

WOOTTON-BY-WOODSTOCK CE PRIMARY LISTENING PERIOD REGARDING PROPOSED CLOSURE

This document sets out the information required for stakeholders and interested parties regarding the proposed closure of Wootton-by-Woodstock CE Primary School.

The 'listening period' runs for four term-time weeks, from 20 March 2023 – 1 May 2023 (not including school holidays) and ODST welcomes comments and questions during this time.

For clarity in this document:

- **ODST** refers to **Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust** – the Multi-academy Trust responsible for Wootton-by-Woodstock CE Primary and Tackley CE Primary.
- **OCC** refers to **Oxfordshire County Council** – the Local Authority responsible for education provision in the Woodstock area.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO INTERESTED PARTIES

1. Name and contact address of the academy trust considering school closure:

Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust, St Mary's Convent, Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire OX12 9AU. odst.admin@oxford.anglican.org

2. Likely date of closure

End of academic year 2022-23 (31 August 2023)

3. Why closure of the school is considered necessary

The number of current and incoming children in the catchment for the school is extremely low. We know that being educated in a larger group of peers is of great benefit to the children - interacting with a group of peers of the same age supports their learning, for example in group work and developing social skills. It is not likely that in the coming years we would have enough children in each age group at Wootton to be able to provide that quality education experience for them.

This is a decision made in the interests of children at Wootton-by-Woodstock, and not a financial-led decision. ODST has significant expertise in supporting small schools, which can provide a strong educational environment for pupils. In this case however, the extremely small number of pupils means that the highest-quality educational experience can no longer be provided.

Interim arrangements for children to attend Tackley CE Primary this academic year (the school where they share the same governing body and Headteacher) have been successful. No major issues or points of contention have been raised during this period. Parents recognise the advantages of children attending a larger school with more opportunities, but that is still in-keeping with the small rural community feel of Wootton.

4. Pupil numbers for whom provision is currently made

Number of pupils currently on roll:

By year group: YR = 5, Y1 = 5, Y2 = 3, Y3 = 2, Y4 = 2, Y5 = 3 and Y6 = 5

By sex: M = 13 / F = 12

By SEND needs: 9 pupils with SEND needs and 1 pupil with an EHCP

5. The need for school places in the area and capacity for displaced pupils

There is capacity at Tackley CE Primary for all current Wootton pupils. ODST and Tackley CE Primary adjusted the Tackley building in 2022 to ensure sufficient space and facilities for the Wootton pupils to be educated there.

Some families may choose an alternative school, subject to the availability of places. Most of the surrounding schools have spare places in most, if not all, year groups. Population data shows that future numbers of Reception pupils living in Wootton-by-Woodstock are expected to be very low, and there is sufficient capacity in the surrounding local schools to accommodate the local population. There is significant housing growth in Woodstock, but OCC is already expanding Woodstock CE Primary in Shipton Road, Woodstock and this will offer an extra 15 places per year beginning in September 2023.

6. The process for finding places at other schools for displaced pupils, and provision made for pupils with SEND

Families will be asked by OCC which school they would prefer to choose for their child when Wootton-by-Woodstock officially closes. We expect most will choose Tackley CE Primary, where children are already being educated and there are confirmed places available for them.

Families can submit other preferences should they wish to. OCC will handle applications where another school is named and liaise with schools to see what places can be offered.

The needs of SEND pupils have been considered and we are confident their needs can be met at Tackley. Parents of pupils with SEND and EHCPs should contact ODST and OCC if they are considering a different school.

7. Likely impact of closure on the community and measures proposed to mitigate adverse impact

ODST is very aware that closing a small village school is a sad and difficult choice for the community. It is clear though that there are too few children in the catchment to make continued high-quality education possible. The children have been educated off-site at Tackley CE Primary for much of the 2022-23 academic year, which as a gradual change has minimised the community impact so far.

The school building is not used for community purposes as it has no hall. The village hall and church are used for community purposes and will not be impacted by the school closure.

The land trustees have strong local links and have committed to a local consultation about future use of the school site.

8. Where closure plans relate to a rural primary school, demonstrating that trustees have considered:

- **Effect on the local community** (As stated in 7.)

