

Appendix 1 - School Place Planning workshops

This document includes the slides presented and information obtained from each of the breakout sessions. The wording is as written and no interpretation has taken place.



Education, Inclusion & Access Department

Addressing the high number of surplus places workshop

By 2030, all children and young people on the Isle of Wight will be equipped with the skills and aspiration to access opportunities of their choice.

We are not naming schools in this workshop

We can talk about areas, but not schools.

Education Strategy

By 2030, all children and young people on the Isle of Wight will be equipped with the skills and aspiration to access opportunities of their choice.



Isle of Wight
Education Strategy
A cradle to career approach
2024 to 2030



Our five priorities:

- **High aspirations.**
- **Rich curricular** experiences with meaningful pathways into adulthood.
- **High quality special educational needs and disability provision** for children and young people.
- **A highly trained workforce**, with a range of continued professional development and clear career routes.
- **A sustainable** education infrastructure.

Addressing the high number of surplus places

What do you think the Council got wrong?

Be honest, we need to know – **30 minutes**

Comfort Break



Addressing the high number of surplus places

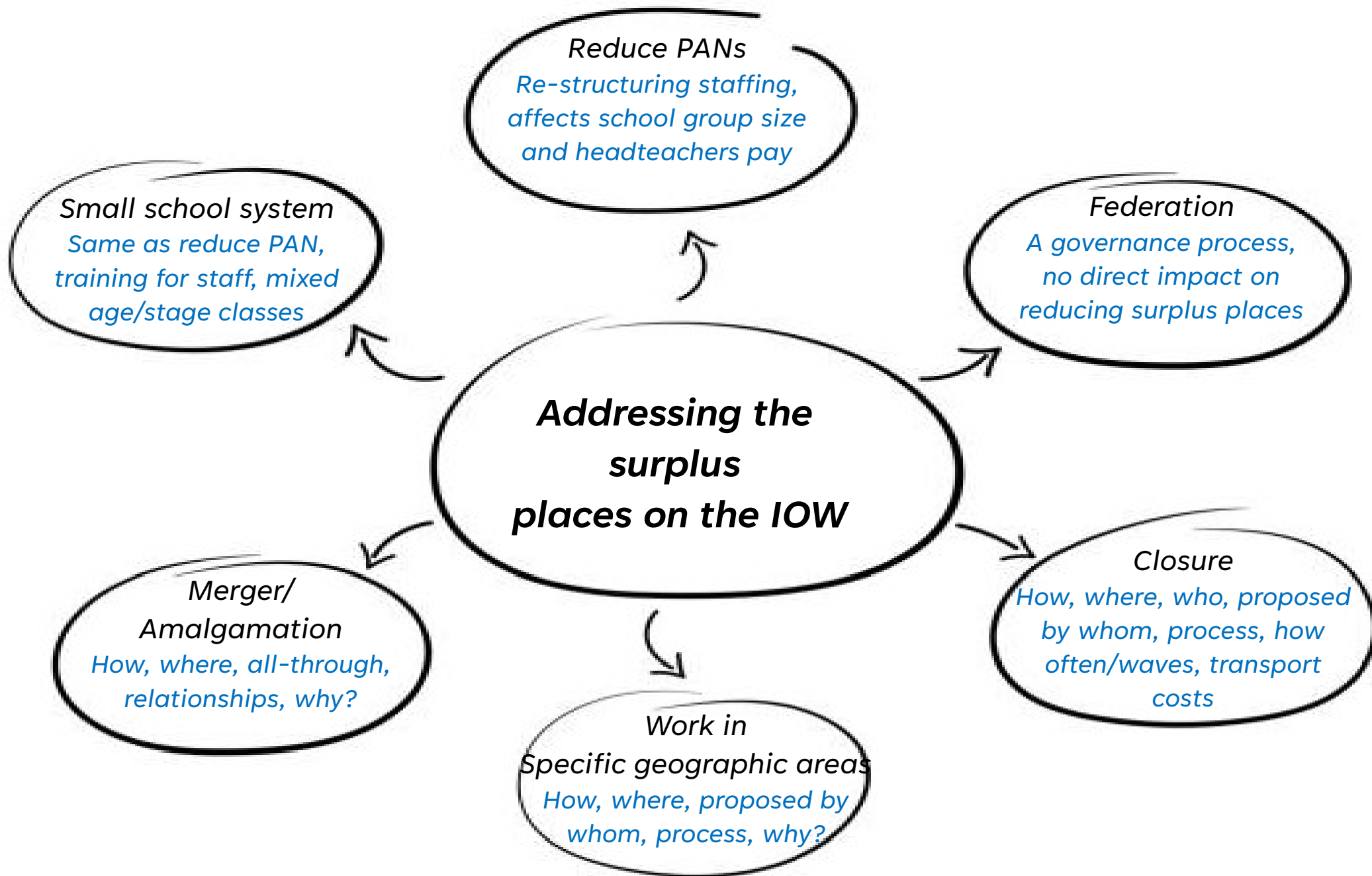
If the Council do this again, what **principles** should we apply, and agree with all parties before starting, including children? – **30 minutes**



