church of England) Voluntary Controlled Primary School who were eligible for Free School Meals in October 2022 was 22.7%. Whilst this is in line with the national average of 22.5% it is higher than the local average for Huntingdonshire which is 18.1%. This is an indicator that the school has higher than the local average of families on low incomes.

Families on low incomes may be less likely to have the resources available, for example transport options and IT solutions, to mitigate the dispersal of social networks caused by the school closure. They may also be disproportionately impacted by the need to purchase required items such as school uniform.

Such families are less likely to be able to apply preference to the school their child attends following the closure of Great Gidding (Church of England) Voluntary Controlled Primary School due to being reliant on Local Authority provided transport options. As a result, children from disadvantaged families may have fewer options to their counterparts who have financial opportunity.

### **Gender reassignment**

The proposed closure of Great Gidding Primary School will not have a foreseeable negative impact on this group.

### **Marriage and civil partnership**

The proposed closure of Great Gidding Primary School will not have a foreseeable negative impact on this group.

### **Sexual orientation**

The proposed closure of Great Gidding Primary School will not have a foreseeable negative impact on this group.

### **Sex**

As at the January 2022 Pupil Led Annual Census (PLASC), there were 20 female, and 24 male children on roll at the school. Whilst this is slightly more male than female, the number is not significant.

Therefore, the proposed closure of Great Gidding Primary School will not have a foreseeable negative impact on a those of a particular sex.

### **Race**

The rate of children on roll at Gt Gidding who belong to an ethnic minority is low.

At the January 2023 Pupil Led Annual Census, 39 of the 44 children on roll reported being white British. Of the remaining 5 children on roll, 3 reported an ethnicity other than White British, 1 refused to provide the information, and for 1 child the information had not yet been obtained.

<b>Great Gidding CofE Primary School</b>	<b>44</b>
Any Other Asian Background	1
Any Other Mixed Background	1
Information Not Yet Obtained	1
Refused	1
White - British	39
White and Asian	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>44</b>

Therefore, the proposed closure of Great Gidding Primary School will not have a foreseeable negative impact on ethnic minorities.

### **N.B. Staff**

Should closure be considered, staff redundancies will also be considered. This is likely to be undertaken via a separate EqIA completed specifically for the staff redundancy process.



## Research, data and /or statistical evidence \*

List evidence sources, research, statistics etc used. State when this was gathered/dates from. State which potentially affected groups were considered. Append data, evidence or equivalent

- Actual data regarding the children on roll at the school (2022). This includes:
  - Numbers on roll and year group
  - Home catchment location of pupils
  - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) data
- Actual data regarding children on roll at neighbouring schools to determine capacity (2022)
- Demographic data (2022) including:
  - The number of children of primary school age forecast to be resident in the Great Gidding catchment area over the coming years.
  - Child Health Information Service data regarding reducing birth rates which are resulting in falling school rolls
  - Planned housing developments in the area
  - Great Gidding population data
  - Census data regarding the gender and ethnicity of children on roll
- Data regarding children with SEND (2022) including
  - The number of children on roll with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP)
  - The number of children on roll in receipt of SEND Support
- Financial information (2022/23 and forecast up to 2025/26)
  - The current and 3-year budget forecast for the school.
  - The cost of redundancies, should they be required
  - The cost of decommissioning buildings
  - The cost of transport to provide access to alternative schools for displaced children
- Performance data (2021/22)
  - SATs pupil outcomes at the school for reading, writing and maths
  - Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) outcomes
  - Year 1 Phonics outcomes
- Exploration of the potential impact of running a 2-class structure on the education offer and pupil outcomes.
- Leadership and governance information including
  - The outcome of a Strategic Leadership and Governance Review undertaken in October 2019
  - Vacancies and interim positions
- Information related to nearby schools including distance from Great Gidding and appropriateness for relocating Great Gidding pupils
- Demographic data regarding small settlements in Cambridgeshire.
- Responses to the consultation on the future viability of the school received via multiple means:
  - Smart Survey
  - Consultations email inbox
  - In writing
  - During parent one to one meetings (where specified that it can be used for this purpose)

- During 5 consultation events – for parents, staff, public, parish council and local Headteachers
- Community Impact Assessment
- Input from church representatives

#### Consultation evidence \*

State who was consulted and when (e.g. internal/external people and whether they included members of the affected groups). State which potentially affected groups were considered. Append consultation questions and responses or equivalent

The DfE guidance document '[Opening and Closing Maintained Schools](#)' guides this process, including through provision of a list of consultees.

A period of consultation was agreed by the Children and Young People Committee on 17 January 2023. The consultation period commenced on 23 January 2023 and ran until 21 February 2023.

There were many ways in which responses to the consultation were gathered:

- An online smart survey (open 23 January 2023 – 21 February 2023)
- Provision of a box at the school where paper responses can be posted and forwarded (available 23 January 2023 – 21 February 2023)
- Provision of a consultations email inbox
- One to one meetings offered to parents/carers (6 February and 9 February 2023)
- Three consultation events at Gt Gidding CE Primary school; one for parents, one for staff and one for the public (held 31 January 2023)
- A consultation event for Headteachers of other primary schools in the area (held at Folksworth Village Hall on 6 February 2023)
- A consultation event with the Parish Council (held 9 February 2023)
- A pupil voice forum attended by all pupils at the school on 5 February 2023.

All responses were collated and provided in full to Children and Young People Committee on 8 March 2023. Committee also received an overview of the consultation responses including:

- themes arising
- how many responses were received and through which mechanism
- who has responded (parents of current and previous pupils, staff, governors, Gt Gidding residents, other)
- views on closure of the school (strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree)

Themes and points arising from consultation are considered within this assessment and in the community impact assessment, which appended the 8 March committee paper.

Consultation questions and responses were appended to the 8 March 2023 Children and Young People Committee report.

Based on all the evidence you have reviewed/gathered, what positive impacts are anticipated from this proposal? \*

This includes impacts retained from any previous arrangements as well as new benefits including improvements in line with our duties as a Public Sector organisation under the Equality Act. Use the evidence you described above to support your answer

Should the school remain open it will be subject to a financial deficit position which will make the running of it unviable. Timely closure avoids a budget deficit which would otherwise have to be managed.

Continued falling rolls and increasing costs will either result in this school having a budget deficit very soon or in the education offer being significantly impacted by the measures taken to remain within budget. Closure of the school, and relocation of the pupils on roll elsewhere, will ensure that pupils are not in a school which is unable to provide a broad and rich curriculum due to financial constraints and the need to reduce to a 2-class structure.

Children attending Great Gidding Primary School from out of catchment have the potential to benefit from being relocated to a school in their local community.

Based on consultation evidence or similar, what negative impacts are anticipated from this proposal? \*

This includes impacts retained from any previous arrangements. Use the evidence you described above to support your answer

#### Children on roll - Reception to Year 5:

- Being unable to access an alternative school place in the local area
- Impact on emotional wellbeing of their school closing and moving to a new, larger school
- Potential loss of established peer relationships and the resulting impact on social development
- Potential impact on educational attainment as a result of being in a larger school, being affected emotionally and managing the loss of old social connections and needing to form new social connections.
- Possible loss of access to a church school
- Increased journey times for some pupils.
- Possible loss of access to a small school with mixed year groups.

#### Children on roll - Year 6:

- Classmates and peers moving schools prior to the end of the academic year and the resulting experience of seeing their school community dwindle.
- Emotional impact of their school closing

- Potential negative result on SATs performance due to the emotional and social impact of what is happening.

### Children with SEND

- Possible negative impact of attending a larger school for some children with SEND

### Parents/carers

- Potential of not being able to relocate their child(ren) to another small school/church school.
- Potential of having to transport their child(ren) to school in order to access an alternative school which meets their preference.

### Gt Gidding Community

- Potential loss of trade at local businesses, namely the pub, shop and village hall
- The possible reduction in the church community and the resulting impact on the local church
- Possible reduced attraction of living in Gt Gidding and a resulting impact on the stability of the community and the housing market.

### How will the process of change be managed? \*

Poorly managed change processes can cause stress/distress, even when the outcome is expected to be an improvement. How will you involve people with protected characteristics/experiencing socio-economic inequalities in the change process to ensure distress/stress is kept to a minimum? This is particularly important where they may need different or extra support, accessible information etc

The change process will follow that laid out in the DfE '[Opening and Closing Maintained Schools](#)' guidance document. Information regarding the proposal and consultation is being shared widely and is accessible online. There is a consultations email inbox which is monitored daily to enable the request of information in an alternative format should it be required.

HR services are involved throughout to advise and support staff working in the school. The impact on staff will be identified and mitigated as far as reasonably practicable, for example through support to identify future recruitment opportunities in the local area.

Local Authority support will be made available to all children at the school through the Strategic SEND Support Team who will provide support for pupils using a pastoral emotional health and wellbeing approach. The package of support made available will be bespoke to the needs of pupils at Gt Gidding and delivered by a Strategic SEND Support Specialist Teacher. The support is scheduled to commence in May.

Should we become aware of a significant population of people who may need information in a different format, we will be proactive in providing that. Otherwise, information will be made available in different formats, as far as is reasonably practicable, upon request.

How will the impacts during the change process be monitored and improvements made (where required)? \*

How will you confirm the process of change is not leading to excessive stress/distress to people with protected characteristics/experiencing socio-economic inequalities, compared to other people impacted by the change? What will you do if it is discovered such groups are being less well supported than others?

There was a consultations email inbox, an online survey and a place to receive paper responses to ensure that impacted people could ask questions about the process and provide responses. In addition, there were multiple consultation meetings. One to one meetings were offered to parents of the school and contact with admissions officers will be made available should a decision to close be made. There has also been a pupil voice group forum facilitated by staff with appropriate skill in working with children. This included all pupils at the school on the day.

The process is being closely monitored by Education Place Planning Officers in relation to consultation responses and by HR staff in relation to staff relocation and redundancy (though this will be covered in more detail in the staff specific EqIA).

An FAQ document is available. This was updated in response to consultation responses received. Questions and comments arising during the consultation were published. Though these were redacted prior to publication (to protect personal data and ensure privacy), Committee members received them in full. Council responses to questions and comments aimed to provide an understanding of why decisions have been made, whilst also ensuring that consultees feel heard and assured of a fair and transparent process.

Responses were monitored and analysed. Should any group have been disproportionately represented in responses, the Council would have sought to establish why. Learning will be applied to future consultation activity.

If responses had indicated an impact on a particular group not already identified, it would have been taken into consideration with regards to how any negative consequences can be mitigated.

This is the first time since the 1992 that the Council has had to propose a school closure. Staff will ensure any learning throughout the process is used to inform change.

Action to mitigate impact with reasons/evidence to support this or justification for retaining negative impact

Throughout the process so far, the ability of people to engage and comment has been maximised through use of mixed media and other support. I.e. a webpage where information can be found including consultation documents and FAQs; regular update letters and communications to parents and staff; face to face group meetings for staff, parents and members of the public; an email inbox where comments can be received; an online form where comments

can be received; a box at the school where paper responses can be received; a pupil voice face to face forum; one to one meetings offered to parents; HR meetings for staff; admissions meetings for parents should a decision to close be made.

## **Age**

The objective outcome of maintaining educational standards and ensuring good educational provision for all children is key. The benefit of attending a school where a broad and varied curriculum is offered is likely to outweigh negative consequences of closure for the majority of children in the long term. Alternatives to closure are being considered and if an option is found that meets the educational aim without closure, it will be presented to CYP committee.

It is proposed that a change to the catchment area, from the 2023/24 academic year, be made to incorporate the Gt Gidding catchment area into the Sawtry catchment area. This would ensure that should Gt Gidding close, children living in the school's catchment area would have access to other local schools. An application for a variation in admission arrangements under paragraph 3.6 of the School Admissions Code 2021 could be made due to a significant change in circumstances (which would be the closure of Gt Gidding) and this would assist in making the changes sooner than under the Code using the normal procedures of consultation, which would not be implemented until the admissions round for September 2025. Under the normal procedures, consultation would occur during the Autumn Term; determination would be made by 28 February post consultation; and implementation would occur in the year after determination.

Every pupil would be guaranteed the offer of a place at an alternative primary school in their local area. Which school is offered will depend on parental preference and the home catchment location of each child. It is noted that 3 children live outside of Cambridgeshire (2 in Peterborough and 1 in Northamptonshire). Liaison with the local admissions authority regarding these children is taking place. Schools likely to receive displaced children include:

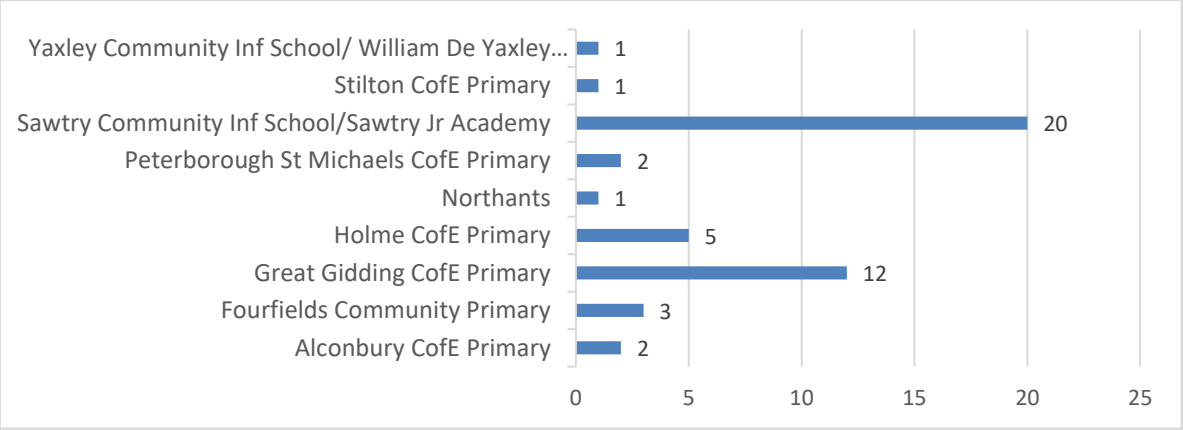
- Sawtry Community Infant School
- Sawtry Junior Academy
- Holme Church of England Primary School
- Fourfields Community Primary School
- Stilton Church of England Primary School
- Yaxley Community Infant School
- William de Yaxley Church of England Junior School
- Alconbury Church of England Primary School

These schools will in many cases be closer to home than Great Gidding. Where the schools are further away (and it is the catchment or closest school with available places), transport to and from school will be provided. It is anticipated that places will be made available and offered in catchment schools which, offers are accepted by families, is likely to result in more children being able to walk to school, or in reduced journey times. This is currently subject to negotiations with schools regarding increase of PAN.

The majority of pupils attending Gt Gidding are from outside its catchment area. As at the October 2022 annual pupil census, there were 47 pupils on roll at Gt Gidding. Only 12 (25.5%) of those pupils lived in the Gt Gidding catchment. The remaining 35 pupils (74.5%) travelled to Gt

Gidding from other catchments. The largest proportion of pupils attended from the Sawtry catchment. This is illustrated in the chart below.

**Distribution of pupils attending Gt Gidding CofE VC Primary School**



**Source: Pupil led annual school census (PLASC) October 2022**

From this information it is evident that the majority of pupils attending Gt Gidding already faced journeys to and from school each day. A number of in-year applications to move to alternative schools have been received and some children have left Gt Gidding for other schools. The impact on traffic congestion and the environment had the potential to be reduced in the event that Gt Gidding were to close, as the majority of displaced pupils have the opportunity to attend schools nearer to their home address. However, parental preference is clear with many families opting against their local/closest school when making an in-year application to move to an alternative school.

Of the 12 children on roll in October 2022 who reside in Gt Gidding’s catchment 2 are in Yr 6 and will transfer to secondary phase in Sept 2023. For the remaining 10 children, if Gt Gidding were to close, alternative schools are not far from the village and would be in travelling distance for community activities - between 3.1 and 7.3 miles away from Gt Gidding as shown in the table below. For the majority of pupils and families these schools could be nearer to their home address.

**Distance from Gt Gidding CofE VC Primary School to alternative schools in the local area**

School	Distances in miles (as the crow flies)
Sawtry Infants School	3.1
Sawtry Junior Academy	3.1
Folksworth CofE VC Primary School	4.5
Stilton CofE Primary Academy	4.7
Brington CofE Primary School	5.1
Holme CofE Primary School	5.5
Yaxley Community Infant School	7.1
William de Yaxley CofE Junior Academy	7.2
Fourfields Primary School	7.3



Analysis of those on roll at the time of the October 2022 census shows that of the 37 Reception to Year 5 pupils who may be affected by the proposal, approximately 73% live nearer, or the same distance, to an alternative school, with approximately 27% living further away. Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils who meet the criteria set out in the link below.

#### [Pre-16 transport \(mainstream\) - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

As at January 2023, the local authority anticipated that 10 pupils would be eligible for free home to school transport to their nearest alternative school if applying the transport policy. This was offset by 8 children who currently receive free transport to Gt Gidding, and who may no longer be eligible. Hence, the additional cost to the local authority had the potential to be small. However, due to the exceptional circumstances, the Children and Young People's committee may choose to support families with transport costs over and above what the policy states.

The local authority acknowledges that pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment and attending the school will face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day though, for the majority, their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance.

It is envisaged that many displaced pupils will continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers, though some may receive LA provided transport. Given that the majority of pupils are able to attend a school nearer to their home address, it initially appeared unlikely that there would be an increase in car usage. To the contrary, it was hoped that car usage would reduce, thereby having a positive impact on the environment. The reality, based upon in-year applications received, is that many families have opted against their local school, as they previously did in their preference for Gt Gidding. As a result, car usage is likely to remain at a similar level whether Gt Gidding closes or remains open.

The local authority must continue to discharge its statutory duty in terms of ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet demand and that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their local community and makes best use of public funding.

It is not the school's or the local authority's role to seek to encourage families with young children to move to the village. The LA is not allowed to promote any school and indeed the resources required to attempt to do so would be prohibitive and likely to be of little effect.

Schools in the local area have a greater offer for wraparound care and events than is currently available at Gt Gidding. They provide events and clubs, but many also provide wrap around care for pupils. The offer available is summarised below and further detail can be found by contacting schools directly.

##### ☐ Sawtry Community Infant school

Sawtry Community Infant School runs a number of lunch time and after school clubs for pupils including music, gymnastics, computing, multi-sports, dance, choir and dodgeball.

The Friends of Sawtry Infant School Association runs fundraising events including a Christmas shopping event, discos, mini competitions, and a summer fayre.

There is a preschool, Buttons and Bows, running from the school site.



Wrap around care is provided on site, by Kidzone, to both Sawtry Infants School and Sawtry Junior School pupils.

□ Sawtry Junior Academy

Sawtry Junior Academy offers a wide range of after school enrichment activities, including a wide range of clubs, a lunch time homework club, and music lessons for piano, recorder, violin, drums and guitar.

The Sawtry Junior Parents Association runs fundraising events for the school, including discos, film nights, Christmas and Summer Fayres.

Wrap around care is available at the nearby Sawtry Infants School site.

□ Fourfields Community Primary School

Fourfields Primary School offers a wide range of after school enrichment activities. There are after school clubs run by school staff offering choir, cooking, football, cross country, reading, Korean, history, forest fun. There is a lunch time pokemon card swapping club. There are also after school clubs run by external providers on school site including Taekwondo, drama, boxercise and football.

The school runs events for parents, including parent coffee afternoons and a support group for parents of children with special educational needs (SEN).

Yaxley Out of School Club offers wrap around care for the children at the school.

□ Alconbury CofE Primary School

Alconbury's local vicar leads Collective Worship weekly. Other clergy from the local Baptist and Methodist churches who are friends of the school lead worship each half term.

The school runs a range of clubs, further details of which can be obtained from the school office.

Alconberries Before and After School Club offers wrap around care.

□ Holme CofE Primary School

Holme CofE Primary School offers wrap around care via an After School Club.

The school runs clubs offering football for girls run by Peterborough United Football Club, Lego, Zumba, singing, netball and futsal.

Friends of Holme School facilitate the sale of pre-loved school uniform and Christmas jumpers and run the 100 club, a lottery which involves parents and other relatives being able to buy a number for a monthly draw.

□ Yaxley Community Infant School

Wrap around care is provided for Yaxley Infants, by Energy Kidz, at William de Yaxley Junior School.

The school can provide information on clubs and events if requested.

□ William de Yaxley CofE Junior School

Wrap around care is provided on site at William de Yaxley Junior School by Energy Kidz. Easter holiday club provision is also available on site.

Pupils take part in collective worship and there is a worship council, voted for by peers.

The school has a lunch time Eco Club and offers in school music lessons, delivered by JMP Music, for the following: Piano/keyboard, guitar, ukulele, drums, singing, violin, recorder and trumpet. Lessons for clarinet, saxophone and flute are also available online.

□ Stilton CofE Primary School

Collective worship at Stilton CofE Primary School takes place daily and there is a termly schedule of times when parents/carers can attend the school to join collective worship.

Various extracurricular activities are available for children at the school including choir, gardening club, French, music, Lego club, DT, street dance, and music lessons in singing, keyboard, drums, guitar and ukulele.

The Haven Out of School Club runs wrap around care from the site.

□ Folksworth CofE Primary School

Folksworth CofE Primary School holds collective worship. The school has links with its local churches in the surrounding catchment villages of Folksworth, Stilton, Elton, Haddon, Morborne. These villages and churches fall within the Diocese of Ely. The Vicar-in-charge of The Stilton Group of Parishes, Richard Gibbs, is the local Vicar and visits the school regularly.

After school clubs are available at the school. They are run by Youth Dream and the current offer includes multi sports, handball/dodgeball, yoga, netball, Minecraft, SATs booster, and bible story Lego.

Friends of Stilton School meet regularly to organise events and initiatives that support fundraising for the school.

□ Brington CofE Primary School

St Leonard's Pre-school is located next door to Brington CofE Primary School. As well as offering Early Years provision the site hosts the out of school club which, although a separate entity, is run by the same charitable trust. Wrap around care is available 7:30 – 18:00, 50 weeks of the year.

Collective worship is a feature of the school and a pupil worship committee meets at least once every half term.

The school can provide information on clubs and events if requested.

It is recommended that, in addition to the mitigations outlined above, the receiving schools would be asked to identify buddies for the incoming pupils to help further ease transition by ensuring there is a familiar face and an introduction to new friendship groups.

The local authority would be responsible for overseeing the process of closing the school and would work closely with the school to implement closure, including supporting pupils during their final months at Gt Gidding and in their transition to a new school. Many parents/carers have already made in-year application to move their child(ren) to an alternative school and in most cases, the first preference has been met. Parents and carers of children remaining at the school would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school, should the decision be made to close. Parents/carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child(ren) to attend. Parents/carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. The local authority would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would

be made in line with the School Admissions Code and the admissions policies for the schools involved. Further information is available on the Cambridgeshire County Council website at:

[Apply for a school place - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The local authority would take all practicable steps to ease the transition for all pupils, including vulnerable groups. It would work with the receiving schools to arrange transition days for pupils to meet their new teachers and to familiarise themselves with their new environments.

Local Authority support will be made available through the Strategic SEND Support Team who will provide support for pupils using a pastoral emotional health and wellbeing approach. The package of support made available will be bespoke to the needs of pupils at Gt Gidding and delivered by a Strategic SEND Support Specialist Teacher.

Whilst there may be an emotional impact on adults within Great Gidding due to the loss of the school, evidence from Business Intelligence data suggests that small settlements remain stable even without a school.

## **Disability**

The objective outcome of maintaining educational standards and ensuring good educational provision for all children applies equally to children with SEND as to others. The benefit of attending a school where a broad and varied curriculum is offered is likely to outweigh negative consequences of closure for the majority of children in the long term. Alternatives to closure are being considered and if an option is found that meets the educational aim without closure, it will be presented to CYP committee.

The council is aware that children with SEND may be disproportionately affected by the potential closure of Great Gidding Primary School.

To mitigate impact as far as reasonably possible, there are several steps that will be taken, should the closure go ahead.

In January 2023 there were 9 children on roll at Great Gidding Primary who were accessing SEN support. There were, and still are, no children who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

The SEND District Team is working to identify the provision required to meet the needs of children receiving SEN support. They provide the receiving school with advice regarding implementation of the required support within their existing resources.

The SEND District Team is ensuring that link SEND practitioners are identified within the receiving schools and that information is appropriately shared regarding the children they will receive.

Support will be available to Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) at receiving schools to incorporate the provision required as part of the school's graduated response.

Prior to closure, the SEND District Team is working with staff at Great Gidding Primary School to carry out child centred planning for the small number of children with more complex needs. This will ensure that pupil and parent/carers voices are heard and used to build a robust and successful transition plan.

For the small number of children requiring more specialist transition support, the SEND District Team will work collaboratively with receiving schools and parents/carers to identify how SEND District schools hours can be used for the individual case work required.

Should any children receive an EHCP prior to closure, they will be supported to identify and transition to a school through the well-established EHCP processes.

### **Pregnancy and maternity**

Data provided by the business intelligence team estimates that there have been a very small number of births in the Great Gidding catchment in recent years (on average, less than 2 per year over the past decade), and that this trend of low births in the village is expected to continue, and if anything reduce even further.

### **Religion or belief**

All non-denominational state funded schools in England have to provide collective worship of a '*broadly Christian character*'. Equally, denominational schools are not exclusive to worshipping families.

Aside from Gt Gidding, there are five denominational schools within 6 miles of Gt Gidding (as the crow flies). These are listed alongside their distance from Gt Gidding, their published admission number (PAN) and the number of classes they currently operate.

- Gt Gidding CofE Primary School (0m; PAN 14; 3 classes)
- Folksworth CofE Primary School (4.5m; PAN 15; 4 classes)
- Stilton CofE Primary Academy (4.7m; PAN 30; 6 classes)
- Brington CofE Primary School (5.1m; PAN 17; 4 classes)
- Holme CofE Primary Academy (5.5m; PAN 17; 5 classes)

Though it cannot guarantee to do so, the LA will endeavour to meet parental preferences for alternative school places and it is forecast that there will be surplus places in all of the above schools in September 2023 with the exception of Brington CE Primary School. There is the possibility of Brington reorganising classes to create capacity in surplus physical space. Further detail of places can be found in the Community Impact Assessment section entitled 'Impact on Neighbouring Schools'.

CCC Officers offered to meet with parents one to one. With parents that took up this offer, we discussed likely preferences for alternative school placement should Gt Gidding close. Based upon this information, officers are exploring options with implicated schools which would allow for as many preferences to be met as possible.

Should a decision be made to close the school, a discrete admissions round will be opened for parents of children in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding CofE Primary School. Parents

will be able to express three preferences for alternative schools, and effort will be made to accommodate children in denominational schools should they so wish.

The consultation process has already raised a number of concerns from parents whose children would be displaced to other schools in the event of Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School closing. These include the cost of transport to their child's new school if their choice of school does not entitle them to transport assistance under the Council's transport policy. This could apply to families whose preference is for an alternative Church of England school. If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to the school nearest to their home address or the nearest Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character to their home address. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.

Children resident in the Great Gidding catchment, and those further afield, will still have access to the local church, even should they no longer attend as part of their school day.

Families and children of faiths other than Church of England, and of no faith also attend Great Gidding Primary School. It may be that some would prefer a school without a designated religious character, or have no preference.

### **Rural isolation**

Whilst it is possible that there will be an impact in terms of declining demand for housing in the village and associated impact on house prices, data provided by the Business Intelligence team indicates that villages with similar demographics and no local school have stable populations.

The Giddings Parish Council provide information on its website about a range of groups and events in the wider parish area that could be accessed by the local community. Events have included:

- The Great Gidding Wassail held in Jubilee Wood
- Festive wine tasting
- Luddington Open Studios, where Luddington in Brook ladies were serving homemade cakes and teas
- Hamerton Village Harvest Supper
- Harvest Festival and Service of Prayer and Reflection remembering Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at St Michael's Church.
- Winwick Fete
- Summer wine tasting
- Coffee mornings at the village hall.

The economic benefits that a school brings to a community must be considered beneficial side effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, budget deficits and academic standards must be the major considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close a school; this cannot be an overriding factor. If the school closed, the local shop and pub would be unable to rely on passing trade from the school community and their families.

This is already the case for 13 weeks of the year during school holidays. It would be for the local community to consider how to support local retail facilities.

Concern was raised during the consultation that there is potential for reduced bookings at the village hall for events such as children's parties. Most of the children on roll at Gt Gidding do not live in the catchment. It is likely that events for these children have been held in venues local to their home rather than to their school. The families of children on roll who do reside in Gt Gidding are likely to continue to use the village hall as previously. Research conducted by the Parish Council Clerk shows that there have been only 2 children's parties at the village hall since the end of COVID-19 lockdowns in March 2021. Both bookings were for village residents. There was an children's party enquiry from a resident outside of Gt Gidding but the booking could not be facilitated due to it coinciding with another booked event. The school directly made use of the village hall over a 2 day period in July 2022 for end of term event rehearsals. The hall was made available for use of the school with no charge.

Gt Gidding and Abbots Ripton are the smallest settlements in Cambridgeshire with a primary school. The Abbots Ripton school catchment has a different demographic to Gt Gidding with over 44 age 4-11 children living in catchment, compared to only 19 in the Gt Gidding catchment. A demographic comparison of Gt Gidding and similar Cambridgeshire villages without schools or where schools previously closed indicates that populations remain stable.

## **Poverty and socio-economic status**

If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to alternative schools even if they are not the school nearest to their home address or the nearest Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character to their home address, and with uniform costs. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.

It is possible that many children will relocate to schools with peers from Great Gidding.

Transition arrangements will be made to ensure opportunities to form new social groups are maximised, for example through visits prior to transition and through the identification of 'buddies' at the receiving schools who will socially support their new peers.

It is possible that some children will attend school closer to home if relocated, which is likely to have a positive impact on access to community and peer group activities.

Many alternative schools have help available to parents through the provision of low cost second hand uniform.

All schools are legally obliged to provide additional support to children and families from disadvantaged backgrounds and as such, the support received through free school meals and pupil premium will continue for all eligible children.



### Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan:

Details of negative impact (e.g. worse treatment/outcomes)	Groups affected	Action to mitigate impact with reasons/evidence to support this or justification for retaining negative impact	Who by	When
Some people may find it more difficult to access consultation and or events and this inequality could affect their ability to contribute and be heard.	All	During the process so far, the ability of people to engage and comment was maximised through use of mixed media and other support. I.e. a webpage where information can be found including consultation documents and FAQs; regular update letters and communications to parents and staff; face to face group meetings for staff, parents and members of the public; an email inbox where comments can be received; an online form where comments can be received; a box at the school where paper responses can be received; a pupil voice face to face forum; one to one meetings offered to parents; HR meetings for staff; admissions meetings for parents should a decision to close be made.	Education Place Planning Team	During the consultation period
Children on roll at the school who reside in the Great Gidding catchment area and those who have recently been/will be born in the catchment will no longer have access to a school in their local community. It is of benefit to children to be able to walk to school and to attend school with peers who live locally to facilitate social development with peers outside school.	Age	Children will be offered places at alternative schools following a discreet admissions round solely for families of pupils at Gt Gidding. These schools will in many cases be closer to home than Great Gidding. Where the schools are further away (and it is the catchment or closest school with available places), transport to and from school will be provided. It is anticipated that places will be made available and offered in catchment schools which, offers are accepted by families, is likely to result in more children being	Admissions team	May 2023





<p>fast paced social and emotional development and it is likely that there will be impact. Support will be needed to minimise detriment to wellbeing and to ensure positive transition to alternative schools.</p> <p>Great Gidding has an aging population. Small villages often form close communities which are dependent on each other for quality of life. It is possible that the relocation of school children will have an emotional impact on elderly residents.</p>		<p>Whilst there may be an emotional impact on adults within Great Gidding due to the loss of the school, evidence from Business Intelligence data suggests that small settlements remain stable even without a school. This information is available in the community impact assessment.</p>	<p><b>Business Intelligence Team</b></p>	<p><b>Complete</b></p>
<p>Children with SEND have the right to access education provision which meets their educational, health and care needs, and which promotes the best life outcomes.</p> <p>As part of the duty under the Children &amp; Families Act 2014, the Council has a legal duty to identify and assess the special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) of children and young people for whom they are responsible. The Council becomes responsible for securing appropriate educational provision for a child/young person in its area when it becomes aware that the child/young person has or may have SEND. The Council must then ensure that those children and young people receive a</p>	<p><b>Disability</b></p>	<p>The council is aware that children with SEND may be disproportionately affected by the potential closure of Great Gidding Primary School. To mitigate impact as far as reasonably possible, there are several steps that will be taken, should the closure go ahead.</p> <p>There are currently 9 children on roll at Great Gidding Primary who are registered as requiring SEN support. There are no children who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).</p> <p>The SEND District Team will work to identify the provision required to meet the needs of children receiving SEN support. They will then provide the receiving school with advice regarding</p>	<p><b>LA SEND Services</b></p>	<p><b>Throughout the remainder of this academic year and into the next academic year if required.</b></p>

<p>level of support which will help them “achieve the best possible educational and other outcomes.”</p> <p>There are currently no children on roll at Great Gidding Primary School who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There are children on roll who accessing SEN Support.</p> <p>Whilst the needs of children accessing SEN Support are met through ordinarily available provision within mainstream schools, it is possible that the issues highlighted as affecting all children on roll will disproportionately impact children with SEND. Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities can be more reliant on trusted adult relationships and more susceptible to trauma resulting from upheaval.</p> <p>Additional support for the transition of children with SEN to new schools will be required and particular attention paid to engagement with their parents/carers. This will be provided by CCC SEND services in conjunction with Great Gidding and the receiving school’s staff.</p>		<p>implementation of the required support within their existing resources.</p> <p>The SEND District Team will ensure that link SEND practitioners are identified within the receiving schools and that information is appropriately shared regarding the children they will receive.</p> <p>Support will be available to Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) at receiving schools to incorporate the provision required as part of the school’s graduated response.</p> <p>Prior to closure, the SEND District Team will work with staff at Great Gidding Primary School to carry out child centred planning for the small number of children with more complex needs. This will ensure that pupil and parent/carer voices are heard and used to build a robust and successful transition plan.</p> <p>For the small number of children requiring more specialist transition support, the SEND District Team will work collaboratively with receiving schools and parents/carers to identify how SEND District schools hours can be used for the individual case work required.</p> <p>Should any children receive an EHCP prior to closure, they will be supported to identify and</p>		
---	--	---	--	--

		transition to a school through the well-established EHCP processes.		
It is possible that those with young children, current pregnancy or who plan to have children will choose to move away from the village or will not opt to move to the village at all.	<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	Data provided by the business intelligence team estimates that there are a very small number of children the Great Gidding catchment in recent years, and that this trend is expected to continue, and if anything reduce even further, regardless of there being a school . This information is available in the community impact assessment.	<b>Business Intelligence Team</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<p>Gt Gidding CE Primary is a denominational school (Church of England). The school has strong links with the church, into the grounds of which it has direct access from the school site.</p> <p>Currently there are 19 church of England primary schools providing a total of 3747 denominational places in Huntingdonshire. Should Gt Gidding close the number of denominational primary schools would reduce to 18 and the total number of places to 3649. Whilst there are other denominational schools in the area surrounding Gt Gidding, places being available at those schools cannot be guaranteed and transport may not be provided for parental choice placements, in accordance with CCCs transport policy. Some pupils currently in Reception to</p>	<b>Religion or belief</b>	<p>Parents can express preference for alternative schools with a designated religious character, though it is acknowledged that transport may only be provided where this is their catchment/closest school with available places.</p> <p>Children resident in the Great Gidding catchment, and those further afield, will still have access to the local church, even should they no longer attend as part of their school day.</p> <p>Families and children of faiths other than Church of England, and of no faith also attend Great Gidding Primary School. It may be that some would prefer a school without a designated religious character, or have no preference.</p> <p>If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close</p>	<b>Admissions team</b>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>April 2023</b></p>

<p>Year 5 at Gt Gidding might be offered places at non-denominational schools.</p> <p>The church community may suffer detriment from the loss of the primary school children within their church community.</p> <p>The children may suffer detriment through reduced access to the place of worship.</p> <p>Parents may have selected the school as their preference due to it being a Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character and be unhappy that this option will now be closed to them locally. Whilst some schools that children may be relocated to are also Church of England schools, some are not. Should parents express a preference for a school which is not their catchment/closest school on the basis of the school's designated religious character, they may be responsible for transporting their children to and from that school. This is due to the Councils policy that transport is only provided where a child attends their catchment school or the closest school with places available.</p> <p>Great Gidding Church of St Michael is led by a visible, popular and active lay and ordained church team. As a typical and important rural church, it has 2 'minister led' services a month on Sundays, and one early morning midweek communion. In addition, individuals regularly use the church as a spiritual haven at any part of the day. The closure of the</p>		<p>the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to the school nearest to their home address or the nearest Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character to their home address, and with uniform costs. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.</p>	<p><b>Place Planning Team</b></p>	
---	--	---	-----------------------------------	--

<p>school will naturally likely impact on participation in such activities, particularly in relation to those individuals and families whose presence in the community is a consequence of being at, or having children in, the school. In short, the school closure will reduce the wider impact of the church's Ministry, and the reciprocal resourcing of it. For Christmas, Harvest, Remembrance Day and for choral evensongs (2 or 3 a year, with visiting choir), the congregation increases considerably as a consequence of school participation. The school come into church every month for a service and are a welcome and important part of the congregation. Due to their regular attendance, the staff and pupils have made a 'qualifying connection' to be married in the church, should they wish. The school has 3 services in the year when parents also come.</p> <p>Without the school, participation could be significantly impacted, not least in terms of children, young people and families. The community will need to further support the excellent Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit purposes.</p> <p>The Grade 1 listed building is increasingly in need of support, and funding. The closure of the school then, like any major village service, will thus further put pressure on the long term sustainability of such essential</p>				
--	--	--	--	--

spiritual provision, for those of faith and for anyone seeking pastoral care and support.				
<p>Residents of rural communities are often socially connected with children and school activities often being a central aspect of social activities. The number of children living in the area is already low and there may be an impact in terms of fewer children attending local village events and further declining numbers of children residing in the village.</p> <p>Whilst it is possible that there will be an impact in terms of declining demand for housing in the village and associated impact on house prices, data provided by the Business Intelligence team indicates that villages with similar demographics and no local school have stable populations.</p>	<b>Rural isolation</b>	Whilst it is possible that there will be an impact in terms of declining demand for housing in the village and associated impact on house prices, data provided by the Business Intelligence team indicates that villages with similar demographics and no local school have stable populations.	<b>Business Intelligence Team</b>	<b>Complete</b>
<p>The number of children on roll at Great Gidding (Church of England) Voluntary Controlled Primary School who are eligible for Free School Meals is 22.7%. Whilst this is in line with the national average of 22.5% it is higher than the local average for Huntingdonshire which is 18.1%. This is an indicator that the school has higher than the local average of families on low incomes.</p>	<b>Poverty and socio-economic status</b>	<p>Transport will be provided to alternative schools at no cost to parents, should they accept offers for their catchment/closest school with places.</p> <p>It is possible that many children will relocate to schools with peers from Great Gidding.</p> <p>Transition arrangements will be made to ensure opportunities to form new social groups are maximised, for example through visits prior to transition and through the identification of</p>	<p><b>Education transport team</b></p> <p><b>Receiving schools</b></p>	<p><b>Ongoing</b></p> <p><b>Upon admittance of children previously</b></p>

<p>Families on low incomes may be less likely to have the resources available, for example transport options and IT solutions, to mitigate the dispersal of social networks caused by the school closure. They may be also be disproportionally impacted by the need to purchase required items such as school uniform.</p> <p>Such families are less likely to be able to apply preference to the school their child attends following the closure of Great Gidding (Church of England) Voluntary Controlled Primary School due to being reliant on Local Authority provided transport options. As a result, children from disadvantaged families may have fewer options to their counterparts who have financial opportunity.</p>		<p>‘buddies’ at the receiving schools who will socially support their new peers.</p> <p>It is possible that some children will attend school closer to home if relocated, which is likely to have a positive impact on access to community and peer group activities.</p> <p>If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to other schools, possibly even those that are not the school nearest to their home address or the nearest Church of England school with an Anglican Christian character to their home address, and with uniform costs. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.</p>	<p><b>Place Planning Team</b></p>	<p><b>attending Gt Gidding</b></p> <p><b>April 2023</b></p>
---	--	---	-----------------------------------	---







## Appendix 4: Community Impact Assessment

### Issue no. 1.0

#### Introduction

Gt Gidding (Church of England) VC Primary School is located in the village of Great Gidding, in northwest Cambridgeshire.



Gt Gidding is in the district of Huntingdonshire and is surrounded by the small settlements of Little Gidding, Steeple Gidding, Winwick, Hamerton and Luddington in the Brook. The closest larger settlement is the village of Sawtry, 4.9 miles away.



Covering 352.3 square miles, Huntingdonshire is a large district in Cambridgeshire and is classified as 'rural 80' meaning that at least 80% of its population live in rural settlements. Approximately 80% of the population live in large market towns and rural towns. The rest live in rural villages and hamlets.

## Impact on pupils

The closure proposal would directly affect pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding Primary School. It is apparent from the information provided that, were Gt Gidding to close, sufficient places in the surrounding area schools could be created to accommodate the estimated 34 (as at January 2023) Reception to Year 5 pupils who would be displaced from the school at the end of the academic year. Year 6 pupils currently at Gt Gidding would not be directly impacted as they will move on to secondary school in the new academic year.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) may be disproportionately impacted due to the nature of their individual needs and/or the complexity of transitioning SEN support arrangements or support in place via an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

### ***Potential Impact:***

The main changes for pupils in Reception to Year 5 would be:

- A new school
- A new routine
- A new route to school
- A new uniform
- New teachers and support staff
- A new learning environment
- Changed friendship groups

It is possible that the impact of the above will be greater for children with SEND.

Responses to the Stage 1 consultation indicated that parents and carers were concerned about the impact on the social relationships, mental health and wellbeing of pupils.

They have also raised concerns about the cost of purchasing new uniform and transport to their child's new school if their choice of school does not entitle them to transport assistance under the Council's transport policy

### ***Mitigating Factors:***

It is proposed that a change to the catchment area, from the 2023/24 academic year, be made to incorporate the Gt Gidding catchment area into the Sawtry catchment area. This would ensure that should Gt Gidding close, children living in the school's catchment area would have access to other local schools.

Every pupil would be guaranteed the offer of a place at an alternative primary school in their local area. Which school is offered will depend on the home catchment location of each child. It is noted that 3 children live outside of Cambridgeshire (2 in Peterborough and 1 in Northamptonshire). Liaison with the local admissions authority regarding these children is taking place. Schools likely to receive displaced children include:

- Sawtry Community Infant School
- Sawtry Junior Academy
- Holme Church of England Primary School
- Fourfields Community Primary School
- Stilton Church of England Primary School
- Yaxley Community Infant School
- William de Yaxley Church of England Junior School
- Alconbury Church of England Primary School

The local authority would be responsible for overseeing the process of closing the school and would work closely with the school to implement closure, including supporting pupils during their final months at Gt Gidding and in their transition to a new school. Parents and carers of children at the school would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Parents

and carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. The local authority would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would be made in line with the School Admissions Code and the admissions policies for the schools involved. Further information is available on the Cambridgeshire County Council website at:

[Apply for a school place - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

The local authority would take all practicable steps to ease the transition for all pupils, including vulnerable groups. It would work with the receiving schools to arrange transition days for pupils to meet their new teachers and to familiarise themselves with their new environments.

There are currently no children on roll at the school who have an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP). There are children in receipt of Special Educational Needs (SEN) support. If the school were to close the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) District Team would work with school staff to carry out child centred planning for children in receipt of SEN support. This will ensure that pupil and parent/carer voices are heard and would be used to build a robust and successful transition plan. The local authority SEND District Team would identify provision required to meet the needs of children receiving SEN support and would ensure that link SEND practitioners are identified within receiving schools so that information is appropriately shared regarding the children they would receive. Support would be available to Special Education Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) at receiving schools to incorporate the provision required as part of the school's graduated response.

Should any child receive an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) during the remainder of the current academic year, they and their family would be supported to identify, and transition to a new school through the well-established EHCP processes should the school close.

Local Authority support will be made available through the Strategic SEND Support Team who will provide support for pupils using a pastoral emotional health and wellbeing approach. The package of support made available will be bespoke to the needs of pupils at Gt Gidding and delivered by a Strategic SEND Support Specialist Teacher.

Some of the schools identified mention on their websites that second hand uniforms are available at a very low cost.

### ***Recommendation:***

That, in addition to the mitigations outlined above, the receiving schools would be asked to identify buddies for the incoming pupils to help further ease transition by ensuring there is a familiar face and an introduction to new friendship groups.

If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to the school nearest to their home address or the nearest faith school to their home address, and with uniform costs. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.

## **Impact on parents and families**

There are/have been events both inside and outside of school hours organised by the school. These include but are not limited to:

- Summer and Christmas Fayres (though the last of these was in 2019)
- Harvest Festival during which the whole school go to church and family members are invited to attend
- Book week events during which parents are invited to an assembly
- Christingle church service followed by a Christmas Mingle
- Discos and quizzes have been held in the past but are not regular events

A dance club and a PE club are offered after school one day per week for approximately 1 hour. Previously, 2 PE related clubs and an art club were offered.

Gt Gidding used to provide wrap around care before school, after school or during the holidays but no longer does so due to lack of interest making it unviable.

There is no Early Years provision on site at the school or elsewhere in the village.

***Potential Impact:***

If the proposals go ahead, these events would cease.

***Mitigating Factors:***

Schools in the local area have a greater offer. They provide events and clubs, but many also provide wrap around care for pupils. The offer available is summarised below and further detail can be found by contacting schools directly.

□ Sawtry Community Infant school

Sawtry Community Infant School runs a number of lunch time and after school clubs for pupils including music, gymnastics, computing, multi-sports, dance, choir and dodgeball.

The Friends of Sawtry Infant School Association runs fundraising events including a Christmas shopping event, discos, mini competitions, and a summer fayre.

There is a preschool, Buttons and Bows, running from the school site.

Wrap around care is provided on site, by Kidzone, to both Sawtry Infants School and Sawtry Junior School pupils.

□ Sawtry Junior Academy

Sawtry Junior Academy offers a wide range of after school enrichment activities, including a wide range of clubs, a lunch time homework club, and music lessons for piano, recorder, violin, drums and guitar.

The Sawtry Junior Parents Association runs fundraising events for the school, including discos, film nights, Christmas and Summer Fayres.

Wrap around care is available at the nearby Sawtry Infants School site.

□ Fourfields Community Primary School

Fourfields Primary School offers a wide range of after school enrichment activities. There are after school clubs run by school staff offering choir, cooking, football, cross country, reading, Korean, history, forest fun. There is a lunch time pokemon card swapping club. There are also after school clubs run by external providers on school site including Taekwondo, drama, boxercise and football.

The school runs events for parents, including parent coffee afternoons and a support group for parents of children with special educational needs (SEN).

Yaxley Out of School Club offers wrap around care for the children at the school.

□ Alconbury CofE Primary School

Alconbury's local vicar leads Collective Worship weekly. Other clergy from the local Baptist and Methodist churches who are friends of the school lead worship each half term.

The school runs a range of clubs, further details of which can be obtained from the school office.

Alconberries Before and After School Club offers wrap around care.

□ Holme CofE Primary School

Holme CofE Primary School offers wrap around care via an After School Club.

The school runs clubs offering football for girls run by Peterborough United Football Club, Lego, Zumba, singing, netball and futsal.

Friends of Holme School facilitate the sale of pre-loved school uniform and Christmas jumpers and run the 100 club, a lottery which involves parents and other relatives being able to buy a number for a monthly draw.

□ Yaxley Community Infant School

Wrap around care is provided for Yaxley Infants, by Energy Kidz, at William de Yaxley Junior School.

The school can provide information on clubs and events if requested.

□ William de Yaxley CofE Junior School

Wrap around care is provided on site at William de Yaxley Junior School by Energy Kidz. Easter holiday club provision is also available on site.

Pupils take part in collective worship and there is a worship council, voted for by peers.

The school has a lunch time Eco Club and offers in school music lessons, delivered by JMP Music, for the following: Piano/keyboard, guitar, ukulele, drums, singing, violin, recorder and trumpet. Lessons for clarinet, saxophone and flute are also available online.

□ Stilton CofE Primary School

Collective worship at Stilton CofE Primary School takes place daily and there is a termly schedule of times when parents/carers can attend the school to join collective worship.

Various extracurricular activities are available for children at the school including choir, gardening club, French, music, Lego club, DT, street dance, and music lessons in singing, keyboard, drums, guitar and ukulele.

The Haven Out of School Club runs wrap around care from the site.

□ Folksworth CofE Primary School

Folksworth CofE Primary School holds collective worship. The school has links with its local churches in the surrounding catchment villages of Folksworth, Stilton, Elton, Haddon, Morborne. These villages and churches fall within the Diocese of Ely. The Vicar-in-charge of The Stilton Group of Parishes, Richard Gibbs, is the local Vicar and visits the school regularly.

After school clubs are available at the school. They are run by Youth Dream and the current offer includes multi sports, handball/dodgeball, yoga, netball, Minecraft, SATs booster, and bible story Lego.

Friends of Stilton School meet regularly to organise events and initiatives that support fundraising for the school.

□ Brington CofE Primary School

St Leonard's Pre-school is located next door to Brington CofE Primary School. As well as offering Early Years provision the site hosts the out of school club which, although a separate



entity, is run by the same charitable trust. Wrap around care is available 7:30 – 18:00, 50 weeks of the year.

Collective worship is a feature of the school and a pupil worship committee meets at least once every half term.

The school can provide information on clubs and events if requested.

***Recommendation:***

None

## **Impact of proposal on the wider community**

Concern was expressed that, should the school close, amenities may be affected. Specifically, concerns were expressed about the impact on the village shop, the village pub and the village hall in respect of lost trade and lost bookings for events such as children's parties and the potential impact on the local Church and Church community due to the loss of services attended by school.

***Potential Impact:***

If the school were to close there may be a reduction in trade at the local shop and pub, and in bookings at the village hall. The local community would no longer be able to attend church events facilitated for and attended by the school. As a result, local amenities may be lost and there may be a resulting impact on people moving into the village/house prices.

Schools act as employers and consumers in the local area. Parents of pupils attending the school may be more likely to spend locally. Sell et al (1996) studied the socio-economic impacts of school closures on North Dakota communities. They found a perceived decline in retail sales and the number of businesses in both communities where schools had closed and communities where schools had gained students due to the consolidation of schools. Those from communities where schools had closed were more likely to think this decline was due to the school closure. However, there was a lack of data to support their belief [1] [2]. A high proportion of pupils at the school do not live in Gt Gidding so the school has had the effect of bringing in potential customers from outside the village.

Great Gidding Church of St Michael is led by a visible, popular and active lay and ordained church team. As a typical and important rural church, it has 2 'minister led' services a month on Sundays, and one early morning midweek communion. In addition, individuals regularly use the church as a spiritual haven at any part of the day. The closure of the school will naturally likely impact on participation in such activities, particularly in relation to those individuals and families whose presence in the community is a consequence of being at, or having children in, the school. In short, the school closure will reduce the wider impact of the church's Ministry, and the reciprocal resourcing of it.

For Christmas, Harvest, Remembrance Day and for choral evensongs (2 or 3 a year, with visiting choir), the congregation increases considerably as a consequence of school participation. The school come into church every month for a service, and are a welcome and important part of the congregation. Due to their regular attendance, the staff and pupils have made a 'qualifying connection' to be married in the church, should they wish. The school has 3 services in the year when parents also come.

Without the school, participation could be significantly impacted, not least in terms of children, young people and families. The community will need to further support the excellent Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit



purposes. The Grade 1 listed building is increasingly in need of support, and funding. The closure of the school then, like any major village service, will thus further put pressure on the long term sustainability of such essential spiritual provision, for those of faith and for anyone seeking pastoral care and support.

***Mitigating Factors:***

The Giddings Parish Council provide information on its website about a range of groups and events in the wider parish area that could be accessed by the local community. Events have included:

- The Great Gidding Wassail held in Jubilee Wood
- Festive wine tasting
- Luddington Open Studios, where Luddington in Brook ladies were serving homemade cakes and teas
- Hamerton Village Harvest Supper
- Harvest Festival and Service of Prayer and Reflection remembering Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II at St Michael's Church.
- Winwick Fete
- Summer wine tasting
- Coffee mornings at the village hall.

The economic benefits that a school brings to a community must be considered beneficial side effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, budget deficits and academic standards must be the major considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close a school; this cannot be an overriding factor. If the school closed, the local shop and pub would be unable to rely on passing trade from the school community and their families. This is already the case for 13 weeks of the year during school holidays. It is also likely, that as the majority of pupils attending the school live outside of the catchment area, they would therefore be more likely to use facilities and be part of the community where they lived rather than where they attend school. It would be for the local community to consider how to support local retail facilities.

Concern was raised during the consultation that there is potential for reduced bookings at the village hall for events such as children's parties. Most of the children on roll at Gt Gidding do not live in the catchment. It is likely that events for these children have been held in venues local to their home rather than to their school. The families of children on roll who do reside in Gt Gidding are likely to continue to use the village hall as previously. Research conducted by the Parish Council Clerk shows that there have been only 2 children's parties at the village hall since the end of COVID-19 lockdowns in March 2021. Both bookings were for village residents. There was an children's party enquiry from a resident outside of Gt Gidding but the booking could not be facilitated due to it coinciding with another booked event. The school directly made use of the village hall over a 2-day period in July 2022 for end of term event rehearsals. The hall was made available for use of the school with no charge.

Gt Gidding and Abbots Ripton are the smallest settlements in Cambridgeshire with a primary school. The Abbots Ripton school catchment has a different demographic to Gt Gidding with over 44 age 4-11 children living in catchment, compared to only 19 in the Gt Gidding catchment. A demographic comparison of Gt Gidding and similar Cambridgeshire villages without schools or where schools previously closed indicates that populations remain stable.

***Recommendation:***

None

**Access to provision of same school designation**

Gt Gidding is a denominational school (Church of England). Currently there are 19 church of England primary schools providing a total of 3747 denominational places in Huntingdonshire. Should Gt

Gidding close the number of denominational primary schools would reduce to 18 and the total number of places to 3649. Whilst there are other denominational schools in the area surrounding Gt Gidding, places being available at those schools cannot be guaranteed and transport may not be provided for parental choice placements, in accordance with CCCs transport policy.

**Potential Impact:**

Some pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding might be offered places at non-denominational schools.

**Mitigating Factors:**

All non-denominational state funded schools in England have to provide collective worship of a '*broadly Christian character*'. Equally, denominational schools are not exclusive to worshipping families.

Aside from Gt Gidding, there are four denominational schools within 6 miles of Gt Gidding (as the crow flies). These are listed alongside their distance from Gt Gidding, their published admission number (PAN) and the number of classes they currently operate.

- Gt Gidding CofE Primary School (0m; PAN 14; 3 classes)
- Folksworth CofE Primary School (4.5m; PAN 15; 4 classes)
- Stilton CofE Primary Academy (4.7m; PAN 30; 6 classes)
- Brington CofE Primary School (5.1m; PAN 17; 4 classes)
- Holme CofE Primary Academy (5.5m; PAN 17; 5 classes)

The LA will endeavour to meet parental preferences for alternative school places but cannot guarantee to do so.

**Recommendation:**

CCC Officers offered to meet with parents one to one. With parents that took up this offer, we discussed likely preferences for alternative school placement should Gt Gidding close. Based upon this information, officers are exploring options with implicated schools which would allow for as many preferences to be met as possible.

Should a decision be made to close the school, a discrete admissions round will be opened for parents of children in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding CofE Primary School. Parents will be able to express three preferences for alternative schools, and effort will be made to accommodate children in denominational schools should they so wish.

If Committee were to decide to move to Stage 4 of the statutory process and close the school, officers would propose that the Committee considers an exceptional case for the parents/carers of pupils who were on roll at the school on 17 January 2023 and subsequently displaced to other schools, to receive support with transport to the school nearest to their home address or the nearest faith school to their home address. Officers would present more information in support of this if the Committee were to meet in April.

## Impact on neighbouring schools

If the school were to close, every pupil in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding would be offered a place at an alternative school, many of which are likely to be nearer to their home address. Pupil numbers at Gt Gidding are subject to change between now and the end of the academic year. For the purpose of consistency, this section will consider the impact of 39 pupils potentially being displaced, as per the October 2023 forecast pupil numbers.

**Potential Impact:**

The table below shows the actual number of pupils on roll during the October 2022 school census. The information shows that there were 1733 pupils on roll across nine schools within 7.5m (as the crow

flies) of Gt Gidding, with 1849 places available if all schools were operating up to their published admission number (PAN). This results in 116 (6.3%) surplus places across these schools.

### Pupil numbers and places available within 7.5m of Gt Gidding (October 2022)

Data source: October 2022 school census

Capacity	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)
Sawtry Infant School	60	62	61	60					183	180	-3
Sawtry Junior Academy	65				57	55	83	73	268	260	-8
Folksworth CE Primary	15	14	9	12	17	16	11	16	95	105	10
Stilton CE Primary Academy	30	28	14	18	17	27	25	26	155	210	55
Brington CE Primary	17	16	15	15	17	12	19	15	109	119	10
Holme CE Primary	17	22	18	15	16	15	17	15	118	119	1
Yaxley Infants School	60	53	40	39					132	180	48
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	64				53	57	59	58	227	256	29
Fourfields Primary	60	58	60	60	89	60	60	59	446	420	-26
<b>Combined total on roll</b>		253	217	219	266	242	274	262	1733		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>		259	259	259	268	268	268	268		1849	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)</b>		6	42	40	2	26	-6	6			116

This information has been used to forecast the number of places required across the same schools for the following academic year (2023/24) – See Table below. The forecast takes account of birth rates, trends in actual numbers, and planned housing development. For example, for Sawtry Infant School there were 62 children on roll in September 2022, but due to birth rate and housing development within the village, this figure is expected to increase to 82 children entering reception in September 2023.

These forecasts have been used to assess the capacity of schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils from Gt Gidding in September 2023 should it close on 31 August 2023.

### Provisional pupil numbers within 7.5 miles of Gt Gidding (forecast for October 2023)

Data source: Pupil forecasts October 2022

Capacity	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)
Sawtry Infant School	60	82	57	60					199	180	-19
Sawtry Junior Academy	65				59	60	56	83	258	260	2
Folksworth CE Primary	15	9	15	8	13	16	15	11	87	105	18
Stilton CE Primary Academy	30	11	29	14	13	13	26	23	129	210	81
Brington CE Primary	17	13	17	18	16	21	19	20	124	119	-5
Holme CE Primary	17	13	17	17	16	16	16	17	112	119	7
Yaxley Infants School	60	52	53	45					150	180	30
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	64				43	50	53	60	206	256	50
Fourfields Primary	60	55	61	60	59	89	58	59	441	420	-21
<b>Combined total on roll</b>		235	249	222	219	265	243	273	1706		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>		259	259	259	268	268	268	268		1849	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus (+)</b>		24	10	37	49	3	25	-5			143

Pupil numbers across the nine schools are forecast to decrease by 27 to 1,706 in October 2023, with surplus places increasing from 6.3% to 7.7%.

If Gt Gidding's forecast of 39 pupils on roll for 2023/24 were to be absorbed by the nine schools, there would be 1,745 pupils and a remaining surplus of 104 places, or 5.6%.

It is acknowledged that William de Yaxley CE Junior School is currently RI which may influence parental choice. Even without this school, there are sufficient places amongst the remaining 8 schools to accommodate displaced pupils, with a remaining surplus of 54 or 3.4%.

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of surplus capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts. A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

*"It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools".*

In this case, an overall capacity of 5.6% leaves surplus at the bare minimum and the capacity is not evenly spread across all year groups.

The closure proposal would directly affect pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 at Gt Gidding. Year 6 pupils currently at Gt Gidding would not be directly impacted as they will move on to secondary school in the new academic year. Although overall it appears that there are sufficient school places, it is apparent from the information provided that, were Gt Gidding to close, and no further action be taken, there would be insufficient places in the surrounding area in some year groups.

Some local schools may benefit from the proposal by reducing surplus places and providing more certainty about pupil numbers. The proposal should create a more sustainable network of schools in the local area thereby reducing the risk of more schools becoming unviable.

#### ***Mitigating Factors:***

N/A. In the longer term a new school planned to open in Sawtry in September 2024 to make provision for children arising from new developments in Sawtry will also mitigate the impact of displaced pupils wanting to take up a place in a Sawtry school.

#### ***Recommendations:***

CCC Officers will seek to establish parental preference, where possible, prior to the decision regarding closure of Gt Gidding CofE VC Primary School. This is not because the decision is being pre-empted, but rather to ensure that, should a decision to close be made, the appropriate planning is in place to accommodate displaced children.

CCC Officers, together with the implicated schools, will explore options to create additional capacity in the area. Options include increasing the number of classes through use of vacant classroom space within schools and the reorganisation of class structures to ensure capacity is available across the year groups

### **Impact on pupil travel arrangements**

Transport to alternative schools, in particular alternative denominational schools, was raised as an issue.

#### ***Potential Impact:***

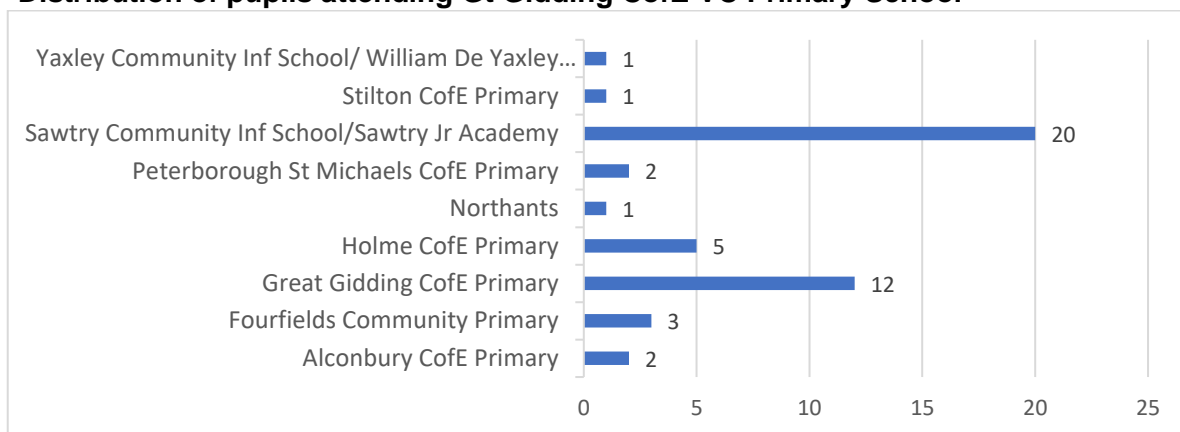
Some families may be impacted by additional travel costs and travel time. The closure of the school may impact members of the community who will have to go beyond the local village to

engage with teachers and use community facilities. There may be a resulting impact on traffic and the environment of children having to travel by car to an alternative school.

### **Mitigating Factors:**

The majority of pupils currently attending Gt Gidding are from outside its catchment area. As at the October 2022 annual pupil census, there were 47 pupils on roll at Gt Gidding. Only 12 (25.5%) of those pupils lived in the Gt Gidding catchment. The remaining 35 pupils (74.5%) traveled to Gt Gidding from other catchments. The largest proportion of pupils attended from the Sawtry catchment. This is illustrated in the chart below.

### **Distribution of pupils attending Gt Gidding CofE VC Primary School**



**Source: Pupil led annual school census (PLASC) October 2022**

From this information it is evident that the majority of pupils attending Gt Gidding already face journeys to and from school each day. It is highly likely that journey times, and therefore the impact on traffic congestion and the environment, could be reduced in the event that Gt Gidding were to close as the majority of displaced pupils would have the opportunity to attend schools nearer to their home address.

Of the 12 children on roll in October 2022 who reside in Gt Gidding's catchment 2 are in Yr 6 and will transfer to secondary phase in Sept 2023. For the remaining 10 children, if Gt Gidding were to close, alternative schools are not far from the village and would be in travelling distance for community activities - between 3.1 and 7.3 miles away from Gt Gidding as shown in the table below. For the majority of pupils and families these schools could be nearer to their home address.

### **Distance from Gt Gidding CofE VC Primary School to alternative schools in the local area**

School	Distances in miles (as the crow flies)
Sawtry Infants School	3.1
Sawtry Junior Academy	3.1
Folksworth CofE VC Primary School	4.5
Stilton CofE Primary Academy	4.7
Brington CofE Primary School	5.1
Holme CofE Primary School	5.5
Yaxley Community Infant School	7.1
William de Yaxley CofE Junior Academy	7.2
Fourfields Primary School	7.3

Analysis shows that of the 37 Reception to Year 5 pupils likely to be affected by the proposal, approximately 73% live nearer, or the same distance, to an alternative school, with approximately 27% living further away. Free home to school transport would be provided for eligible pupils who meet the criteria set out in the link below.

[Pre-16 transport \(mainstream\) - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

From the information currently available, the local authority considers that 10 pupils would be eligible for free home to school transport to their nearest alternative school. This is offset by 8 children who currently receive free transport to Gt Gidding, and who may no longer be eligible. Hence, the additional cost to the local authority would be small. The local authority acknowledges that pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment and attending the school will face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day. However, for the majority their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance.

It is envisaged that displaced pupils would continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers. Given the majority of pupils would be able to attend a school nearer to their home address it is unlikely there would be an increase in car usage. To the contrary, it would be hoped that car usage would reduce thereby having a positive impact on the environment.

Though it is recognised that some families may choose to travel further to an alternative denominational school, there are sufficient denominational schools within a reasonable distance and so this impact is likely to be small.

#### ***Recommendation:***

Should a decision be made to move to stage 2: publish a statutory notice of formal proposal for closure, information regarding parental preference for alternatives schools will be used to review the impact on travel arrangements.

