Prescribed Information; 6 November 2026

Hampshire County Council

Statutory Proposal to discontinue The Clere School with effect from 31 August 2027

This statutory proposal is published under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013.

1. Local Authority details

Hampshire County Council, Elizabeth II Court, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UQ

2. School details

Name	The Clere School
Type	Community School
Address	Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury, RG20 9HP
Age Range	11 - 16 years
Capacity	725 pupils: Published Admission Number: 145 places per year group Numbers on roll as of 2 November 2026: 221
Ofsted	Most recently published Ofsted section 5 inspection: 25 January 2025 Judgements; Quality of education: Requires Improvement Behaviour and attitudes: Inadequate Personal development: Requires Improvement Leadership and management: Inadequate The school received a further Section 5 Ofsted inspection in October 2026, the outcome of which has yet to be confirmed and published.

3. What changes are proposed by Hampshire County Council?

Hampshire County Council intends to discontinue (close) The Clere School with effect from 31 August 2027.

4. Evidence of demand

The Clere School is located in the rural village of Burghclere in the north-west of Hampshire, close to the border with West Berkshire. It is a 725-place secondary school for pupils aged 11-16 years (145 pupils per year group).

On 13 May 2026 the school's chair of governors on behalf of the governing body wrote to Hampshire County Council requesting that it initiate the statutory closure process, and undertake the required consultation/s, on the grounds of financial and educational unviability of the school. The initial non-statutory consultation ran from 4 September to 2 October 2026. Responses were considered in the 26 October report to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services, who approved proceeding to the statutory Public Notice stage.

The school has experienced a sustained decline in pupil numbers over a prolonged period. During the last ten years, pupil numbers have remained below 500, including periods when the school received positive Ofsted judgements. At the time of the January 2025 Ofsted inspection the school recorded 470 pupils on roll however as of the summer census, the school recorded only 366 pupils, of whom only 49% resided within the school's catchment area.

As of 3 September 2026 (the day before the non-statutory consultation was launched), the school had 290 pupils on roll against a capacity of 725 places, representing approximately 60% surplus capacity and leaving 435 places unfilled. As of 2 November 2026, pupil numbers had fallen further to 221.

The decline in pupil numbers reflects a combination of demographic change, lower primary-age cohorts progressing through the education system, established patterns of parental preference, anticipated housing growth, and also the impact of the school's fluctuating Ofsted judgements. Taken together, these factors indicate that future demand for places at The Clere School is expected to remain significantly below the school's capacity for the foreseeable future. This is reflected in both the forecast Year 7 intakes and longer-term pupil roll projections, which remain substantially below the level required to support a viable and sustainable secondary school of this size.

Hampshire County Council regularly produces pupil forecasts to support its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places. These forecasts are informed by a range of evidence, including historic pupil trends, live birth and health registration data, migration patterns, housing development and parental preference. The forecast number of Year 7 pupils at The Clere School has fallen significantly in recent years and is expected to remain low over the longer term. The table below sets out the Year 7 forecast for the school as of Spring 2026.

Academic Year	2023 /24	2024 /25	2025 /26	2026 /27	2027 /28	2028 /29	2029 /30	2030 /31	2031 /32
Yr 6 Population	158	137	118	136	138	116	125	120	107
Year 7 Forecast	**122**	**73**	**57**	**75**	**76**	**64**	**68**	**66**	**59**

Despite these projections, only 34 offers were taken up for Year 7 at the beginning of September 2026, 42 pupils below what was anticipated, with 290 pupils in total on roll for all year groups. This lower than forecast intake will have a further impact

on the longer-term forecast for the school. The table below demonstrates the impact the lower Year 7 pupil intake in September 2026 is forecast to have;

Academic Year	2023/ 24	2024/ 25	2025/ 26	2026/ 27	2027/ 28	2028/ 29	2029/ 30	2030/ 31	2031/ 32
Yr 6 Population	158	137	118	136	138	116	125	120	107
Updated Yr 7 forecast	***122***	***73***	***57***	***34***	***51***	***43***	***46***	***44***	***40***

In carrying out its sufficiency duty, Hampshire County Council generally plans on the basis that schools operate at around 95% of capacity, allowing a degree of flexibility for parental preference, in-year admissions and population movement. For a school with a capacity of 725 places, this would equate to approximately 689 pupils. The Clere School has not operated at this level for at least the last 10 years and current forecasts do not indicate a return to pupil numbers at, or close to, this level in the foreseeable future.

