



SAVE CRAGG VALE JUNIOR & INFANT SCHOOL

We are parents of children attending Cragg Vale Junior & Infant School (the vast majority of pupils' parents support the view outlined below).

We are seriously concerned at proposals initially outlined to us in a letter from David Oliver (8th September 2015), the Chair of the school's Board of Governors, to 'relocate' the school to a new site at Calder High School, on the basis of a lack of funding to carry out necessary structural repairs and refurbishment. This letter appears to be based on the Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Services (Calderdale MBC, 14th September 2015). In essence, the recommendations in this Report amount to the closure of the school and the opening of a new one in Mytholmroyd, a village which currently already has two.

Our concerns are summarised below and we would be very grateful if you would read them before making your decision.

The apparent lack of transparency and consensus

We know that despite the letter being signed off "for and on behalf of the Governing Board", this matter has not been discussed/generally agreed in a Governors' Meeting or similar.

The lack of options being put forward

The Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Services describes an "access issue" which "*prevents the school ever being suitable for disabled children.*" (para 4.1)

Conversely, access for wheelchair users is currently available via a ramp up to the school; wheelchair users can then enter the building via the side entrance. There is also an accessible toilet. The school is also particularly responsive to children who have other disabilities which are not necessarily physical.

Regarding sporting provision, the Director's Report states that "*No Playing Field exists. This lack of provision restricts the schools ability to deliver successfully the outdoor PE curriculum.*" (para 4.3.6)

However, in the 2013/14 academic year, the school was awarded a Bronze School Games Award by Sainsbury's, in recognition of all the sports participated in, both in school and in local competitions. It is now working towards the Silver level of achievement. Should alternative premises be required, the school has permission to use Cragg Vale Tennis Club (HX7 5TB) for a variety of sports, including football and netball. It is within walking distance and has been recently refurbished to include a toilet and changing facilities and has storage space for sports equipment.

With reference to solutions to the Director of Children and Young People's Services' concerns, we note that the only two options being put forward for consideration are:

5.1 *To relocate Cragg Vale J & I School from Cragg Vale to Brier Hey Lane, Mytholmroyd, Hebden Bridge (Current Calder High Sixth Form)*

5.2 *To do nothing and continue to monitor the condition of the school building.*

Suitable alternative options, which are much nearer Cragg Vale than Calder High School, do not appear to have been considered. Other options currently being explored would mean upheaval could be kept to a minimum in the case of a full refit.

The lack of concrete financial details at this stage

We do not believe that a funding shortfall has been definitively established given that central government has not yet determined the exact amount of money to be allocated to the school in its successful Priority School Building Programme bid. As Mr Oliver's letter states, "*At this point we are still awaiting a detailed evaluation of just what sums might be available, and what these funds may be applied to,*" it appears highly premature to consider agreeing to consult on a relocation proposal before the availability of central funding for refurbishment and structural repairs has been precisely determined, or indeed whether the funding could be applied to such a proposal.

It may then be pertinent to consider having independent assessments of the condition of the building, the work that is needed, how much it will cost and over what timescale. This should then be compared with the total cost of the proposed move to Calder High School.

The effect on the local community

As Cragg Vale J & I School is a Designated Rural School, regard needs to be paid to "*the likely effect of the discontinuance on the local community and any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school.*" (Explanatory notes to The Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2014 SI 2014/2650). The loss of one of the key focal points for the Cragg Vale community obviously has the potential to be of serious detriment to the social and economic life of the village. Our school has a very special ethos and is a community school in the truest sense of the word. It has a long and established close connection with other community groups such as the Cragg Vale Community Association, Cragg 15, the Church and the two local pubs.

A relocation would mean it would be impossible to maintain these relationships, and would destroy the very essence of the school itself.

Further to this point, we feel Calder High School is a particularly inappropriate environment to relocate to, considering, for example, how drop off/pick up points for the proposed new premises are apparently near a bus terminal; how being in such close proximity to much older children may impact upon primary pupils; and how the proposed new premises is approximately three times bigger than our current building.

Finally, we note that although the Report of the Director of Children and Young People's Services (para 2.4) claims that Cragg Vale School is "*not fit for a modern education curriculum*", in 2012, OFSTED rated it as "**Good with outstanding features**" and stated that "***Cragg Vale is a good school. It is happy and harmonious and has many strengths, some of which are outstanding.***"

We ask all parties involved in the decision-making process to seriously consider all possible alternative solutions before moving to a – no doubt extremely costly – consultation process.

Enquiries can be emailed to us via: contactcraggparents@gmail.com