Isle of Wight
Council

Break







Comfort Break



Rural schools on the Island

Arreton St George's Church of England (Aided) Primary School	Voluntary aided school	Rural hamlet and isolated dwellings
Bembridge Church of England Primary School	Voluntary controlled school	Rural town and fringe
Brading Church of England Controlled Primary School	Voluntary controlled school	Rural town and fringe
Brighstone Church of England Aided Primary School	Voluntary aided school	Rural village
Freshwater & Yarmouth Church of England Aided Primary School	Voluntary aided school	Rural town and fringe
Godshill Primary School	Community school	Rural village
Newchurch Primary School	Community school	Rural village
Niton Primary School	Community school	Rural town and fringe
Queensgate Foundation Primary	Foundation school	Rural town and fringe
Shalfleet Church of England Primary School	Voluntary controlled school	Rural hamlet and isolated dwellings
St Helens Primary School	Community school	Rural town and fringe
St Saviour's Catholic Primary School	Voluntary aided school	Rural town and fringe
Wootton Community Primary School	Community school	Rural town and fringe
Wroxall Primary School	Community school	Rural town and fringe

As our school shrink, what do we need to consider...

- 🏫 Our communities prefer local schools. However...
- 🏫 Movement of pupils (in year admissions) and the impact on school budgets
- 🏫 As schools shrink, we need to support teachers with adapting teaching approaches, to adjust to teaching mixed age/stage teaching
- 🏫 As schools shrink, their group size reduces, are governors going to review their staffing structure, including headteacher pay range, deputy/assistants pay and the highest paid teacher(s)?

As our school shrink, what do we need to consider...

Where Isle of Wight schools are in terms of group size*

Group Size	Salary	Schools
1	£56,316 - £74,926	ARRETON ST GEORGE'S CE PRIMARY BRADING C.E. PRIMARY BRIGHSTONE CE PRIMARY ST HELENS PRIMARY SCHOOL
2	£59,167 - £80,634	BEMBRIDGE C OF E PRIMARY BINSTEAD PRIMARY BROADLEA PRIMARY SCHOOL DOVER PARK PRIMARY HOLY CROSS CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL OAKFIELD C OF E PRIMARY SUMMERFIELDS PRIMARY WOOTTON COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL WROXALL PRIMARY SCHOOL
3	£63,815 - £86,783	GURNARD PRIMARY HAYLANDS PRIMARY HUNNYHILL PRIMARY SCHOOL NINE ACRES PRIMARY QUEENSGATE FOUNDATION PRIMARY GODSHILL PRIMARY & BARTON PRIMARY SCHOOL (Federation) NETTLESTONE PRIMARY & NEWCHURCH PRIMARY (Federation) ST BONIFACE (Federation) FRESHWATER & YARMOUTH & SHALFLEET CE PRIMARYS (Federation)
4	£68,586 - £93,400	CARISBROOKE C OF E PRIMARY & NEWPORT C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL (Federation) GREENMOUNT PRIMARY & GATTEN AND LAKE COUNTY PRIMARY (Federation)
5	£75,675 - £103,010	
6	£81,441 - £113,624	
7	£87,651 - £125,263	
8	£96,673 - £138,265	

*As of summer census 2025

Addressing the high number of surplus places

Other thoughts...

- 🚀 *Criteria/matrix*
- 🚀 *If closure, in what areas? What are the transport implications*
- 🚀 *Cllrs*
- 🚀 *Support for schools*
- 🚀 *Support for staff*
- 🚀 *Once named, managing pupils leaving*
- 🚀 *Managing the public and press*
- 🚀 *Managing our communities - Social media?*
- 🚀 *Resources needed*

Addressing the high number of surplus places

Criteria/matrix – what
would this look this?





Isle of Wight
Council

Break



What else...

What would you do?



Surplus Places Options Workshop

Tuesday 9 September 2025

Session One

13 ATTENDEES

What do you think the Council got wrong?

- Council members not informed enough to understand the guidance and therefore challenge misinformation officers were giving and make accurate decisions.
- Giving people the impression that they could influence/decide a criteria. It is set in opening and closing schools' guidance and must just be followed. If schools that are in locations that are surplus to requirement are not closed first, there will always be reason for legal contest.
- All schools need to agree as such to everything throughout this process.
- No discussions of planning or strategic thought of options additional to closure which is part of the "opening/closing and statutory guidance".
- Opening and closing schools' guidance not legally followed.
- Not thinking about a sustainable school system from the start, and because of this it has greatly affected the whole Island system financially.
- Using criteria that was not transparent and clear. This was reflected by the number of FOIs/OSA report.
- Not all meetings/events were recorded/minuted centrally.
- The closure of X was possible because other local schools could accommodate/had space for these displaced children. How then has the Council justified spending huge sums of money 'expanding' a different local school when spaces existed in the area? This has set a very bad precedent moving forwards because all families could argue this point and the IOW Council did not follow process so have created an unnecessary and contentious situation moving forward.
- Significant procedural flaws in all aspects of statutory guidance, as evidenced in OSA report.
- Everything was rushed!
- Admissions needs to be worked out.
- Diocese and Governors need to be involved fully from the start.
- Council approach led to very stressful cabinet meetings. Council members being misled – no opportunity for schools to voice correct information.
- It did not include an experienced external consultant.
- Headteachers not given opportunity to discuss openly and transparent.
- Every paper for every school at every point in the process contained inaccurate and conflicting data. Including sharing data that was not officers to share, which led to misled responses to the consultation. As evidenced in OSA report.
- Consultation was term used when in fact it was the representation stage.
- Not engaging with Academy trusts/Diocese.
- Start process earlier with schools not early September.
- No guidance on how to manage budget despite asking for advice.
- "Politics".
- Waste of resources when schools closed. Other schools not contacted to see if there was a need.
- Highly skilled staff not considered for retention.
- Jobs and process needs to be thought through and planned, all schools onboard.
- Stop wholesale movement of children until "finally" named – this has decimated previously healthy schools and budgets.
- Staff made to feel their performance was lacking and as though they were "the enemy".
- Headteachers made to feel isolated. Big divide on Island not previously there.
- Redundancy across Island offered too late in process for proper consideration.
- Done to us – not with us.