- **Availability and likely cost of transport for pupils**

Transport has been discussed in detail between ODST and OCC, and both parties are committed to ensuring continued ease of access for pupils to Tackley CE Primary. A separate document detailing transport plans is available.

- **Any increase in the use of motor vehicles and likely effect**

As is currently the case, transport provided is likely to take the form of a minibus, which will mitigate against increase in vehicle traffic.

- **Alternatives to the closure**

Wootton-by-Woodstock has worked in partnership with Tackley CE Primary in recent years including joint leadership arrangements and using both sites for education. However it is clear that there is not a strong educational benefit to keeping the Wootton site open.

9. Where the academy has a religious character, the impact on the balance of denominational provision in the area

Tackley CE Primary, Woodstock CE Primary and Combe CE Primary all offer Church of England education provision in the area.

10. The equality impact of the closure and mitigating measures

An equality impact assessment has been carried out by ODST and Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE). No negative impact was identified, including on protected characteristics. There was a positive impact identified regarding disabilities. *'The designated receiving school (Tackley CE Primary) is fully accessible, unlike the current school which has no vehicular access nor access to the upper floor and some steps (it is a listed building so is difficult to change)'*. Additionally, equality-related policies for Wootton are the same at Tackley CE Primary, as both schools belong to ODST and implement inclusive policies.

11. Where the academy has sixth form provision, the impact on 16-19 opportunities in the area

N/A – Wootton provides 4-11 primary education.

12. Where the closure will remove provision reserved for SEND pupils, how the changes will lead to improvements in provision for these children

N/A – Wootton provides mainstream education.

13. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including mitigation against increased car use

ODST and OCC are committed to providing transport to Tackley CE Primary for all Wootton pupils who require it, for two academic years. A full transport plan is available. As is currently the case, transport provided is likely to take the form of a minibus, which will mitigate against increased car use.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the listening period and how can I contribute?

The listening period part of the school closure process and is a chance for families, staff and the community to ask questions or comment on the proposal to close Wootton-by-Woodstock CE Primary. The listening period will include:

- Meetings for parents (parents should refer to communications from the school for details)
- Meetings for staff with the ODST HR team
- ODST also welcomes comments and questions via email at odst.admin@oxford.anglican.org

Are there enough other school places in the Wootton area to meet future need arising from new housing developments?

There is no significant planned housing growth in the Wootton area. There is significant housing growth in Woodstock, but OCC is already expanding Woodstock CE Primary in Shipton Road, Woodstock and this will offer an extra 15 places per year beginning in September 2023. In the longer term, plans to increase school capacity to the south of Woodstock, in Yarnton and Begbroke, will provide capacity for further population growth in that area. There is always some uncertainty over both future birth rates and the exact impact of housing growth, and OCC will continue to monitor housing plans and births data, working with local schools to plan further expansion if necessary.

How will the children's transition to a new school be managed?

All pupils have already made the transition to being educated at Tackley CE Primary and this has been handled very carefully and successfully by staff who know the children and families well. Families will be formally asked by OCC which school they would prefer to choose for their child when Wootton-by-Woodstock officially closes, and we expect most if not all to choose Tackley CE Primary.

What will happen to pupil transport to Tackley?

ODST is in discussions with OCC regarding pupil transport, and both are committed to ensuring continued ease of access to Tackley CE Primary. We expect to provide transport to Tackley for all current Wootton pupils that require it. This will be guaranteed for two academic years (2023-24 and 2024-25). Further details about transport plans will be provided in a separate document for families.

What will happen to wrap-around care?

ODST and Tackley CE Primary are committed to running wrap-around care five days per week at Tackley, if there is sufficient demand from families. Families will be asked to indicate preferences to support planning. Wrap-around care at the Wootton school site will cease in July 2023.

What will happen to school staff?

Wootton-by-Woodstock staff are already working at the Tackley CE Primary site and ODST will formalise these transfers.

What will happen to the school building?

The school building and land is owned by the Parrott and Lee Foundation. When the school closes, the responsibility for the building and land will return to Parrot and Lee trustees, who plan a consultation with the community about future use of the site.

Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST)

Registered Office: St Mary's Convent, Denchworth Road, Wantage, Oxfordshire, OX12 9AU

Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust is a private company limited by guarantee, registered in England (No. 08143249), and is an exempt charity.