### **Impact on community demographics**

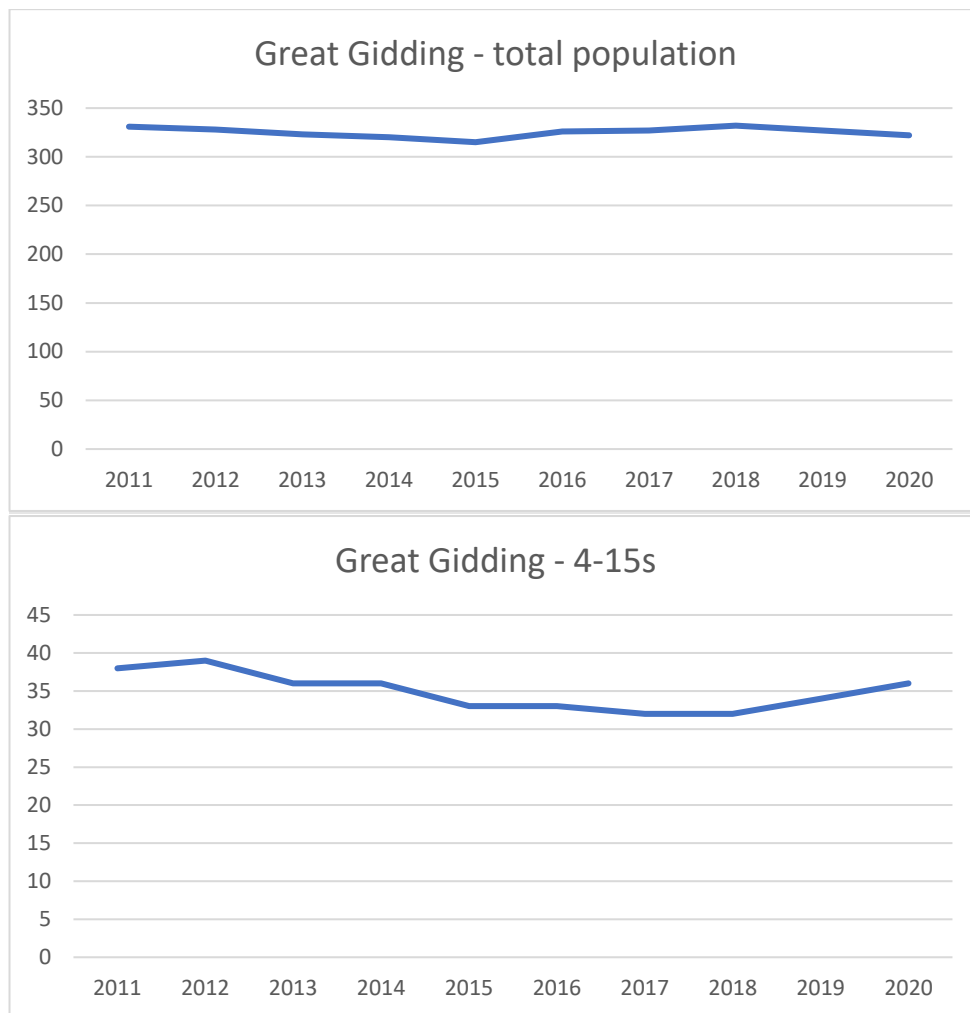
Concern was expressed that, should the proposed closure be implemented, the demography of the village would change, with less families choosing to live in the area.

The total population of Gt Gidding has remained stable at 300 - 350 between 2011 and 2020. There is a very low rate of housing development in the Gt Gidding area and so development does not have a significant impact on the number of primary age children, or indeed the total population. Population stability is indicated in both the table and the graph below.

#### **Gt Gidding total population 2011 - 2020**

Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total population</b>	335	331	328	323	320	315	326	327	332	327	322
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		29	30	27	27	24	24	23	23	25	27





Abbots Ripton is the only settlement in Cambridgeshire that is smaller than Gt Gidding and has a primary school. A population comparison of Gt Gidding with Abbots Ripton and six other Cambridgeshire small settlements shows that populations remain stable, regardless of there being a school. This indicates that a school is not necessary for a settlement to retain population stability. Further detail of this comparison can be found at the end of this document in appendix A.

#### ***Potential Impact:***

The closure of the school could have the effect of making the village less attractive to families with school age children and so attracting an older population.

#### ***Mitigating Factors:***

The local authority must continue to discharge its statutory duty in terms of ensuring there are sufficient school places to meet demand and that all schools are well placed to deliver high quality education that meets the needs of their local community and makes best use of public funding.

It is not the school's or the local authority's role to seek to encourage families with young children to move to the village. The LA is not allowed to promote any school, and indeed the resources required to attempt to do so would be prohibitive and likely to be of little effect.

#### ***Recommendations:***

None

### **Summary and conclusions of the potential impact on the community**

The community impact assessment has identified a number of possible areas where the proposal could have some negative impact on a small number of local families and the local community, but also some mitigating factors which limit the impacts.

Issue	Potential Impact	Mitigating Factors	Conclusions
Impact on pupils	Coping with change to a new school environment. This impact may be greater for children with SEND.	The local authority and schools would work to minimise disruption of transition. Additional transition support will be available for children with SEND.	Initially negative; later potentially positive in terms of widening peer groups and accessing different facilities. Overall: Neutral
Impact on parents and families	Loss of clubs and events.	All the alternative schools provide a range of clubs and events.	Neutral
Impact on wider community	Reduced bookings in community venue.	Gt Gidding village hall hosts events not linked to the school and is likely to continue to do so. The impact of bookings for children is unlikely to be significant as the number of children residing in Gt Gidding is unlikely to significantly change.	Potentially negative.
	Local shop losing trade	None	Potentially negative
	Reduced access to, and use of, the church for children, families. Reduction in the church community and the resulting impact on sustainability.	Community support will aid the Parochial Church Council in continuing to make the church available to the community, whether that be for festival times, regular worship for those who seek it, a spiritual safe-space, or general use for social benefit purposes.	Potentially negative
Access to same school designation	A number of pupils could be offered places at non-denominational schools.	There are other denominational schools in the area. Parents can express preference for a denominational school.	Neutral



Impact on neighbouring schools	Neighbouring schools would offer places to pupils currently at Gt Gidding.	Work will take place to increase capacity and ensure sufficient places at surrounding schools to take all the pupils from Gt Gidding.	Neutral
Impact on pupil travel arrangements	Some families may experience increased costs and travel time to school; others may experience reduced costs and travel time to school.	For the majority of pupils there are alternative schools nearer to their home address. Some pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment might face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day. However for many their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance. Free home to school transport would be available for eligible pupils in line with the Council's statutory duties and its published policy.	Potentially negative for pupils living in the Gt Gidding catchment who might face longer journeys to and from school each day. Approximate times for travel each way, to and from school in Sawtry are below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gt Gidding, 10 mins</li> <li>• Little Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>• Steeple Gidding, 9 mins</li> <li>• Winwick 12 mins</li> <li>• Hamerton 10 mins</li> <li>• All villages – 21 mins</li> </ul>
Impact on community demographics	Closure of the school may impact the balance of community.	The birth rate in the village is low and projected to remain so. Very few pupils arising are from new housing. The majority of new homes are likely to be in school admissions areas served by other schools. Assessment of settlements similar to Gt Gidding indicates population stability regardless of there being a school.	Neutral

In any small community, the loss of one institution or business will be felt proportionately more than in a larger community and the closure of a school in a village community will undoubtedly impact. Good schools engage parents in their children's education and reach out to the wider community for support, as well as providing community facilities. However, these must be

considered beneficial side-effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Numbers on roll, budget deficits and quality of education must be the considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close this cannot be the overriding factor.

The DfE guidance refers to the fact that some schools may be a focal point for family and community activity, providing extended services for a range of users, and their closure may have wider social consequences. However, Gt Gidding school does not currently run community events or wrap around care for pupils and so this impact will be limited.

### **References**

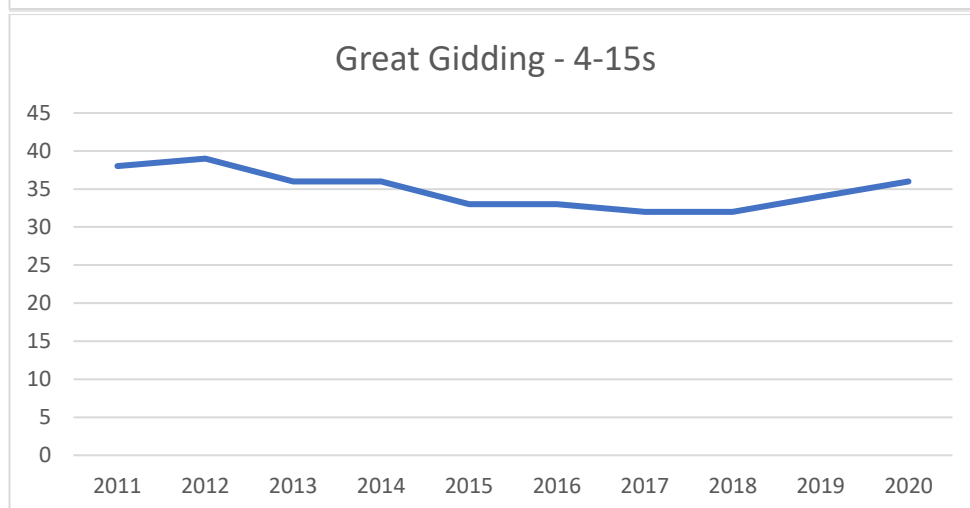
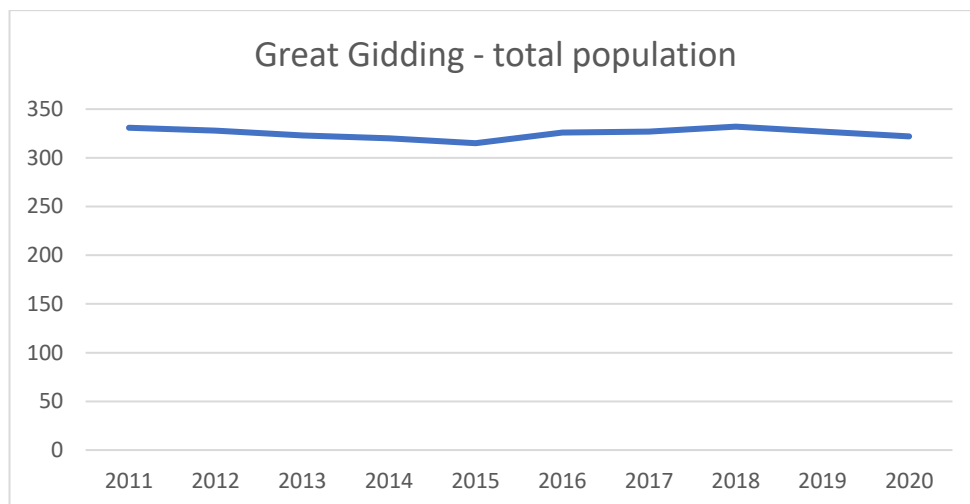
- [1] Sell, R., Leistritz, L. and Thompson, J. (1996) "Socio-economic impacts of schools consolidation on host and vacated communities". *Agriculture Economic Report* No. 347
- [2] Sustainable Education Review, The Impacts of School Closures Analysis Report, The Moray Council November 2014

## Appendix A

### Cambridgeshire Small Settlement Population Comparison

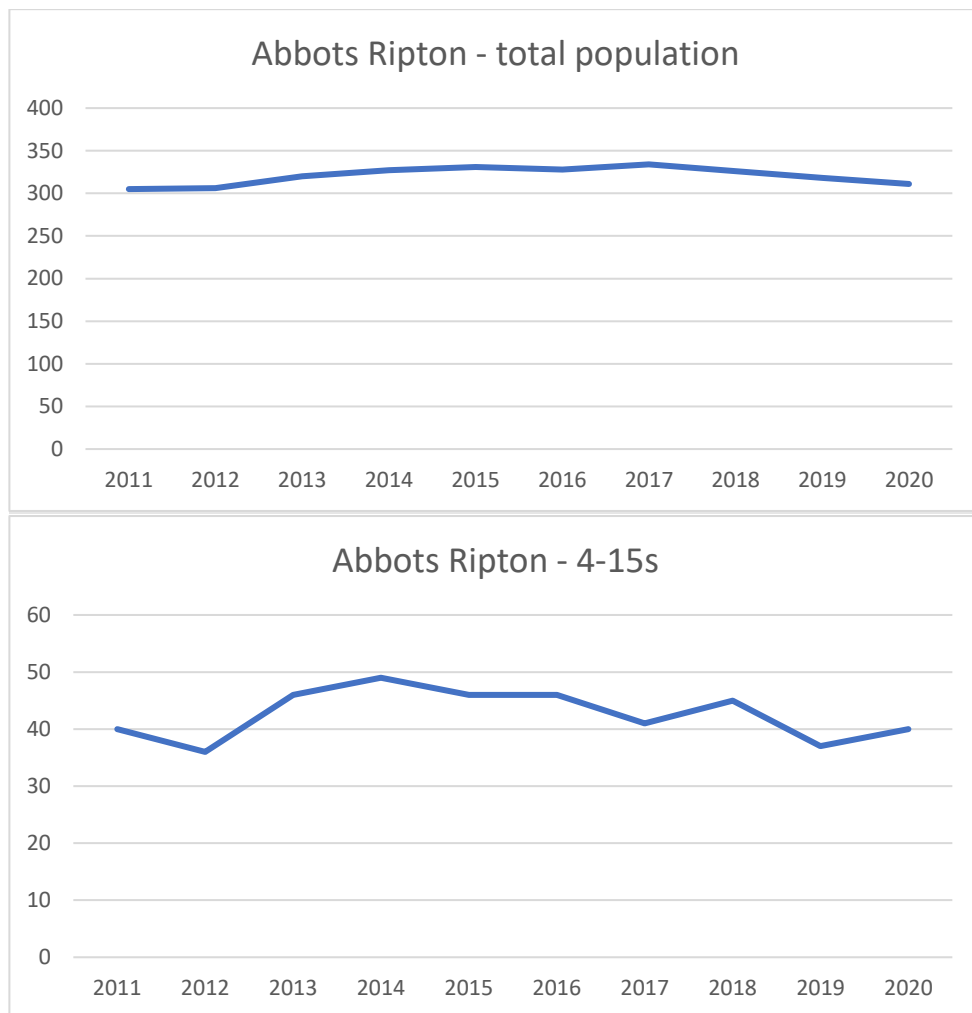
#### Gt Gidding total population 2011 - 2020

Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total population</b>	335	331	328	323	320	315	326	327	332	327	322
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		29	30	27	27	24	24	23	23	25	27



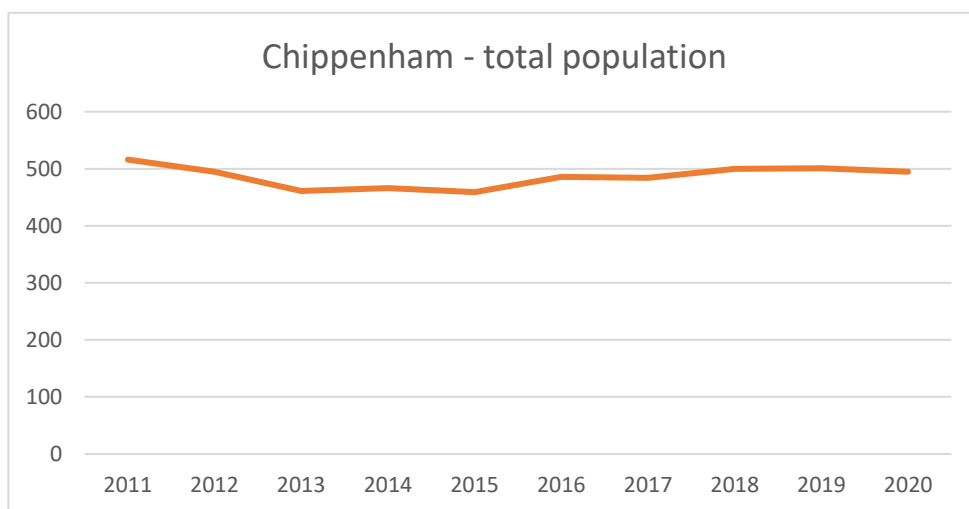
#### Abbots Ripton total population 2011 – 2020 (This is the only Cambridgeshire settlement smaller than Gt Gidding with a school)

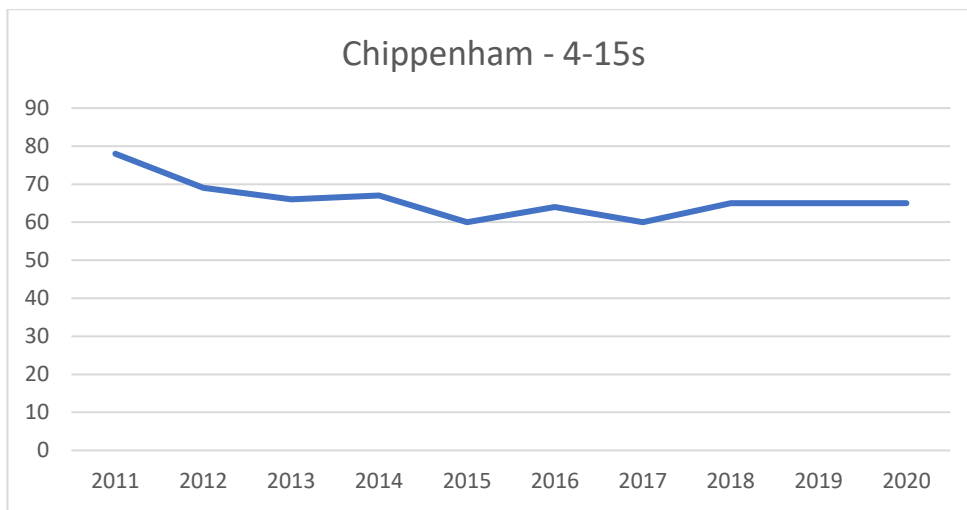
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total population</b>	305	305	306	320	327	331	328	334	326	318	311
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		27	23	33	36	33	33	28	32	24	27



#### Chippenham total population 2011 - 2020

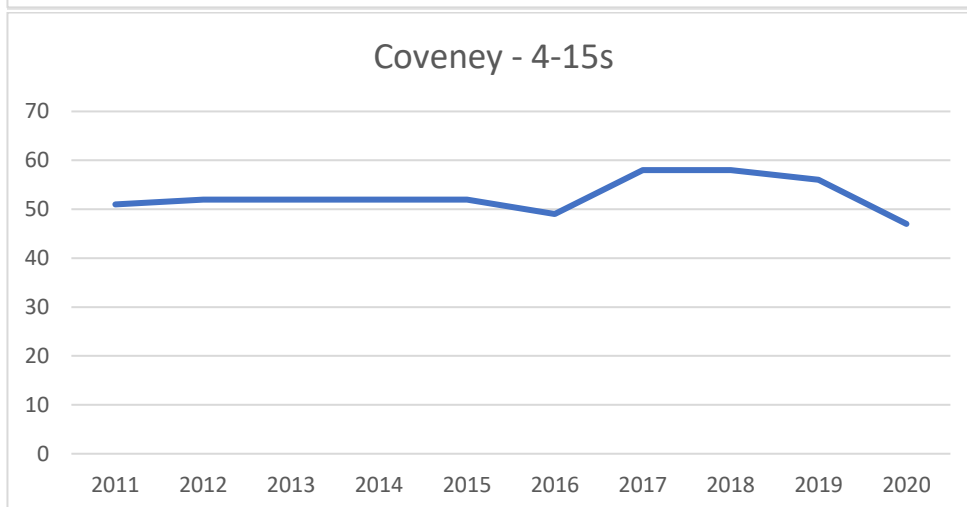
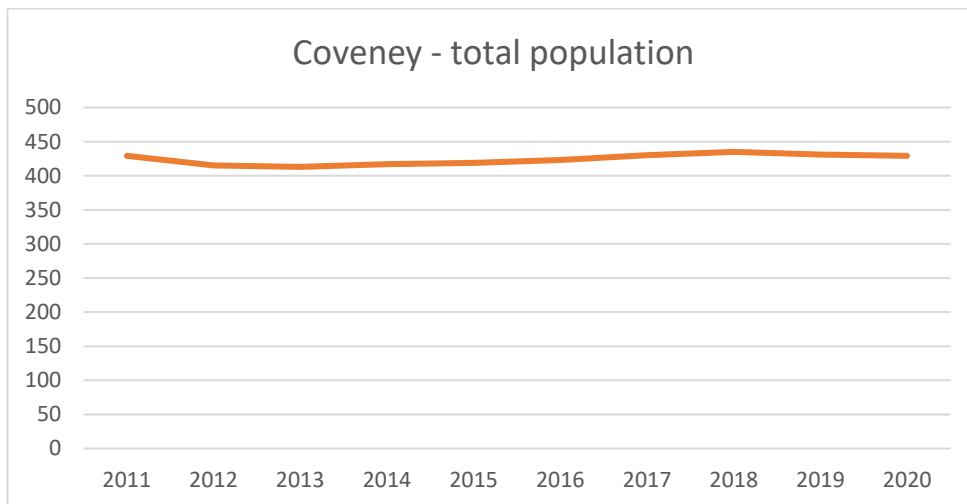
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total population</b>	517	516	495	461	466	459	486	484	500	501	495
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		44	39	37	38	34	36	34	39	39	39





#### Coveney total population 2011 - 2020

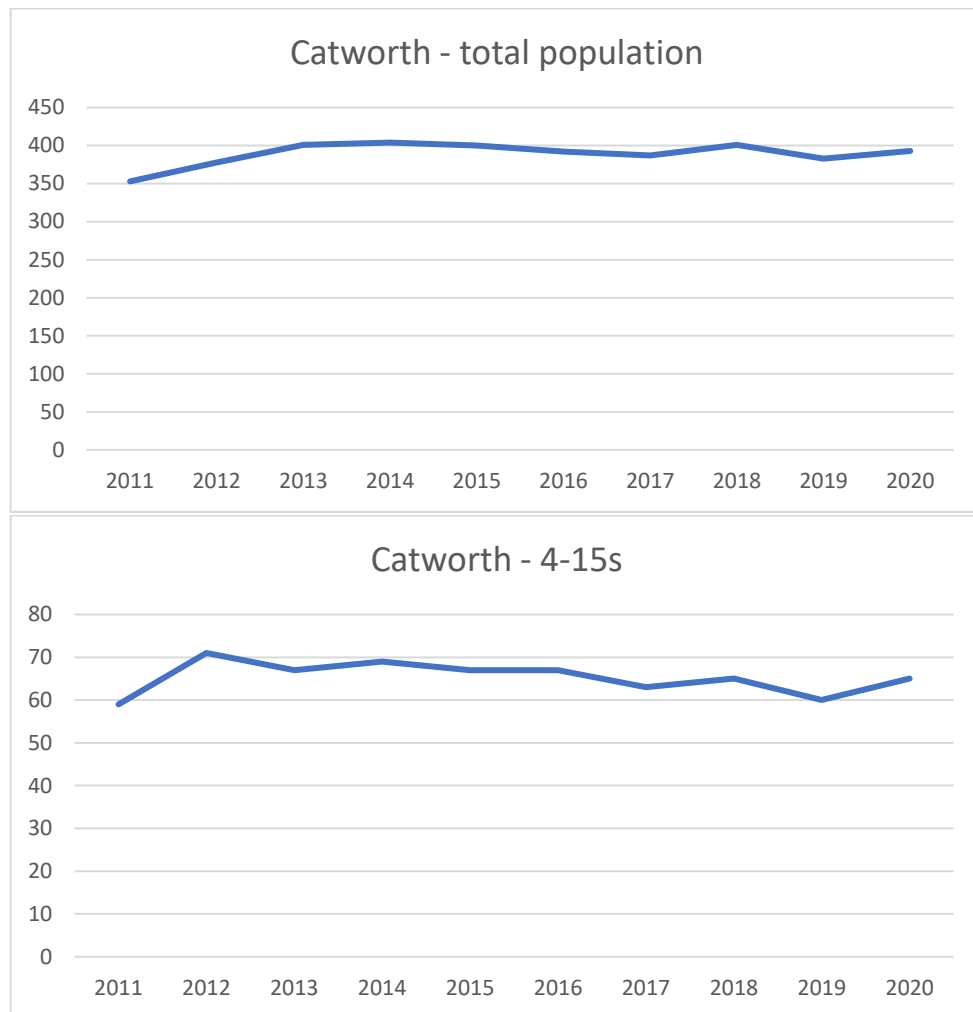
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total population	517	516	495	461	466	459	486	484	500	501	495
PLASC count age 4-15		44	39	37	38	34	36	34	39	39	39



#### Catworth total population 2011 - 2020

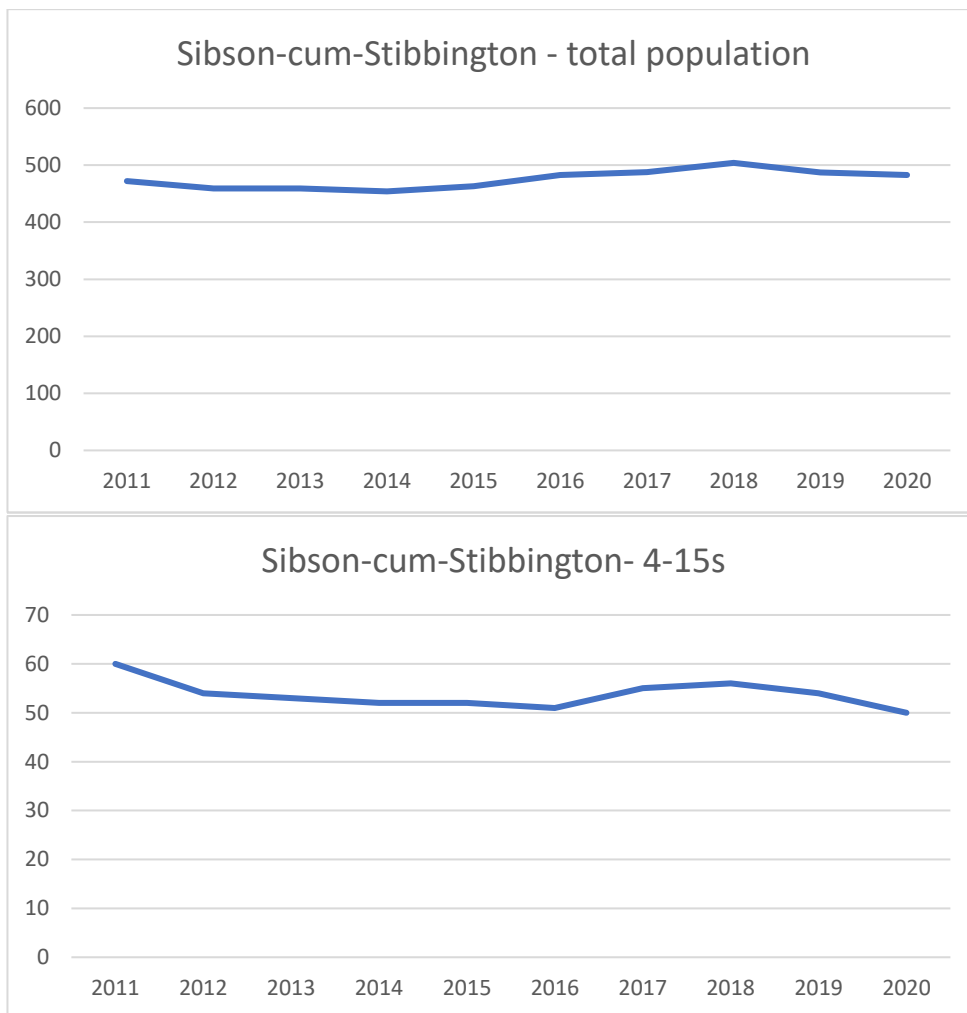
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
-----	-------------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------

<b>Total population</b>	347	353	378	401	404	400	392	387	401	383	393
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		37	49	45	47	45	45	41	43	38	43



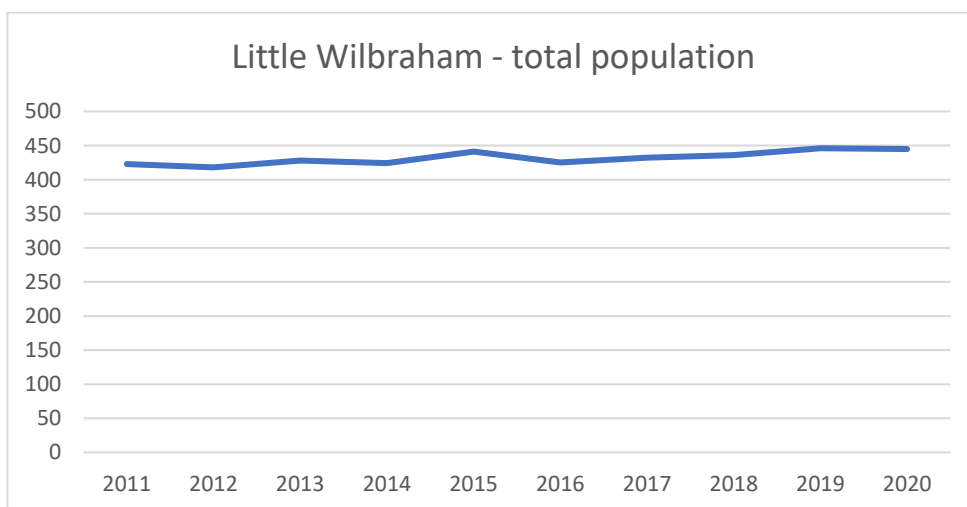
#### Sibson-cum-Stibbington total population 2011 - 2020

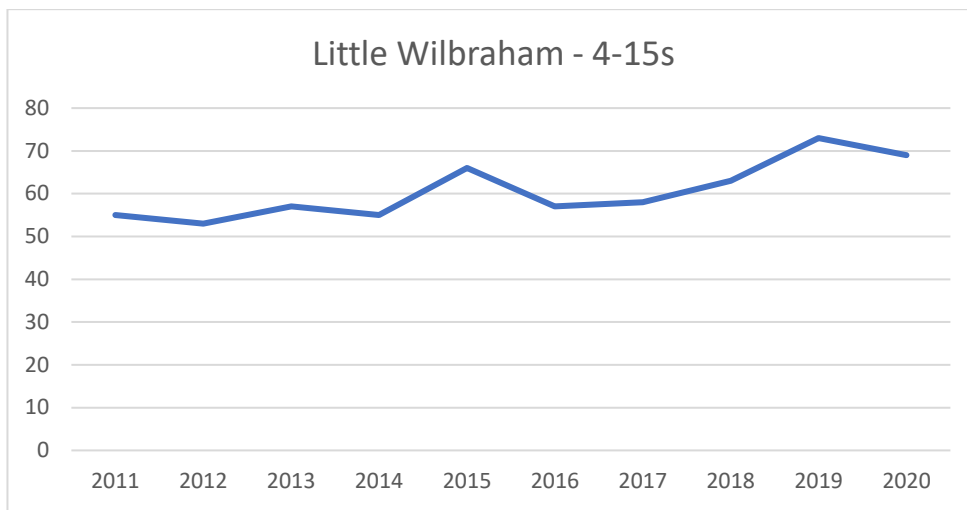
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total population</b>	473	472	459	459	454	463	483	488	504	487	483
<b>PLASC count age 4-15</b>		33	27	26	25	25	24	28	29	27	23



#### Little Wilbraham total population 2011 - 2020

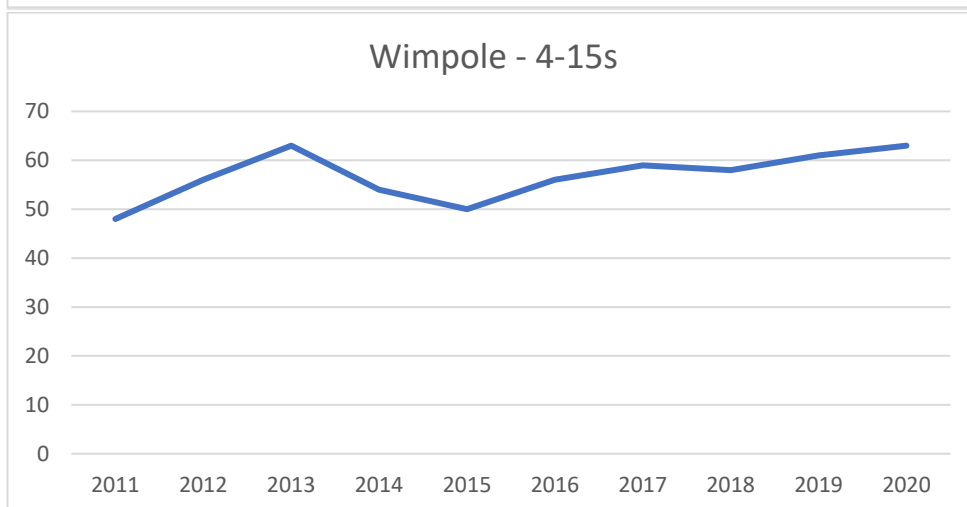
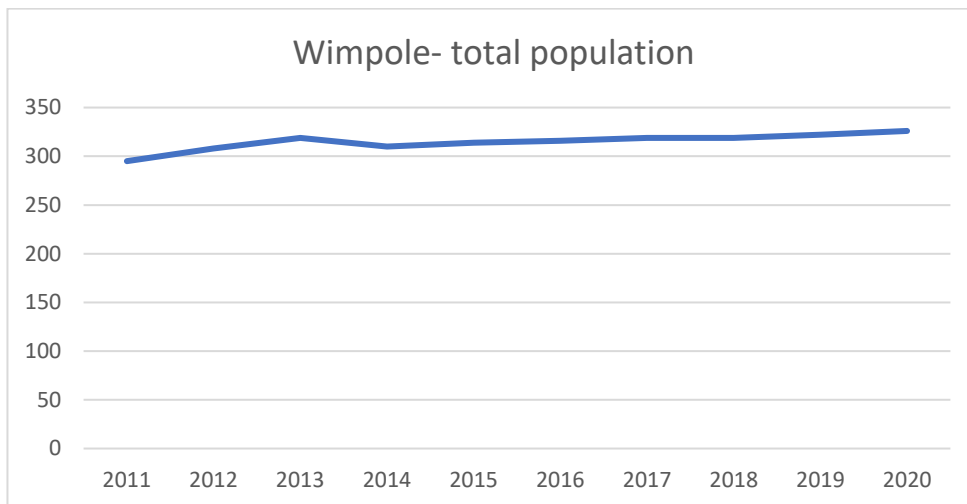
Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total population	425	423	418	428	424	441	425	432	436	446	445
PLASC count age 4-15		36	35	39	36	43	37	38	43	53	49





#### Wimpole total population 2011 - 2020

Age	Census 2011	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Total population	301	295	308	319	310	314	316	319	319	322	326
PLASC count age 4-15		23	27	30	26	24	27	30	29	32	34





# Appendix 5: Gt Gidding Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School Presumption against the closure of rural schools

## Introduction

Gt Gidding Church of England (CE) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Primary School (Gt Gidding/the school) is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2022.