- More complicated than needed.
- Ofsted after a year of intense stress and bereavement inappropriate and unfair.
- Not all schools even in July 25 aware of need to close schools. Schools still saying they were expanding.
- Underestimated work involved, e.g. not enough HR staff to close schools or work with Headteachers named.
- All reports not cut and pasted and are reflective of individuals.
- Grammatical errors in report.
- Less 'waffle' with communication with public – consider less but more concise information – to the point.
- Build trust – not transparent and clear criteria for reasons in particular to share with parents/community.
- Policial implications (certain schools were 'Councillors/local members' children attend!!)
- Must now react from lessons learnt! (Network with Headteachers that went through process to ensure that Headteachers do not experience the same).
- Councillors need to be involved from start – key principles – key criteria. Their involvement from the start.
- Change in Academies and different messages given.
- Headteachers/Governors' thoughts asked – e.g. exploration of federating some schools – this could/maybe have helped.
- Some unfortunate messages 'leaked' from staff working in Council. 'Mixed' messages (information shared differed from Councillors to Headteachers).
- Need consistency for support/wellbeing – ensure support in place – stick to 'what' say you're going to do.
- Needed to look at key areas of the Island – geographical.
- Initially not all officers had enough local knowledge and understanding.
- Ensure lessons taken from Schools Adjudicator report.
- Very first workshops/information sessions did not get joined visibly enough with outcomes (pubic did not get it).
- Some incorrect information given – Academies.
- Clarity of criteria – weighting.
- Media coverage / PR.
- Make sure all parents aware prior – short/sharp/drip-fed. How to reach those who are harder to reach?
- More clarity around reason for closure compared to others.
- Do Diocese need more engagement?
- Point out the negatives/issues currently, and the positives once the process has been completed.
- Councillors need to think of the bigger picture rather than votes.
- Visits to Parish Councils to engagement/understanding.
- Longer engagement period – all stakeholders.
- Set out clear rational of factors considered to ensure all aware of the fair/consistent approach.
- What is criteria? All areas judged by same criteria. Rationale – post code, areas?
- Avoid summer holidays.
- Impact of social media.
- Wider community do not understand the need to close schools. Mindset is still linked to rural village schools.
- Lack of understanding of financial implications.
- People do not read full document – easy read version?
- Most schools' cohort is across Island – transport/safe walking routes etc.
- Consider of sensitivities around expansion of specialist provision alongside SPP.

- Cluster meetings for Headteachers in areas identified for potential closure.
- Support for staff redeployment.
- Headteachers who have experienced closure share experience with Headteacher groups and share the positives after the process.
- Amount of false news/levels of personal abuse directed at individuals: link to wider engagement/clarity of criteria.
- Full engagement and acceptance of decisions/process.
- Managing conflict communities/Councillors' decision making

If the Council do this again, what principles should we apply, and agree with all parties before starting, including children?

- Principles – non set previously.
- HT standards/Nolan principles.
- Openness.
- Transparency.
- Honesty.
- Respect.
- Professionalism.
- Application of consistent criteria. Area X school A&B identified, visits schools and consult about process with stakeholders – what are expectations/timescales?
- How do we increase engagement of stakeholders to gain a majority view rather than minority who shouts loudest?
- Meetings with individual families. Gain voice of all.
- Planned in year transfer for pupils identified for school closure – alleviate anxiety, secure places, reduce mass exodus, provide certainty for families.
- Staff not voicing on social media.
- Professionalism.
- Honesty.
- Fact based.
- Involving children in bigger picture.
- Mutual respect.
- Respect, transparency, kindness, professionalism.
- Not personal.
- What is agreed, needs to be stuck to – goal posts not changed.
- Apologise when you need to.
- Children involved from the start.
- Same criteria for every school.
- Process led by external individual/team.
- Follow the statutory guidance – to make sure it is not a significantly flawed process.
- All schools sign up to everything: such as whole Island agreement on:
 - Redundancy (voluntary)
 - Recruitment (frozen from beginning)
 - Admissions
 - All saying the same message
- All Schools supporting each other.
- Everything genuinely open and transparent.
- LA to stay professional and not personal.
- Use an experienced external consultant who has been successful in another LA in this process (Martin Goff) – non-negotiable.

- Ensure the LA has the capacity to deliver the process (HR/transition/finance/legal/property management).

