

Hexton JMI School Options Analysis – Director’s Four Tests August 2023

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
1	Do nothing	No Hexton JMI School (“the School”) has a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 10. There were 21 children on roll in the academic year 2022/23 (Spring 2023 school census). 1 child has been allocated a Reception place for September 2023. The number of children on roll has declined significantly over the last 5 years. There were 31 pupils on roll in September 2021 when the public consultation on the previous closure proposal took place.	No The School currently operates with a two-class structure: Early years foundation stage (EYFS)/ Key Stage 1 (KS1) and Key Stage 2 (KS2). This means that the school has mixed ages in each class. Accommodating such a range of ages (Year 3/4/5/6) in one junior class makes delivering the curriculum challenging. The breadth of need in each class creates difficulties for leaders and teachers to plan the School’s curriculum so that it is coherent and appropriately sequenced to meet pupils’ needs (this being a central premise to the expectations of the Education Inspection Framework).	No Due to its age, the School building is likely to have condition issues which will require on-going maintenance. Some remedial/building work to the flat roof was carried out in 2018. The School has no current bids to Hertfordshire County Council’s (HCC) repair and maintenance (R&M) programme. Only a small number of pupils attending the School live in Hexton village and are therefore able to walk to school. The majority of children attending the School live further afield, predominantly in Central Bedfordshire and usually	N/A

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
		There are very few pre-school aged children living in Hexton. This consistent decline in population in the area means that the School is considerably under its PAN. Due to low local demand and its proximity to the Hertfordshire/ Central Bedfordshire border, just under half of its pupils live out of county (9 pupils = 43%) and travel from outside Hertfordshire (Spring 2023 school census). Only 6 pupils at the School live in Hexton with the remaining pupils travelling from other towns in Hertfordshire (Letchworth and Hitchin). It is expected that local demand will continue to be low and there is no new	This creates challenges in delivering and sustaining good education outcomes for pupils. Pupil numbers would have to increase significantly for the school to be able to cover its regular expenses (without unforeseen costs) and as shown, the data suggests this will not happen. For the School to continue, and pupil outcomes not to be compromised, Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) would need to underwrite its increasing deficit position.	have to travel by car. These children living further afield have alternative schools which are more local to where they live.	

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
		housing coming forward that would change this.			
2	Federation	No Hexton JMI was previously in a soft federation with Pirton School. This collaboration ended recently, and a new head was appointed in September 2022. In light of the very low numbers of children living in the village, this option would rely on the school recruiting pupils from outside the village. Federation would not increase local demand for places at the School.	No Whilst, in theory, a federation may reduce the financial burden through the sharing of resources, the current issues at the School would not be solved by federating with another school. Even with centralised contracts and a potential reduction in leadership costs, this would not generate a sufficient saving to make the school financially viable.	Unlikely A hard federation would offer potential cost savings through shared resources and economies of scale. However, a hard federation is considered challenging in this instance due to the small size of the School and its rural location.	Yes Would minimise transitional arrangements although the management structure would be likely to change.
3	Hexton JMI converts to an Academy and joins a Multi-	No	No Although joining a MAT could offer benefits in terms of economies of	Unlikely See comments above.	N/A

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
	Academy Trust (MAT)	As outlined above, local demand for school places in the village is very low. Joining a MAT would not change the level of local demand or the current surplus of places. There is not sufficient demand locally.	scale, collaboration across schools, shared learning, and resources etc., it is unlikely that a Trust would consider the future of the School to be viable and therefore this option is not considered to be feasible.	An academy lease would be needed. HCC legal fees and surveyor fees for such a transaction would need to be covered as would the same fees for the academy.	
4	Closure and offer alternative arrangements for existing pupils	Yes Demand in Hexton is minimal and the School has a high level of surplus. Closure would remove surplus places from across the area. The majority of pupils on roll at the School travel in from outside the village with school places available in schools closer to where the children live.	Yes The School is organising in two mixed-age classes. Accommodating such a range of years (Year 3,4,5,6) in one class has made curriculum planning and delivery challenging and has resulted in a wide age range being taught in one class. The breadth of need in each class creates difficulties for leaders and teachers to plan the school's	Yes Closure would avoid the ongoing financial risk to the school budget and would also reduce the cost of upkeep on the school buildings, which would no longer be required for education purposes. The majority of existing pupils attending the School live closer to another	Yes The next nearest school is Ramsey Manor in Central Bedfordshire, 1.4 miles away. The next nearest Hertfordshire schools to Hexton are Pirton School (community school) (PAN:25) which is 2.75 miles by road and Offley

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
		There is no new housing development proposed in Hexton. A new housing development of 500 homes has recently received a resolution to grant planning consent, subject to section 106 (s106), in neighbouring Barton-le-Clay. Central Bedfordshire has secured land within that development for new primary provision and plans to meet any arising need locally.	curriculum so that it is coherent and appropriately sequenced to meet pupils' needs (this being a central premise to the expectations of the Education Inspection Framework¹). This creates challenges in delivering and sustaining good education outcomes for pupils.	school and therefore there is likely to be a positive environmental impact due to a reduction in car journeys.	Endowed (Voluntary Aided) (PAN:20) which is 3 miles by road. Both Pirton and Offley Endowed Schools have some vacancies. Most of the children attending Hexton JMI School have schools more local to where they live. It is proposed therefore to run an in-year admissions process to allocate Hexton pupils places at alternative schools closer to where they live. Any families wishing to pursue a place at an out-of-county school would need to apply directly

¹ [Education inspection framework \(EIF\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-inspection-framework)

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
					to that school or local authority. For children living in Hexton it does mean that if the school closes that they would no longer have a school within safe walking distance and would therefore be eligible for school transport. Should a decision be taken to close the School, Officers will work closely with the School to ensure a smooth transition for all pupils, including those with Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), and would work closely with Integrated Services for Learning

No	Option	Reduce surplus places and provide places where they are needed to meet demand	Enhance capacity to raise educational standards, reduce risk of under-performance or serious weakness	Have acceptable implications for building design, environmental impact, and cost	Have acceptable transitional arrangements for affected pupils
					(ISL) colleagues and other key professionals to ensure children with SEND have an alternative appropriate placement which takes account of their specific needs.

Other options considered and discounted:

- **Close Hexton JMI School year by year**

This option would see the school slowly decline in numbers over 7 years. This is not considered in the best interests of the staff or pupils of the School.