The Department for Education (DfE) statutory guidance *‘Opening and closing maintained schools’* January 2023 (the guidance) refers to a presumption against the closure of rural schools. The guidance states:

*“Proposers should be aware that the Department expects all decision makers to adopt a presumption against the closure of rural schools. This doesn’t mean that a rural school will never close, but that the case for closure should be strong and clearly in the best interests of educational provision in the area”*

The Local Authority (LA) therefore has a duty to carefully consider the factors set out in the guidance when proposing to close a rural school. These factors include:

- Alternatives to closure including: federation with another local school; conversion to academy status and joining a multi-academy trust; the scope for an extended school to provide local community services and facilities e.g. child care facilities, family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access etc;
- Transport implications i.e. the availability, and likely cost of transport to other schools and sustainability issues; and whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times
- The proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community, i.e. whether the school is being used by the local community
- The size of the school and whether it puts the children at an educational disadvantage e.g. in terms of breadth of curriculum or resources available;
- Educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools
- The overall and long-term impact on local people and the community of the closure of the village school and of the loss of the building as a community facility; and
- Wider school organisation and capacity of good schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils.
- Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local areas which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term)

Each of these factors is addressed below.

## Context: Demographics of Gt Gidding compared to other small settlements in Cambridgeshire

The Council's Business Intelligence Service have carried out case studies of Cambridgeshire small settlements with similarities to Gt Gidding including Abbots Ripton, Chippenham, Coveney, Catworth, Sibson-cum-Stibbington, Little Wilbraham, Wimpole and Dry Drayton. The findings are summarised below.

- In 2020, all of these settlements had populations of less than 500, except for Dry Drayton, which had approximately 700.
- Gt Gidding is one of the smallest settlements considered with 322 residents in 2020.
- When considering the population data over time for each of these settlements (from 2011 to 2020), they remain stable with only minor variation. This may be because small settlements tend to be designated as "infill villages" in Local Plans meaning that only small housing developments of 1 or 2 dwellings are generally permitted.
- Of the 11 villages in Cambridgeshire with population between 300 and 350 in 2020, only Gt Gidding (pop 322) and Abbots Ripton (pop 310) have a primary school. Dry Drayton (pop 700) is the next smallest village with a primary school.
- In 2020, Great Gidding had the second smallest Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) count of residents in the 4-15 age range of 27.
- By comparison Dry Drayton had a 2020 PLASC count of 101 residents in the 4-15 age range.
- In terms of total catchment population Gt Gidding has 560, Abbots Ripton 990, and Dry Drayton 700.
- Gt Gidding is comparatively isolated whereas Abbots Ripton is close to major roads and market towns
- The October 2022 pupil census records the 4-11 age population in Gt Gidding catchment as 19, Abbots Ripton 44 and Dry Drayton 66
- Gt Gidding and Abbotts Ripton are the smallest settlements in Cambridgeshire with a primary school.

## Alternatives to closure

A number of alternative options (set out below and included in the consultation document) were considered by the LA and the Diocese of Ely before agreeing to consult on the possible closure of Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School. Officers approached 7 primary schools to explore possibilities for collaboration to support the school. Unfortunately, these approaches did not come to anything.

- **Federation.**

Only maintained schools can federate with each other. A maintained school is a community, voluntary aided or voluntary controlled school. Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School is a voluntary controlled school. A maintained school cannot federate with an academy.

Although federations are recognised as a way of enabling smaller schools to work more formally in partnerships to share costs, this would not necessarily address the financial challenges faced at Gt Gidding. Nevertheless, federation with another local church school has been explored and 3 schools have been approached. This is a voluntary decision for individual governing bodies to take and there is no obligation on those governing bodies to establish or join a federation. In each case, following initial due diligence, the potential partnership school decided not to progress given concerns around the viability of Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School. In summary, this option was not considered reasonable to take

forward given a lack of interest from other schools to partner with Gt Gidding Primary in this way.

- **Academisation.**

In undertaking their due diligence, academy trusts, both local and national, find some small schools to be financially unviable or too isolated to be included in their trust, unless they convert with other small schools as a local hub. Previous consideration has been given to the academisation of Gt Gidding and adoption into a church Multi Academy Trust (MAT). As a voluntary controlled school, it could only academise with a church MAT unless approval to join a non-Diocesan MAT was granted by the Diocese of Ely. This option was not considered viable by the Diocese and Council given a lack of interest from an appropriate church of England MAT. Academisation would not address the low pupil numbers and budget challenges the school faces.

- **Closure aligned with the planned new Sawtry Primary School**

The new school in Sawtry will open with Reception children only with a proposed opening date of September 2024. Pupil numbers will be managed to support the existing two schools in Sawtry. The 2023-24 academic year will require significant reduction in the education offer at Great Gidding due to funding. There will also be a challenge to recruit an interim Headteacher. The Council and the Diocese do not, therefore, see this option as viable.

- **No change**

As outlined in this consultation document, Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School has been undersubscribed in each of the last five years and pupil numbers fall significantly short of its published admission number (PAN) each year. There is very little in-catchment demand for places at the school. The school faces significant financial challenges, with the governors' five-year budget plan showing a deficit of over £40,000 by 2024/25. Doing nothing will not address these challenges.

A number of alternative options to closure were suggested by respondents to the consultation to address the challenges the school faces. These are set out below and have been categorised according to the following headings.

Those considered unrealistic, costly or outside the control of the local authority or school

- Increase the funding for the school either from local authority resources or by lobbying government, and work with the school to help improve it.

LA response: *The national funding formula is determined by the government and allocated to local authorities via the Dedicated Schools Grant. The local authority does not have the power or resources to increase funding for the school. Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School is already receiving the highest level of per pupil funding in Cambridgeshire at more than £8,000 per child compared with the median of £4,400 per child.*

- The Council should attract more families from outside the catchment area to help the school's viability.

LA response: *The LA cannot market any school in its area. The education model is that of parents being able to express a preference for the school they wish their child to attend.*

### Those considered within the LA's control / influence

- Change the catchment area of the school to increase the geographical area e.g., to include Glatton.

LA response: *Expanding the catchment area could only be undertaken in line with the School Admissions Code 2021 and would require a further consultation process to be undertaken. The earliest this could happen would be Autumn 2023 and could not be implemented for entry before September 2025. This assumes that the expansion was not subject to objections to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and a contrary decision from the Adjudicator. Changing the catchment area of a school is a significant undertaking and there will always be gains and losses. Whilst broadening Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School's catchment might attract more pupils, it would need to be significantly broader than the addition of Glatton to make a positive difference to the school's financial challenges. It would also mean other pupils may have further to travel to their local school, and negatively impact the rolls of other schools. Expanding the catchment area would not necessarily result in greater pupil numbers. That would depend upon parental preference. The LA, therefore, does not consider this to be an option*

- Reduce from 3 classes to 2 classes. The school ran two classes once before in the recent past.

LA response: *The school ran a two-class structure just for the 2011-12 academic year when numbers on roll were 47 at January 2012 census (down from 59 in 2011) and it could afford then to provide some non-teaching support in both classes.*

*Pupil numbers then increased to allow the school to revert back to a three-class structure in September 2012. Numbers on roll at the time of the October 2012 census were 64. Up until the end of the academic year 2012/13, Infant Class Size Funding operated which supported schools with low numbers in Reception and KS1 and the school benefited from this, e.g. in 2012/13, it received an additional £8030 in its budget.*

*Were the school to move from 3 classes to 2 classes in September 2023, they would be organised with Reception, Year (Yr) 1 and Yr2 pupils in one class (as now) and Yr3, Yr 4, Yr 5 and Yr 6 pupils (i.e. the whole of Key Stage 2 (KS2) in the second class.*

*Currently the numbers in Willow Class (Yrs 3 and 4) and Oak class (Yrs 5 and 6) enable a teacher and additional support staff in each of these two classes. The budget deficit for 2024/25 is forecast to be between £60k and £65k. With pupil numbers reduced further, it would not be financially viable to employ any Teaching Assistants for the academic year 2024/25 and all the KS2 children would be taught by a single teacher. Likewise, Cherry Class (Yrs R, 1 and 2) would have a single teacher and no support staff.*

*Creating a class across all four KS2 year groups would require a bespoke curriculum for the school and potentially for the individual children. This would require extensive child development knowledge alongside subject specific knowledge.*

*The teacher (who may be the headteacher) would have to have extensive knowledge of the KS1, KS2 and year 7 curriculum. Planning would need to take account of the sequence and progression of learning across three curriculum frameworks. The developmental needs, physical and emotional maturity and level of independence of the pupils across this age range vastly differ.*

*Alongside this, the teacher would have to ensure effective provision and completion of the statutory assessments for year 4 and year 6. In addition, for any children who did not move into year 3 at the expected level, there would be the additional pressure of targeted intervention to narrow any gaps in learning.*

*In addition, the 2014 curriculum and the expectations around progressive sequence of key knowledge makes four year groups in a class much more challenging than in 2011.*

*A two-class structure is, therefore, not a viable option.*

- Operate the school for Reception and Key Stage 1 (KS1) (Yr 1 and Yr 2) pupils only, with KS2 children attending a different school.

LA response: *The small numbers involved (10 or fewer) mean that this would not be viable*

#### Those considered within the school's control

- Academisation - see page 2 above
- Develop the school as a community hub.

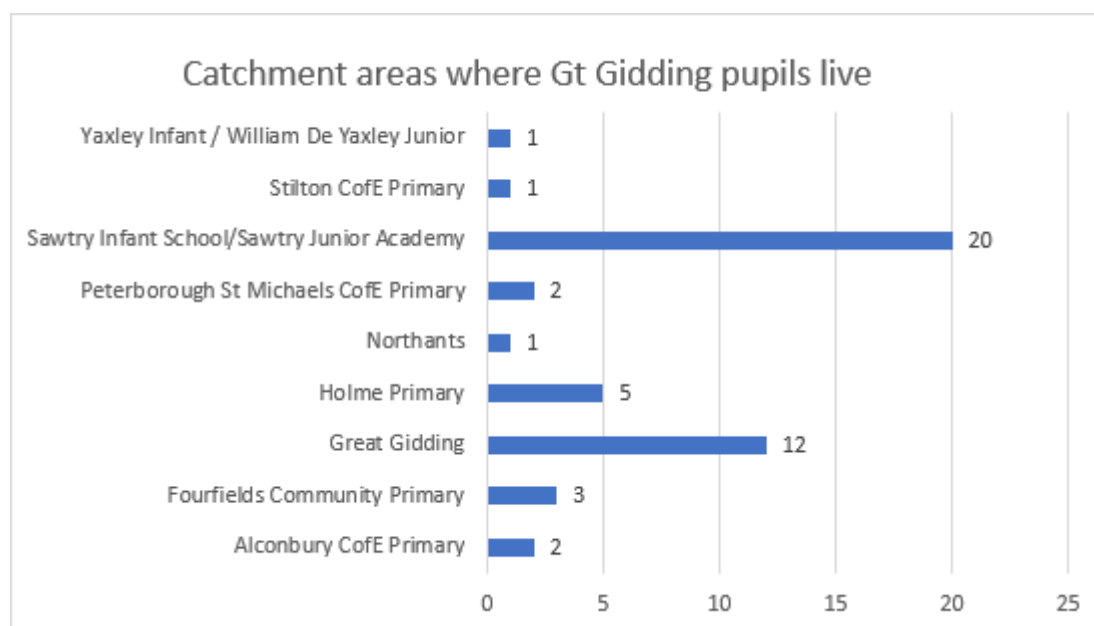
LA response: *Use of the school as a community hub would require money for upkeep, which would need to be funded by community events/services. Our research has concluded that the village hall and church are sufficient to meet the needs of the community and we have no indication that there is demand beyond what the village hall and church provide, and the services that are accessed in Sawtry (medical services, for example). See section below on impact on the local community.*

## Transport Implications

Some families may be impacted by additional travel costs and travel time. The closure of the school may impact members of the community who would have to go beyond the local village to engage with their children's teachers.

The October 2022 Pupil Led Annual School Census (PLASC) recorded 47 pupils on roll. Only 12 (25%) of them reside in the Gt Gidding catchment while 35 (75%) lived in areas served by other schools.

Figure 1: Graph to show catchment areas where pupils on roll at Gt Gidding live



The January 2022 School Census also showed that of the 18 children living in the area served by Gt Gidding attending state funded schools in Cambridgeshire, 5 of them (28%) attended other state funded schools in the surrounding area.

The nearest alternative schools are between 3.1 and 7.1 miles away (as the crow flies) from Gt Gidding as shown in the table below. For the majority of pupils and families, these schools might be nearer to their home address.

Figure 2: Table showing alternative schools and their distance to Gt Gidding

School	Distance from Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School in miles (as the flies rounded)
Sawtry Infants	3.1
Sawtry Juniors	3.1
Folksworth CE VC P	4.5
Stilton CE Primary Academy	4.7
Brington CE VC P	5.1
Holme CE Primary Academy	5.5
Yaxley Infants	7.1
William de Yaxley CE Junior Academy	7.2
Fourfields P	7.3

The majority of pupils currently attending Gt Gidding are from outside the school's catchment area while a number of children living in-catchment travel to other schools. The majority of children, therefore, already face journeys to and from school each day.



Any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase?

Analysis in January 2023 showed that of the 37 Reception to Year 5 pupils on roll at the time likely to be affected by the proposal, approximately 73% lived nearer/the same distance to an alternative school, with approximately 27% living further away. However, for many on roll at the school, their nearest alternative school is within statutory walking distance of their home address. Given the large proportion of children who attend Gt Gidding as a parental preference rather than a catchment placement, it is envisaged that displaced pupils would continue to be transported to and from school under arrangements made by their parents and carers and that, given that the majority of pupils would be able to attend a school nearer to their home address, it is unlikely there would be a noticeable increase in car usage. On the contrary, it would be expected that car usage would reduce.

The availability, and likely cost to the local authority, of transport to other schools

Since January 2023 numbers on roll have dropped further. Of the 8 children currently on roll (as at 20 February 2023) who reside in Gt Gidding's catchment 2 are in Yr 6 and will transfer to secondary phase in Sept 2023. The current contract cost is £110 per day/£20,900. In September 2023, the remaining 6 in-catchment on roll will be comprised of 2 pupils in Yr 6, 1 in Yr3 and 3 in Yr2. Estimated transport cost, based on current quotes, for them to attend primary provision in Sawtry (the nearest to Gt Gidding and its feeder villages) is £134 daily/£25,460 per annum. The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) would be approximately 30 minutes depending on the number of pick-up points.

The transport route will be required for between one (for Yr 6 pupils) and four years (for current Yr 3 pupil) for displaced children. Table 2 above indicates that there are forecast to be 2 children in Reception in catchment in 2024 and 1 in each of the following years. The transport estimates include costs for transporting these children. As catchment children reduce in number it is envisaged that a smaller vehicle (taxi rather than minibus) will be required and this will be reflected in reduced costs.

Parents may express a preference for their child to attend any school, but if the school were to close, Sawtry Infant and Junior Schools would become the designated catchment school for children living in the villages currently served by Gt Gidding Primary School and children living in that area would be entitled to transport assistance to Sawtry as the nearest schools are located there and the distance is over the statutory walking distances. The journey time by minibus or taxi (depending on the number of children) would be approximately 30 minutes depending on the number of pick-up points.

In summary, the LA acknowledges that some pupils living in villages currently in catchment for Gt Gidding Primary Schools and attending the school, might face longer journeys to and from an alternative school each day. However, the journey times would all fall well within the DfE's best practice of 45 minutes maximum for primary age children as set out in its *Guidance on Home to School Travel and Transport Guidance* which states at paragraph 34: "*As a general guide, transport arrangements should not require a child to make several changes on public transport resulting in an unreasonably long journey time. Best practice suggests that the maximum each way length of journey for a child of primary school age to be 45 minutes and for secondary school age 75 minutes, but these should be regarded as the maximum. For children with SEN and/or disabilities, journeys may be more complex and a shorter journey time, although desirable, may not always be possible.*" [Department for Education \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-home-to-school-travel-and-transport-guidance)

In conclusion, the proposal will not result in unreasonably long journey times.

[Home to school travel assistance policy \(cambridgeshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/cambridgeshire-transport-travel-guidance)

## Size of the school and quality of education

### Size of school

Gt Gidding is a small rural school with a published admission number of 14 and capacity for 98 pupils (14 x 7 year groups). The school is organised across 3 classes as follows:

- Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 class of 18
- Year 3 / 4 class of 10
- Year 5 / 6 class of 19

Source: School Census October 2022

Since the most recent height between 2013 and 2015 when total pupil numbers ranged from 70 to 75, pupil numbers have fluctuated between 56 and 66 between January 2016 and January 2018, and then continued to drop to 50 or below for the following 3 years. The October 2022 Pupil Lead Annual School Census (PLASC) recorded 47 pupils on roll. As of 31 January 2023, there were 44 pupils on roll. Since then (as of 20 February 2023), 14 have applied for, and 9 have already taken up, places elsewhere. In addition to this, 10 Yr 6 children will leave the school at the end of the current academic year to transfer to secondary phase.

Consequently, there is expected to be a maximum of 20 pupils on roll in September 2023. This could be as low as 13 if all the further 7 in-year applications for children to move elsewhere are successful.

The LA recognises that the consultation on the future of the school closure has led some parents to seek to move their children from Gt Gidding ahead of a decision being made. However, a steady downward trend was already established prior to 2022/23 and with it the increasing concern that due to the size and capacity of the school there are limitations to the provision which can be offered to pupils. Links with other schools are minimal. Specialist teaching, curriculum resourcing and enrichment opportunities are limited due to financial and human resource pressures. Wider opportunities outside of the school day are also limited to sport and Art for KS2 pupils. These will be further exacerbated when, for budgetary reasons, the school reaches the point of having to reduce from operating three classes to two, which given the numbers just referred to, would be the case September 2023.

### Quality of Education

The LA has provided a high level of engagement with and range of support to the school in recent years for teaching and learning and leadership and management. These are summarised in the table below.

Figure 3: LA engagement with Gt Gidding CE VC Primary School

Academic Year	Engagement with the LA
2015-16	10 notes of visit and a school review
2016-17	19 notes of visit and half termly review meetings
2017-18	18 notes of visit from subject/specialist advisers including early years, maths and English as well as 2 from the school improvement adviser.

Although the number of visits has since dropped to 8 visits a year, every year from 2018/19 the School Improvement Service has continued to maintain this level of support, including during the pandemic when 'visits' were provided online. This exceeds the usual entitlement of 5 visits from members of the School Improvement Service and does not include visits from other services such as the Early Years Service and the SEND Service.



In addition to curriculum support, a Strategic Leadership and Governance Review was carried out by the LA in October 2019. The findings from the review indicated that there were significant areas that required immediate improvement in order that the governing body carry out its functions effectively.

In September 2015 the school was rated by Ofsted as Requires Improvement (RI). In October 2017, the school received an overall rating of Good, although the Outcomes for Pupils remained as Requiring Improvement (RI). The school was inspected again in November 2022. This was a section 8 ungraded inspection by Ofsted. The outcome of the inspection was that:

*There has been no change to this school's overall judgement of good as a result of this ungraded (section 8) inspection. However, the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now. The next inspection will therefore be a graded inspection.* The school can expect to receive its next section 5 graded inspection within 12 to 24 months of November 2022.

However, *the evidence gathered suggests that the inspection grade might not be as high if a graded (section 5) inspection were carried out now.*

E.g., SEND: *teaching has not been adapted consistently well. Some pupils with SEND receive less precise levels of support than others.* The school can expect to receive its next section 5 graded inspection within 12 to 24 months of November 2022.

The key findings of the November 2022 inspection were that:

- *Leaders and teachers have worked together to bring about improvements to the curriculum. They have made sure that it is better suited to the mixed-aged classes in the school. The curriculum is designed to complement leaders' vision of 'growing great learners'.*
- *In too many subjects, teachers do not ensure that pupils practise key knowledge until they are fluent. This means that those pupils who most need to be secure in crucial component knowledge struggle unnecessarily to complete complex tasks. Leaders should ensure that teachers thoroughly teach the most important knowledge and concepts that pupils need before they move on to new content*
- *Leaders do not consistently provide teachers with up-to-date information about pupils with SEND to inform their teaching choices. This means that teaching to support these pupils is not as precise as it should be. Leaders should ensure that teachers have, and use, detailed information about pupils with SEND to adapt their teaching appropriately.*

#### The educational standards at the school and the likely effect on standards at neighbouring schools

- Trends in attainment data are difficult to gather, as the numbers of pupils in each cohort at a school the size of Gt Gidding Primary School are so small that percentages can be skewed quite significantly year on year.
- Due to these very small cohorts, it is highly unlikely that educational standards will be significantly impacted in neighbouring schools.
- In 2022:
  - 50% of pupils achieved a Good Level of Development at the end of Foundation Stage
  - 85.7% of pupils achieved the national standard in reading, writing and maths at the end of Key Stage 1. However, no pupils achieved learning at a greater depth.
  - 100% of pupils achieved the national standard for reading and half of these pupils achieved the national standard in Maths. No pupils achieved the national standard and in writing.
- The end of year predictions for 2023 paint a positive picture with many pupils across the school expected to meet or exceed the national standard. These predictions

exceed national averages, however as previously noted, such small numbers of pupils can sway data one way or the other quite significantly.

### The proportion of pupils attending the school from within the local community, i.e. whether the school is being used by the local community

The January 2022 the School Census recorded 18 children living in the catchment area served by Gt Gidding Primary School attending state funded schools in Cambridgeshire. This number has dropped in the last 5 years. 5 of them (28%) attended other schools in the surrounding. This latter number has risen in the past 5 years.

Figure 4: Table showing the number of children living within the catchment and the proportion attending Gt Gidding in the last 5 years

Year (January census)	Number of 4-11year olds living in the catchment area	Number (%) attending Gt Gidding Primary	Number (%) attending other state funded primary schools
Jan 2017	23	21 (91%)	2 (9%)
Jan 2018	28	24 (86%)	4 (14%)
Jan 2019	25	19 (76%)	6 (24%)
Jan 202	23	17 (74%)	6 (26%)
Jan 2021	21	14 (67%)	7 (33%)
Jan 2022	18	13 (72%)	5 (28%)

### The overall and long-term impact on local people and the community of the closure of the school and of the loss of the building as a community facility

The majority of respondents to the consultation classified themselves as resident within the school community (not a parent, governor or member of staff) or former employees, former pupils or close friends / family members of children at the school or pupils. The LA recognises that the majority of respondents strongly disagree with a proposal to close the school.

The school is seen as an important part of the village and its loss could have an impact on community life. This is addressed in more detail in the **Community Impact Assessment** appended to the main Committee report.

A demographic comparison of Gt Gidding and similar Cambridgeshire villages without schools or where schools previously closed indicates that populations remain stable.

In small communities, schools can be a key provider of services other than education, but this is not the case in Gt Gidding. Local community services have not traditionally been provided at the primary school. Family and adult learning, healthcare, community internet access are all provided elsewhere. There are:

- doctors' surgery and chemist in both Alconbury and Sawtry
- dentists in Sawtry (private) and Huntingdon and Peterborough (NHS)
- family and adult learning opportunities in Sawtry through the community college and through CARESCO charity based in Sawtry which exists to serve the local community in Sawtry and its satellite villages which includes the Giddings and Winwick
- Sawtry Eye Magazine) published monthly (by CARESCO) details all activities in the local area
- Monthly library bus service to Gt Gidding
- Library in Sawtry with free access to PCs and the internet

Gt Gidding used to provide wrap around care before school, after school or during the holidays but no longer does so due to lack of interest making it unviable.

There is no Early Years provision on site at the school or elsewhere in the village.

Were the school to close, none of the above services would be affected.

The economic benefits that a school brings to a community must be considered beneficial side effects to the main duty of a school which is to provide a quality education to its pupils. Academic standards and overall viability must be the major considerations in any decision on the future of a school and, while a community may be impacted by a decision to close a school; this cannot be an overriding factor. If the school closed, the local shop and pub would be unable to rely on passing trade from the school community and their families. This is already the case for 13 weeks of the year during school holidays. It would be for the local community to consider how to support local retail facilities.

### School organisation and capacity of good schools to accommodate displaced pupils

Table X below shows the actual number of pupils on roll during the October 2022 school census. The information shows that there were 1733 pupils on roll across nine schools within 7.5m (as the crow flies) of Gt Gidding, with 1849 places available if all schools were operating up to their published admission number (PAN). This results in 116 (6.3%) surplus places across these schools.

Figure 5: Table showing pupil numbers and places available within 7.5 miles of Gt Gidding (October 2022)  
Data source: October 2022 school census

Capacity	Ofsted rating	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus
Sawtry Infant School	Good	60	62	61	60					183	180	-3
Sawtry Junior Academy	Good	65				57	55	83	73	268	260	-8
Folksworth CE Primary	Good	15	14	9	12	17	16	11	16	95	105	10
Stilton CE Primary Academy	Good	30	28	14	18	17	27	25	26	155	210	55
Brington CE Primary	Good	17	16	15	15	17	12	19	15	109	119	10
Holme CE Primary	Good	17	22	18	15	16	15	17	15	118	119	1
Yaxley Infants School	Good	60	53	40	39					132	180	48
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	RI	64				53	57	59	58	227	256	29
Fourfields Primary	Good	60	58	60	60	89	60	60	59	446	420	-26
<b>Combined total on roll</b>			253	217	219	266	242	274	262	1733		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>		388	259	259	259	268	268	268	268		1849	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus</b>			6	42	40	2	26	-6	6			116

This information has been used to forecast the number of places required across the same schools for the following academic year (2023/24) – See Table X. The forecast takes account of birth rates, trends in actual numbers, and planned housing development. For example, for Sawtry Infant School there were 62 children on roll in September 2022, but due to birth rate and housing development within the village, this figure is expected to increase to 82 children entering reception in September 2023.

These forecasts have been used to assess the capacity of schools in the area to accommodate displaced pupils from Gt Gidding in September 2023 should it close on 31 August 2023.

Figure 6: Table showing provisional pupil numbers within 7,5 miles of Gt Gidding (October 2022)

Data source: Pupil forecasts October 2022

Name of school	Ofsted rating	PAN	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total (R-Y6)	Capacity	Deficit (-) / Surplus
Sawtry Infant School	Good	60	82	57	60					199	180	-19
Sawtry Junior Academy	Good	65				59	60	56	83	258	260	2
Folksworth CE Primary	Good	15	9	15	8	13	16	15	11	87	105	18
Stilton CE Primary Academy	Good	30	11	29	14	13	13	26	23	129	210	81
Brington CE Primary	Good	17	13	17	18	16	21	19	20	124	119	-5
Holme CE Primary	Good	17	13	17	17	16	16	16	17	112	119	7
Yaxley Infants School	Good	60	52	53	45					150	180	30
William de Yaxley CE Junior School	RI	64				43	50	53	60	206	256	50
Fourfields Primary	Good	60	55	61	60	59	89	58	59	441	420	-21
<b>Combined total on roll</b>			235	249	222	219	265	243	273	1706		
<b>Capacity (if operating to PAN)</b>		388	259	259	259	268	268	268	268		1849	
<b>Deficit (-) / Surplus</b>			24	10	37	49	3	25	-5			143

Pupil numbers across the nine schools are forecast to decrease by 27 to 1,706 in October 2023, with surplus places increasing from 6.3% to 7.7%.

If Gt Gidding's forecast of 39 pupils on roll for 2023/24 were to be absorbed by the nine schools, there would be 1,745 pupils and a remaining surplus of 104 places, or 5.6%.

It is acknowledged that William de Yaxley CE Junior School is currently RI which may influence parental choice. Even without this school, there are sufficient places amongst the remaining 8 schools to accommodate displaced pupils, with a remaining surplus of 54 or 3.4%.

Schools operate most efficiently and effectively when full or nearly full. To this end the local authority seeks to keep the number of surplus places (the number of places in schools that are unfilled) to a minimum. However, it is generally accepted that not all unfilled places in a school are surplus places, but that a small margin of surplus capacity is often allowed to facilitate parental preference, to take account of the fact that schools with available places may not always be in the part of a planning area where the demand is, and to allow for a degree of error in the forecasts. A school is generally considered to be full when it has less than 5% of its places unfilled. This is in line with the National Audit Office report on Capital Funding for new school places published in 2013, where it states:

*“It is considered that on average 5 per cent was the bare minimum needed for authorities to meet their statutory duty with operational flexibility, while enabling parents to have some choice of schools”.*

In this case, an overall capacity of 5.6% leaves surplus at the bare minimum and the capacity is not evenly spread across all year groups.

In the longer term, a new school planned to open in Sawtry in September 2024 to make provision for children arising from new developments in Sawtry will also mitigate the impact of displaced pupils wanting to take up a place in a Sawtry school.

**Whether the school is now surplus to requirements (e.g. because there are surplus places elsewhere in the local areas which can accommodate displaced pupils, and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term)**

In light of the above availability of alternative school places if Gt Gidding Primary were to close, the LA would regard it as surplus to requirement and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium or long term.

March 2023



## Passenger Transport Policy Review

To:	Children and Young People Committee
Meeting Date:	25 April 2023
From:	Executive Director Children's Services
Electoral division(s):	All
Key decision:	No
Forward Plan ref:	n/a
Outcome:	To seek the Committee's views on proposed revised travel assistance policies and to consider the recommended proposed changes to the existing discretionary travel arrangements.
Recommendation:	<p>The Committee is asked to approve the recommendations below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) to proceed with a consultation on withdrawing the current discretionary travel arrangements for children aged between 8 and 11 living more than 2 miles but less than the statutory 3 mile walking distance from their home to school.</li><li>b) to consult on revisions to the Council's discretionary Post-16 Travel Assistance offer, for students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), withdrawing the existing provision of free assistance, and introducing a new level of subsidy in line with the mainstream travel assistance subsidy.</li><li>c) to consult on introducing a subsidised charge for discretionary transport assistance for children with SEND, who attend nursery provision and request assistance.</li><li>d) to comment on and agree the adoption of the revised travel assistance policies and governance arrangements, including the new Home to School Travel Assistance Policy for Children in Care, with the exception of the proposed amendments listed in a, b and c above.</li></ul>
Voting arrangements:	Co-opted members of the Committee are eligible to vote on this item.

Officer contact:

Name: Fran Cox

Post: Assistant Director: Education Capital and Place Planning

Email: [fran.cox@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:fran.cox@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01480 379582

Member contacts:

Names: Councillors Bryony Goodliffe and Michael Atkins

Post: Chair/Vice-Chair

Email: [Bryony.Goodliffe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Bryony.Goodliffe@cambridgeshire.gov.uk) / [Michael.Atkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:Michael.Atkins@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: 01223 706398 (office)



# 1. Background

## Statutory Responsibilities

- 1.1 Parents and carers have a duty under the Education Act 1996 to ensure that their children attend school and to make the necessary travel arrangements, including accompanying them where appropriate on their journey to and from school. Parents and carers are also responsible for their children until they arrive at school and once they leave at the end of the school day.

There are, however, certain circumstances under which the Council has a duty to make travel arrangements. These duties can be reviewed in **Appendix 1**. Under these duties the Council must provide free travel assistance to those children:

- whose nearest suitable school is beyond 2 miles (if below the age of 8) or beyond 3 miles (if aged between 8 and 16).
- who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to school as a result of mobility issues associated with their Special Education Need and/or Disability (SEND).
- who cannot reasonably be expected to walk to their nearest suitable school because of the nature of the route they would have to use to get to and from that school.

- 1.2 The Council must also provide free transport where pupils are entitled to free school meals, or their parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credits if:

- They are aged between 8 and 11, attend their nearest suitable school and it is more than 2 miles from their home; or
- They are aged between 11 and 16, attend one of their 3 nearest suitable schools, provided it is more than 2 miles but not more than 6 miles from their home; or
- They are aged between 11 and 16, attend a school that is more than 2 but not more than 15 miles from their home, that their parents have chosen on grounds of their religion or belief if, having regard to that religion or belief, there is no suitable nearer school to their home.

## 1.3 Discretionary Powers

Section 508C of the Education Act 1996 provides the Council with discretionary powers to go beyond their statutory duties and pay the whole or any part of reasonable travel expenses for children not eligible under Section 508B. It is for each Council to decide whether and how to apply and employ these discretionary powers. However, in doing so, the Council must act reasonably when determining their discretionary arrangements. The Council currently operates a number of discretionary schemes outlined below:

- Extended Walking Distance: Pupils aged 8-11.
- Temporary, Emergency or Exceptional Travel Assistance.

- Transport to Nursery Schools (SEND).
- Transport to After School Clubs (SEND).
- Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy.

1.4 A table summarising the Council's current statutory and discretionary transport arrangements has been included as **Appendix 2**

#### 1.5 Policy Review

In November 2022 it was highlighted to the Children and Young People Committee (CYP) that there was a need undertake a review of the Council's existing policies. The Council currently publishes one main Travel Assistance Policy, which includes the statutory eligibility and discretionary provision for both mainstream children and young people and those with SEND. In addition to the main transport policy, the Council publishes an annual Post-16 Policy Statement, which must be consulted upon and published by 31 May each year.