Addressing the surplus places on the IOW - Options

- Ultimate goal – shared vision.
- Working in geographical areas – consider each option for individual areas, e.g. reduce sites/small schools – specific to area.
- Explore federation: shared resources, including staff – financial positives, staff development opportunities.
- Future leadership aspiration 10 years' time?
- Governance.
- Sharing resources/policies/ideas – old cluster working more collaboration between schools.
- Consultant to process/facilitate public meeting and manage disorderly conduct.
- Do Councillors have a vision/appetite to explore all options?
- Councillors – visit to schools and talk to Headteachers.
- Cost of buildings and running of these.
- PAN – look at these.
- When/if determining closure criteria – compare schools with the same PANs to determine percentage of surplus places – cannot compare PANs of 15 to 25/30.
- Consider budget deficits – context.
- Understand context of each school – not one size fits all.
- Consider geographical areas – context of these, where do children live, which schools are in the area, transport links.
- Sharing resources – human and physical.
- Federation.
- Mergers.
- Reduced PANs of larger schools.
- Full closures and implement “Titan Schools”.
- Executive Head model.
- Follow the statutory guidance.
- Review geographical areas (based on dot maps) – minimum 4 schools, maximum 10 schools (legal requirement).
- SEN developments – RP/special schools.
- All Headteachers need training on opening and closing statutory guidance.
- Executive Headteachers/Headteachers need to be involved with Council members, Diocesan, Academy trusts until it is really clear on where the Island needs to go on ‘opening and closing’ schools to make it financially viable.
- It needs a clear financial plan (this was not there in the flawed process).

Criteria and Matrix – what would this look like?

- Main priorities – quality of education will develop over time.
 - Parental preference.
 - Locality of pupils.
 - Proximity of schools.
- Quality of education – aware becomes subjective – Ofsted.
- Buildings.
- Does it work closing schools on mass?

- Different criteria/remit for each school (is it possible to have 'one size fits all'?)
- Needs to be completed by external advisors.
- Difficult for Headteachers to write criteria as we can 'tweak' this to not include our school! (And we do not want to be continually told 'we wanted this'!!!)
- Do not think there can be 'one size fits all'.
- However, clear transparency and reasons clear so that everyone knows why specific school is chosen.
- Difficult to apply specific criteria due to different cohorts – PP/FSM/SEND etc, e.g. quality of education.
- Geographical area.
- Number of places required in each area – idea of numbers to close in each area.
- Number on roll.
- Future projections.
- Out of area placed pupils taking into account parental preference – which schools are consistently meeting PAN.
- Buildings – condition/capacity.
- Faith schools – engagement.
- Keeping it simple.
- It has to be undertaken by an experienced independent consultant.
- All meetings must be minuted.
- Everything must be transparent.
- Do not confuse 'opening and closing' schools' criteria with 'closing schools of concern' – avoid using standards/Ofsted in addressing surplus places.
- We need to be clear about SEN.
- Ensure data is updated along the way – keep talking to schools.
- Diocesan/academy involvement.
- Weighted criteria for each geographical area – shared.
- All schools included in the criteria and it has to be transparent.

What would you do?

- An experienced independent consultant.
- Involve everybody from the outset.
- Same messages going out to all schools and ensure all same messages delivered.
- Everybody following it together all aspects admissions, redundancy etc.
- Ensure capacity.
- Schools need their own independent HR and legal advice during the process is essential. The SLA with IOW Council is a conflict of interest when schools do not agree/want to challenge/question and yet cannot get an independent view.
- Everything transparent. Every meeting minuted and shared.
- Get external advisor/officer/lead etc to run/lead the process.
- 'Step' away from emotional context/not personal.
- Merge local schools to create larger school.
- Consider addressing SEND need in mainstream which would also impact spaces.
- Consider a scoring system – stick to it – no ambiguity so not open to opinion – just FACTS.
 - e.g. budget stability
 - Staff turnover
 - Results (over time)
 - Ofsted
 - Building

- (Over time as things change)
- PR campaign – target everyone with short sharp messages.
- Special schools created – find out which staff would already be interested? (Reduce redundancies).
- Communicate to Councillors and the wider community about the impact of lack of funding on workload, wellbeing and outcomes.
- Get an independent external professional to take a lead on the process.
- Ask the question: are there any schools who would want to close/federate/amalgamate?

Surplus Places Options Workshop

Tuesday 9 September 2025

Session Two

13 ATTENDEES

What do you think the Council got wrong?

- Looking at alternatives to school closure.
- Being mindful of the needs of the community – particularly ‘deprived’ areas.
- Meaningful consultation to address all issues. Aware that not all parents will get involved and they need to be kept informed.
- Processes did not appear to be followed.
- Considering preschool needs locally.
- Clearer accountability for decisions needed (how arrived at).
- Being honest with everyone.
- ‘Alternative’ schools not thought through enough.
- Encouraging schools (rural) to work together for solution.
- Process flawed from the outset.
- Criteria for closure not applied equally across all schools.
- Diocese views not properly listened to.
- Some Councillors closed minded – not open to dialogue.
- Promises made to parents were not kept (not disrupting education further).
- Council needed to be open to more ideas. Councillors needed to be better informed.
- Following the outcome no meaningful acknowledgement of the mistakes made/damage caused.
- “Done to” not “done with” – lack of engagement with Headteachers/Governing Bodies.
- Lack of historic recognition of previous LA documents relating to school mergers.
- Due diligence regarding land ownership not done: a letter was found re Godshill.
- Did not follow correct DfE guidance for closing schools as highlighted by Schools Adjudicator.
- Data wrong (i.e. Arreton’s PAN incorrect).
- Did not involve Diocese enough.
- Did not look at federations as an option.
- Data accuracy and completeness.
- Final decision by full Council not committee as impacts whole Island.
- Lack of clarity in communications and engagement – all stakeholders, whole community, parents understanding of problem – what the issue is and why doing nothing is not an option – financial, quality of education, national trend not just an IOW issue.
- Diocesan engagement and use of land/buildings.
- Approach progress through lens of finance vs impact on quality of education.
- Did not show their workings, e.g. alternative options considered, clear selection criteria, monetary impact – business case.
- Guidance for closing schools not followed.
- Due process re legal requirements – there were procedural failings!
- Muddled waters by references to SEN provision requirements when not directly related.
- Lack of clarity on criteria.
- Community interest – politicians, residents, churches, Diocese.
- Urban vs rural.
- Culture – what sort of schools do we want?
- Academies – where are they in the process?
- Financial – empty seats, empty buildings implications.

