

Response from Freshwater Parish Council to the West Wight School Place Planning Consultation



1. Freshwater Parish Council rejects the Isle of Wight Council's preferred option being the closure of All Saints' CE Primary School as set out in the delegated decision report 03/19.
2. Freshwater Parish Council voted unanimously that it is vital to the community to retain its Primary School. Freshwater is a large village (the largest on the Island and one of the largest in England) with a population in the region of 5,700. As with the rest of the West Wight, Freshwater does have an ageing population, however, the Parish Council wishes to encourage families to both live and work within our Village, therefore, a school is important in attracting and keeping families with younger children in the Village and local area.
3. We now have innovative local businesses, such as Rapanui and The Hut, expanding their businesses and seeking to recruit additional staff together with their families to the Village.
4. The Parish Council is aware of the predicted fall in the birth rate on the Island, however the draft Island Planning Strategy Development Plan has put forward a proposal for an additional 557 homes in the West Wight. The majority of these homes will be in Freshwater which is identified as a Secondary Settlement. The Parish Council has stressed the need for affordable properties for local people in its response to the Strategy. This will lead to an increase in need for school places over the lifetime of the plan – 2020-2035.
5. All Saints School is fortunate in having an excellent site in the centre of the Village. The plot is sizeable with a large playing ground and field. We have heard from parents how many children walk, cycle or scoot to school each day. The safe walk to school is enhanced by the Zebra Crossing close to the entrance to the school, the secluded nature of the school site and the bridleway at the rear of All Saints, which is used by many parents taking their children to school. The school is also close to Moa Place Car Park where parents driving their children to school can park free of charge and walk the short distance to the School.
6. On the other hand, St Saviours School does have real difficulties in terms of access. It would be unsafe for children to walk to school, on one particular route, along a narrow road which has no pavement. There has been concern about the speed of vehicles using this road. Children from Freshwater Bay would have to use

Bedbury Lane which is also a narrow road with no pavement. There are inadequate parking facilities near to the site.

7. All Saints School is in very close proximity to Freshwater Library, Stroud Field which has children's play equipment, School Green and the West Wight Sports and Community Centre. All of these facilities are a safe and short walk from the School.
8. It is noted that a substantial number of children from Freshwater are choosing to attend one of the remaining four Primary Schools in the West Wight. Many reasons have been mooted as to why this is, including the large turnover of staff, as highlighted in the last Ofsted report. It is surprising that more has not been done to identify the issues, which have led to parents making this choice and travelling to more distant schools rather than use their local village school.
9. The current league tables showing the overall performance at end of Key Stage 2 in 2018 are identified below
 - **Reading:** St Saviours 4th, All Saints 9th, Yarmouth 18th, Brighstone 25th and Shalfleet 36th
 - **Writing:** St Saviours 20th, All Saints 16th, Yarmouth 19th, Brighstone 40th, Shalfleet 2nd
 - **Maths:** St Saviours 1st; All Saints 25th, Yarmouth 3rd, Brighstone 40th, Shalfleet 20th

This table reflects the outcomes from the 44 Primary Schools on the Island across the three subjects. The results from All Saints reflect that the school has an average achievement in the three subjects. It does not show that it is either below or well below average in any of the three subject areas, as implied in the results.

10. The Parish Council objects to the procedure being adopted and submits that the Department for Education statutory guidance on the closure of rural schools is not being adhered to.
11. Freshwater Parish Councillors would urge that any decision made by the Cabinet Member for Education should not focus purely on one School as appears to be the case currently. All Saints has been a successful and thriving school in the past and with the right leadership and support, which is very obvious in the community, could again be a thriving Village school to which parents choose to send their children to.
12. The Parish Council feels that the suggested closure date of September 2019 is much too soon. It is submitted that September 2020 would be far more realistic and achievable for the implementation of an alternative to the closure of the school.

13. The Parish Council is aware of two alternatives to closure which are being put forward; the closure of St. Saviour's and the creation of a multi-faith school on the All Saints site, and a federation between Anglican schools which would see pupils from Freshwater currently taught at Yarmouth relocated to the All Saints site.
14. We would be grateful for your consideration of the points that we have raised.