Housing growth forms an important part of the forecasting process and includes consideration of housing completions, sites with planning permission, committed developments and relevant allocations identified through adopted or emerging development plans, where appropriate. Expected rates of housing delivery and associated pupil yields are then applied when assessing future demand for school places.

Forecasts are based on the best evidence available at the time. Whilst they can take account of known and identified housing growth, they cannot reliably assume the delivery or timing of speculative developments or proposals that have not yet formally come forward. Future pupil demand is influenced not only by whether development proceeds, but also by factors such as planning timescales, build-out rates, occupation rates, and patterns of household movement.

Housing growth has been taken into account as part of the County Council's assessment of future demand for places at The Clere School. However, even when taking account of known housing development and anticipated growth, pupil numbers are not projected to return to a level that would support the long-term operation of a secondary school of this size. Consequently, available evidence does not indicate a return to pupil numbers sufficient to sustain the continued operation of a secondary school.

Schools are funded through the National Funding Formula, with the majority of funding allocated on the basis of pupil numbers. Sustained low pupil numbers therefore have a direct impact on the income available to support leadership, staffing, curriculum delivery and wider school operations. With low pupil numbers forecast over the next 5 to 10 years, based on the school's May 2026 budget submission, the projected deficit is expected to increase from **-£2,706,073** to **-£7,000,321** by 2028/29.

The low number of pupils directly reduces the funding available to the school. This presents leaders and governors with challenges around the effectiveness of leadership and management in addition to the workload and wellbeing of individual staff. There is insufficient budget to appoint the wide range of specialist teachers many schools have, and a number of staff are frequently acting solely and carry a broad range of roles teaching in single staff departments, with few parallel colleagues to work alongside. This results in there being limited capacity to respond to changing needs.

There is currently a significant risk to pupils' education and wellbeing should the current headteacher be absent or choose to resign. In light of the current challenges, it is unlikely that the school will be able to attract a suitable replacement. This will leave the school without stable leadership, creating uncertainty and disruption for pupils, and potentially compromising the continuity and quality of their learning experience.

At its most recent published Section 5 Ofsted inspection in January 2025, the Chief His Majesty's Inspector (HMI) considered that the school required significant improvement after having judged the school to be "inadequate" in Behaviours and Attitudes, and Leadership and Management, and "Requires Improvement" in both the Quality of Education and Personal Development judgement areas. The school received a further Section 5 Ofsted inspection in October 2026, the outcome of which has yet to be confirmed and published.

Prior to, and following, the January 2025 Ofsted judgement, Hampshire County Council provided significant support to The Clere School through Hampshire Improvement and Advisory Service (HIAS), Education Finance Services (EFS), Education People Services (EPS) and wider Children's Services teams. Following the Ofsted judgement, The Hurst School also provided significant support to The Clere School, with the agreement of both Governing Bodies and the Local Authority. This included The Hurst School Headteacher undertaking the role of Interim Headteacher between March 2025 and April 2026, alongside support from key staff and resources to help maintain standards and improve outcomes. The effectiveness of these measures and the overall approach has been recognised through three subsequent HMI monitoring visits since January 2025. However, despite improvements in educational outcomes, pupil numbers have remained low and continued to decline.

Whilst educational improvements have been achieved, these have not altered the underlying and ongoing demographic and financial sustainability issues that the school will continue to face. Consequently, the financial position of the school continues to deteriorate, significantly limiting the school's capacity to sustain further improvement over the longer term.