- Agree the broad points first, then details. Relationships/trust.

If the Council do this again, what principles should we apply, and agree with all parties before starting, including children?

- Engage honestly 2-way communication.
- Consult children using appropriate language – give them an opportunity to shape their future.
- Clear process giving criteria for next steps – and following it.
- Following DfE guidance and procedures correctly.
- Transparent in all matters.
- Using meeting times for discussion and decisions – not discussing outside.
- Being able to trust Councillors and LA officers.
- Respect on both sides – clear behaviour protocols.
- Local community engagement.
- Listening respectfully to others' views.
- Not dismissing a viewpoint because you do not agree with it (open-minded).
- No deals done behind the scenes.
- Set out the benefits first – then explain how you will achieve it.
- Do the messages need to be clearer/stronger to start with?
- "IOW children have worst exam results in Britain" ... is this what you want?
- Address concerns from the start (or anticipated concerns).
- Get Councillors onboard from the start – educating Councillors / MPs on severity of situation and the need for them to support change.
- Identify "change champions" to ensure messages on point/consistent.
- Clarity of messages.
- Re-establishing trust: could be an independent body brought in to review and put forward a new proposal.
- Look at local elections timings and avoid clashes!!
- What is the definition of a successful school in terms of outcomes for children on the Island (link to education strategy).
- All schools need to be included in the process including academies.
- Represent the best interests of all Island children – same capability and aspiration as children nationally.
- Decision makers take responsibility, e.g. Councillors vs deferring to officers.
- Practicality matters!
- Think outside the box: what have other Council's done to address this same issue? Home education (strategy?)
- Embrace diversity.
- What schools do we need? Types, variety.
- Financial viability.
- Governorship.
- Is federation a better option?
- What are the tipping points?

Addressing the surplus places on the IOW - Options

- Academisation.
- Types of school, e.g. faith, academy, community.
- Small school system – income streams.

- Business partnerships: Chamber of Commerce, Solent Enterprise, Tourism Visit IOW. To attract families to IW, incentivise businesses focus industries – remote working, relocation packages, myth busting. Public services availability – NHS dentists/GPs.
- Merger amalgamation.
- Utilise schools to support SEN provision within existing school structure mainstream.
- Work in geographic areas – how defined and purpose of area boundaries.
- Clear and timely investment in transport infrastructure especially school age children: bus passes, cost of Solent travel.
- Federation – soft federations temporary collaboration – shared resources: fractional SL roles.
- Closure.
- Reduce PANs.
- Homeschooling.
- Diocese to help out.
- Amalgamation/federations – can help temporarily. Long term vision needed.
- Use building to better meet needs of SEND, LAC pupil premiums.
- Focus on high quality leadership.
- Fresh ideas.
- Focus on high quality Governors.
- Admissions process: return to a strict catchment area system. Would this drive people into different schools?
- Look at what other Islands are doing.
- Close everything and start again.
- Look for early retirement/voluntary redundancy headteachers.
- Merger/amalgamation schools can determine their own future for a good outcome.
- Do not forget importance of pre-schools.
- Consider federation as long term. It could be key to reducing surplus places.
- Collaboration is key.
- SEND provision needs to be considered.
- Schools sharing staffing arrangements (informal) – reduces costs.
- Increasing employment opportunities – attracting more families to Island.
- Meeting needs of local communities.
- Ensuring faith schools remain represented.
- Making sure good transport links in place to support families and schools (including off Island).

Criteria and Matrix – what would this look like?

- Viability – financial, size, people living in the area.
- Ofsted rating / school improvement
- Position – geography.
- Quality of governorship.
- Quality of leadership.
- Vulnerable – transition plans.
- Re-purposing buildings.
- Financial viability / management.
- Outcomes.
- Percentage surplus places and ongoing likely trend.
- Where pupils are coming from: how many are walking / school transport users etc.
- Secondary destination.
- Building condition.
- Percentage of SEND / FSM / PP.

- Environmental sustainability.
- 'Island Development Plan' for future housing development etc.
- Transport links (existing).
- Community value/impact.
- Population growth – housing developments, proportion 2nd homes.
- Number of schools in area and capacity.
- Influence of feeder schools into secondary schools.
- Facilities/buildings: maintenance, grounds, carbon neutral targets, future use, current capacity, land/ownership.
- Where children live in relation to school – transport links, catchment areas.
- Attainment Ofsted grading progress – outcomes.
- Faith/church schools.
- Budget/finances.
- Needs of children and community – cannot be met elsewhere (deprivation).
- Expertise in school (SEND).
- Budgets – managing finances.
- Faith schools – access.
- SEND provision resource class (expertise).
- Quality of education – not necessarily data driven.
- What the school delivers to its children and communities - support and services for children and families, wrap around care, breakfast clubs.
- If school is named for closure being clear on alternative provision and making sure it meets the needs.
- Social mobility – not necessarily how close families are in proximity to schools.
- Age and condition of building – investing in infrastructure.
- Proximity to other schools – how far would children need to travel to next nearest school?