It was identified that the review should give particular consideration to the following:

- How we communicate our policies to families making their school selections, in particular those parent and carers of children/ young people with SEND, so that they are fully informed of the eligibility criteria when making those important decisions.
- How our policies communicate the decision-making and appeal processes, especially when considering exceptional requests for high-cost transport arrangements.
- The accessibility of the policies, ensuring they are clear and understandable for those parents/carers who need are making decisions regarding their child's school placement.

1.6 This policy review is being undertaken as a part of the Council's wider [Transport Transformation Strategy](#) agreed by this committee in November 2022. Within this strategy, an action plan has been identified to help achieve the delivery of outstanding transport provision and address the significant budgetary pressures currently being faced. These pressures are in part due to inflationary pressures, national driver shortages and increased costs of fuel, but are equally due to the significant growth in both the mainstream pupil population and the SEND growth.

1.7 The review of the Council's discretionary policy schemes, as set out in section 1.3, is being undertaken as one of a number of current and planned work streams, identifying areas where changes are considered appropriate by officers, with the potential to deliver budgetary savings. Some of the workstreams include:

##### 1.7.1 A review and rationalisation of all transport routes

This review of transport routes will have a particular focus on high-cost, individual travel routes in order to achieve better value for money.

### 1.7.2 Communication and engagement

A comprehensive review of communication for children, young people and families is being undertaken. This commenced with a review of the Council's Travel Assistance policies, but will also focus on the Council's webpages, frequently asked question documents, and the creation of additional information guides, to be available for families for key transition points in their children's education.

### 1.7.3 Safer routes to school route reviews

The Council has operated a long-standing 'invest to save' programme, where existing routes, previously assessed as unavailable, are reviewed, and funding is allocated for improvements to create an "available" walking route to school. This investment enables the withdrawal of Council-funded transport, generating future budgetary savings. Officers will continue with the programme of identifying routes where potential investments can be made, in order to redesignate routes as being safe and existing transport to be withdrawn.

## 2. Review of Discretionary Transport Arrangements

### 2.1 Extended Walking Distance: Pupils aged 8-11

The Council has historically used its discretionary powers to extend the statutory 2 mile 'walking distance' to include children from the age of 8 up to the point at which they transfer to secondary school at age 11: namely the Council operates a primary/secondary split in terms of the walking distance criterion, rather than an under 8 /over 8 split. This recognises the fact that in Cambridgeshire, children transfer from primary to secondary school at age 11.

2.2 It is recognised that this discretionary arrangement is a long standing policy, reflecting the age ranges within the 2 tiered education system in Cambridgeshire. However, research shows that we are among the minority of Authorities, with only 1 of our 8 geographical neighbours providing assistance to all children aged between 8 and 11, living between 2 and 3 miles from their nearest suitable school.

2.3 If the Council were to align its policy to its statutory duties, travel assistance would remain in place for children living in rural communities, for whom there is no available walking route to and from their nearest school. These children would continue to receive travel assistance, as referenced in 1.1.

2.4 Children living within low income households would also continue to be supported with travel assistance, under the statutory duty of extended rights, as referenced in 1.2.

2.5 Children whose long-term medical conditions or disabilities, which would prevent them from walking the 3 mile distance to and from school, would be considered for continuing travel assistance under the Council's established medical transport policy.

2.6 The Council currently transports 220 children aged between 8 and 11, who live more than 2 miles from their primary school, but less than 3 miles. The current cost of these arrangements totals £265,285.60. Of the 220 pupils, 172 would continue to be eligible for assistance, as highlighted in 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5. 48 pupils would no longer be eligible

for travel assistance. The estimated saving from current transport routes would be £44,273 per year.

- 2.7 Careful consideration would need to be given as to the timing of any changes to the existing policy, in order to allow families the opportunity to make informed decisions when applying for school places.
- 2.8 Consideration would need to be given to the impact on families who have multiple children attending the same school, who may be placed in the situation of having 1 child who continues to be eligible and 1 child who is no longer eligible for assistance.
- 2.9 The possibility of offering remaining seats for purchase on the existing contracted vehicles by those families whose children no longer meet the criteria for free assistance could be explored. Any offer would, however, be subject to the availability of vehicles that meet the Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR).
- 2.10 This report proposes to Committee the option to proceed with a consultation to align the Council's policy to its statutory duties and withdraw the current blanket discretionary policy of providing travel assistance to all pupils aged between 8 and 11, living more than 2 but less than 3 miles from their nearest suitable school. A copy of the revised policy wording proposed is available in **Appendix 3**
- 2.10 Temporary, Emergency or Exceptional Travel Assistance

The Council has operated a long-standing policy of considering requests for exceptional discretionary travel assistance beyond statutory entitlement, to support the most vulnerable families in times of significant need. This includes the consideration for assistance in the following circumstances:

- Where a family is forced to move into emergency temporary accommodation or are made unintentionally homeless.
- Where a family has been forced to move home during their child's GCSE studies.
- Other cases of extreme vulnerability, as supported by schools and relevant professionals.

The Council has supported in excess of 120 families during the 2021/22 academic year from the above categories. In light of continuing financial pressures facing families, especially those who are most vulnerable, it is the view of officers that the current level of support provided through this discretionary policy remains appropriate and no change is proposed in the draft new policy.

2.11 Transport to Nursery Schools (SEND)

There is no statutory duty placed on the Council to provide free travel for children below the statutory school age to attend nursery school. However, the Council considers requests for assistance where a child has an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and, without the provision of travel assistance, would be unable to access the education provision specified in their Plan.

2.12 This report proposes to Committee the option to proceed with a consultation on ceasing to provide this assistance free of charge, but to instead offer subsidised assistance on a similar basis, currently offered for Post-16 students. A copy of the proposed revised policy wording is available in **Appendix 3**.

2.13 Transport to After-School Clubs (SEND)

Since 2011 the Council has funded the cost of transport to enable children and young people attending a number of the County's area special schools to stay on beyond the end of the school day and participate in after school activities. The Council also provides funding from its High Needs Block towards the cost of running this after-school provision, in the order of £20,000 per school per year.

The Council expects to spend £111,929.38 on providing transport to the After-School clubs run by the following Area Special Schools in 2022/23:

- Highfields Academy in Ely.
- Samuel Pepys in St Neots.
- Spring Common Academy in Huntingdon.
- Meadowgate Academy in Wisbech.

The after-school clubs at both the Castle School in Cambridge and the Granta School in Linton are currently not able to operate due to resourcing difficulties.

The continuation of the transport provided to after-school clubs was previously considered by members of the Children and Young People's Committee and in May 2022 it was agreed the current arrangements would continue for a further 12 months.

The After-School Club transport provision is not included within the scope of this report, as the future viability of the club provision itself is currently being considered as a part of the Council's Safety Valve Programme. A further report covering all aspects of the Safety Valve proposals will be brought to Committee in the summer term.

2.14 Post-16 Travel Assistance

The Council has no statutory duty to provide free or subsidised post-16 travel assistance. However, in compliance with Section 508F of the 1996 Education Act, the Council must prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or other support, that it considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training. Under this duty, the Council should consider the appropriateness of assistance available for students living in rural areas, so that they are not financially disadvantaged due to increased travel distances and costs.

2.16 There are currently separate policies for mainstream Post-16 students (aged 16-19) and for SEND students (aged 16-25). The current arrangements have been in place since September 2016, where financial support is focused on students from qualifying low-income households attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC). In addition, support provided for students with SEND who hold an EHCP. These students must live more than 3 miles from this centre or be unable to walk this distance as a result of

their SEND. They must also be unable to access their Post-16 centre by public transport or on foot.

- 2.17 Eligible students, both mainstream and SEND, are required to make a financial contribution, in certain circumstances, as set out below in **Table A**. In addition to this, the current policy provides free assistance for students with SEND who meet the qualifying low income criteria.
- 2.18 Children in Care and Care Leavers (aged 16-19) attending and living more than 3 miles from their NAC remain eligible for free travel assistance, as a part of the Council's corporate parent support arrangements.
- 2.19 The current charges for Post-16 students are set out below:

**Table A**

<b>Charges for the 2022/2023 Academic Year</b>	<b>Post-16 Mainstream</b>	<b>Post-16 SEND Termly/Annual Costs</b>	<b>Post-16 Children in Care Termly/Annual Costs</b>
Low income eligible students	£133 / £405	£0	£0
Other eligible students	N/A	£220 / £660	£0
Spare Seat Costs for non-eligible students	£260 / £780	£260 / £780	£260 / £780

- 2.20 Those students who do not meet the qualifying criteria for subsidised assistance are offered the opportunity to purchase spare seats on existing Council contracted school bus routes. These seats are sold on a term-by-term basis and are subject to availability on vehicles which meet the Public Service Vehicles Accessibility Regulations (PSVAR). The current cost of these seats is set out in section 2.19.
- 2.21 Students are also signposted directly to colleges and commercial operators, who offer discounted rates on their services for Post-16 students. These discounts currently include:
- 50% discount on rail travel.
  - Discounted termly/annual Stagecoach Student Rider ticket for Post-16 students on Cambridgeshire routes.
- 2.21 Students who do not meet the qualifying criteria for travel assistance are also signposted towards the Government's 16-19 Bursary Fund. This fund is in place to support the most vulnerable 16-19 year olds to continue in their education. The fund is managed directly by each college or sixth form and includes two elements:
- Guaranteed bursaries of £1200 a year for the most vulnerable students i.e. those Children in Care, Care Leavers and receiving income support in their own right.

- Discretionary bursaries for any student staying on in education and training who, as determined by schools, colleges, and training providers, face genuine financial barriers to help with costs such as transport, food, or equipment.

2.22 This report proposes to Committee the option to proceed with a consultation on revisions to the Council's discretionary Post-16 Travel Assistance offer, for students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), proposing the withdrawal of the current provision of free assistance for low income households and introducing a new level of subsidy in line with current subsidy for Post-16 mainstream students, as indicated below in **Table B**. Officers are of the view that this change would align the subsidy the Council is continuing to offer equitably across all low income families. A copy of the proposed revised policy wording is available in **Appendix 3**.

2.23 Table of Proposed Post 16 Charges

**Table B**

<b>Proposed Charges</b>	<b>Post-16 Mainstream</b>	<b>Post-16 SEND Termly/Annual Costs</b>	<b>Post-16 Children in Care Termly/Annual Costs</b>
Low income eligible students	£133 / £405	<b>£135/£405</b>	£0
Other eligible students	N/A	£220 / £660	£0
Spare Seat Costs for non-eligible students	£260 / £780	£260 / £780	£260 / £780

2.24 **Table C** sets out the sets out the Post-16 expenditure and income for the 2022/23 Academic Year. It is anticipated that the proposed policy revision, as set out in 2.22, would generate an anticipated increase in income of £112k per annum.

**Table C**

<b>2022/23</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Net Expenditure</b>
<b>Post-16 SEND</b>	£2,733,618	£141,898	£2,591,720
<b>Post-16 Mainstream</b>	£234,730	£57,777	£173,953
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,968,348</b>	<b>£199,675</b>	<b>£2,765,673</b>

### 3. Review of Travel Assistance Policies

3.1 The Council has a duty to publish a home to school travel assistance policy, setting out arrangements for children and young people of statutory school age. There is no duty to

undertake a formal annual review of this policy, but it should be kept under regular review to ensure it continues to meet local needs and comply with statutory requirements.

- 3.2 An effective policy should be easy for parents/ carers or students to access and be clearly written so that parents and carers can easily understand it. It should clearly set out all the statutory eligibility criteria, in addition to the discretionary consideration offered by the Council. Policies should also set out the application and appeals policies.
- 3.3 The Council's current travel assistance policy comprises of one policy document setting out the eligibility criteria and arrangements for statutory school aged children/ young people (aged 4-16), including those children/ young people with Special Educational Needs and/ or Disabilities (SEND). It also sets out criteria and discretionary arrangements for Post-16 students (both mainstream and SEND). The current policy has been in place since December 2016.
- 3.4 In addition to the main policy document the Council also reviews and consults upon an annual Post-16 Policy Statement, which must be published by 31 May each year.
- 3.5 As referenced in 1.4 of this report, the key focus of this review is to ensure our eligibility criteria and arrangements are clear and accessible for parents/ carers and students. Additionally, the policy must be clearly communicated at appropriate transition points for children and young people, whether that be when a child is due to begin primary school for the first time, or at the naming stage of a school within a child's Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- 3.6 It is the view of officers undertaking the policy review that introducing dedicated policies for children/ young people with SEND and students requiring assistance with Post-16 travel would improve accessibility for parents/ carers and students. It is therefore suggested the existing one policy is developed into 3 draft policies:
- Draft School Travel Assistance Policy – Mainstream. (**Appendix 4**)
  - Draft School Travel Assistance Policy for Pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities. (**Appendix 5**)
  - Draft Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy. (**Appendix 6**)
- 3.7 In addition to the above 3 policies, a new policy has been created to outline the support provided with travel assistance for Children in Care. The objective of this policy is to support the good practice currently taking place within children's social care in relation to multi-agency decision making. A copy of the draft proposed policy, which has been shared with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee, is included as **Appendix 7**.
- 3.8 School Travel Assistance Policy Mainstream

This policy sets out the criteria and arrangements for statutory home to school travel assistance for children and young people attending mainstream schools and academies. This includes entitlement for children/ young people with SEND who have no special transport requirements.



- 3.9 The first proposed revision within this policy includes a change in terminology for a qualifying school to which an eligible child/ young person might receive travel assistance. This was previously referred to as the “*designated*” school” and will now be referred to as the “*nearest suitable school*”. This change will bring the Council’s policy in line with the terminology used within the Department of Education’s (DfE) statutory guidance.
- 3.10 The second proposed revision relates to the calculation of home to school distance measurements. The existing policy confirms that measurements will be calculated by using the “*shortest available walking route*”. Whilst this will remain the process for determining whether a child/ young person lives within or outside the statutory walking distances, an extension is proposed to set out how distances will be measured beyond the maximum statutory walking distances. This description will be:

*For routes beyond the maximum statutory walking distance of 3 miles, where there is no expectation that a child/ young person would **walk** the distance, measurements are undertaken by the shortest **road route**.*

3.11 School Travel Assistance Policy for Children/ Young People With SEND

This draft policy sets out the criteria and arrangements for statutory home to school travel assistance for children and young people with SEND who require travel assistance to and from their school or educational setting. This may be because their educational need or disability prevents them from walking the distance to and from school or because they require specific transport requirements.

- 3.12 When reviewing the travel assistance policy for children/ young people with SEND, the focus was on ensuring the eligibility criteria were clearly set out and that the application, decision-making and appeals procedures were clearly set out and transparent.
- 3.13 It includes a revised description of Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs) including the enhanced criteria agreed by Members at the CYP Committee in September 2021, so that parents/ carers can better assess whether a PTB would be a suitable transport option for their child.
- 3.14 The initial review has identified the need for a more robust and transparent decision-making process for requests for high-cost and exceptional transport arrangements. It is proposed that an Officer Panel process, made up of Senior Officers across Transport and SEND Services, be established ensuring all decisions are made following a thorough, child-focused discussion, taking into consideration all supporting evidence.
- 3.15 Further workstreams will be undertaken to ensure the successful communication of the Council’s policy, which will include consultation and partnership working with:
- The Statutory Assessment and Recourses Team
  - Pinpoint, the Cambridgeshire Parent/ Carer forum

## 4. Alignment with corporate priorities

### 4.1 Environment and Sustainability

Through encouraging independent travel and reducing, where appropriate, the need for individual travel arrangements, the Council can contribute to improving carbon and air quality outcomes.

### 4.2 Health and Care

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4.3 Places and Communities

There are no significant implications for this priority.

### 4.4 Children and Young People

For many vulnerable children living in Cambridgeshire, their school can be their main point of continuity. The Council continues to operate consistent and robust processes for assessing the need for exceptional discretionary travel assistance, supporting those children and young people who are most in need.

### 4.5 Transport

Robust eligibility checking processes will ensure that children/young people receive the travel assistance, appropriate to their needs and which also encourages independent travel, at every possible opportunity,

## 5. Significant Implications

### 5.1 Resource Implications

#### Budgetary Pressures

Whilst the focus of if this report is on policy review, it would not be possible to undertake such a review without considering the continuing financial pressures placed on the Home to School Transport budget, particularly relating to children/young people with SEND. In 2021/22, the SEND transport budget was £14.86m and ended the financial year with an overspend of £1.32m, due to the continuing demand for places at Special Schools and High Needs Units combined, with an increase in complexity of transport need. For 2022/23, the SEND budget has been increased to £17.92m to reflect the expected increasing pupil population demands, along with the predicted increase in the number of pupils with Education, Health, and Care Plans (EHCPs). However with high inflationary cost increases, the pressure on the budget continues to increase throughout the course of the year and it is anticipated that the financial year will conclude with an overspend of £3.2 million, across both the SEND and mainstream transport budgets.

## 5.2 Procurement/Contractual/Council Contract Procedure Rules Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- All education transport is contracted through procurement frameworks established in compliance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules.

## 5.3 Statutory, Legal and Risk Implications

The report above sets out details of significant implications.

## 5.4 Equality and Diversity Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- S149 Equality Act 2010 ('The Act') places a duty on councils to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to eliminate discrimination. As such the Council has a duty to ensure its policies, practices, procedures, and services do not discriminate against disabled people.
- Section 6 of the Act defines disability and section 20 defines the duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not discriminated against.
- The Council is under a legal duty to publish a policy that reflects these provisions and to comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.

In respect of the proposals outlined in sections 2.10, 2.13 and 2.22, the consultation process would be used to help gather information on any potential impact for the children/young people whose eligibility for transport may be affected by the proposed changes, from which an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) will be undertaken.

## 5.5 Engagement and Communications Implications

The withdrawal or change to existing school transport provision is an emotive and challenging process. Any proposed policy changes which would lead to a change in a child/ young person's eligibility would be subject to consultation, with careful consideration being given to the timing of any proposed changes.

## 5.6 Localism and Local Member Involvement

It is likely that the majority of members will have families living in their divisions who may see their child's entitlement to travel assistance change as a result of these proposals.

## 5.7 Public Health Implications

Should the Council proceed with the proposals outlined in 2.10, more children would be encouraged to walk to school and experience health benefits as a result. Provision is made within the Council's statutory duties, as set out in 2.5, to continuing to support those who

have long-term medical conditions/disabilities, which prevent them from walking the expected distances to and from school.

## 5.8 Environment and Climate Change Implications on Priority Areas:

### 5.8.1 Implication 1: Energy efficient, low carbon buildings.

Neutral Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.8.2 Implication 2: Low carbon transport.

Neutral Status: Neutral

It is not yet known how the proposals set out within Sections 2.10, 2.13 and 2.22 might impact on how children will travel to school. However, these implications would be explored, families consulted and information gathered as a part of the proposed consultation process.

### 5.8.3 Implication 3: Green spaces, peatland, afforestation, habitats and land management.

Neutral Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.8.4 Implication 4: Waste Management and Tackling Plastic Pollution.

Neutral Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.8.5 Implication 5: Water use, availability and management:

Neutral Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

### 5.8.6 Implication 6: Air Pollution.

Negative Status: Neutral

Explanation: There is a risk that any change to the Council's existing policies, which reduces the level of support currently offered, could lead to a greater number of parents transporting their children in individual cars.

### 5.8.7 Implication 7: Resilience of our services and infrastructure and supporting vulnerable people to cope with climate change.

Neutral Status: Neutral

Explanation: There are no significant implications within this category

Have the resource implications been cleared by Finance? Yes

Name of Financial Officer: Martin Wade

Have the procurement/contractual/ Council Contract Procedure Rules implications been cleared by the Head of Procurement and Commercial? Yes

Name of Officer: Claire Ellis

Has the impact on statutory, legal and risk implications been cleared by the Council's Monitoring Officer or Pathfinder Legal? Yes

Name of Legal Officer: Emma Duncan

Have the equality and diversity implications been cleared by your EqIA Super User?

Yes

Name of Officer: Jon Lewis

Have any engagement and communication implications been cleared by Communications?

Yes

Name of Officer: Simon Cobby

Have any localism and Local Member involvement issues been cleared by your Service Contact? Yes

Name of Officer: Jon Lewis

Have any Public Health implications been cleared by Public Health?

Yes

Name of Officer: Raj Lakshman

If a key decision, have any Environment and Climate Change implications been cleared by the Climate Change Officer?

Yes

Name of Officer: Emily Bolton

## 6. Source documents

6.1 Cambridgeshire Home to school travel assistance policy

6.2 Department for Education - Home to school Travel and Transport Guidance - Statutory Guidance for Local Authorities (July 2014)



## APPENDIX 1

### The Legal Framework- Home to School/College Transport

The Legal parameters relating to home to school/college transport for children and young people of statutory school age are set out in Sections 508, 509 and schedule 35B of the 1996 Education Act as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Sections 509(1) and (2) place a duty upon local authorities to provide free transport where necessary to facilitate the attendance of children and students at schools and institutions both within and outside of the further and higher education sectors.

Section 509(3) allows local authorities to pay the whole or any part of reasonable travelling expenses when not making provision under 509(2) above.

Section 509(4) requires local authorities to take certain factors into account including the child's age, the nature of possible routes and parental wishes for the provision of education at a school or institution in which the religious education is that of the religion or denomination to which his/her parent adheres.

Section 509AD defines the duty placed on local authorities to have regard to religion and belief in exercising their school travel functions. They are required to provide free transport to the nearest secondary school preferred by reason of a parent/carer's religion or belief between 2 and 15 miles from the child's home where the family meets the national low-income criteria.

In line with the requirements of the Act, the Council provides free transport for all young people of secondary school age (11-16) living in low income families **if** they are eligible for free school meals, or their parent/carers are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit<sup>1</sup>, to:

- one of their three nearest qualifying schools where they live more than two miles, but not more than six miles from that school and
- the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two miles, but not more than 15 miles from that school.

The Act requires authorities to make arrangements to assist students with transport costs, as appropriate, who are enrolled on a full-time post-16/FE course of study, which started before they reached the age of 19. For students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, assistance must be provided up to the age of 21, as a minimum. It does not prescribe what those arrangements might involve. It is therefore, for the Council to decide whether transport needs to be provided and under which circumstances assistance with travel should be available.

The law states that in providing transport, local authorities must make no less favourable arrangements for students attending a further education sector institution or a higher education institution maintained or assisted by the Council than at a

---

<sup>1</sup> These are statutory eligibility criteria.

## APPENDIX 1

maintained or state-funded school (be it a community, voluntary aided, foundation school or academy, including free schools and University Technical Colleges).

The law also stipulates that if the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has secured for a student a placement for education or training at an institution outside the further and higher education sectors together with accommodation, the Council is under a duty to provide transport if it deems it necessary for facilitating the student's attendance at that institution.

Section 508A of the Act covers the duty upon local authorities to promote sustainable travel.

Section 508B of the Act deals with the duty on local authorities to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for 'eligible children'. Section 35B of the Act defines 'eligible children' – those categories of children in a Council's area for whom travel arrangements will always be required. A condition of each category is that they are of statutory school age. Under Section 508B, every feature of these arrangements must be provided free of charge.

Section 508C of the Act provides local authorities with the discretionary powers to make arrangements for those children not covered by Section 508B.

Statutory walking distance is defined in Section 444(5) of the Act as either two miles (if the child is under 8 years of age) or three miles (if the child is aged 8 to 16 years old).

The Council has used its discretionary powers under Section 508C of the Act to apply a two mile 'walking distance' for children up to the point at which they transfer to secondary school at age 11.

### The Equality Act 2010

S149 Equality Act 2010 ('The Act') places a duty on local authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to eliminate discrimination. As such the Council has a duty to ensure that its policies, practices, procedures and services do not discriminate against disabled people.

Section 6 of The Act defines disability and section 20 defines the duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not discriminated against.

The Council is under a legal duty to publish a policy that reflects these provisions and to comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.



## APPENDIX 2

<b>Transport Entitlement Table</b>	<b>Type of Entitlement</b>	<b>Current arrangements</b>	<b>Proposed arrangements</b>
<b>Nursery Aged Children</b>			
Children with an EHCP where it is identified that transport is a barrier to accessing the named provision	Discretionary	<b>Free</b>	<b>Subsidised</b>
<b>Primary Aged Pupils (4-11)</b>			
Pupils aged 4-7 living more than 2 miles from their nearest suitable school	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils aged 8-11 living more than 2 miles from their nearest suitable school	Discretionary	<b>Free</b>	<b>No entitlement</b>
Pupils aged 8-11 living more than 3 miles from their nearest suitable school	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils who are unable to walk the 2/3 mile distance due to their Special Educational Need and/or disability	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils who are unable to walk the 2/3 mile distance due to the nature of the walking route	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils aged 4-11 who do not meet the eligibility criteria where exceptional circumstances are established	Discretionary	Free	Free
<b>Secondary Aged Pupils (11-16)</b>			
Pupils living more than 3 miles from their nearest suitable school	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils living in low income households, between 2 and 6 miles attending one of their 3 nearest schools	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils who are unable to walk the 3 mile distance due to their Special Educational Need and/or disability	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils who are unable to walk the 3 mile distance due to the nature of the walking route	Statutory	Free	Free
Pupils aged 11-16 who do not meet the eligibility criteria where exceptional circumstances are established	Discretionary	Free	Free
<b>Students Aged 16-19 or 16-25 for Students with SEND</b>			
Students aged 16-19 attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, more than 3 miles from home	Discretionary	None	None
Students aged 16-19 living in low income households, attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, more than 3 miles from home	Discretionary	Subsidised	Subsidised
Students aged 16-19 with SEND, attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, more than 3 miles from home	Discretionary	Subsidised	Subsidised
Students aged 16-19 with SEND, living in low income households, attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, more than 3 miles from home	Discretionary	<b>Free</b>	<b>Subsidised</b>
Students aged 19-25 with SEND, attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, where it is established that transport is a barrier to accessing continued learning	Statutory	Free	Free
Students aged 16-19 who are in care, or are care leavers, attending their Nearest Appropriate Centre, more than 3 miles from	Discretionary	Free	Free



## APPENDIX 3 – Home to School Travel Assistance Policies – Proposed policy wording amendments

Proposed Policy Amendments	Name of Policy	Current Policy Wording	Proposed Policy Wording
<i>Proposal a) to consult on withdrawing the current discretionary travel arrangements for children aged between 8 and 11 living more than 2 miles but less than the statutory 3 mile walking distance from their home to school.</i>	<b>School Travel Assistance Policy – Mainstream (section 2.5)</b>	<p>Eligibility Criteria for Primary aged children (4-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they live within the boundaries of Cambridgeshire Local Authority; and</li> <li>• they are registered at their <i>nearest suitable school</i></li> <li>• that school is more than 2 miles from their home, by shortest available walking route.</li> </ul>	<p>Eligibility Criteria for Primary aged children (4-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they live within the boundaries of Cambridgeshire Local Authority; and</li> <li>• they are registered at their nearest suitable school</li> <li>• that school is more than 2 miles from their home, for pupils aged 4-7 and 3 miles for pupils aged 8-11, by shortest available walking route.</li> </ul>
	<b>School Travel Assistance Policy for Children/Young People with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) (section 2.3)</b>	<p>Eligibility Criteria Primary aged pupils (4-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live within the boundaries of the area covered by Cambridgeshire County Council</li> <li>• Have an Education, Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP)</li> <li>• Be attending the school that is the nearest suitable school/the school designated by the Council as able to meet their needs (please refer to section 2.7)</li> </ul>	<p>Eligibility Criteria Primary aged pupils (4-11)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live within the boundaries of the area covered by Cambridgeshire County Council</li> <li>• Have an Education, Health &amp; Care Plan (EHCP)</li> <li>• Be attending the school that is the nearest suitable school/the school designated by the Council as able to meet their needs (please refer to section 2.7)</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 3 – Home to School Travel Assistance Policies – Proposed policy wording amendments

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live more than two miles from their nearest suitable primary school and/or not be able to walk those distances, accompanied by an adult as necessary (this needs to be supported by appropriate medical evidence).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Live more than 2 miles, for children aged 4-7 and 3 miles for children aged 8-11 from their nearest suitable primary school and/or not be able to walk those distances, accompanied by an adult as necessary (this needs to be supported by appropriate medical evidence).</li> </ul>
<p><i>Proposal b) to consult on revisions to the Council's discretionary Post-16 Travel Assistance offer, for students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND), withdrawing the existing provision of free assistance, and introducing a new level of subsidy in line with the mainstream travel assistance subsidy.</i></p>	<p><b>Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy - Travel Policy for full time learners aged 16-19 and Continuing adult learners with Education Health and Care Plans aged 19-25 (section 3.1)</b></p>	<p><b>16-19 Travel Assistance</b> In addition to the criteria set out in section 2.2, subsidised assistance is available for students who have an EHCP and who;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attend their Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC) named within their EHCP;</li> <li>live more than 3 miles from this centre <b>or</b> are unable to walk this distance as a result of their SEND; <b>and</b></li> <li>are unable to access public service travel (bus or train) <b>or</b> a bus service contracted by the Council.</li> </ul> <p><b>Where a student meets the criteria in section 3.1 and they,</b></p>	<p><b>16-19 Travel Assistance</b> In addition to the criteria set out in section 2.2, subsidised assistance is available for students who have an EHCP and who;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>attend their Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC) named within their EHCP;</li> <li>live more than 3 miles from this centre <b>or</b> are unable to walk this distance as a result of their SEND; <b>and</b></li> <li>are unable to access public service travel (bus or train) <b>or</b> a bus service contracted by the Council.</li> </ul> <p><b>Where a student meets the criteria in section 3.1 and they,</b></p>

## APPENDIX 3 – Home to School Travel Assistance Policies – Proposed policy wording amendments

		<p>or a member of their household meets the income criteria set out in 2.2 (d) free travel assistance will be provided.</p> <p>Where a student does not meet the criteria set out in section 3.1, as they are considered able to travel on public or contacted service, they may apply for subsidised travel assistance under the mainstream criteria outlined in section 2.2.</p>	<p>or a member of their household meets the income criteria set out in 2.2 (d) a lower rate of subsidised assistance will be available. Further information regarding the current charges is available on the Council's website <a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk">www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Where a student does not meet the criteria set out in section 3.1, as they are considered able to travel on public or contacted service, they may apply for subsidised travel assistance under the mainstream criteria outlined in section 2.2.</p>
<p><i>Proposal c)</i> to consult on introducing a subsidised charge for discretionary transport assistance for children with SEND, who attend nursery provision and request assistance</p>	<p>School Travel Assistance Policy Mainstream (section 4.8)</p> <p>and</p> <p>School Travel Assistance Policy for Children/Young People with Special Education Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND) (section 3.9)</p>	<p><b>Nursery and Reception Pupils</b></p> <p>The Council <b>will only</b> provide travel assistance, in exceptional circumstances, for children attending a maintained nursery or nursery class or an early years setting run by a private, voluntary or independent provider if this is named in the child's EHCP and without such assistance the child would be unable to access the education provision specified.</p>	<p><b>Nursery and Reception Pupils</b></p> <p>The Council <b>will only</b> provide travel assistance, in exceptional circumstances, for children attending a maintained nursery or nursery class or an early years setting run by a private, voluntary or independent provider if this is named in the child's EHCP and without such assistance the child would be unable to access the education provision specified. Where agreed assistance will be subsidised and subject to a termly</p>

### APPENDIX 3 – Home to School Travel Assistance Policies – Proposed policy wording amendments

		<p>If children are attending a mainstream school part-time at the start of their Reception Year, the Council <b>will only</b> provide transport to school at the start of the school day and to return home at the end of the school day. Parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their children to and from school at other times of the school day before they attend full-time.</p>	<p>financial contribution from the parent/carer. Further information regarding the financial contribution is available on the Council's website <a href="http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk">www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a></p> <p>If children are attending a mainstream school part-time at the start of their Reception Year, the Council <b>will only</b> provide transport to school at the start of the school day and to return home at the end of the school day. Parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their children to and from school at other times of the school day before they attend full-time.</p>
--	--	--	---

## **School Travel Assistance Policy - Mainstream**

***Supporting eligible children to get to their school or setting safely,  
promoting independence and wellbeing***

**September 2023**

People Services Directorate  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

Agreed by

Published

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<a href="#"><u>Preface</u></a>	<b>4</b>
<a href="#"><u>Introduction</u></a>	<b>5</b>
<b>Entitlement for travel assistance for children aged 4-16 attending mainstream schools</b>	<b>6</b>
Compulsory School Age	6
Statutory Walking Distances	6
Distance Measurement Calculations	6
Available Walking Routes	7
Eligibility Criteria for Primary aged children (4-11)	7
Eligibility Criteria for Secondary aged children (11-16)	7
Nearest Suitable School	7
Extended Transport Rights	8
Timing of Eligibility Assessment	8
Available Walking Routes	8
Travel Assistance to school of religious Character	8
Disabled Parents/Carers	9
Assistance on Medical Grounds	9
Fair Access Protocol	10
Pupils who have reached the statutory school leaving age of 16 by the time they start Year 11	10
<b>Discretionary Travel Assistance</b>	<b>10</b>
Temporary House Moves	10
Continuity of Education (Years 6,10 & 11 only)	11
Consideration of Discretionary Transport Requests	11
<b>Travel Arrangements</b>	<b>12</b>
Type of Arrangements	12
Person Transport Budgets (PTB) / Parental Mileage Payments	12
Bicycle Allowance	12
Home Address / Split Families Arrangement	13
Pick-up / Drop off Points	13
Journey Times	13
Circumstances where the Council will not provide or fund additional travel.	14
Nursery and Reception Pupils	15
<b>Travel Assistance for Post-16 Students (16-19)</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>General Information</b>	<b>15</b>
Safety and Well-being of Children	15
Seatbelts	16
Passenger Assistants	16
Spare Seats for Non-Eligible Children/Young People	17
Behaviour on school transport	17
Bus Passes	18
Changes in Circumstances	18



	<b>Page</b>
Travelling Expenses	
Respite Care	18
Rail and Alternative Transport	19
Disability Training	19
Where Travel Assistance is Provided in Error	19
<b>Useful Contact Information</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Glossary</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
A: Appeals Process	23
B: The Legal Framework	25
C: Factors considered by the Council in assessing availability of routes within walking distance	27

## Preface

This policy applies to children living in Cambridgeshire and describes free and assisted transport entitlement to mainstream schools and academies, including entitlement for children/young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) who have no special transport requirements. Please note that some children/young people with SEND require specific transport for which a supplementary policy is available. A supplementary policy also available for students over compulsory school age (Post-16).