In April 2025, the school was issued with an Academy Order by the Department for Education following its Ofsted judgement. However, despite efforts to identify a suitable sponsor by the DfE, no academy trust has been willing to take on the school. During that time, the County Council maintained ongoing dialogue with the Department for Education regarding the support being provided to the school. However, the existence of the Academy Order has limited the County Council's

ability to plan strategically for the future provision of school places in the area as no structural change can be progressed by the Local Authority where an Academy Order is in place. Whilst an Academy Order remains in place, the Local Authority is unable to pursue alternative structural arrangements for the school, such as federation, the creation of an all-through school or other changes to the school's organisational structure, without the agreement of the Department for Education.

Having considered the school's viability, local demographics and financial position, Hampshire County Council concluded that consultation on the future of The Clere School should be undertaken. In accordance with the statutory process, the Department for Education Regional Director confirmed that she would support consultation on a proposed closure. Subsequently, on 13 May 2026, the governing body requested that Hampshire County Council initiate the statutory closure process and undertake the required consultations, citing the school's financial and educational unviability.

An initial non-statutory consultation ran from Friday 4 September 2026 to Friday 2 October 2026, following the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services (ELMCS) approval in September 2026.

5. Objectives, including how the proposal would increase educational standards and parental choice.

The proposal is to close The Clere School with effect from 31 August 2027. Subject to approval of the proposal, all pupils on roll at The Clere School at the point of closure would automatically transfer to the roll of The Hurst School. In addition to the proposed arrangements for existing pupils on roll, the proposal also includes changes to primary and secondary school admission arrangements. It is proposed that Vernham Dean Gillum's Church of England (CE) Primary School and Hurstbourne Tarrant CE Primary School be linked with Testbourne Community School, and those individual school catchment areas form part of an enlarged catchment area for Testbourne Community School, and that Burghclere Primary School, Ashford Hill Primary School, Woolton Hill Junior School, Ecchinswell and Sydmonton CE Primary School, Kingsclere CE Primary School and St Martin's East Woodhay CE Primary School be linked with The Hurst School, and those individual school catchment areas form part of an enlarged catchment area for The Hurst School. These proposals and changes would need to be agreed by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2027/28 and 2028/29 as part of a variation application and then determined as part of the statutory consultation on admission arrangements 2029/30 by the governing body of Testbourne Community School (as admission authority for the school) and Hampshire County Council (as admission authority for The Hurst School).

The proposal has been developed taking account of school place sufficiency, current and projected pupil demand, geography, transport considerations and the long-term sustainability of secondary school provision across the area. The objective of the proposal is to provide a sustainable long-term solution to the demographic, educational and financial challenges facing The Clere School. Sustained low pupil numbers, declining demand for places, significant financial pressures and ongoing viability concerns have created increasing challenges in maintaining a sustainable educational offer over the longer term.

Subject to approval of the school's closure, the proposed transfer of current pupils to the roll of The Hurst School, together with the proposed future admission and catchment arrangements for The Hurst School and Testbourne Community School, will provide access to a broader curriculum delivered by subject-specialist teachers, together with a wider range of enrichment and extracurricular opportunities. The proposal will also provide greater organisational resilience through access to a larger staffing structure, reducing the reliance on single-person departments and increasing capacity to respond to changes in educational need. This will help support the continued delivery of a broad and balanced curriculum, specialist subject expertise and wider educational opportunities for pupils. The proposal would therefore support the continued provision of a sustainable secondary education offer for children and young people within the area.

In relation to parental preference, parents would continue to be able to express preferences for schools through the normal main round and in-years admissions processes. The proposal does not affect parents' ability to apply for places at schools of their preference, and applications would continue to be considered in accordance with published admissions arrangements.

6. Consultation details

A non-statutory consultation on the future of The Clere School, Burghclere took place from Friday 4 September 2026 to 11:59 Friday 2 October 2026.

The purpose of this consultation was to seek the view of consultees on the proposal to close the school with effect from 31 August 2027.

It was important to hear the views of stakeholders so that Hampshire County Council could consider them as part of the detailed work on the future of The Clere School, Burghclere.

