



The Midhurst Society

Charity number 268565

1 Gilbert Hannam Close, Midhurst, GU29 9FY

01730-815238

To 'Have your Say' @ WestSussexGov.co.uk

Response dated 15 October 2019

Re: Proposed reorganisation of rural and small schools in West Sussex consultation

We are disappointed to see that once again WSCC is looking at the economic case for closing or merging some of our rural schools. We are particularly concerned about Stedham School, which is in our area of activity.

We are aware of the tremendous strain felt by WSCC as budgets get pruned year after year, but village life, such a vibrant aspect of West Sussex, is not just about economies of scale. Church, pub, shop, post office, and school: these institutions give heart to a village. If we lose them the local community suffers, and there is a knock-on effect on the wider community.

In a world-wide survey conducted by OECD in 2013 it was found that village schools in the UK perform better than urban schools. Britain was ranked 30th out of 57 countries in terms of results achieved by urban-based pupils but were 10th in the world based on scores in rural areas.

Commenting on the report at the time, Alan Smithers, professor of education at Buckingham University, said:

“Rural schools often performed better because they had a more settled pupil population. In cities, parents get a choice between lots of schools and word quickly gets round that school A is good and school B struggles, which often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy and leads to a very socially-segregated system. In a rural setting, the school is geared towards the whole range of abilities, interests and aspirations and often does better across the board.”

We have been inundated by messages of support from parents and past pupils. In light of the recent announcement of additional funding £7.1bn by Central Government we urge you to leave Stedham School open.

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