

Direct Line (0926) 412546
Switchboard (0926) 410410 ext.
If calling ask for Mr Collinson
Your ref
My ref SBD/PC/JER

To: Parents of pupils at
Church Lawford C.E. First
School.

COUNTY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
22 NORTHGATE STREET,
WARWICK CV34 4SR

Margaret Maden BA (Hons)
County Education Officer

Eric Wood MSc
Deputy County Education Officer

Julian M Davies IPFA
Second Deputy County Education Officer

Date 15th January, 1990

Dear Parent,

A short time ago I wrote to you about a consultation meeting that the primary education development working party wished to have with parents of pupils attending Church Lawford CE First School on Monday, 5th February 1990 at 7.00 p.m. at the school.

I am writing to you again to confirm this meeting and to give you some information that will help you to understand why the working party is anxious about the future of the school.

1. Statistical Information

1.1 Number on roll

The number of pupils on roll according to the most recent return is 28, made up as follows:

<u>4+</u>	<u>5+</u>	<u>6+</u>	<u>7+</u>	<u>Total</u>
8	7	8	5	28

1.2 Forecasts

The most recent forecast for the total school roll in future years is as follows:

<u>1989</u>		<u>1990</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>1992</u>	<u>1993</u>	<u>1994</u>thereafter
28		30	28	27	25	24	

You will appreciate that intakes in years later than 1993 are not yet born so we can only base our estimate on historic intakes and age groups of pre-school children. Furthermore, this is a very small school and the pupils come from a wide area so that the possibility of significant variation from the forecast is greater than normal. Even so, the school seems set to remain very small for the foreseeable future.

1.3. Roll in previous years

During the last ten years the roll of the school has been as follows:

<u>1978</u>	<u>1979</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>1982</u>	<u>1983</u>	<u>1984</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1986</u>	<u>1987</u>	<u>1988</u>
51	38	33	32	27	27	26	34	34	38	26

It is clear that during the 1980s the roll has been fairly constant within the range 26-38.

1.4 Premises

The school has excellent modern premises with accommodation for 96 pupils, although the low number on roll has allowed one teaching room to be used by a playgroup for part of the week.

2. Small Schools

There are certainly some advantages for small schools and the most obvious of these are the small classes. These enable the teachers to get to know the children extremely well and it is possible to create a family atmosphere within the school. On the other hand, there is a strong body of opinion that feels that very small schools are not able to give the pupils the wide range of experiences, due to the small number of adults in the school, that a larger school could offer them, and small classes can reduce opportunities for stimulation and competition among peers.

The policy of the Education Committee, which is in line with government policy, is that schools should, in general, have sufficient pupils to qualify for three full-time teachers. In the case of a First School the current staffing model would require 64 pupils before the school had a third full-time class. It is clear that Church Lawford school has been roughly half this figure during the last ten years, and there seems no reason to suppose that the position will change significantly.

3. The Future

Until now schools have been staffed using a computer model that made sure that every school, however small, had at least two classes. This staffing subsidy has meant that whereas in Church Lawford CE First School there have been classes around 15, many First Schools in the county have had classes of 30 or more. The Education Reform Act changes all this and schools' budgets will have to be set on the assumption that all children of the same age will be staffed at the same rate. This will apply whether the school has control of its budget or not. Since the teacher-staffing costs are by far the most expensive item on a school budget, you can see that this change in the rules will have a profound effect on small schools.

Based on the new formula which has just been approved by the Secretary of State, the total budget for Church Lawford School would be £43,470, compared with the budget based on existing formulae of £48,663. There will, therefore, be a cut of £5,193 p.a. based on current figures, a loss of 10.67%. As has been mentioned, the school's budget will be sensitive to the number of pupils on roll, and if the school were able to exceed the current roll then it would be possible to reduce the budget shortfall but, conversely, if the roll were to fall, the budget could fall accordingly creating a real problem for the school. The situation is therefore very precarious.