It is important to think about how your child gets to school to ensure they are safe, active and taking a route that is sustainable and environmentally friendly. The Council sees transport as a route to independence and at every possible opportunity will promote and encourage independent travel.

Parents/carers have a duty and a responsibility to ensure that their children attend school and to make the necessary travel arrangements, including accompanying them where necessary on their journey to and from school. Parents/carers are also responsible for their children until they arrive at school and after they leave the school at the end of the school day.

This policy:

- sets out the criteria against which children and young people's statutory entitlement to free travel assistance will be determined; and
- sets out where discretionary assistance may be provided, where the eligibility criteria for free assistance is not met; and
- sets out how any travel arrangements will be delivered; and
- sets out the process for reviews and appeals against those decisions.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Local Authority has a duty to make arrangements to facilitate attendance at schools and colleges by providing free transport in certain circumstances<sup>1</sup>.

1.2 This policy sets out how the Council will identify and support those eligible Cambridgeshire children and young people, attending:

- i. Schools maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council (the Council), the Local Authority.
- ii. Other state-funded schools, including Academies, Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges (UTCs) in the area in which Cambridgeshire County Council is the Local Authority.
- iii. Independent special schools where these are named in a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- iv. Schools maintained by other local authorities where Cambridgeshire has determined these as the *nearest suitable schools* (see the Glossary) for the pupils concerned.

1.3 Travel assistance is only arranged for the normal start and normal finish times of schools i.e. is not tailored for individual courses, work experience, examination timetables or any other similar situations. Similarly, assistance will not be arranged for travel between institutions during the school day, to offsite locations or to enable children to attend extra-curricular activities and other commitments outside school hours.

---

<sup>1</sup> As prescribed in Sections 508, 509 and schedule 35B of the 1996 Education Act as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006

## 2. Entitlement for travel assistance for children aged 4-16 attending mainstream schools

### 2.1 Compulsory School Age

Compulsory school age is the age when a child must be in school<sup>2</sup>. A child reaches compulsory school age on the prescribed day following their fifth birthday, or on their fifth birthday if it falls on a prescribed day. The prescribed days are 31 December, 31 March and 31 August.

In Cambridgeshire, in recognition of the fact that many children begin school before they reach compulsory school age, “primary” aged children are defined as those aged from 4 to 11 and “secondary” aged children/young people range from 11 to 16.

### 2.2 Statutory Walking Distances<sup>3</sup>

Walking distances from home to school are measured using the method shown in Section 2.3. The legal maximum walking distance for children and young people of statutory school age is;

- 2 miles for children up until the age of 8
- 3 miles for children/young people aged between 8 and 16.

In Cambridgeshire the Council currently uses its discretionary powers, under Section 508C of the Education Act 1996, to extend the 2 mile ‘walking distance’ to all primary aged children, up to the point at which they transfer to secondary school at age 11.

### 2.3 Distance Measurement Calculations

For the purposes of determining eligibility for travel assistance, within Cambridgeshire, distances are measured using the Council’s digital mapping system, by the shortest available walking route from outside the child/young person’s home, to the nearest open gate at the school.

For routes beyond the maximum statutory walking distance of 3 miles, where there is no expectation that a child/young person would **walk** the distance, measurements are undertaken by the shortest **road route**. See glossary for further details.

Distances to schools outside of Cambridgeshire are measured using a combination of local maps and on-line resources.

---

<sup>2</sup>Section 8 of the Education Act 1996 and The Education (Start of Compulsory School Age) Order 1998

<sup>3</sup> The statutory walking distances are prescribed by section 444(5) of the Education Act 1996

## 2.4 Available Walking Routes

An available walking route is the distance from the home address to the nearest school gate along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk with reasonable safety.

Travel assistance will be provided in cases where the walking route is less than 2 miles for primary aged pupils and 3 miles for secondary aged pupils, but the route has been assessed by the Council as **not** being available.

Entitlement to travel assistance will cease as and when routes are made “*available*” following highway improvements.

The criteria used by the Council to assess the availability of a route are set out in **Appendix C**

## 2.5 Eligibility Criteria for Primary aged children (4-11)

- they live within the boundaries of Cambridgeshire Local Authority; and
- they are registered at their *nearest suitable school*; and
- that school is more than 2 miles<sup>4</sup> from their home, by the shortest available walking route.

## 2.6 Eligibility Criteria for Secondary aged children/young people (11-16)

- they live within the boundaries of Cambridgeshire Local Authority; and
- they are registered at their “*nearest suitable school*”; and
- that school is more than 3 miles from their home, by the shortest available walking route.

## 2.7 Nearest Suitable School

The Council deems a child/young person’s nearest suitable school to be:

- the nearest school; or
- the catchment school (if this is different from their nearest school) or
- the school specified in the child/young person’s Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) as being the nearest school able to meet their needs, whilst the child remains at that school; or
- The **next nearest** school, as designated by the Council, in cases where an application has been made and refused for both the catchment and nearest schools, due to oversubscription.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Council currently uses its discretionary powers under Section 508C of the Act to apply a two mile ‘walking distance’ for children up to the point at which they transfer to secondary school at age 11

**Notes:**

- Where parents/carers express a preference for their child to attend a school that is **not** their nearest suitable school, **no** travel assistance will be provided and they will be responsible for making and funding **all** travel arrangements.
- Some secondary schools operate their own catchment areas, as a part of their school admission arrangements, which extend beyond the area recognised by the Council for home to school transport purposes. Such circumstances will be identified within the online schools directory, available within the School Admissions process.
- For addresses around the borders of Cambridgeshire the nearest school may be located in another local authority area.

## **2.8 Extended Transport Rights**

Children/young people living in low income households who are eligible for free school meals, or whose parents are in receipt of the maximum level of Working Tax Credit<sup>5</sup>, are entitled to free travel assistance to:

- Their nearest suitable school more than 2 miles from their home (aged between 8-11<sup>6</sup>); or
- one of their three nearest qualifying schools where they live more than two miles, but not more than six miles from that school (aged 11-16); or
- the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two miles, but not more than 15 miles from that school (aged 11-16).

Supporting evidence may be required to determine eligibility.

Once eligibility has been confirmed, the young person will be entitled to travel assistance for the entirety of the **school year** for which the assessment has been made. For each subsequent year while the young person is of statutory school age, the Council will make a new assessment of eligibility on receipt of the child/young person's application for travel assistance. If they continue to meet the qualifying criteria, assistance will be provided.

## **2.9 Timing of Eligibility Assessment**

Eligibility for travel assistance is considered based on school placement availability, within the normal school admissions round, at the time places are allocated.

Where parent/carers apply for their school place late i.e. after the published closing date for applications for admission, OR as a part of the In year admission process, eligibility for travel assistance is assessed taking into account the availability of places in the nearest schools at that point of allocation (as far as this is possible to do so).

---

<sup>5</sup> These are statutory eligibility criteria.

<sup>6</sup> These pupils already receive free assistance under the Council's policy, see footnote 1.

## 2.10 Travel assistance to schools of religious character

The Council supports travel assistance for compulsory school aged children, based on a religious preferences, in the following circumstances;

- Children/young people who qualify under extended rights set out in section 2.8; or
- Children/young people where the school is determined to be their nearest suitable school in accordance with the eligibility criteria set out in sections 2.5 and 2.6.

## 2.11 Disabled parents/carers

In some circumstances, the Council will provide travel assistance where a parent/carer has a disability, as defined under the Equality Act 2010, which prevents them accompanying their child to school. In order to qualify for assistance on this basis the child/young person **must**:

- be attending their nearest suitable school (as set out in section 2.7); **and**
- be unable to walk the distance independently, (i.e. of primary school age or have a Special Education Need or Disability which prevents them from walking the distance); **and**
- have no other adult in the household to accompany them on the journeys to and from school.

Requests will be considered on an individual basis taking into consideration all supporting evidence provided, including confirmation from the parent/carer's GP or relevant consultant, of the registered disability.

Where assistance is agreed, this may be on a time limited basis, depending on the circumstances of each case. The assistance will be provided by the most appropriate means, with a focus on sustainability and independence.

## 2.12 Transport on medical grounds

The Council considers requests where a child/young person has a diagnosed long-term medical condition which prevents them from, either walking to and from school, or from accessing their existing travel arrangements provided by the Council. Requests for new or alternative arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis **only where**:

- they are attending their nearest suitable school (see 2.7) **and**
- the child/young person's consultant/GP provides the Council with written confirmation and supporting evidence that assistance is **essential** on medical grounds to enable them to get to and from school.

In cases where a child/young person, who normally qualifies for travel assistance, has a short-term medical need which prevents them from accessing the type of assistance provided by the Council, the Council will consider

requests for alternative, **temporary** arrangements on a case-by-case basis.

Where a child/young person, who **does not** meet the eligibility criteria for travel assistance, has a short-term medical need, their parents/carers are responsible for making and funding any temporary travel arrangements.

### **2.13 Fair Access Protocol**

Where a child/young person has been placed at a school, as a part of a managed move or following a permanent exclusion, under the Fair Access Protocol, travel assistance eligibility will be assessed as per the criteria set out in sections 2.5-2.7 of this policy to their nearest suitable school, as agreed by the Panel. Under local arrangements all Cambridgeshire secondary schools receive devolved funding to support children/young people to access alternative provision in order to promote inclusion.

Where a parent/carer express a preference for their child to attend a school that is not that designated by the Panel/Council, and a place is offered parents/carers will be responsible for making and funding all travel arrangements to and from that school.

### **2.14 Pupils who have reached the statutory school leaving age of 16 by the time they start Year 11**

In cases where the young person has reached the age of 16 (the statutory school leaving age) before they start Year 11 (the final year of statutory education), for example as a result of time lost due to illness, or where a decision was made earlier in their education to delay their transfer from one year group to the next, travel assistance will be provided to enable them to complete their statutory education provided they meet the eligibility criteria set out in Section 2.6

## **3 Discretionary travel assistance**

The Council reserves the right to make exceptions to the policy in circumstances where the Executive Director, or Designated Senior Officer, considers it reasonable to do so and where it would be in the best interests of the child or young person concerned.

### **3.1 Temporary house moves**

The Council will consider requests for temporary exceptional travel assistance, in recognition of the disruption which can arise when a family finds it necessary to move into temporary accommodation with no prior notice due to circumstances beyond their control, for example as a result of domestic abuse or following a house fire. Requests will be considered on a case-by-case basis, provided the temporary home is in Cambridgeshire **and** the child/young person was attending their *nearest suitable school* prior to the temporary move.



Account will be taken of:

- whether there is a risk that the child/young person will be taken into care/accommodated by the Council;
- whether the child/young person is entitled to free school meals;
- whether the child/young person or family is already known to and is receiving support from the Council, for example through parenting and family support services;
- the child/young person's age and the length of time they have been enrolled at their current school and time remaining;
- the distance from the temporary home to the child/young person's school;
- the nature of the route the child/young person would have to use get to and from the school; and
- the anticipated length of stay in the temporary accommodation.

If the Council agrees to provide discretionary travel assistance, this will usually be for a **maximum** of six teaching weeks/half a term (whichever is longer). After that time, the Council expects the parents/carers to make and fund their own transport arrangements or apply for a place in a school local to their new address.

### **3.2 Continuity of Education (Years 6, 10 and 11 only)**

The council recognises the disruption which can occur where a family, due to circumstances beyond their control, must move home, with no prior notice, within Cambridgeshire whilst their child is studying in Years 6, 10 or 11. Requests for assistance will be considered on a case-by-case basis, for the purposes of maintaining continuity of the child's education. Additional information may be sought from the family, and account will be taken of the following;

- whether the child was attending their nearest suitable school;
- the nature of/reason for the house move;
- when during the school year the move took place;
- how much notice was given of the move;
- whether the child/young person is entitled to free school meals;
- whether the family can make their own arrangements to travel;

### **3.3 Consideration of Discretionary Transport Requests**

Any requests for travel assistance beyond the Council's statutory duties, will be considered through a discretionary transport process. Parent/carers will be invited to provide written representations and include any relevant supporting evidence from their child's school and other relevant professionals. The request will then be considered by a panel of senior officers.

## **4 Travel Arrangements**

### **4.1 Type of arrangements**

In the majority of circumstances mainstream travel assistance will be provided in the form of a bus pass on a Council contracted route or on a public service bus/rail route.

In some circumstances, where it is the most cost effective option, parents/carers may be offered the option of a Personal Transport Budget (PTB) / Parental Mileage Payments as set out in section 4.2.

The Council has a priority to reduce the number of Individual travel arrangements and, as such, these are normally only put in place in exceptional circumstances, such as an assessed Special Education Need or Disability which requires specific travel arrangements. Please refer to the separate policy *School Travel Assistance Policy for Pupils with Special Educational Need and/or Disabilities (SEND)* for further details.

### **4.2 Personal Transport Budgets (PTB) / Parental Mileage Payments**

PTBs are discretionary payments made to parents/carers in exchange for full responsibility for transporting their child safely to and from school. PTBs can be used by parents/carers in a variety of ways including;

- Driving your child to school yourself.
- Arranging for a friend or relative to cycle or walk with your child.
- Car share with other parents.
- Getting a bus pass for a friend to go with your child.
- Paying for a bus pass for your child.
- Paying for childcare for another child – so you can take your eligible child to school.
- Working with the school to join up with other parents.
- Use towards the cost of a taxi or share the cost of the taxi with other parents.

Payments are calculated using a flat rate fee of £0.40 per mile for four journeys (home to school and return x 2) per school day. If there is a more cost-effective option (such as an existing shared transport arrangement), a PTB will not normally be agreed.

### **4.3 Bicycle allowance**

In cases where a child/young person has been assessed as meeting the criteria for travel assistance, as an alternative to being issued with a bus pass, or other form of transport, they may apply to receive a termly allowance to travel by bicycle to and from school/college. Such allowances will only be payable where this is the most sustainable form of transport.

Application details are available on the Council's website [School transport - Cambridgeshire County Council](#)

#### 4.4 Home address / split family arrangements

Where a child/young person is entitled to travel assistance, the Council will deem their main home address to be that used by their parents/carers when applying for the child/young person's place at school.

In cases where a child/young person spends part of the week or regularly resides at a different address, for example where their parents are separated, the Council **will not** provide assistance to and from that alternative address.

The Council **will not** authorise the collection or return of a child/young person to any alternative address during the week, such as the child/young person's childcare address (e.g. childminder or other family member).

Requests for assistance may be considered, on a case-by-case basis, where there are exceptional, compelling grounds for why additional assistance is required, taking into consideration any additional cost to the Council.

#### 4.5 Pick-up / drop off points

The maximum distance under which children will be expected to make their own way, accompanied by an adult as necessary, to a pick-up point will be **half a mile** for children of primary school age and **one mile** for young people of secondary school age. Where a child has SEND needs, a pick-up point will be assessed based on their individual needs.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children get to and from the designated pick up and drop off point for the vehicle and remain responsible for them until they board the vehicle on their way to school or once they leave the vehicle at the end of their return journey.

Once on school premises the school becomes responsible for the supervision of the child/young person. Depending on the needs of a child, an identified member of school staff may meet them on arrival to ensure they safely enter the school.

Pick up and drop off times will be planned in accordance with the official school/education setting day and will enable a child/young person to arrive at school on time. The Council is unable to guarantee that pick up or drop off times will be compatible with any other arrangements made by parents/carers.

#### 4.6 Journey Times

The journey each way, from home to school (excluding the time taken to get to the designated pick-up point or waiting for a connecting service) should be ordinarily achieved within;

- 45 minutes for primary aged children (4-11)
- 75 minutes for secondary aged children/young people (11-16)

Where it is the parent/carers preference for a child to attend a school to which the journey time exceeds these limits, the Council will not be responsible for making, or funding their travel arrangements.

If travel assistance takes the form of transport organised by the Council, one return journey at fixed times will be provided, timed so that children/young people arrive at school in advance of registration and/or the official school teaching day, and are collected within 20 minutes of the end of the school teaching day.

#### **4.7 Circumstances where the Council will not provide or fund additional travel.**

**Lateness** -The child/young person is not at the pick-up point and ready to board the vehicle by the scheduled departure time.

**Offsite Alternative education**, extracurricular activities or journeys between institutions within the school day (for journeys of this nature the organising school or institution will be responsible for transport arrangements).

**Work Experience** - For young people on work experience placements. It is the responsibility of the school/college to support students to find and be able to access a suitable work experience placement.

**Poor attendance** - To support a child/young person's attendance at school nor will it provide travel assistance in cases where the child/young person is required to remain at school because they have been placed in detention.

**Medical/Dentals Appointments** - When the child/young person has a medical or dental appointment at a time when they would normally be travelling to or from school or during the school day.

**Sickness** – If a child/young person becomes ill during the school day, the school will notify their parents/carers and ask them to make arrangements to collect their child.

**Court Attendance** - When a child/young person is required to attend a court hearing.

**Fixed Term Exclusions** - When a child/young person has been issued with a fixed term exclusion.

**Before / After school clubs** - Travel assistance will not be made available to enable a child/young person to attend a before or after school club.

**School Transition Days** – Travel assistance is not provided the by Council for attendance at school transition events. It is the responsibility of each school to make any arrangements.

In **exceptional** circumstances the Council may consider providing travel assistance on a case-by-case basis. Requests will be considered by a panel of senior officers.

#### **4.8 Nursery and Reception Pupils**

The Council **will only** provide travel assistance, in exceptional circumstances, for children attending a maintained nursery or nursery class or an early years setting run by a private, voluntary or independent provider if this is named in the child's EHCP and without such assistance the child would be unable to access the education provision specified.

Where children are attending a mainstream school part-time at the start of their Reception Year, the Council **will only** provide transport to school at the start of the school day and to return home at the end of the school day. Parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their children to and from school at other times of the school day before they attend full-time.

### **5. Travel Assistance for Post-16 Students (16-19)**

Please refer to the Council's separate Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy for details of the support offered for Cambridgeshire Post-16 students.

### **6. General Information**

#### **6.1 Safety and well-being of children**

In order to promote the safety of children on school transport, the Council undertakes the following:

- (i) police vetting of:
  - a) drivers of all contracted vehicles used for school transport;
  - b) drivers of all vehicles used for SEND transport;
  - c) provision of passenger assistants for children and young people with SEND/ECHPs where appropriate;
  - d) provision of passenger assistants for children and young people on mainstream transport;
- (ii) the use of licensed vehicles only;
- (iii) the provision of identity cards for non-Public Service Vehicle (PSV) drivers, through the licensing system;
- (iv) safety checks on vehicles through the licensing process;

(v) written guidance for signature by drivers and passenger assistants of children and young people with SEND/EHCPs, setting out what is expected of them;

(vi) provision and fitting of correct forms of safety restraint, including child seats, booster seats/cushions, depending on the age and height of the child, in accordance with child seat restraint legislation [The Motor Vehicles (Wearing of Seat Belts) (Amendment Regulations 2006)]

In cases where a bus or taxi driver has concerns that there is no one to escort a child from the designated drop off point home or meet them at home (if the drop off point is their home address), the Council's advice is that they should take the child/young person to the nearest Social Care office.

## **6.2 Seatbelts**

In accordance with legal requirements, the Council requires seatbelts to be provided in all coaches, minibuses and cars which are used on its home to school/college contracts. This is not the case on public service vehicles (buses and trains).

The Council requires vehicles used to transport children of primary school age and those children and young people with SEND/EHCPs who have been assessed by the Council as not being able to travel on public service vehicles, to be fitted with seat belts.

Where seatbelts are provided children and young people are expected to wear them at all times when they are travelling.

## **6.3 Passenger Assistants**

A passenger assistant will be provided in each of the following circumstances:

- (i) the vehicle is carrying more than 16 pupils **and** all the pupils are of primary school age; or
- (ii) the driver of the vehicle sits in a cab or compartment separated from the passenger seating accommodation, which means that the driver cannot gain access from his/her seat without first leaving the vehicle; or
- (iii) the driver of the vehicle does not have control of the vehicle doors from the seated driving position (i.e. the vehicle is not fitted with central locking); and/or
- (iv) in any other circumstances when the Executive Director, or Designated Senior Officer, deems it reasonable or appropriate.

## 6.4 Spare seats for non-eligible children/young people

In January 2020 the Department for Transport implemented its Public Service and Vehicle Accessibility regulations (PSVAR). These regulations require all the vehicles of 22 or more seats, carrying fare paying passengers, to meet new accessibility requirements, i.e. low access, wheelchair accessible. Full information about this change in legislation is available on the [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) website.

Following this change in legislation, the network of transport providers in Cambridgeshire are unable to provide a sufficient number of PSVAR compliant vehicles to serve all home to school travel routes operated by the Council. The difficult decision was, therefore, taken to cease the general sale of spare seat provision on vehicles of over 22 seats for children aged 4-16 with effect from September 2021.

At the Council's discretion, spare seats on existing contract routes of 22 seats or less, **may** be made available for purchase in order to facilitate access for students who have no other transport means available to them.

Rates charged are reviewed and published annually. Applications **may only** be submitted from the start of the half-term holiday which immediately precedes the term for which the spare seat is being sought.

It is a condition of acceptance of any offer to purchase a spare seat from the Council that parents/carers confirm their understanding and acknowledge that:

- (a) availability of seats will vary term-by-term;
- (b) availability of seats can only be guaranteed for the term for which payment has been accepted and a bus pass issued;
- (c) changes may need to be made to transport arrangements at short notice;
- (d) seats are offered on a first come/first served basis;
- (e) they and their children must abide by the Council's Code of Conduct for Home to School/College Travel.

The Council is under no obligation to offer spare seats for purchase. The provision of spare seats is always made on a discretionary basis. There is, therefore, no appeal against the decision to not offer any child/young person access to a "spare seat".

## 6.5 Behaviour on school transport

The Council has a published Code of Conduct which applies to all children/young people regardless of their mode of travel to school. They are expected to behave appropriately in accordance with the Code.

The Code is available to download from the Council's website [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and copies are available in all schools.

Children/young people travelling to school/college by service or contract vehicle using a pass supplied by the Council who misbehave, cause damage or injury either to the vehicle or other passengers, can expect to have their pass withdrawn either temporarily or permanently by a Designated Senior Officer.

Once a pass is withdrawn, the parents/carers of the child/young person concerned will be responsible for ensuring that they are able to attend school regardless of the grounds on which they qualified for transport. There is no right of appeal against a transport ban.

## **6.6 Bus Passes**

Travel assistance is generally provided through the issuing of passes on contract or public service buses.

Passes will be issued on the basis of the parents/carers' home address given on the application form for admission to school.

Entitlement to travel will be withdrawn if the child/young person subsequently moves to a new address where he/she is no longer eligible for assistance or where it is apparent that the parents/carers have provided fraudulent or misleading information. In such circumstances, passes must be returned to the Passenger Transport Team without delay.

## **6.7 Changes in Circumstances**

Where there has been a change in circumstances which may affect a child/young person's eligibility for travel assistance, such as a change of address, parents/carers has a duty to inform the Council as soon as possible, so that the child/young person's eligibility can be re-assessed.

**Failure to do so could lead to a child/younger person's travel assistance being withdrawn.**

## **6.8 Travelling expenses**

The Council will not consider any claim for payment of travelling expenses, unless it has agreed to do so in writing in advance.

## **6.9 Respite care**

Transport to enable children/young people deemed eligible for respite care such as that organised by Social Care Services, health and voluntary agencies will only be provided if this has been approved by the appropriate budget holder.



## **6.10 Rail and alternative transport**

Where there is a choice of mode of travel and entitled students find using the more expensive method (usually rail) more convenient, the Council will purchase season tickets on the understanding that parents/carers pay the difference in cost between the more expensive method and the alternative, cheaper travel option offered by the Council.

## **6.11 Educational visits/school trips**

If a school is making arrangements for an educational visit or school trip which includes the need for special or adapted transport for a child/young person with physical needs, the school will need to meet the costs from its own resources.

## **6.12 Disability training**

In accordance with Government guidance, the Council is active in ensuring that drivers and passenger assistants who take children/young people to and from school have undertaken disability equality training in order for them to be able to recognise, support, manage and communicate appropriately with all those who have disabilities irrespective of the nature of the disability.

## **6.13 Where Travel Assistance has been provided in error**

Where travel assistance has been provided in error, the Council will continue to provide this until the end of the term in which the error was identified in order to allow for alternative arrangements to be put in place by the parents/carers concerned.

## **7. Useful Contact Information**

Operational enquiries	<a href="mailto:edtransport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">edtransport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Eligibility enquiries	<a href="mailto:h2stransportrequests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">h2stransportrequests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Appeal Enquiries	<a href="mailto:transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

Contact by Telephone:

**0345 045 5208**

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

Saturday 9am to 1pm

## **GLOSSARY**

<b>Academy</b>	An independent state-funded school run by a trust. The trust or local governing board are responsible for admissions to the school. The definition of academy includes free schools and University Technical Colleges.
<b>Catchment area</b>	A defined geographical area surrounding a school from which it will usually take the majority of its pupils/students.
<b>Catchment school</b>	The local school within a defined geographical area described as the catchment (see above), recognised by the Council for meeting its statutory obligations for home to school transport. This is without prejudice to any catchment area that may be determined by an own admission authority school within its admission arrangements.
<b>Community school</b>	A school maintained by the Council where the Council is responsible for employing the staff and for the admission arrangements.
<b>Distance from home to school</b>	The distance from the entrance to the child's home to the nearest recognised entrance of the school via the shortest available walking route up to the maximum of 3 miles and the shortest road route beyond that distance.
<b>Foundation school</b>	A school which is funded and maintained by the Council, but where the governing body is responsible for admissions to the school and the employment of the staff.
<b>Low income</b>	The eligibility criteria for subsidised or free travel assistance on grounds of low income vary depending on whether they are statutory or discretionary.
<b>Maintained schools</b>	All schools funded and maintained by the Council (this includes community, foundation, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools).
<b>Nearest Suitable School</b>	Each home address within Cambridgeshire will have a catchment school and/or a school which is the closest school to that address. In

the majority of cases, the catchment and closest school are the same school. In cases where it is not nearest suitable school is whichever of the two schools the child attends.

In addition to the above conditions, a different school may be designated as nearest suitable school when;

- (1) the school is specified in the child/young person's Education Health Care Plan as being the nearest school able to meet their needs, whilst the child remains at that school; or
- (2) where a school is identified as the nearest suitable school under In-Year Fair Access Protocol whilst the child remains at that school; or
- (3) where an application has been made for a child/young person's catchment and nearest school(s) but a place is refused due to oversubscription, the Council will designate an alternative school as the "nearest suitable school". In determining which school becomes the nearest suitable school, the individual circumstances of each case will be considered as well as; which is the next nearest school with a place available, which given the age of the child can be accessed using existing transport/route, or using the easiest travel route at the lowest cost.

**Parent**

A person who is the child's natural parent or, is not the natural parent but has parental responsibility for the child, or who has care of the child.

**Public examination courses**

GCSEs, AS levels, A levels, NVQs, BTec First/National Diplomas, International Baccalaureate.

**Religion or belief**

The main indication of what constitutes a 'religion' is that it must have a clear structure and belief system. 'Belief' is defined as 'a religious or philosophical belief' and equates to 'conviction'. Based on European case law, *it has to be more than an opinion or idea. A belief must be genuinely held and the parents bear a heavy burden of showing that it is the real reason for their action/preference.*

<b>SETT</b>	The Council's Social Education Transport Team which organises transport for those who are entitled to travel assistance under the Council's Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy.
<b>Shortest available walking route</b>	Route along which a child may walk, without trespass, with reasonable safety, accompanied by an adult as necessary (see Appendix D)
<b>Voluntary aided School</b>	A school set up and owned by a voluntary body, usually a church body, largely financed by the Council but run by the school's governing body.
<b>Voluntary controlled School</b>	A school maintained and funded by the Council but with links to the foundation which originally established the school. The constitution will normally have representatives of the foundation on the governing body.
<b>Walking distance</b>	Defined as either two miles for children of primary school age or three miles for children of secondary school age as measured by the shortest available walking route.

## APPENDIX A

### Travel Assistance Appeals Process

A two-stage travel assistance review/appeals process is available for parents/carers who wish to challenge a decision about:

- the type of travel assistance offered;
- their child's eligibility for free or subsidised travel;
- the distance measurement;
- the availability of the route unless the Council has undertaken a review of that route and the parents/carers have been notified in writing that the Council has assessed the route as meeting its criteria as an available route and that it intends to withdraw free travel assistance as a result. In such cases, appeals against such decisions move straight to Stage Two of the process set out below.

**Note:** There is no right of appeal against the decision to exclude a child/young person from their travel arrangements, either on a temporary or permanent basis. on the grounds of unacceptable behaviour (see Section 22).

#### Stage one:

Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's decision to submit a written request asking for a review of that decision.

Requests, along with a supporting evidence, should be sent to [transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

The written request should detail why the parents/carers believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances they believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

A senior Council officer, independent of the original decision, will review the original request/application within 20 working days of receipt of the parents' written request and write to the parents to inform them of the decision including:

- the rationale for the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted;
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- information about escalation to Stage Two (if appropriate).

#### Stage Two:

Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's Stage One decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to Stage Two.

- Within 40 working days an Appeals Committee, who have received appropriate training considers written and verbal representations from the parents/carers and Council officers and reaches a decision on the case.

- If the appeal is unsuccessful and the parent/carers consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal was handled, they can lodge a complaint with to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- If the parents consider the appeal decision to be flawed on public law grounds, they can apply for judicial review.

A further appeal **will only** be considered if there has been a clear change of circumstances, for example, a change of school or address. A change of year group alone would not constitute a change of circumstances.

**Please note:**

If a child is under 16 years of age, the right of appeal can only be exercised by a parent.

If a child is 16 or 17 years old, the parent or the young person can exercise the right of appeal.

If a child is 18 years old, only the young person has the right of appeal.

## APPENDIX B

### The Legal Framework

The Legal parameters relating to home to school/college transport for children and young people of statutory school age are set out in Sections 508, 509 and schedule 35B of the 1996 Education Act as amended by the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Sections 509(1) and (2) place a duty upon local authorities to provide free transport where necessary to facilitate the attendance of children and students at schools and institutions both within and outside of the further and higher education sectors.

Section 509(3) allows local authorities to pay the whole or any part of reasonable travelling expenses when not making provision under 509(2) above.

Section 509(4) requires local authorities to take certain factors into account including the child's age, the nature of possible routes and parental wishes for the provision of education at a school or institution in which the religious education is that of the religion or denomination to which his/her parent adheres.

Section 509AD defines the duty placed on local authorities to have regard to religion and belief in exercising their school travel functions. They are required to provide free transport to the nearest secondary school preferred by reason of a parent/carer's religion or belief between 2 and 15 miles from the child's home where the family meets the national low-income criteria.

In line with the requirements of the Act, the Council provides free transport for all young people of secondary school age (11-16) living in low income families **if** they are eligible for free school meals, or their parent/carers are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit<sup>7</sup>, to:

- one of their three nearest qualifying schools where they live more than two miles, but not more than six miles from that school and
- the nearest suitable school preferred on grounds of religion or belief, where they live more than two miles, but not more than 15 miles from that school.

The Act requires authorities to make arrangements to assist students with transport costs, as appropriate, who are enrolled on a full-time post-16/FE course of study, which started before they reached the age of 19. For students with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, assistance must be provided up to the age of 21, as a minimum. It does not prescribe what those arrangements might involve. It is therefore, for the Council to decide whether transport needs to be provided and under which circumstances assistance with travel should be available.

The law states that in providing transport, local authorities must make no less favourable arrangements for students attending a further education sector institution

---

<sup>7</sup> These are statutory eligibility criteria.

or a higher education institution maintained or assisted by the Council than at a maintained or state-funded school (be it a community, voluntary aided, foundation school or academy, including free schools and University Technical Colleges).

The law also stipulates that if the Education Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) has secured for a student a placement for education or training at an institution outside the further and higher education sectors together with accommodation, the Council is under a duty to provide transport if it deems it necessary for facilitating the student's attendance at that institution.

Section 508A of the Act covers the duty upon local authorities to promote sustainable travel.

Section 508B of the Act deals with the duty on local authorities to make such travel arrangements as they consider necessary to facilitate attendance at school for 'eligible children'. Section 35B of the Act defines 'eligible children' – those categories of children in a Council's area for whom travel arrangements will always be required. A condition of each category is that they are of statutory school age. Under Section 508B, every feature of these arrangements must be provided free of charge.

Section 508C of the Act provides local authorities with the discretionary powers to make arrangements for those children not covered by Section 508B.

Statutory walking distance is defined in Section 444(5) of the Act as either two miles (if the child is under 8 years of age) or three miles (if the child is aged 8 to 16 years old).

