

Ravenstonedale Endowed School Drop-In Session

Thursday 6 November 4:30 to 6:30pm

Although starting as a drop-in session the evening quickly changed to the format of a general meeting. During the course of the evening there were 28 attendees.

The following points and questions were raised;

- It was felt that the small schools that many rural settings have are very good at providing individual support to their pupils.
- Why did the council not act more quickly when numbers started to drop at the school?
 - Learning Improvement Officers have been supporting the school for some time, pre-dating the release of the Ofsted report in April 2014. However, ultimately parents chose to send their children to other schools in the surrounding area.
- Why does the process to close the school take so long?
 - Should a decision be made to move forward with closure of the school following the consultation, there is a statutory procedure to be carried out. Following the consultation period the county council's Cabinet (made up of 10 county councillors) will need to meet, consider the outcome of the consultation, and make a decision on whether to publish statutory notices formally proposing the closure of the school. Following this publication a set period of time – 4 weeks – must be allowed for anyone to make a response to the proposal before Cabinet again meets to make a final decision. This process would mean that the earliest date that the school could close is 10 April 2015.
- Who makes the final decision on the closure of the school?
 - The final decision is made by the elected members of the Cabinet.
- Is it possible to attend the meeting where the final decision to close the school is made?
 - Yes. Members of the public can attend Cabinet to watch. Should they wish to speak, or present a petition, then this must be done by prior arrangement with Jackie Currie (01228 221030). Cabinet dates can be found at <http://councilportal.cumbria.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?Committeed=117>
- Should Ravenstonedale School close is it possible to have a catchment area other than that suggested in the consultation document?
 - Yes. The map contained in the consultation document which shows Ravenstonedale's catchment area as part of Kirkby Stephen catchment is only a suggestion. The purpose of the consultation is to gather opinions on what the future of the school, and its catchment area, should be.
- Why are there staff left with nothing to do while there are no pupils in the school? Why can they not be released from their contracts?

- The decision on the closure of Ravenstonedale School has not yet been made. If such a decision is made the county council's HR department will work closely with the staff to support them in deciding on their own future.
- The endowment on the school states that the building should always be kept for educational purposes – what will happen to the building once the school has closed?
 - Should the school close then the building would be handed back to the Trustees of the Ravenstonedale Educational Foundation. It may be possible that the school building could continue with some educational function (a nursery, a forest school and adult education were suggested as possibilities) and the county council would certainly consider options should this course be taken.
- Could the school re-open as a free school?
 - Should Ravenstonedale School close then it would be possible for an application for a free school in the village to use the school building should the Trustees agree.
- Ravenstonedale is an expensive area to live for young families