It is difficult to see what economies the school could make to compensate for cuts of this order in its budget. It is the view of the working party that it would be extremely difficult for the school to continue in view of the precariousness of its budget.

4. The Proposal

It is proposed that Church Lawford C.E. Junior & Infant School should close in the Summer 1991 and that pupils should join their older brothers and sisters at Long Lawford Combined School, and that in future all pupils from the area should begin their formal education at Long Lawford School.

As most parents are aware, Long Lawford School is housed in a very good modern building on an attractive site where there is a swimming pool. The school has an official capacity of 324 and there are 234 pupils on roll at the moment so that, even with a further 30 pupils from Church Lawford, it would have plenty of room within its existing buildings.

The most recent forecasts indicate that the roll without Church Lawford School children will rise to just over 250 and remain at that level. There will therefore be sufficient accommodation for the foreseeable future for all pupils from 4+ to 12+ in the area now served by the Church Lawford and Long Lawford schools.

Although the classes will be larger than those at Church Lawford at present, they will be mostly single-age classes which are normally preferred by most parents.

5. Finances

Although the working party always looks at the educational arguments before considering any financial savings, there would be savings associated with this proposal and the Authority is under great pressure from central government to take surplus places out of use, and without doubt money is saved and can be redirected elsewhere in the education service when surplus places are removed.

Under the new formula, the budget is made up of three main elements based on pupil numbers, premises-related costs and a base allocation which is the same for all First Schools.

If Church Lawford CE First School were to close there would be no saving on the pupil-related budget because the same figure would be generated whether the pupils were at Church Lawford or Long Lawford or, indeed, anywhere else. However, the premises-related budget and the base allocation would be saved and these are £3,500 and £21,000 respectively. The total saving would therefore be £24,500 p.a.

Against this should be set the cost of extra transport, estimated at no more than £8,500 p.a., but in reality likely to be little or no additional cost. The total net saving should therefore be at least £16,000 p.a. and almost certainly more than £20,000 p.a.

6. Procedure

It must be stressed that the purpose of the meeting is to consult with parents on the proposal. The working party has not made a final decision

but, in view of the information available to it, has formed the opinion that the proposal represents the best possible arrangement for the education of First School pupils in the Church Lawford area.

After the meeting the working party will reconsider the proposal in the light of the views of teachers, governors and parents that it will have received during the consultation meetings.

If the working party decides to proceed it will make a recommendation to the Education (Schools) Sub-Committee on 6th March, and if the sub-committee agrees it will make a recommendation to the Education Committee at its meeting on 3rd April. The Education Committee will decide whether to proceed with formal closure notices or not. If it decides to proceed, then a public notice will be published giving any ten interested local government electors or recognised body, such as the governors or the parish council, two months in which to make an objection to the proposal. All the objections would be made to the Education Authority which would pass them on to the Secretary of State. The final decision would then be made by the Secretary of State and this would be binding on the Education Committee.

7. Summary

- 7.1 This is the first step in considering a proposal to close Church Lawford CE First School and to offer pupils places at Long Lawford Combined School.
- 7.2 The main reasons for making this proposal are that Church Lawford school is very small and expert advice suggests that schools below about 60 pupils have difficulty in providing a full range of opportunities for their pupils, and this will become more pronounced with the introduction of the National Curriculum.
- 7.3 There is real uncertainty about Church Lawford school's ability to continue at its current level of provision because of the new budget arrangements which have had to be introduced as a result of the Education Reform Act.
- 7.4 There would be a saving of at least £16,000 p.a. arising from the closure of the school and the Authority itself is under great pressure to make savings.
- 7.5 No decisions have been taken and many steps will have to be followed before there could be a decision to close the school.

I hope this document gives you some of the information you need, and I look forward to seeing you at Church Lawford school on 5th February.

Yours sincerely,



P. Collinson
Senior Education Officer