The Council has used its discretionary powers under Section 508C of the Act to apply a two mile 'walking distance' for children up to the point at which they transfer to secondary school at age 11.

### The Equality Act 2010

S149 Equality Act 2010 ('The Act') places a duty on local authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people and to eliminate discrimination. As such the Council has a duty to ensure that its policies, practices, procedures and services do not discriminate against disabled people.

Section 6 of The Act defines disability and section 20 defines the duty to make reasonable adjustments so that disabled people are not discriminated against.

The Council is under a legal duty to publish a policy that reflects these provisions and to comply with the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty.



## APPENDIX C

### Factors considered by the Council in assessing availability of routes within walking distance

#### 1.0 The child/young person

- (a) the age of the child/young person;
- (b) any disabilities the child/young person may have.

**NB** The child/young person is expected to be accompanied by an adult, as appropriate.

#### 2.0 The route

The Council will conduct a detailed assessment of the route. In line with guidance issued by the Road Safety Great Britain and Local Authority Road Safety Officer (LARSOA) best practice guidance. This will be undertaken at the times of day that pupils would be expected to use it to travel to and from school and, where appropriate, will include a vehicle gap analysis of roads to cross.

- (a) If a public footpath, totally separated from roads is available, it must normally be made up with a hard surface, for example, tarmac, gravel etc. to be acceptable as a route (in all weather).
- (b) The presence of suitable refuges adjacent to a road, for example, a verge.
- (c) The volume, speed and type of traffic.
- (d) Visibility, for example, sharp bends with a high hedgerow or bank, or overhanging trees or branches that might obscure fields of vision for the pedestrian or motorist.
- (e) Accident record of the route at the times of day children/young people would be expected to use it to get to and from school.

There would normally need to be a combination of factors present for the route to be unavailable for an accompanied child/young person.

#### 3.0 The following are examples of potential hazards which the Council considers to be acceptable to an accompanied child/young person:

- (a) Lonely routes
- (b) Moral danger
- (c) Unmanned level crossings
- (d) Roads to be crossed
- (e) Limited street lighting
- (f) Canals, rivers or ditches running along part or the whole of the route

The legal definition of an 'available route' is a route along which a child, accompanied as necessary, can walk and walk with reasonable safety to school. It does not fail to qualify as 'available' because of dangers which would arise if the child were unaccompanied. (*Essex CC v Rogers [1986]*)



## **School Travel Assistance Policy for Children/Young People with Special Educational Need and/or Disabilities (SEND)**

***Supporting eligible children/young people to get to their school or  
setting safely, promoting independence and wellbeing***

**September 2023**

People Services Directorate  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

Agreed by

Published

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Preface</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Travel Assistance Eligibility for children with SEND aged 4-16</b>	<b>4</b>
Primary (4-11)	4
Secondary (11-16)	5
Travel Assistance for journeys less than 2 and 3 Mile Walking distances	5
Nearest Suitable School	6
Requests for discretionary / Exceptional Transport Arrangements	6
<b>Travel Arrangements</b>	<b>6</b>
Individual Travel Training Programme	7
Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs)	7
Passenger Assistants	8
Pick up Drop off Points	8
Journey Times	8
Circumstances when Travel Assistance will not be provided	9
Review of Arrangements	10
Nursery and Reception Pupils	10
Transport for Children In Care	10
Educational visits/school trips	10
<b>Post-16 Students (16-25) with Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties and/disabilities (SEND)</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Application Process</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Appeals Process</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Useful Contract Information</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Glossary of Terms</b>	<b>13</b>

## Preface

This policy applies to children living in Cambridgeshire and describes free or subsidised transport assistance to schools, academies and colleges for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and/or disabilities (SEND). This policy should be seen as supplementary to the Mainstream Home to school Travel Assistance Policy for the same academic year.

Families should read the Mainstream Policy to ensure that they are aware of the overarching principles that it contains. Please note in particular the sections relating to changes of address, split families, transport withdrawal, distance measurements and exceptional circumstances.

It is important to think about how your child gets to school to ensure they are safe, active and taking a route that is sustainable and environmentally friendly. The Council sees transport as a route to independence and at every possible opportunity will promote and encourage independent travel.

Parents/carers have a duty and responsibility to ensure that their children attend school and to make the necessary travel arrangements, including accompanying them where necessary on their journey to and from school. Parents/carers are also responsible for their children until they arrive at school and after they leave the school at the end of the school day.

The Council believes that independent travel, and travel with peers supports the development of key life skills for all young people. Where it is safe, appropriate and reasonable to do so, pupils with SEND will be expected to walk, accompanied as necessary by a responsible adult or to access transport from a common pick up point near their home.

This policy also:

- sets out the criteria against which children and young people with SEND's statutory entitlement to free travel assistance will be determined; and
- sets out where discretionary assistance may be provided, where the eligibility criteria for free assistance is not met; and
- sets out how any travel arrangements will be delivered; and
- sets out the process for reviews and appeals against those decisions.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 This policy for pupils with SEND is supplementary to the Mainstream Home to School/College Transport Policy, which applies to all pupils. It specifically relates to travel assistance between home and school at the start and end of the official school day.
- 1.2 The Mainstream Home to School Travel Assistance Policy explains the underpinning legislation and policy, including sections on safety and walking to school and the Council obligations for Extended Rights for Low Income Families.
- 1.3 This policy sets out how the Council will identify and support those children and young people, with qualifying SEND, who need travel assistance to their school or educational setting, whether this is in a mainstream school, unit attached to a mainstream school or a special school and whether it is within the statutory walking distance or further away from home.
- 1.4 Parents/carers should be aware that they will be required to complete an application form to be assessed for transport eligibility. An individual risk assessment of the pupil's transport needs may also be required. Delays in the provision of information required for such an assessment may lead to a delay in transport being arranged.

## **2. Travel Assistance Eligibility for children with SEND aged 4-16**

- 2.1 In the majority of cases children/young people of statutory school age with SEND will attend their nearest suitable mainstream school and their entitlement to travel assistance is assessed against the criteria set out within the Mainstream Home to School Travel Assistance Policy.
- 2.2 Travel assistance will be assessed on an individual basis and will be provided by the Council in the most cost effective and appropriate way whilst meeting the child's assessed travel needs. It may be provided in a number of ways, including bus, public transport, PTB (Personal Transport Budget) or taxi as appropriate. Independent travel training may also be provided. All eligibility and travel assistance arrangements will be reviewed at times of transition e.g. moving from primary to secondary education; to ensure that the basis for entitlement continues and the method of travel assistance remains appropriate. Interim reviews may also be undertaken, according to the individual needs of each child/young person.

### **2.3 Eligibility Criteria Primary aged pupils (4-11)**

- Live within the boundaries of the area covered by Cambridgeshire County Council
- Have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)
- Be attending the school that is the nearest suitable school/the school designated by the Council as able to meet their needs (please refer to section 2.7)

- Live more than two miles<sup>1</sup> from their nearest suitable primary school and/or not be able to walk those distances, accompanied by an adult as necessary (this needs to be supported by appropriate medical evidence).

## 2.4 Secondary aged pupils (11-16)

- Live within the boundaries of the area covered by Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Have an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP).
- Be attending the school that is the nearest suitable school/the school designated by the Council as able to meet their needs (please refer to section 2.7).
- Live more than three miles<sup>2</sup> from their nearest suitable secondary school and/or not be able to walk those distances, accompanied by an adult as necessary (this needs to be supported by appropriate medical evidence).

## 2.5 Travel Assistance for journeys less than 2 and 3 mile walking distances

Where a child/young person, with or without an EHCP, is unable to walk the distances outlined in sections 2.3 and 2.4, as their special education need **or** disability **ordinarily** prevents them from doing so, even when accompanied as necessary by a parent/carer, free travel assistance will be considered to their designated nearest suitable school.

## 2.6 Assistance sought under paragraph 2.5, will be considered on an individual basis, by a panel of senior officers who will consider supporting written evidence, from a range of sources, for example, Education or Health professionals, parents and school SENCO, that describes the child as having, but not limited to:

- long term severely restricted independent mobility, due to a physical disability;
- long term severely restricted independent mobility due to a medical condition resulting in severe persistent pain and/or extreme fatigue;
- a sensory impairment resulting in severely restricted mobility;
- severe behavioural emotional and/or social difficulties in comparison with other children of their age. This may be linked with cognitive ability or be as a result of a specific development disorder.

**Note:** “Long term” describes something that is likely to last for at least a year and in many cases for the rest of the life of the person affected.

---

<sup>1, 2</sup> Please refer to the mainstream home to school travel assistance policy for details of how distances are measured.

## 2.7 Nearest Suitable School

In order to meet the eligibility criteria for travel assistance a child/young person must be attending the school that is the **nearest suitable school** able to meet their needs, as designated by the Council, outlined within their EHCP. This school **may** be different to the parent/carers preferred school.

Where parents/carers express a preference for their child to attend a school other than the **nearest suitable school** it is important that they understand that they will be responsible for making and funding **all** travel arrangements. The only exception will be where an alternative school has been ordered by the SEND tribunal.

Eligible school types include;

- Schools maintained by Cambridgeshire County Council (the Council), the Local Authority.
- Other state-funded schools, including Academies, Free Schools, Studio Schools and University Technical Colleges (UTCs) in the area in which Cambridgeshire County Council is the Local Authority.
- Independent special schools where these are named in a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).
- Schools maintained by other local authorities where Cambridgeshire has determined these as the *nearest suitable schools* (see the Glossary) for the pupils concerned.

## 2.8 Requests for discretionary / exceptional transport arrangements

Requests for travel assistance made outside of the criteria set out in 2.3 and 2.4, will be considered on an individual basis, via the completion of an exceptional transport request form, along with evidence supporting the request. The request will then be considered by a panel of senior officers.

Where parents/carers are unhappy with the outcome of their request, they may appeal the decision through the Review and Appeals Process set out in section 6.

## 3 Travel Arrangements

3.1 The type of arrangement provided for each eligible child/young person will be assessed on an individual basis and will be determined, by the Council, to be one of the following;

- Bus pass either on a public service route or school contract bus.
- A place on the Independent Travel Training (ITT) Programme.
- Personal Transport Budget (PTB).
- A place on an existing vehicle/route.
- Individual transport, for those children/young people with the most complex needs.



### **3.2 Individual Travel Training Programme**

To support the development of and to empower learners to become self-reliant travellers, eligible children/young people with an EHCPs or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, will, where appropriate, be offered a programme of independent travel training. Upon successful completion and sign-off of the travel training programme, travel arrangements will be reviewed and adjusted as appropriate.

### **3.3 Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs)**

Where a child/young person with SEND has been identified as being eligible for travel assistance, parents/carers may be offered the option of a PTB. PTBs are discretionary payments made to parents/carers in exchange for full responsibility for transporting their child safely to and from school. PTBs can be used by parents/carers in a variety of ways including;

- Driving your child to school yourself.
- Arranging for a friend or relative to cycle or walk with your child.
- Car share with other parents.
- Getting a bus pass for a friend to go with your child.
- Paying for a bus pass for your child.
- Paying for childcare for another child – so you can take your eligible child to school.
- Working with the school to join up with other parents.
- Use towards the cost of a taxi or share the cost of the taxi with other parents.

Payments are calculated using a flat rate fee of £0.40 per mile for four journeys (home to school and return x 2) per school day. If there is a more cost-effective option (such as a shared transport arrangement), a PTB will not normally be agreed.

All requests are considered on an individual basis and, in exceptional circumstances, an enhanced PTB payment may be agreed by a panel of senior officers, following consideration of all supporting evidence. The following circumstances may be considered, but not limited to;

- Severe medical needs of a child/young person which, during the course of a transport journey, could result in them needing immediate medical attention.
- The child/young person's behaviour presenting significant risk to other passengers in the vehicle and/or other transport users.
- The need for a second adult to accompany and support the child.
- The cost per mile of providing a taxi would be considerably greater than paying the parent/carer a PTB despite the home to school journey distance being very short.
- Where there are complex and exceptional family circumstances including the need to get other siblings to and from school, childcare arrangements or working arrangements.

- Other considerations, for example, the age, height and/or weight of the child and their mobility.
- Where an Occupational Therapist or other specialist assessment indicates that a PTB arrangement would be the most appropriate option.

### 3.4 Passenger assistants

The Council will assess the need for a passenger assistant (PA) on a vehicle on a case-by-case basis, based on the needs of the individual child.

### 3.5 Pick up drop offs

The maximum distance under which children will be expected to make their own way, accompanied by an adult as necessary, to a pick-up point will be **half a mile** for children of primary school age and **one mile** for young people of secondary school age. Where pick up/drop off point needs adapting for a child/young person has SEND, supporting evidence will be considered to ensure an appropriate a pick-up point will be agreed in accordance with their individual needs.

Pick up and drop off times will be planned in accordance with the official school/education setting day and will enable a child/young person to arrive at school on time. The Council is unable to guarantee that pick up or drop off times will be compatible with any other arrangements made by parents/carers.

Parents/carers are responsible for ensuring their children get to and from the designated pick up and drop off point for the vehicle and remain responsible for them until they board the vehicle on their way to school or once they leave the vehicle at the end of their return journey.

Once on school premises the school becomes responsible for the supervision of the child/young person. Depending on the needs of a child, an identified member of school staff may meet them on arrival to ensure they safely enter the school.

### 3.6 Journey Times

The journey each way, from home to school (excluding the time taken to get to the designated pick-up point or waiting for a connecting service) should ordinarily be achieved within;

- 45 minutes for primary aged children (4-11)
- 75 minutes for secondary aged you people (11-16)

If a child is attending special out of county provision named in their EHCP, these travel times are more likely to vary. Where parents/carers insist on a child attending a school to which the journey time exceeds these limits, the Council will not be responsible for making, or funding their travel arrangements.

If travel assistance takes the form of transport organised by the Council, one return journey at fixed times will be provided, timed so that children/young people arrive at school in advance of registration and/or the official school teaching day, and are collected within 20 minutes of the end of the school teaching day.

### **3.7 Circumstances where the Council will not provide or fund additional travel;**

**Lateness** -The child/young person is not at the pick-up point and ready to board the vehicle by the scheduled departure time.

**Offsite alternative education**, extracurricular activities or journeys between institutions within the school day (for journeys of this nature the organising school or institution will be responsible for transport arrangements).

**Work Experience** - For young people on work experience placements. It is the responsibility of the school/college to support students to find and be able to access a suitable work experience placement.

**Poor attendance** - To support a pupil/student's attendance at school nor will it provide travel assistance in cases where the pupil/student is required to remain at school because they have been placed in detention.

**Medical/Dentals Appointments** - When the child/young person has a medical or dental appointment at a time when they would normally be travelling to or from school or during the school day.

**Sickness** – If a child/young person becomes ill during the school day, the school will notify their parents/carers and ask them to make arrangements to collect their child.

**Court Attendance** - When a child/young person is required to attend a court hearing.

**Fixed Term Exclusions** - When a child/young person has been issued with a fixed term exclusion.

**Before / After school clubs** - Travel assistance will not be made available to enable a child/young person to attend a before or after school club.

**School Transition Days** – Travel assistance is not provided the by Council for attendance at school transition events. It is the responsibility of each school to make any arrangements.

In **exceptional** circumstances the Council may consider providing travel assistance on a case-by-case basis, by a panel of senior officer.

### **3.8 Review of travel arrangements**

As part of the annual review of the EHCP travel assistance for the child/young person will also be reviewed, including considering whether their current way of getting to their education setting is supporting their independence outcomes.

### **3.9 Nursery and Reception Pupils**

The Council **will only** provide travel assistance, in exceptional circumstances, for children attending a maintained nursery or nursery class or an early years setting run by a private, voluntary or independent provider if this is named in the child's EHCP and without such assistance the child would be unable to access the education provision specified.

If children are attending a mainstream school part-time at the start of their Reception Year, the Council **will only** provide transport to school at the start of the school day and to return home at the end of the school day. Parents/carers will be responsible for transporting their children to and from school at other times of the school day before they attend full-time.

### **3.10 Transport for children in care**

For the purposes of travel assistance, the policy for children in care is the same as for those for whom the Council is not the corporate parent. However, in circumstances where a child/young person's foster placement is changed, the Council is sympathetic to the disruption this can cause and mindful of the fact that school placement may be the one point of continuity for them.

Decisions regarding requests for travel assistance in such cases are based on the individual circumstances of the child in care, their year group and the journey length.

### **3.11 Educational visits/school trips**

If a school is making arrangements for an educational visit or school trip which includes the need for special or adapted transport for a child/young person with physical needs, the school will need to meet the costs from its own resources.

## **4. Post-16 students (16-25) with Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SEND)**

Please refer to the Council's separate Post-16 Travel Assistance Policy for details of the support offered for Cambridgeshire Post-16 students with SEND.

## **5. The Application Process**

- 5.1** Transport entitlement must be discussed with a parent by the Statutory Assessment Team (SAT) Caseworker as part of the discussion around appropriate school placement. It is vital parents are aware of their child's entitlement when making their school preferences. The Transport Engagement

Officers are available to meet with parents at this point in the Education Health and Care Needs Assessment process, to outline the options available.

- 5.2** Applications for travel assistance are made once a school has been named in the child/young person's EHCP.
- 5.3** The application is completed by the family or SAT casework officer and is then assessed by Eligibility officers within the Passenger Transport Team.
- 5.4** If the child/young person meets the eligibility criteria for travel assistance the family are informed.
- 5.5** If the child/young person does not meet the eligibility criteria, however, the parents/carers consider there to be compelling grounds for discretionary travel assistance, an exceptional transport request will be considered, along with all relevant evidence by a panel of senior officers.
- 5.6** In cases where a request for travel assistance is declined, parent/carers will be informed of the Council's 2 stage appeals process, as set out in section 6.

## **6. Review and Appeals Process**

A two-stage travel assistance review/appeals process is available for parents/carers who wish to challenge a decision regarding:

- the type of travel assistance offered;
- their child's eligibility for free or subsidised travel;
- the distance measurement;
- the availability of the route unless the Council has undertaken a review of that route and the parents/carers have been notified in writing that the Council has assessed the route as meeting its criteria as an available route and that it intends to withdraw free travel assistance as a result. In such cases, appeals against such decisions move straight to Stage Two of the process set out below.

### **6.1 Stage one:**

Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's decision to submit a written request asking for a review of that decision.

For children who hold an EHCP these should be sent to [sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

The written request should detail why the parents/carers believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances they believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

A senior Council officer, independent of the original decision, will review the original request/application within 20 working days of receipt of the parents' written request and write to the parents to inform them of the decision including:

- the rationale for the decision reached;

- how the review was conducted;
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- information about escalation to Stage Two (if appropriate).

## 6.2 Stage Two:

Parents/carers have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's Stage One decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to Stage Two.

- Within 40 working days an Appeals Committee, who have received appropriate training considers, written and verbal representations from the parents/carers, case work officers and/or other relevant council officers and reaches a decision on the case.
- If the appeal is unsuccessful and the parents consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal was handled, they can lodge a complaint with to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- If the parents consider the appeal decision to be flawed on public law grounds, they can apply for judicial review.

A further appeal **will only** be considered if there has been a clear change of circumstances, for example, a change of school or address. A change of year group alone would not constitute a change of circumstances,

## 6.3 Please note

- If a child is under 16 years of age, the right of appeal can only be exercised by a parent.
- If a child is 16 or 17 years old, the parent or the young person can exercise the right of appeal.
- If a child is 18 years old, only the young person has the right of appeal.

## 7. Useful Contact Information

See the Council's website at: [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Operational enquiries	<a href="mailto:edtransport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">edtransport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Eligibility enquiries	<a href="mailto:h2stransportrequests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">h2stransportrequests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
Appeal Enquiries	<a href="mailto:sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

Contact by Telephone:

**0345 045 5208**

Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm

Saturday 9am to 1pm

## **GLOSSARY**

<b>Academy</b>	An independent state-funded school run by a trust. The trust or local governing board are responsible for admissions to the school. The definition of academy includes free schools and University Technical Colleges.
<b>Catchment area</b>	A defined geographical area surrounding a school from which it will usually take the majority of its pupils/students.
<b>Catchment school</b>	The local school within a defined geographical area described as the catchment (see above), recognised by the Council for meeting its statutory obligations for home to school transport. This is without prejudice to any catchment area that may be determined by an own admission authority school within its admission arrangements.
<b>Community school</b>	A school maintained by the Council where the Council is responsible for employing the staff and for the admission arrangements.
<b>Distance from home to school</b>	The distance from the entrance to the child's home to the nearest recognised entrance of the school via the shortest available walking route up to the maximum of 3 miles and the shortest road route beyond that distance.
<b>Foundation school</b>	A school which is funded and maintained by the Council, but where the governing body is responsible for admissions to the school and the employment of the staff.
<b>Low income</b>	The eligibility criteria for subsidised or free travel assistance on grounds of low income vary depending on whether they are statutory or discretionary.
<b>Maintained schools</b>	All schools funded and maintained by the Council (this includes community, foundation, voluntary controlled and voluntary aided schools).

## **Nearest Suitable School**

Each home address within Cambridgeshire will have a catchment school and/or a school which is the closest school to that address. In the majority of cases, the catchment and closest school are the same school. In cases where it is not nearest suitable school is whichever of the two schools the child attends.

In addition to the above conditions, a different school may be designated as nearest suitable school when;

- (1) the school is specified in the child/young person's Education Health Care Plan as being the nearest school able to meet their needs, whilst the child remains at that school; or
- (2) where an application has been made for a child/young person's catchment and nearest school(s) but a place is refused due to oversubscription, the Council will designate an alternative school as the "nearest suitable school". In determining which school becomes the nearest suitable school, the individual circumstances of each case will be considered as well as; which is the next nearest school with a place available, which given the age of the child can be accessed using existing transport/route or using the easiest travel route at the lowest cost.

## **Parent**

A person who is the child's natural parent or, is not the natural parent but has parental responsibility for the child, or who has care of the child.

## **Public examination courses**

GCSEs, AS levels, A levels, NVQs, BTec First/National Diplomas, International Baccalaureate.

## **Religion or belief**

The main indication of what constitutes a 'religion' is that it must have a clear structure and belief system. 'Belief' is defined as 'a religious or philosophical belief' and equates to 'conviction'. Based on European case law, *it has to be more than an opinion or idea. A belief must be genuinely held and the parents bear a heavy burden of showing that it is the real reason for their action/preference.*



<b>SETT</b>	The Council's Social Education and Transport Team which arranges transport for those who are entitled to travel assistance under the Council's Home to School/College Travel Assistance Policy.
<b>Shortest available walking route</b>	Route along which a child may walk, without trespass, with reasonable safety, accompanied by an adult as necessary (see Appendix D)
<b>Voluntary aided School</b>	A school set up and owned by a voluntary body, usually a church body, largely financed by the Council but run by the school's governing body.
<b>Voluntary controlled School</b>	A school maintained and funded by the Council but with links to the foundation which originally established the school. The constitution will normally have representatives of the foundation on the governing body.
<b>Walking distance</b>	Defined as either two miles for children of primary school age or three miles for children of secondary school age as measured by the shortest available walking route.



## Post 16 Travel Assistance Policy

***Travel Policy for full time learners aged 16-19 and Continuing adult learners with Education Health and Care Plans aged 19-25***

**September 2023**

People Services Directorate  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

Agreed by

Published

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
Legislation and Guidance	3
Policy Aim	3
<b>Post 16 Eligibility Mainstream aged 16-19</b>	<b>5</b>
Eligibility Criteria	5
Nearest Appropriate Centre	5
Students with a long term medical condition / disability	6
Children in Care / Care Leavers	6
International Baccalaureate (IB)	6
Apprenticeships	7
<b>Post 16 Eligibility Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SEND) aged 16-25</b>	<b>7</b>
Eligibility Criteria 16-19	7
Eligibility Criteria 19-25	7
<b>Travel Arrangements</b>	<b>8</b>
Individual Travel Training Programme	8
Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs)	8
Individual Transport Arrangements	9
Cycle Allowance	9
Journey Times	9
<b>Other Support Available</b>	<b>10</b>
Bus and Rail Operator Discounts	10
Students with Visual Impairments	10
16-19 Bursary Scheme	10
College run Transport	10
Spare Seats	10
<b>Application Process</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Review and Appeals Process</b>	<b>11</b>
Stage 1 Review	11
Stage 2 Appeal	12
<b>Complaints Process</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>General Information</b>	<b>13</b>
Travel Passes	13
Changes in circumstances	13
Behaviour on Council contracted Transport	13

# 1. Introduction

This policy sets out the travel schemes and support available, within Cambridgeshire, for the provision of travel assistance for young people/students aged 16-19 or 16-25 for students with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND).

Independent travel plays a key role in enabling young people to prepare for adulthood, enabling them to access their community and build a skill for life. Where possible, we would expect those attending Post-16 education would be to able to walk or use public transport.

This policy describes the support available for;

- full-time learners aged 16-18 and those learners aged 19 and over, continuing the same course started before they were 19;
- relevant adult learners with Education, Health and Care Plans aged 19-25.

## 1.1 Legislation and Guidance

Through the Education Act 1996<sup>1</sup> and the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009) a Council has a statutory responsibility to consider how it will assist learners to access the appropriate post 16 provision.

Through the Education and Skills Act 2008, from 2014 the age of participation has been raised so that young people will be required to stay in education or training until their 18th birthday. This does not mean that young people must stay on at school once they reach 16; this is still the statutory school leaving age. Instead, they are able to choose from the following:

- full-time education, such as school, college or home education;
- following a full-time work-based learning route (e.g. Apprenticeship); or
- undertaking part-time education or training equal to one day a week if they work, are self-employed or volunteer for at least 20 hours per week.

A Post16 Transport Policy Statement must be in place by 31st May each year.

## 1.2 Policy Aim

This policy document specifies the support that Cambridgeshire County Council (the Council) considers necessary to facilitate the attendance of Post 16 learners in their education or training at;

- a school;
- a further education institution;
- a local authority maintained or assisted institution providing higher or further education;
- a 16 to 19 Academy; or

---

<sup>1</sup> Sections 509AA, 508F and 508G of the Education Act 1996

- any establishment (not falling within the above categories) at which the authority secures the provision of education or training under section 15ZA of the Education Act 1996.

It also:

- sets out the criteria against which young people's entitlement to travel assistance will be determined; and
- sets out where discretionary assistance may be provided; and
- sets out the process for reviews and appeals against those decisions.

DRAFT

## 2. Post 16 Travel Assistance Eligibility Mainstream

- 2.1. Parents/carers and students may be able to purchase passes from bus and rail operators at the same or lower cost than the subsidised rate charged by the Council and are advised to check with operators first before applying to the Council.
- 2.2. For those Students who choose to undertake a **full-time** course of education (a minimum 15 taught hours per week) after the age of 16, the Council will provide **subsidised assistance** to enable them to undertake a course of study at the **nearest appropriate post-16 centre** designated by the Council if they meet **all** the below criteria:
- (a) live within the area where Cambridgeshire is the Local Authority; **and**
  - (b) are under 19 or are on a course of further education which started before they reached the age of 19; **and**
  - (c) are resident at an address which is more than three miles from their nearest appropriate post-16 centre measured by the *shortest available walking route*; **and**
  - (d) either the student or a member of their household are in receipt of one of the following:
    - income support
    - income based Job Seekers Allowance (we do not accept contribution-based job seekers allowance)
    - income related Employment & Support Allowance
    - support under Part VI of the Immigration & Asylum Act 1999
    - guarantee element of State Pension Credit
    - NHS Tax Exemption certificate. (a photocopy/scanned copy of the card stating the expiry date will be required)
    - Universal Credit with a household monthly net income of no more than £935

Copies of original documentation are required as evidence of entitlement to benefits.

**For further details of the subsidised assistance and associated charges, please refer to the Council's current Post 16 Policy Statement.**

### 2.3. Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC)

The Council defines the Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC) as the school or college that:

- regardless of county boundaries, is nearest to the student's family home; **and/or**
- where appropriate, named by the Council for travel purposes as the school or college catchment for the student's registered home address; **and**

- offers the main essentials of the course required by the student, both in terms of type and level with regard to higher education and/or career outcomes.

In cases where the nearest centre to the student's home does not offer a particular subject, subject mix (for example at A-Level) or a particular range of module options, travel assistance will not be provided to a more distant centre unless the student is able to provide evidence to demonstrate that their choice of subjects is **essential**, in order to pursue a specific career or higher education pathway.

#### **2.4. Students with a long term medical condition / disability**

A student **may** also qualify for subsidised assistance to their nearest appropriate centre **if** they have a **diagnosed long-term medical or Disability condition** which prevents them from:

- walking to that centre if it is less than 3 miles from their home; **or**
- walking to and from the designated pick up/drop off point; **or**
- accessing the type of free transport provided by the Council (usually a pass for a contract or service bus).

Requests will be considered on a case by case basis and written confirmation from the student's Consultant/GP that transport is **essential** on medical/disability grounds and the period for which is required before consideration will be given to such requests.

#### **2.5. Accelerated School Leavers**

Where a student has progressed through secondary school a year in advance of their chronological age, i.e. is aged 15 when embarking upon a course of further education, the Council will consider them as if they had already reached the age of 16 years for the purposes of determining eligibility for travel assistance.

#### **2.6. Children in Care / Care Leavers**

Children in Care and Care Leavers are eligible for free travel assistance provided they are attending their NAC. Proof of status will be required at the time of application in the form of a letter on headed paper from their Social Worker

#### **2.7. International Baccalaureate (IB)**

The Council will provide subsidised assistance to the nearest centre which offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) if the student meets the criteria set out in section 2.2 above **and** there is an existing transport route.



## **2.8. Apprenticeships**

The Council does not provide travel assistance for apprenticeships on the basis that the young person is earning a wage. The Post-16 Travel Policy is discretionary, and the level of subsidy provided by the Council is for those in full-time education.

## **3. Post -16 Eligibility for Post-16 students with Special Educational Needs, Learning Difficulties and/or Disabilities (SEND) aged 16-25**

### **3.1. 16-19 Travel Assistance**

In addition to the criteria set out in section 2.2, subsidised assistance is available for students who have an EHCP and who;

- attend their Nearest Appropriate Centre (NAC) named within their EHCP; **and**
- live more than 3 miles from this centre **or** are unable to walk this distance as a result of their SEND; **and**
- are unable to access public service travel (bus or train) **or** a service contracted by the Council.

**3.2.** Where a student meets the criteria in section 3.1 and they, or a member of their household meets the income criteria set out in 2.2 (d) **free** travel assistance will be provided.

**3.3.** Where a student does not meet the criteria set out in section 3.1, as they are considered able to travel on public or contacted service, they may apply for subsidised travel assistance under the mainstream criteria outlined in section 2.2.

### **3.4. 19-25 Travel Assistance**

The Council is required to provide free travel assistance, for continuing adult learners aged 19-25 who hold an EHCP, only where it is considered essential to their attendance at their Nearest Appropriate Centre. Students will be required to provide the following evidence supporting why they are unable to make their own travel arrangements:

- other arrangements considered or tried and why they were not suitable;
- whether there is a family member or carer who is able to transport them and, if not, why it would not be possible or reasonable for them to do so;
- whether they are in receipt of higher rate mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment or Disability Living Allowance to assist with their mobility problems, but there are factors limiting its use;
- Whether they have access to a 'Motability vehicle'.

Requests will be considered on an individual basis, taking into consideration the Council's policy, legal duties along with all supporting information provided.

In cases where travel assistance is not considered to be essential, students will be offered subsidised assistance, provide the criteria set out in 3.1 is met.

## **4. Travel Arrangements**

**4.1** Travel assistance is usually provided in the form of a bus pass on a public service **or** contract bus for a return journey to and from the designated pick up/drop off point. at the beginning and end of each official school/college day, during published term dates. Students are expected to make their own way to and from the designated pick up/drop off point.

**4.2** The needs for students with EHCPs are assessed on an individual basis. For those whose needs prevent them from accessing the arrangements set out in section 4.1, assistance will normally be provided by;

- A place on the Independent Travel Training (ITT) Programme.
- A Personal Transport Budget (PTB).
- A place on an existing vehicle/route.

### **4.3 Individual Travel Training Programme**

To support the development of, and to empower learners to become self-reliant travellers, eligible young people with an EHCPs or with special educational needs and/or disabilities, will, where appropriate, be offered a programme of independent travel training.

### **4.4 Personal Transport Budgets (PTBs)**

Where a student with SEND has been identified as being eligible for travel assistance, parents/carers may be offered the option of a PTB. PTBs are discretionary payments made to parents/carers in exchange for full responsibility for transporting the student safely to and from school. PTBs can be used in a variety of ways including;

- Driving the student College school yourself.
- Arranging for a friend or relative to cycle or walk with your child.
- Car share with other parents.
- Getting a bus pass for a friend to accompany the student.
- Paying for a bus pass for the student.
- Paying for childcare for another child – so you can take the student to College.
- Working with the College to join up with other parents.
- Use towards the cost of a taxi or share the cost of the taxi with other parents.

PTB payments are calculated using a flat rate fee of £0.40 per mile for four journeys (home to school and return x 2) per school day. If there is a more cost-effective option (such as a shared transport arrangement), a PTB will not normally be agreed.

All requests are considered on an individual basis and, in exceptional circumstances, an enhanced PTB payment may be agreed by a panel of senior officers, following consideration of all supporting evidence. The following circumstances may be considered, but not limited to;

- Severe medical needs of the student which, during the course of a transport journey, could result in them needing immediate medical attention.
- The student's person's behaviour presenting significant risk to other passengers in the vehicle and/or other transport users.
- The need for a second adult to accompany and support the student.
- The cost per mile of providing a taxi would be considerably greater than paying the parent/carer a PTB despite the home to college journey distance being very short.
- Where there are complex and exceptional family circumstances including the need to get other siblings to and from school, childcare arrangements or working arrangements.
- Other considerations, for example, the age, height and/or weight of the student and their mobility.
- Where an Occupational Therapist or other specialist assessment indicates that a PTB arrangements would be the most appropriate option.