What would you do?

- Addressing high percentage of schools operating with deficit budgets.
- Simplifying the funding formula (national issue).
- Voluntary redundancies.
- Working together collaboration.
- Travel considerations including off the Island.
- Learn from previous mistakes.
- Have all stakeholders been identified and engaged appropriately?
- What would the ideal school system look like – re-engineer from scratch – think tank.
- Government policy.
- Impartial maker – external and not emotionally involved.
- Innovative and creative mindset.
- Honesty and transparency.
- Holistic approach (not just education), X – stakeholder collaboration.
- Influence and learning from other areas in country.
- Is the strategy aspirational and ambitions enough?
- Engage, engage, engage.
- Do not rush albeit do not dither either!
- Identify stakeholders from the beginning and get them onboard.
- Identify champions early and utilise them.

- Work with the Diocese from the beginning and make use of their knowledge /influence /experience.
- MPs involved from the start.
- Keep holding sessions like this.
- Keep checking in with us.

Surplus Places Options Workshop

Tuesday 9 September 2025

Session Three

18 ATTENDEES

What do you think the Council got wrong?

- Confusion – how schools were chosen.
- No scoring matrix.
- * Lack of transparency.
- Data Errors.
- Diocese.
- Too many, too quick to manage.
- * Communications issues – follow up stakeholders meeting, poor support, reacting to naming.
- * Not including academies.
- Budget implications if named.
- Lack of officer knowledge of schools chosen – impact on the community
- Reducing PANs to help.
- Prejudice against rural “small schools”.
- Social workers/staff/headteacher should be allowed to be involved throughout any or all of the process.
- Publishing estate re-use!
- Conflict of interest. Decision making staff with a bias to specific schools.
- Those with faith preference should be offered a faith alternative. Same with non-faith. Like for like alternatives offered.
- * *Top 3*
- Arrogant approach.
- No clear/comparable or transparent matrix with all schools included.
- Council often referred to an out of date and out of context headteachers’ letter.
- Consultation paper process was not fair – could be anonymous which opened up for skewed results and open to abuse.
- No listening to community suggestions or options, e.g. merging schools.
- Too many at same time. 6 schools were too many.
- No clear strategy – parents could not see the end picture.
- Planning areas referred to were very out of date.
- Unclear as to how Academies were or were not involved in the process.
- Leaders of the process did not have a successful outcome, are they competent to do it again?
- Drop-in sessions pre-process was not clear and marketed loudly enough.
- Early meetings did not allow for all questions to be answered – leaving parents and staff with unanswered questions/confusion and anger – no preparation from Council.
- Incorrect data.
- Lead Councillor gave us no confidence.
- Early consultation meetings were deemed by the local authority to have the opportunity for the communities of the individual proposed closure schools when those communities did not have opportunity to discuss their individual schools’ case prior to announcement.
- Some people were not allowed to ask questions, e.g. only parents could ask.
- Textbook answers and duplication essay style response to our questions – which did not take into account emotion of the parent.
- No children’s voices (Council could not prove that these sessions were done and done fairly).
- Some schools voluntarily reduced their PAN, but this was not taken into consideration.
- Council not given adequate prep time to respond to papers and questions.
- Timescale too rushed – not enough time to plan and settle for children/staff or schools.

- No clear approach for where displaced children would be allocated, no idea for siblings etc and could not guarantee places together – causing panic and parents moved children before decisions were made.
- Alternative schools named in documents were not aware/not equipped and also not prepared to take in extra kids.
- Became a popularity contest in terms of how many petition signatures and how many consultations are submitted per school.
- Involve the area Councils/Parish Councils in consultation process.
- Allocating children to their nearest school which may not be parent choice, may want child to be near work or based on faith.
- Home-schooled community was not discussed or considered – a plan to reintegrate those children back into school would fill some places.
- Public question time restricted. Questions where the person was not present were not read out or published – no transparency.
- Lack of transparency – no minutes for decision meetings.
- Redundancy and redeployment were not planned or clear.
- No plan to help parents once reallocated, e.g. new uniforms.
- Did not learn from previous mergers/closures which had happened before.
- Media management.
- Political element.
- Clearer political mandate.
- Better engagement/collaboration with stakeholders.
- Equal – Academy – last minute news not included.
- JR needs taking into consideration.
- Use of buildings in the future.
- Transparency on the financial forecasting vs viability for the general public to understand.
- General communication (messaging and terminology).
- The positives (for general public).
- Not being listened to! (Everyone).
- Timeline.

If the Council do this again, what principles should we apply, and agree with all parties before starting, including children?

