

## Surrey Hills All Saints (SHAS) Stakeholder meeting FAQs

Paul Kennedy, CEO, The Good Shepherd Trust

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### Why are GST considering the closure of the Reception/KS1 site in Abinger?

- Falling roll, therefore falling income
  - Capacity of school 300 (Abinger 90, Westcott 210)
  - Current pupils on roll is 178 across both sites, which is less than capacity of the Westcott site
  - Split site means added costs and risks
  - Pupil forecasts for Mole Valley are not encouraging:
    - Next year 33 unfilled reception places, in nine years' time there are predicted to be 64
    - Projected total of 508 unfilled places in this period in Mole Valley
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### Why are you proposing to move all the children to the Westcott site now?

- We don't want to! We have been seeking solutions since new CEO has been with the trust (18 months). COVID response and stability was the focus during much of this time
  - There is never a good time
  - Finances are at a critical point
  - We want to be as open and honest as we can with current and prospective parents
  - Abinger site needs significant capital investment
  - DfE, Surrey, Diocese and trusts all looking at school sustainability given there are already 5000 vacant primary places in Surrey
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### Surrey encouraging schools and academies to review

"It will be particularly useful for Governing Bodies and Trusts if the school is:

- **less than one form of entry** for primary phase. (SHAS)
  - **less than 5FE** for secondary schools.
  - **A standalone academy;** or
  - **Is a school in a planning area showing a reduced need for places."** (SHAS)
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### Place Planning

- In 2019 there were 557 fewer births than in 2018 and this trend continues
  - Surrey had its lowest birth rate since 2002
  - Births have decreased year on year from 2012
  - Since 2012, births have dropped by 19% in Surrey
  - Since 2012, births have dropped by 14% in Mole Valley
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### **Small schools**

- 110 primary or infant and junior have less than 210 pupils
  - 3 secondary schools have less than 600 pupils
  - 9 schools have less than 100 pupils
  - Surrey have an increasing number of schools that are in financial difficulties with in-year deficits
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### **What will happen if the Abinger site remains open and things stay as they are?**

- Definitely increased risk for the whole school
  - It depends on how many pupils joins SHAS, marketing is a key strategy regardless of the outcome.
  - It depends on the local picture, e.g. if all other infant provision closed in the local area, SHAS has a potentially wider offer
  - Currently around 50% overall vacancy in the three open local infant provisions and The Weald EYFS/KS1 is temporarily closed
  - Significant financial planning will be necessary to look at the school in this context
  - If we remain as we are, capital projects across two sites means funding is spread more thinly and will therefore inevitably be less targeted. Other costs could not be rationalised and so we would potentially need to remodel the school's structure.
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### **How many children will be affected?**

- Currently 43 pupils on the Abinger Site
  - Of those, 30 are living in Westcott or Dorking
  - Year 2 will be moving to Westcott in September (22 out of the 43 pupils)
  - There is a risk that some parents may choose to move their children to other settings
  - There are parents who have indicated that they would reconsider SHAS if it were a single site
  - Same curriculum, same teachers, same classes so the quality of education would be protected
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### **What will happen to the site in Abinger if children are moved to Westcott?**

- This is the most frequently asked question
- The site is owned by the Diocese of Guildford, and we lease it from them, as SHAS is a Church of England School
- They would then take over responsibility, we would need to explore what commitments each side has in this operation
- If there was a proposal for another use, I believe there would be further consultation (which would not be GST's responsibility) and there are separate site trustees for the Abinger site.

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**Will the GST profit from the Abinger site being sold?**

- No

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**Is the GST aware that losing the school in Abinger will have a significant impact on the community there?**

- We understand the strong local feeling and understand the 'rural schools' agenda
- Unfortunately, we do not get any additional funding for rural schools
- Additional funding is increasingly linked to deprivation, and we expect that trend to continue. SHAS has below national average number of pupils who attract pupil premium funding
- This means that small, rural schools in low-deprivation contexts may become increasingly vulnerable
- Most of these schools are church schools in our region

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**What will the impact be on the Abinger nursery and church?**

- We cannot second guess that but there may be an impact on nursery numbers
- We have enquired about the nursery becoming part of SHAS but the Regional Schools Commissioner will not consider it whilst the school remains Ofsted inadequate (and we cannot influence the date of the next inspection)
- Potential impact has been widely expressed through the consultation