#### **4.5 Individual Transport Arrangements**

Individual transport arrangements will be considered for those students with the most complex needs. Supporting information will be required, evidencing the particular needs which prevent require an individual arrangement, which will be considered by a panel of senior officers.

#### **4.6 Cycle Allowance**

A cycle allowance is available to students who are entitled to travel assistance but who choose to cycle instead of receiving a bus pass. Students can claim £40 per term, payable in arrears. Retrospective payment can only be considered for the current academic year.

#### **4.7 Journey Times**

The Council expects single journey times (excluding the time the student takes to get to and from the designated pick up/drop off point and waiting time between connections) to be reasonable i.e. achievable within a travelling time of 90 minutes.

## 5. Other support available

### 5.1 Bus and Rail Operator Discounts

In Cambridgeshire, bus and rail operators offer discounted travel rates for Post-16 students. These rates may be lower in cost than the subsidised rates offered by the Council. Further information regarding discounts available can be found withing the Council's annual Post-16 Policy statement.

### 5.2 Students with Visual Impairments

Students with a visual impairment are entitled to a free concessionary bus pass for travel on public services. Applications need to be made on-line via the Council's webpage - <https://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/travel-roads-and-parking/buses/free-bus-pass> . Where travel via a public service is not available due to restrictions on the concessionary pass, the Council may consider providing free travel assistance in this instance if the student meets the low income criteria and is attending their NAC.

### 5.3 16-19 Bursary Scheme

Post 16 centres make discretionary bursary awards to students to help them overcome the individual barriers to participation they face, for example with meeting the cost of travel, or to buy essential books, equipment or specialist clothing. These are items the student would otherwise need to pay for in order to participate.

### 5.4 College run Transport

A number of Post-16 centres across the county operate their own travel routes. Parents/carers and students are advised to contact their Centre directly for further details of arrangements offered, including any associated costs.

### 5.5 Spare Seats on existing council routes

At the Council's discretion, spare seats on existing contract routes, **may** be made available for purchase in order to facilitate access for students who have no other transport means available to them.

Seats on these routes **cannot** be guaranteed and will be subject to availability and the provision of vehicles which meet the Public Service and Vehicle Regulations (PSVAR)

Rates charged are reviewed and published annually. Applications **may only** be submitted from the start of the half-term holiday which immediately precedes the term for which the spare seat is being sought.

It is a condition of acceptance of any offer to purchase a spare seat from the Council that parents/carers confirm their understanding and acknowledge that:

- (a) availability of seats will vary term-by-term;

- (b) availability of seats can only be guaranteed for the term for which payment has been accepted and a bus pass issued;
- (c) changes may need to be made to transport arrangements at short notice;
- (d) seats are offered on a first come/first served basis;
- (e) they and their children must abide by the Council's Code of Conduct for Home to School/College Travel
- (f) the Council is under no obligation to offer spare seats for purchase.
- (g) There is no right of appeal against the Council's decision to not make available the provision of a spare seat.

## **6. Application Process**

For details regarding the application process for Post-16 travel assistance please refer to the Council's Post-16 Policy Statement.

## **7. Review and Appeals Process**

A two-stage travel assistance review/appeals process is available for parents/carers who wish to challenge a decision regarding:

- the type of travel assistance offered;
- their child's eligibility for free or subsidised travel;
- the distance measurement;
- the availability of the route unless the Council has undertaken a review of that route and the parents/carers have been notified in writing that the Council has assessed the route as meeting its criteria as an available route and that it intends to withdraw free travel assistance as a result. In such cases, appeals against such decisions move straight to Stage Two of the process set out below.

### **7.1 Stage 1:**

Parents/carers or students have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's decision to submit a written request asking for a review of that decision.

For students requesting mainstream travel assistance these should be sent to [transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:transportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

For students who hold an EHCP these should be sent to [sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:sendtransportappeals@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

The written request should detail why the parents/carers believe the decision should be reviewed and give details of any personal and/or family circumstances they believe should be considered when the decision is reviewed.

A senior Council officer, independent of the original decision, will review the original request/application within 20 working days of receipt of the parents' written request and write to the parents to inform them of the decision including:

- the rationale for the decision reached;
- how the review was conducted;
- information about other departments and/or agencies that were consulted as part of the process;
- what factors were considered;
- information about escalation to Stage Two (if appropriate).

## **7.2 Stage Two:**

Parents/carers or students have 20 working days from receipt of the Council's Stage One decision to make a written request to escalate the matter to Stage Two.

- Within 40 working days an Appeals Committee, who have received appropriate training considers, written and verbal representations from the parents/carers, case work officers and/or other relevant council officers and reaches a decision on the case.
- If the appeal is unsuccessful and the parents consider that there was a failure to comply with the procedural rules or if there are any other irregularities in the way the appeal was handled, they can lodge a complaint with to the Local Government Ombudsman.
- If the parents consider the appeal decision to be flawed on public law grounds, they can apply for judicial review.

A further appeal **will only** be considered if there has been a clear change of circumstances, for example, a change of school or address. A change of year group alone would not constitute a change of circumstances,

### **Please note**

- If a child is under 16 years of age, the right of appeal can only be exercised by a parent.
- If a child is 16 or 17 years old, the parent or the young person can exercise the right of appeal.
- If a child is 18 years old, only the young person has the right of appeal.

## **8. Complaints Process**

Parents/carers or students who, having followed the above review and appeal process, remain dissatisfied with the Council's decision may refer the matter to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO). The LGO will not usually consider cases unless they have been through the full review and appeal process.

Further information regarding how to make a complaint to the Ombudsman can be found on their webpage [www.lgo.org.uk](http://www.lgo.org.uk).

## **9. General Information**

**9.1** The Council issues photo identification bus passes and operates a 'no pass, no travel' policy

**9.2** If a student loses their pass they must immediately inform the Council's Passenger Transport Team. If a student withdraws from their post-16 studies at any stage, they must return their pass immediately to the Passenger Transport Team. If the pass is returned and received.

- (i) before half term, a refund will be issued for the term in question and any subsequent terms for which payment has been made.
- (ii) after half term, no refund will be issued for the term in question. Payments for subsequent terms will be refunded

**9.3** If a student changes their post-16 course at any stage, they must submit a new transport application.

### **9.4 Behaviour on Council Contracted Transport**

The Council has a published Code of Conduct which applies to all children/young people regardless of their mode of travel. They are expected to behave appropriately in accordance with the Code.

The Code is available to download from the Council's website [www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk](http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk) and copies are available in all schools.

Children/young people travelling to school/college by service or contract vehicle using a pass supplied by the Council who misbehave, cause damage or injury either to the vehicle or other passengers, can expect to have their pass withdrawn either temporarily or permanently by a Designated Senior Officer.

Once a pass is withdrawn, the parents/carers of the child/young person concerned will be responsible for ensuring that they are able to attend school regardless of the grounds on which they qualified for transport. There is no right of appeal against a transport ban.





## **Travel Assistance Policy for Children in Care**

***Supporting eligible children/young people, promoting independence  
and wellbeing***

**September 2023**

People Services Directorate  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
Shire Hall  
Cambridge  
CB3 0AP

Agreed by

Published

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General Principles</b>	<b>3</b>
Home to School	3
Other Transport Requirements	4
Transport to Therapy	4
<b>Individual Children's Needs</b>	<b>5</b>
Babies and Pre-school Children	5
Children of Primary School Age	5
Older children and Young People	5
<b>Parents Travel to Contact</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Useful Contact Information</b>	<b>6</b>

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** Cambridgeshire County Council (The Council) has a duty to provide transport for all children under its care. This policy has been developed to ensure the safe and efficient provision of transport for children in care between home, school, leisure, contact and any other place or activity as a part of the child's care plan.
- 1.2** The safety and wellbeing of children and young people is of paramount importance and will be given priority when making transport arrangements. Arrangements will be authorised and reflect the outcomes of a robust risk assessment, which should reflect the needs and vulnerabilities of the child or young person.
- 1.3** The Council considers that children who are in care should share the normal expectations and day to day experiences of all children. Part of this principle extends to children being able to expect that their full time carers will take them to school, leisure activities, contact, etc.
- 1.4** It is recognised that a child should remain in their school placement wherever possible for consistency of education, minimal disruption, and social aspects such as friendship groups.
- 1.5** It is, however, also acknowledged that for those children who are in care, there may be practical difficulties for their carers in transporting them to and from school, leisure activities, contact, etc.

## **2. General Principles**

### **2.1 Home to School**

Children should travel as their peers do. Wherever possible children and young people who live close to their school should:

- be walked to school by their carers; or a suitably mature person;
- walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; **or**
- be transported by their carers.

- 2.2** Care planning for individual children may require that school placements are maintained whilst permanency is sought. Additionally children should not move schools at certain key points in their education (e.g. during GCSE years).

- 2.3** Children and young people who live further away from their school but live within a reasonable travel distance (45 minutes for primary aged children and 1 hour 15 minutes for secondary aged children/young people) should also travel in the same way as their peers where possible, using the means above or by public or existing council contracted transport.

- 2.4** Where a bus pass is deemed appropriate, these will be issued by the Passenger Transport Team, providing authorisation has been granted by the relevant authorising officer.
- 2.5** Where individualised transport arrangements are deemed appropriate, supporting evidence will be required, detailing the other options which have been considered, and reasons why these are deemed unsuitable.

**2.6 Other Transport Requirements**

The Council recognises that Children in Care may be required to attend, and travel to, other locations including, but not limited to:

- after school clubs and activities;
- Child in Care conferences;
- contact arrangements;
- court.

Where travel is required, it is expected that, wherever possible children and young people should:

- Be walked by their carers; or a suitably mature person; **or**
- Walk/cycle alone if they are of an appropriate age and can do so safely; **or**
- Be transported by their carers.

- 2.7** Where none of the options stated above are possible, and other informal arrangements cannot be identified, it may be necessary for alternative travel arrangements to be commissioned by the Passenger Transport Team. All requests must be authorised by the relevant authorising officer and include which of the following reasons apply:

- it conflicts with the needs of other children living in the family; or
- the use of public transport would present risks which are not consistent with safeguarding vulnerable children, (e.g. multiple placements or additional needs of child/children).
- the foster carer was approved as a carer in employment and cannot reasonably be expected to undertake all transport arrangements.
- the foster carer has no transport available, and the journey cannot be reasonably undertaken on foot or by public transport.

**2.8 Transport to therapy**

It is likely that children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling will be anxious prior to the appointment and may exhibit varying degrees of distress following the session. Some children and young people may wish to disclose very sensitive matters. Therefore, wherever possible, children and young people who are accessing therapy or counselling should be transported by their carers.

- 2.9** Where this is not possible, the child's social worker, supervising social worker and the carers must consider other options, bearing in mind that there should be as much continuity as possible. This should be clearly communicated to the child

and planned in such a way so that the child knows who will transport them to and from the appointment.

- 2.10** The use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored.

### **3 Individual Children's needs**

#### **3.1 Babies and pre-school children**

Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child.

- 3.2** If the foster carer is unable to transport a baby or a pre-school child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored.

- 3.3** When transport arrangements must be commissioned, the Council will supply the provision of one car seat, per eligible child, if one has not been previously supplied.

#### **3.4 Children of primary school age**

Given the age and vulnerabilities of this age group, the foster carer should be the person transporting the child.

If the foster carer is unable to transport a child to and from the contact venue, the use of commissioned transport will be a last resort once all other possibilities have been explored. The use of an escort will need to be assessed depending upon the child's individual needs.

#### **3.5 Older Children and Young People**

The expectation for older children and young people is that, following a risk assessment of contact arrangements within the planning and review process, these arrangements are safe and meet the individual child's needs, giving due consideration to their expressed views. This may include public transport.

Children and young people will be encouraged to travel independently, wherever this is considered appropriate and possible. Some young people may require additional support to travel independently. These needs should be considered by the Social Worker, in conjunction with the carer and assessed and reflected in their care plan.

When older children and young people are assessed as being unable to travel independently, and all options have been explored, then a request for transport, and escort if required, must be submitted with the authorisation of the team manager and any required supporting evidence.

### **4. Parents Travel to Contact**

Parents may be assisted with travelling expenses to enable contact to go ahead. The social worker should submit a request for financial support to the relevant

team manager, with clear reasons for the request. Once the manager's approval has been given, the social worker should submit the authorised request to the Passenger Transport Team, for the appropriate form of assistance, such as bus tickets.

## **5. Alterations to Agreed Travel Arrangements**

- 5.1** The Passenger Transport Team must be given as much notice of cancellations as possible in order to avoid unnecessary costs being incurred and drivers undertaking unnecessary journeys. These must be emailed to the service without delay.
- 5.2** The Passenger Transport Team cannot accept a permanent cancellation from a foster carer. This instruction must be submitted by the child's social worker on the relevant form.
- 5.3** Any minor changes to transport arrangements such as change of time, temporary cancellations due to illness or school closures, must be notified by the foster carer social worker or business support via e-mail. However, changes that have a financial implication can only be made with a new authorised request.
- 5.4** The Passenger Transport Team will not accept a request from a foster carer to alter the destination of a child's journey; any such request must be made via the social worker.

## **6. Useful Contact Information**

Passenger Transport Team  
Cambridgeshire County Council  
ALC2649  
Emery Crescent  
Alconbury Weald  
PE28 4YE

Email: [ssdtransport.requests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:ssdtransport.requests@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

Tel: [0345 045 5208](tel:03450455208)

# Children and Young People Committee Agenda Plan

Published: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023

Updated: 17<sup>th</sup> April 2023

## Notes

The definition of a key decision is set out in the Council's Constitution in Part 2, Article 12.

\* indicates items expected to be recommended for determination by full Council.

+ indicates items expected to be confidential, which would exclude the press and public.

The following are standing agenda items which are considered at every Committee meeting:

- Minutes of previous meeting and Action Log
- Agenda Plan, Training Plan and Appointments to Outside Bodies and Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

[25/04/23] [Revised reserve date]	1. Change in membership	S Miller	Not applicable	[13/04/23]	[17/04/23]
	2. Passenger Transport Policy Review	S Miller	Not applicable		
	3. Future of Great Gidding Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School	F Cox	KD2023/054		
27/06/23	1. Regular Review of Methodology for Estimating Demand For Education Provision Arising From New Housing Developments	C Buckingham	Not applicable	04/04/23	06/04/23
	2. Special Education Needs and Disabilities Transformation Programme	J Lewis	Not applicable		
	3. Strengthening Services Board Activity	E Redding	Not applicable		

	4. Outcome of Ofsted Focus Visit	E Redding	Not applicable		
	5. Finance Monitoring Report	M Wade	Not applicable		
	6. Quarterly Performance Report (Quarters 3 and 4)	H Parkinson	Not applicable		
	7. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Safety Valve	J Lewis	KD2023/058		
[12/09/23] Reserve date				31/08/23	04/09/23
10/10/23	1. Finance Monitoring Report	M Wade	Not applicable	28/09/23	02/10/23
28/11/23	1. Finance Monitoring Report	M Wade	Not applicable	16/11/23	20/11/23
	2. Transport Strategy	F Cox	TBC		
	3. Quarterly Performance Report (Q1/2)	H Parkinson	Not applicable		
16/01/24	1. Schools and Early Years Revenue Funding Arrangements 2024/25	J Lewis	KD2024/003	04/01/24	08/01/24
	2. Determined Admissions Arrangements for the 2024/2025 academic year	F Cox	Not applicable		
	3. Finance Monitoring Report	M Wade	Not applicable		
	4. Fire Sprinkler Systems in Schools: Annual Report	I Trafford	Not applicable		
12/03/24	1. Finance Monitoring Report	M Wade	Not applicable	29/02/24	04/03/24



	2. Quarterly Performance Report (Q3)	H Parkinson	Not applicable		
[16/04/24] Reserve date				[04/04/24]	[08/04/24]

Contact: The Democratic Services team at [democraticservices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)



## Children and Young People (CYP) Committee Training Plan

The training plan provides details of training sessions which have taken place during the current Council and topics for potential future training sessions and visits.

	Subject	Desired Learning Outcome/ Success Measures	Priority	Date	Responsibility	Nature of Training	Audience	Attendance By	% of elected members of the Committee attending
1.	Children & Young People Committee induction	To brief Members of the role and responsibilities of the Children and Young People Committee	High	15.06.21 12.00-2.00pm	Executive Director: People and Communities	Teams	All CYP Members	Cllrs Ambrose Smith Atkins Bywater Bradnam Bird Bulat Coutts Daunton Goodliffe Gowing Hay Hoy Prentice Kindersley M King J King Sharp Slatter Thompson	63%

								Taylor van de Ven	
	Member Induction Programme: Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	To brief new and returning Members and Substitute Members on the responsibilities of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	High	12.07.21	Nicola Curley/ Myra O'Farrell	Teams	Members and Substitute Members of the Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee	Cllrs Ambrose Smith Bird Bradnam Bulat Goodliffe M King Slatter van de Ven	60%
2.	Safeguarding	To brief Members on safeguarding issues and responsibilities	High	08.10.21	Director of Children's Services	Teams	All Members	Cllrs Bulat Goodliffe Taylor Thompson Bird Bradnam Coutts Cox Condron Gowing Nethsingha van de Ven Meschini	40%
3.	Corporate Parenting and the Fostering Service		High	22.10.21 10.00am - 12.30pm	Assistant Director: Regional Adoption and Fostering	Virtual	All Members	Cllrs Atkins Bulat Goodliffe Hay Slatter Taylor Kindersley Nethsingha van de Ven	60%

4.	Ofsted – Inspection Framework – Key areas of focus in assessing quality	Cambridgeshire children's services will have a focussed visit from Ofsted at some time in 2022, and a graded inspection in 2023. The aim:  Introduce to the framework for inspection used by Ofsted  How we ensure that we are prepared for inspections.	Director of Children's Services	02.12.21 12pm – 1pm	Director of Children's Services	Virtual	CYP Members and Corporate Parenting sub committee		
5.	Education - FINANCE	Members gain a clear understanding of education funding and council decision making.		10 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2022 12.30 – 2pm	Service Director: Education & Strategic Finance Business Partner	Teams	All CYP Members	Atkins, Bulat, Goodliffe, Daunton, Coutts, Meschini, Bywater, Slatter, Taylor, M King, Bradnam	34%
6.	Education - SEND	Outline of session: What is SEND?  SEND Support in schools and settings  Exclusions		17 <sup>th</sup> January 2022 12.30 – 2 pm	Assistant Director: SEND & Inclusion	Teams	All CYP Members		

		<p>Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP)</p> <p>High Needs Block and EHCP Demand in Cambridgeshire</p> <p>Cambridgeshire's SEND Transformation Programme</p>							
7.	Performance Management Framework	<p>An introduction to the Performance Management Framework and review of the Children and Young People's Committee's key performance indicators.</p>	Medium	24.02.22	Service Director: Education		All CYP Members invited		
8.	Place Planning 0-19; Admissions, Attendance, Elective Home Education (EHE), Children in Entertainment, Children in Employment	<p>To brief Members about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Council's statutory responsibilities with regard to commissioning educational provision and DfE guidance which informs decisions on</li> </ul>	Medium	01.03.22	Head of Place Planning 0-19	Teams	All Members		

		<p>design and build projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the roles and responsibilities of internal and external partner organisations, including the DfE, Multi-Academy Trusts and the Diocesan Boards for Education</li> <li>the business planning processes involved in commissioning educational provision</li> </ul>							
	Education - Attainment	Members gain a clear understanding of the assessment system used in schools.		23 <sup>rd</sup> March 2022 12 – 1.30 pm	Service Director: Education	Teams	All CYP Members	Cllrs Atkins, Daunton, Bulat, Coutts, Hay, Kindersley, M King, Taylor	50%
9.	Supporting the mental and	To introduce CYP Members and the		7 <sup>th</sup> April 2022	Assistant Director	Virtual	CYP Members	Cllrs Atkins,	60%

	emotional health needs of children in care/on the edge of care	Corporate Parenting Sub Committee to the clinical framework and how it supports our foster carers and contributes to the emotional wellbeing of children and young people.		1.30 – 2.30	Safeguarding and Quality Assurance		and Corporate Parenting Sub Committee	Bradnam, Goodliffe, M King, Hay, Hoy and Slatter	
10.	Journeys for children in care including types of placements, placement matching and seeking permanent placements	To gain an understanding of the various placement types offered to our children and young people in care that supports them achieving permanence.		4 <sup>th</sup> May 2022 12.30 – 2.00	Assistant Director for Fostering, Regional Adoption and Specialist your Peoples Service	Virtual	All Members		
11	The Role of the Foster Carer	To introduce CYP Members and the Corporate Parenting Sub Committee to the role of the Foster Carer, and the part they play in impacting positively on the lives of children in care		21 October 2022 – confirmed & booked 12pm-1pm	Ricky Cooper Fiona Van Den Hout	Virtual	All Members	Cllrs: G Wilson, C Daunton, A Whelan, H Cox Condron, S King, A Bradnam, A Bulat, S Taylor, B Goodliffe	40%



12	Family Hubs	To expand on report to CYP committee in May 2022 and explain plans for roll out		25 <sup>th</sup> November 2022 1pm-2pm	Jenny Goodes Lisa Riddle	Virtual	All CYP members Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee		
13	Contextual Safeguarding	To brief member on contextual safeguarding approach		13 <sup>th</sup> January 2023 1pm-2pm	Ricky Cooper Anna Jack	Virtual	All members		
14	Children and Maternity Collaborative and Integrated Care System	Awareness raising of new health provision		3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2023 12pm-1pm	Director of Children's Services/Raj Lakshman	Virtual	All CYP members Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee		
15	Relational and developmental trauma	To develop your understanding of the effects of relational and developmental trauma and loss on children and young people. You will gain an understanding of how trauma can affect brain development and impact on behaviour and learning and the impact that trauma and attachment difficulties can have		27 <sup>th</sup> April 2023	Claire Hiorns, Headteacher, Virtual School	In person	All Members		

		on a young person's life and education. Cornerstone Virtual Reality Training Headsets will be used to enable you to have a greater understanding of a young person's lived experience.							
	Meeting with Young People's Council			TBC 2022/23	Service Director: Children's	Virtual	All CYP and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee members		
	Commissioning Services – what services are commissioned and how our services are commissioned across Children Services			TBC 2022/23	Service Director: Children's / Head of Children's Commissioning		All CYP and Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee Members		
	Visit Family Safeguarding Team			TBC 2022/23	Head of Safeguarding		All CYP and Corporate Parenting Sub-		

							Committee members		
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	----------------------	--	--

For more information, please contact [Emma Nederpel](#)



# Cambridgeshire County Council Children and Young People Committee

## Appointments to Internal Advisory Groups and Panels

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representatives	Contact details
<p><b>Cambridgeshire Culture Steering Group</b></p> <p>The role of the group is to give direction to the implementation of Cambridgeshire Culture, agree the use of the Cambridgeshire Culture Fund, ensure the maintenance and development of the County Art Collection and oversee the loan scheme to schools and the work of the three Cambridgeshire Culture Area Groups. Appointments are cross party.</p>	4	3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr A Bulat (Lab)</li> <li>2. Councillor Michael Atkins (LD)</li> <li>3. Vacancy</li> </ol>	<p>Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education</p> <p>01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a></p>
<p><b>Corporate Parenting Sub-Committee</b></p> <p>The Sub-Committee has delegated authority to exercise all the Council's functions relating to the delivery by, or on behalf of, the County Council of Corporate Parenting functions, with the exception of policy decisions which will remain with the Children and Young People Committee.</p>	6	n/a	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cllr A Bradnam (LD) – Chair*</li> <li>2. Cllr A Bulat (Lab)</li> <li>3. Cllr A Hay (Con)</li> <li>4. Cllr M MacGuire (Con)</li> <li>5. Cllr L Nethsingha (LD) – Vice Chair*</li> </ol> <p>*The Chair and Vice Chair of the Sub-Committee are selected and appointed by the Children and Young People (CYP) Committee from within CYP members and substitute members.</p>	<p>Richenda Greenhill Democratic Services Officer</p> <p>01223 699171 <a href="mailto:Richenda.greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Richenda.greenhill@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a></p>

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representatives	Contact details
<b>Educational Achievement Board</b> For Members and senior officers to hold People and Communities to account to ensure the best educational outcomes for all children in Cambridgeshire.	3	4	1. Cllr Bryony Goodliffe (Lab) 2. Cllr M King (LD) 3. Cllr S Taylor (Ind) 4. Cllr S Hoy (Con)	Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education  01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Joint Consultative Committee (Teachers)</b> The Joint Committee provides an opportunity for trade unions to discuss matters of mutual interest in relation to educational policy for Cambridgeshire with elected members.	2	6	1. Vacancy 2. Vacancy 3. Vacancy 4. Vacancy 5. Vacancy 6. Vacancy  <i>(appointments postponed pending submission of proposals on future arrangements)</i>	Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education  01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE)</b> To advise on matters relating to collective worship in community schools and on religious education.  In addition to the three formal meetings per year there is some project work which requires members to form smaller sub-committees.  The SACRE Constitution calls for the appointment of four elected members based on political proportionality.	3 per year (usually one per term) 1.30-3.30pm	4	1. Councillor A Bulat (Lab) 2. Councillor S King (Con) 3. Councillor P Slatter (LD) 4. 1 vacancy (Con)*	Amanda Fitton SACRE Adviser  <a href="mailto:Amanda.Fitton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Amanda.Fitton@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representatives	Contact details
SACRE meetings require the presence of an elected Member in order to be quorate.				
<b>Virtual School Management Board</b>  The Virtual School Management Board will act as “governing body” to the Head of Virtual School, which will allow the Member representative to link directly to the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board.	Termly	1	1. Councillor B Goodliffe (Lab)	Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education  01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>  Edwina Erskine Business Support Officer – Administration Services Team Cambridgeshire’s Virtual School for Looked After Children (ESLAC Team)  01223 699883 <a href="mailto:edwina.erskine@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">edwina.erskine@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

# Cambridgeshire County Council Children and Young People's Committee

## Appointments to outside bodies, partnership liaison and advisory groups

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representative(s)	Guidance classification	Contact details
<b>Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Foundation Trust Quarterly Liaison Group</b>  The Adults and Health Committee invited CYP to nominate up to three representatives to attend quarterly liaison meetings with Cambridgeshire Community Services NHS Trust. Any appointments will be made by the Adults and Health Committee.	4	Up to 3	1. Cllr Goodliffe (Lab) 2. Councillor M King (LD) 3. Vacant	Other Public Body Representative	Kate Parker Head of Public Health Business Programmes  <a href="mailto:Kate.Parker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Kate.Parker@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a> 01480 379561
<b>Cambridgeshire Music Hub</b>  A partnership of school music providers, led by the County Council, to deliver the government's National Plan for School Music.	3	2	1. Councillor M Atkins (LD) 2. Councillor F Thompson (LD)	Other Public Body Representative	Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education  01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>  Matthew Gunn Head of Cambridgeshire Music  01480 373500/ 01480 373830 <a href="mailto:Matthew.Gunn@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Matthew.Gunn@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs</b>  To provide training and social facilities for young members of the community.	6	1	1. Cllr Bulat (Lab)  Substitute: Cllr N Shailer (Lab)	Unincorporated Association Member	Jess Shakeshaft <a href="mailto:cambsyoungfarmers@outlook.com">cambsyoungfarmers@outlook.com</a>
<b>Cambridgeshire Schools Forum</b>  The Cambridgeshire Schools Forum exists to facilitate the involvement of schools and settings in the distribution	6	3	1. Cllr Bryony Goodliffe (Lab) 2. Cllr Claire Daunton (LD)	Other Public Body Representative	Tamar Oviatt-Ham Democratic Services Officer  01223 699715668



Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representative(s)	Guidance classification	Contact details
of relevant funding within the local authority area			3. Councillor S Taylor (Ind)		<a href="mailto:Tamar.Oviatt-Ham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Tamar.Oviatt-Ham@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
<b>East of England Local Government Association Children's Services and Education Portfolio-Holder Network</b>  The network brings together the lead members for children's service and education from the 11 strategic authorities in the East of England. It aims to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• give councils in the East of England a collective voice in response to consultations and lobbying activity</li> <li>• provide a forum for discussion on matters of common concern and share best practice</li> <li>• provide the means by which the East of England contributes to the work of the national LGA and makes best use of its members' outside appointments.</li> </ul>	4	2	1.Cllr M King (LD)  2 Cllr B Goodliffe (Lab)	Other Public Body Representative	Cinar Altun  <a href="mailto:Cinar.altun@eelga.gov.uk">Cinar.altun@eelga.gov.uk</a>
<b>F40 Group</b> F40 ( <a href="http://www.f40.org.uk">http://www.f40.org.uk</a> ) represents a group of the poorest funded education authorities in England where government-set cash allocations for primary and secondary pupils are the lowest in the country.	As required	1 +substitute	Councillor Bryony Goodliffe (Lab)  Substitute: Councillor M King (LD)	Other Public Body Representative	Jonathan Lewis Service Director: Education  01223 727994 <a href="mailto:Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Jonathan.Lewis@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representative(s)	Guidance classification	Contact details
<b>Safeguarding Children Partnership Board</b> Safeguarding Partnership Boards have been established by Government to ensure that organisations work together to safeguard children and promote their welfare. In Cambridgeshire this includes Social Care Services, Education, Health, the Police, Probation, Sports and Leisure Services, the Voluntary Sector, Youth Offending Team and Early Years Services.	4	1	Councillor Bryony Goodliffe (Lab) It is a requirement that the Lead Member for Children's Services sits on the Board.	Other Public Body Representative	Joanne Procter Head of Service Children and Adults Safeguarding Board <a href="mailto:Joanne.Procter@peterborough.gov.uk">Joanne.Procter@peterborough.gov.uk</a> 01733 863765
<b>Manea Educational Foundation</b> Established to provide grants and financial assistance for people up to the age of 25 years living within the Parish of Manea.	2	1	Councillor D Connor (Con)	Unincorporated association member	
<b>March Educational Foundation</b> Provides assistance with the education of people under the age of 25 who are resident in March.	3 – 4	1 For a period of five years	Councillor John Gowing (Con)	Trustee of a Charity	
<b>Nature for Everyone Advisory Group</b> Anglia Ruskin University and Learning through Landscapes project. Its aim is to increase outdoor learning at school and home for children with complex and severe learning difficulties in order to support their social and emotional	TBC	1	Councillor Alex Bulat (Lab)	Unincorporated association member TBC	Sara Spear Head of School of Management, Faculty of Business and Law Anglia Ruskin University <a href="mailto:Sara.Spear@aru.ac.uk">Sara.Spear@aru.ac.uk</a> 01223 695039

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representative(s)	Guidance classification	Contact details
development, mental health and wellbeing.					
<b>Needham's Foundation, Ely</b>  Needham's Foundation is a Charitable Trust, the purpose of which is to provide financial assistance for the provision of items, services and facilities for the community or voluntary aided schools in the area of Ely and to promote the education of persons under the age of 25 who are in need of financial assistance and who are resident in the area of Ely and/or are attending or have at any time attended a community or voluntary aided school in Ely.	2	2	1 Cllr Whelan (LD) 2 Cllr Coutts (LD)	Trustee of a Charity	
<b>Shepreth School Trust</b>  Provides financial assistance towards educational projects within the village community, both to individuals and organisations.	4	1	1. Councillor P McDonald (LD)	Trustee of a Charity	
<b>Soham Moor Old Grammar School Fund</b>  Charity promoting the education of young people attending Soham Village College who are in need of financial assistance or to providing facilities to the Village College not normally provided by the education authority. Biggest item of expenditure tends to be to fund purchase of books by university students.	2	1	Councillor M Goldsack (Con)	Unincorporated Association Member	

Name of body	Meetings per year	Reps appointed	Representative(s)	Guidance classification	Contact details
<b>Trigg's Charity (Melbourn)</b>  Trigg's Charity provides financial assistance to local schools / persons for their educational benefit.	2	1	Councillor S van de Ven (LD)	Unincorporated Association Member	

For noting only:

<b>Fostering Panel</b>  Recommends approval and review of foster carers and long term / permanent matches between specific children, looked after children and foster carers. It is no longer a statutory requirement to have an elected member on the Panel, but all county councillors are encouraged to consider whether this is something for which they might wish to be considered. More information is available from <a href="mailto:Michaela.Berry@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Michaela.Berry@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>  Appointees are required to complete the Panel's own application process.	2 all-day panel meetings a month	1	Appointees:  1. Councillor S King (Con) 2. Councillor A Hay (Con)	Ricky Cooper Assistant Director, Regional Adoption and Fostering  01223 699609 <a href="mailto:Ricky.Cooper@cambridgeshire.gov.uk">Ricky.Cooper@cambridgeshire.gov.uk</a>
---	----------------------------------	---	--	---

## School Governance team

---

### **Local Authority Governor Nominations/Appointments**

#### **January 2023**

- Priory Junior – Rachel Coe
- Over Primary – Vicci Godbold
- Dry Drayton Primary – Lindsey Russell (re-appointment)

#### **February 2023**

- Pilgrims Pathways School – Antonio Munoz Bailey
- Spring Meadow Infant and Nursery – David Barker
- Castle Camps Primary – Sarah Gunn
- Bushmead Primary – Rebecca Richards

#### **March 2023**

- No Nominations/Appts