Letters were sent to:

- Parents/ Carers of students at The Clere School (via the school)
- Impacted local Headteachers, both primary and secondary
- Parents of Local schools, both primary and secondary (via the school)
- Staff union representatives
- Local Member of Parliament
- HCC Elected member
- Local District Council
- Local Parish Councils
- Other relevant HCC Officers
- Local pre-school and nurseries
- Local sports clubs

Three public drop-in events (and an additional drop-in held for staff at the school) were held at The Clere School, Earlstone Common, Burghclere, Newbury, RG20 9HP on the below dates to enable members of staff and the public to discuss the proposal with Hampshire County Council officers:

- Year 7 and Year 8 families: Tuesday 22 September 2026 between 3:45pm – 5:45pm
- Year 9 and Year 10 families: Wednesday 23 September 2026 between 4pm – 6pm
- Staff at the school: Thursday 24 September 2026 between 4pm – 5pm
- Year 11 families and other stakeholders: Thursday 24 September 2026 between 5pm – 7pm

The proposal was included on the County Council's consultation website here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/aboutthecouncil/haveyoursay/consultations/theclereschool-burghclere

Further documents regarding the consultation were published on the website along with detailed background information and a Frequently Asked Questions document that was updated throughout the non-statutory consultation period.

In total 164 responses to the consultation were received via email and during the drop-in events. Of these responses, 134 objected to the proposal, 23 were neutral or did not express a clear view, and 7 supported the proposal.
Comments mainly centered around:

- Impact on pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), mental health needs and vulnerable learners
- Value of a smaller school environment
- Educational continuity and examination preparation
- Alternatives to closure and timing of the proposal
- Housing growth, forecasting and future demand
- Transport, accessibility and school places
- The Hurst School proposal, accommodation and transition arrangements
- Community impact and future use of the site

The main themes of the responses are set out in detail in the report that was taken to the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services Decision Day on 26 October 2026. A copy of that report can be found here: https://democracy.hants.gov.uk/documents/s152416/Report.pdf

This statutory public notice consultation will run from Friday 6 November 2026 to Friday 4 December 2026. A copy of the public notice can be found here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/community/publicnotices/publicnoticedetails?id=23586

All applicable statutory requirements in relation to the proposals to consult were complied with.

7. **Will there be any effect on other local schools, academies, educational institutions or the wider community?**

Pupils currently attending The Clere School and those who will still be on roll at the point of closure will automatically transfer to the roll of The Hurst School. Accommodation planning is underway to ensure sufficient capacity is available to accommodate additional pupils.

Changes to primary and secondary school admission arrangements will be required. Hampshire County Council intends for Vernham Dean Gillum's Church of England (CE) Primary School and Hurstbourne Tarrant CE Primary School be linked with Testbourne Community School, and those individual school catchment areas form part of an enlarged catchment area for Testbourne Community School, and that Burghclere Primary School, Ashford Hill Primary School, Woolton Hill Junior School, Ecchinswell and Sydmonton CE Primary School, Kingsclere CE Primary School and St Martin's East Woodhay CE Primary School be linked with The Hurst School, and those individual school catchment areas form part of an enlarged catchment area for The Hurst School. Early discussions with the relevant schools indicated support for the proposed future admission and catchment arrangements. These proposed changes would need to be agreed by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for 2027/28 and 2028/29 as part of a variation application and then determined as part of the statutory consultation on admission arrangements in 2029/30 by the governing body of Testbourne Community School (as admission authority for the school) and Hampshire County Council (as admission authority for The Hurst School).

Hampshire County Council recognises that the proposed closure of The Clere School could affect community connections, local identity and access to school facilities, with longer journeys also affecting some families' routines. These impacts must be balanced against securing sustainable, high-quality secondary education. If approved, transition planning and engagement with families, schools and community organisations would seek to minimise disruption.

8. **Will the proposed change impact travel, accessibility or Special Educational Need Provision?**

The proposal has been developed taking account of geography, transport networks, accessibility and future secondary school place sufficiency. Hampshire County Council recognises that travel and accessibility are important considerations, particularly for families living in rural communities.