- Councillors should not be responding or posting comments on social media about individual schools or the process. Also, to not argue with the public.
- Transparency in all meetings. Make sure minutes for all meetings are kept.
- Leadership team/Councillors to be held accountable for their decisions. Need to be able to answer questions based on their decisions or comments.
- Involve children but make sure it is a broad and fair pool of children.
- “These principles” respect etc should be a given/obvious based on the roles we have signed up to.
- Learn and adapt if you are challenged.
- Own mistakes and accept some parts may have been done wrong.
- Not set time limits on voices/questions/concerns – this will reduce frustration and in turn provide a calmer experience all round.
- Be fair – make sure all schools are given the same information, e.g. child will be provided taxis, but other schools told buses. This causes unnecessary arguments and questions.
- If a leader/team member is not able to follow what is needed, then they should not be involved.
- By doing this it will help to hold every part of local government to account even in the face of inappropriate legal advice.

- Equal voices – everyone should be able to speak despite role or position.
- Children at heart of everything we do.
- Get it right at the beginning.
- Be transparent at all times.
- It is a problem for all of us.
- Everyone needs to see the bigger picture.
- Integrity and honesty of all parties in actions.
- Clear communications.
- Be professional.
- Mutual respect.
- Protecting wellbeing (mental health).
- Upskilling of Governors on Island.
- Codes of Conduct – professional
- 4 x forms of principles for each stakeholder – IOW Council staff (leaders & Councillors), school staff, Governors, young people/students – same could apply to all, but some would be different.
 - 1 = *highest impact*, 4 = *lowest impact*.
 - Council staff – terms of reference/code of conduct, sign off/agree at all points of the process. ‘Sign’ to agree to remain fully committed to each step. 4 = impact.
 - School staff – as above. 2 = impact.
 - Governors – as above. 3 = impact.
 - Young People – as above. To be kept informed. Voices heard (a change to input). 1 = impact.
- Communication for all at key points.
- Communicate with as much time as possible.
- Aggregate all not just top down.
- Put the child’s future potential at the heart of our discussions.
- Transparency.
- Clarity.
- Honesty/true.
- Respect.
- Strategy lead.

Addressing the surplus places on the IOW - Options

- Closure – managed correctly.
- Geography – whole Island.
- Primary or secondary – geographical, secondary feeders?
- More all through.
- Merge of appropriate schools.
- Academisation links.
- Estates management.
- Commercialisation.
- Restructures.
- Homeschooling community – how do we get these children back into the school places. There are approximately 600 home-schooled who could fill the empty spaces. Also, a plan to stop more children from leaving school system.

- SEND department in schools – would also relate to home schools. Some children may stay in school if there were appropriate SEND facilities.
- Do not let schools go over their PAN.
- Reduce PAN across schools to spread school numbers across schools.
- Merging schools would feel less drastic – parents would know where the child would be going, friends stay together, and school identity would blend rather than closing one school and reallocating them to another. It would mean less questions about siblings/travel etc.
- Federate/merge/group schools to share resources/staff/finances. Would also be a benefit as could offer more specialist teachers and subjects.
- Children joining a school mid-year should be funded from day one not the next year regardless of why they have joined.
- Trial no fines for holidays to see if this affects the home educated community. Some may come back to school if they are allowed to take term time holidays.
- Find out why people have “fallen out of love with school education”.
- Not advertise for more headteachers but have heads take on multiple schools which then have a leader. Would cost the school less.
- Look at schools in more urban areas – may be easier to transport them out of large towns/better transport options and send them to the more rural schools to fill spaces as there are a lot in the urban (town) which could be spread.
- Listen to community/school suggestions.
- Only look at one to two schools. See how that works and how the process goes. Then re-evaluate in a few years and as needed look again.
- Synergies for shared services/resources – transport, shared spaces, finance, staff, catering, buying, IT – savings on running cost.
- Academies – primary only or primary/secondary combo.
- Entice more families to the Island – economic incentives – what’s the number you need?

Criteria and Matrix – what would this look like?

- State of buildings.
- Maintenance costs of premises.
- Is building fit for purpose/outdoor spaces?
- Well managed financially.
- Outcomes over time.
- “Behaviour” and exclusions.
- Safe “walking” to school routes.
- Transport links.
- SEND consideration/needs met.
- “RAG” ratings not scoring.
- Simple process.
- Pragmatic.
- Rural school act needs to be followed / adhered to.
- Points system for the criteria.
- Do not include results table as these can be skewed very quickly on a small number of children.
- Is the school federated/shared Head? Does the school share resources etc to try and reduce their expenditure already (increase federations)?
- Has the school previously looked at trying to help their own and LA finances by voluntarily reducing PAN, therefore, voluntarily dropping their own funding by receiving less children.
- Distance to the nearest school with enough places to take in those children.
- Transport costs

- Could any schools be merged instead and still house all the children from both schools?
- Parental preference taken into account - not look at how many children live near a school because there is a preference to travel to another – cannot use that in a matrix.
- Once matrix is done, e.g. based on points. The bottom scoring will be looked at in a more detail – maybe another matrix. But would be more of a manual/human decision at the end, e.g. begin with matrix to narrow it down/rule out the ‘top’ schools.
- Points to raise – look at re-implementing catchment areas (primary schools) – may need to be phased back in.
- Recruitment /jobs.
- Quality of education/Ofsted.
- Site/buildings/grounds – eco buildings?
- Location – different across the Island.
- Nursery/preschools.
- Faith.
- Geography vs where a young person lives.
- Ofsted: (progress/movement)
- Upkeep/threshold: running cost of school sites.

What would you do?