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**How many children from the Abinger area actually attend the SHAS site in Abinger?**

- Based on data from early September:
  - Reception: Abinger 2, Ockley 1
  - Year 1: Forest Green 1
  - Year 2: Abinger 2, Effingham 1, Forest Green 1, Holmbury 1, Holmwood 1, Newdigate 1, Ockley 1, Wooton, 1
- All other pupils are Westcott or Dorking

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**How many surplus places are there currently in this area of Surrey?**

- Focus on infant provision (Year R to Year 2)
- Information from DfE, publicly available on the Get Information About Schools website <https://www.get-information-schools.service.gov.uk>

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**Does the 2017 (inadequate) Ofsted rating – before Surrey Hills joined GST – have any bearing on parents not wanting to send their children to SHAS?**

- We believe this has a negative impact on numbers
- Many parents will not consider SHAS whilst it remains in ‘serious weaknesses’
- Ofsted suspended inspections during the pandemic but inspections have just restarted but we have no control over SHAS inspection date

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**How do we attract more pupils to SHAS?**

- A better Ofsted judgement
- Better facilities
- Great outcomes
- Targeted marketing – this has been delegated to each school by the trust in the past, we are reviewing our support and have heard the feedback from local stakeholders

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**How do we maintain the special and unique aspects of the Abinger site – such as the Forest School?**

- We appreciate the Abinger site is well-loved
- There are increased opportunities at Westcott and future plans to enhance provision

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**What is the impact on parishes?**

- We have had significant feedback from the local parishes
- Diocese will contribute to consultation at various levels
- This will be presented as part of the report to the GST board

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**What does a significant drop in pupil numbers actually mean in terms of school funding?**

- We receive £3301 per pupil at the most basic level
- 209 pupils on last October’s census drives current funding
- 178 pupils expected this October census which drives next year’s funding
- £102k decrease next year based on the difference of 31 pupils
- If pupil numbers trend continues, that is a significant year-on-year shortfall, e.g. 42 pupils currently in year 6 leaving this year, if we achieved 30 in next year’s reception class we still lose 12 pupils overall (best case).
- Pupil projections from Surrey are key to this forecasting

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**How is capital expenditure affected by a split site?**

- We do get some funding for a split site (pupil numbers led) but not for capital expenditure
- This does not cover all the additional costs due to small number of pupils
- Capital projects are duplicated across two sites e.g. boilers, roofs, fire alarm systems

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**How is school effectiveness and efficiency affected by a split site?**

- New Ofsted framework is focussed on curriculum across the whole school, split site makes subject leadership more demanding
- Leadership, safeguarding leaders and subject leaders need to move between sites
- Some functions need to be duplicated e.g. reception, first aid, caretaking

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**If the move happens, when will it be?**

- Very much part of the consultation
- We would not need to rush
- CEO's personal opinion is that some time at Westcott this academic year would be helpful for the pupils
- Westcott needs to be ready to welcome younger pupils

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**How can parents be supported to make drop-off and pick-up at Westcott safe and efficient.**

- This is a good question regardless of the outcome
- 135 pupils already face this issue
- Pub car parks are not a sustainable solution
- Need to encourage walking, cycling etc where appropriate
- We are exploring options such as a drop off zone away from the school with a supervised "walking bus"
- Any solutions very welcome!

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**How does the GST plan to improve the Westcott site?**

- We have already scoped the site and plans in place for both inside and outside space
- If this proposal goes through, the main focus will be developing the EYFS/KS1 spaces at Westcott
- Further development of outside space, including nature area for outdoor learning
- Later potentially:
  - Replace windows
  - Reconfigure entrance
  - Create a play activity area

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**Is there enough space on the Westcott site to accommodate younger children?**

Yes, Westcott capacity is 210 and was originally a primary school for years R-6

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**How will you support the Key Stage 1 children if they move sites (before they would normally at the end of Yr 2)?**

- We would expect to run the transition programmes as we normally would but tailored to the needs of each class
- If a decision has been taken to move, we will work with all people around the children to ensure we do the best job possible
- This will be a child-centred plan

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**What happens next?**

- After the consultation closes, the responses are collated and given to the GST board of trustees as part of the proposal. This will also include financial information, pupil forecasts and contextual information
- The GST board considers all the information presented to them and decides whether we present a business case to the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC)
- The RSC will then either approve or reject the business case
- We anticipate that this could take several months