- Explain to everyone the effect of doing nothing on the pupils.
- Be imaginative and brave.
- Market the message everywhere.
- Be open to change – be supported to change.
- Spend to save.
- Start with level playing field.
- Think children first!
- Independent external advice.
- Name all schools at start.
- Cost benefit analysis – effects of closing each school.
- Independent ‘leader’ / organisation (non-Island).
- Mixed model.
- Clear leadership – Councillor lead.
- Better stakeholder collaboration.
- Expanding federations to strengthen schools, reduce costs and pool resources.
- Practical deadlines – not in school holidays.
- Thorough preparation of a well thought out strategy before process starts.
- Smaller detailed steps.
- Clear timeline.
- Staff aware before public – timing of announcements.
- Be honest with public.
- Staff wellbeing – they need clear detail about their options etc.
- Union involvement for teachers.
- Inappropriate offer of limited faith leaders.
- To see the Council’s findings /thoughts about the last process.
- Figures were updated prior to meetings.
- Questions answered promptly before next meeting, e.g. some scrutiny questions were still unanswered by next meeting, so could not be followed up.

- Not taken into account: data used could be hugely skewed by just one child in a small year group. One child struggling could affect the school results table.
- Research school – has there been any legal limitations placed previously.
- Academies to be included should they be forced to close/reduce PAN.
- Ask parents for alternative school choices early on to gauge where children may move to if their school closed – would give more accurate information for transport costs and proposed issues which were all hypothetical.
- Do it once (future proofing).
- Look at models in other areas across the country (transport – water, rail, road, staggered starts/finishes)

Surplus Places Options Workshop
Tuesday 16 September 2025 (5pm -7pm)
Session Four - Online

20 ATTENDEES

What do you think the Council got wrong?

- Need to look at the assets that we have e.g. best schools (fabric) to keep and then fill with different school communities.
- The council did not listen well enough to suggestions from communities and schools
- The council made decisions centrally and then went out to consult on those decisions, rather than consulting on how to make those decisions.
- There were many options not considered fully, such as amalgamating schools.
- Should the closure matrix be built around the vision of the Education Strategy? How do we implement that vision recognizing the impact of the fabric of the buildings, the quality of education whilst maximising the impact of the budget
- Area specific opportunities for amalgamation. Case studies show that this can be very successful. It will not be the right for some areas but for the larger areas this may be better.
- Does faith have to be a barrier for joining schools together?
- Consider how other remote areas may have handled similar situation.
- Fully open, honest and transparent
- Clear criteria as to why schools are being identified
- Understand impact and that professionals need to follow principles
- Hold people to account to ensure consistency
- Clearer why schools are put into specific areas, if this is the case. - so that people understand criteria
- Consider impact on areas of deprivation.
- Not random targeting
- Consider schools' input/ideas,
- Consultation should be about criteria, so that everyone is agreed
- Joint decisions on criteria so that decisions are made on this basis.
- Encourage all to support process, as criteria is agreed and effective.
- Independent examiner to oversee process

- Difficult to involve children but consider impact on families, communities.
- Help parents and school community understand and feel part of the process.
- More care regarding decisions to close. More support regarding where children will go. Consider transport arrangements etc. More input from community
- Collateral damage - what can be put in place to reduce this?
- More support on how children will be transported to new school - worrying for parents
- will be exceptionally challenging however managed. Ensure understanding that schools have to close. Recognise that some people will be upset.
- Councillors should recognise that decisions are needed to address the situation for the Island. Solidarity
- Council elections affect process and decisions.

If the Council do this again, what principles should we apply, and agree with all parties before starting, including children?

- Managing curriculum and resource planning can cause additional pressure in smaller schools
- Need evidence of children achieving better and provision being better in 2-form entry.
- Everybody needs to be in the pot or it is not equitable.
- Can a matrix be applied fairly?
- If the DfE could not give example of when a matrix has been used well, were they able to share examples of good practise in different local authorities using other systems?
- Is a blended approach - e.g. Can it be some amalgamation be considered as well as closure? The capacity for the schools to continue to be successful financially - including transport and fabric of buildings as well as the quality of the education?

Addressing the surplus places on the IOW - Options

- Look at what provision is available for children at each school - fundamental purpose is to make best provision for all children
- Which provides better education experience - small schools or larger schools?
- What are advantages and disadvantages of small schools?
- Impact on outcomes is already in mix and affecting children as well as in secondary schools

- Identify where education provision is going wrong KS2 or thereafter? Needs professional input
- Information to be shared to enable co-creation of criteria
- Do children in 2-form entry achieve better than 1-form entry (or lower)?
- Mixed classes can be beneficial in some ways - younger children learn from older.

Criteria and Matrix – what would this look like?

- Consider what is needed for all children and then look at schools to create opportunities. Not Ofsted vs Ofsted etc but, what is needed for all children
- Research reasons for parental choice, work, family support, facilities offered by school etc
- Process should be professionally co-created by those affected
- Partnership and collaboration - schools working together. Fair process for all children

What would you do?

- Standard practice in some areas to co-create criteria. Careful analysis to catch and steer the way forward. Not easy but effective.
- Opportunities to help schools to collaborate either informally or formally in ways that would help schools to remain in communities
- Research what children would lose if a school closes
- Tips and ideas from other LAs?
- In some areas keep link with pre-schools so that children transition more easily.
- Keep younger children closer to home so they don't have to travel (i.e. YR - KS1 and pre-school as satellite to main school)