The proposal is that all pupils on roll at The Clere School at the point of closure would automatically transfer to the roll of The Hurst School. In addition, it is proposed that the majority of the current The Clere School catchment area would form part of an enlarged catchment area for The Hurst School, whilst the westernmost part of the current catchment area, including the areas served by Vernham Dean Gillum's CE Primary School and Hurstbourne Tarrant CE Primary School, would form part of an enlarged catchment area for Testbourne Community School.

The Hurst School, located in Baughurst, Tadley, is the nearest Hampshire secondary school to The Clere School, approximately 6.5 miles away. Testbourne Community School, located in Whitchurch, is the next closest Hampshire secondary school, approximately 10.5 miles away. Whilst some schools in neighbouring local authority areas may be geographically closer for some Hampshire residents, Hampshire County Council must plan future admission arrangements based on available Hampshire school provision and its statutory duty to secure sufficient school places for Hampshire children.

The proposal may result in increased travel distances and journey times for some pupils. However, a significant proportion of pupils living within The Clere School catchment area already attend schools outside the catchment area, including schools within neighbouring local authority areas.

Should the proposal proceed, eligibility for school transport assistance would continue to be assessed in accordance with Hampshire County Council's School Transport Policy and relevant statutory requirements. Individual transport assessments would be undertaken, where appropriate, based on a pupil's home address and their allocated school. It is likely that the majority of pupils who are currently travelling on School Transport will continue to require it with any change of school location. Detailed transition planning would be undertaken with affected schools and families to support accessibility and minimise disruption.

Hampshire County Council remains satisfied that appropriate transport arrangements can be considered, where eligible, in accordance with the Council's published School Transport Policy. Further information, including the County Council's policy on assistance with travel to school, can be found here: https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/schooltransport

The school currently has 25 students on roll who have an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP). Supporting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), Education, Health and Care Plans, anxiety and other additional needs is a key priority. It is recognised that established relationships, familiar routines and existing support arrangements can be particularly important for these pupils.

Should the proposal proceed, The Clere School, The Hurst School and Hampshire County Council would work closely with pupils, parents and carers, and relevant professionals to identify individual needs and concerns and develop appropriate transition arrangements. Schools would share information about pupils' needs, existing provision and successful support strategies to support continuity of educational and pastoral support wherever possible. This would include pupils receiving SEND support who do not have an EHCP.

Whilst detailed transition arrangements have not yet been developed, these would be expected to include opportunities for pupils and families to visit the school, meet staff, receive information and have the opportunity to raise questions ahead of any move. Particular consideration would be given to pupils who find change more challenging, with the aim of minimising disruption to their education, support and wellbeing.

For pupils with EHCPs, statutory review processes would be undertaken, with parents and carers fully involved throughout. The County Council's SEND team would be involved in considering individual needs and how provision would continue in any future placement.

9. **Project costs and an indication of how these will be met, including how long-term value for money will be achieved.**

The Childrens Services Capital Programme will meet all associated capital costs linked to the closure of The Clere School. Approval for expenditure will be secured

via the Executive Lead Member for Childrens Services or, Executive Member for Education at a future Decision Day.

Revenue costs will be met through wider Schools Budget allocations and in line with agreed policies. Any required transitional adjustments to the National Funding Formula will also be made.

10. Implementation date and proposed stages

Pupils currently attending The Clere School and those who will still be on roll at the point of closure will automatically transfer to the roll of The Hurst School, Brimpton Road, Baughurst, Tadley, RG26 5NL from Wednesday 1 September 2027.

Accommodation planning is underway to ensure sufficient capacity is available to accommodate additional pupils.

Admissions to Year 7 in September 2027 will follow the statutory admissions application process, which opened in September 2026 and closed on 31 October 2026. National offer day is then 1 March 2027.

Should the decision be made to proceed with the proposal to close The Clere School, The Local Authority will seek to make variations to the relevant admission arrangements for 2027/28 and 2028/29 via the Office of Schools Adjudicator (OSA), during the spring term 2027, and will support the governing body of Testbourne Community School with making a variation application at the same time.

The proposed admission arrangements for 2029/30 will be subject to the normal statutory consultation timescales, with the proposal consulted on in Autumn 2027.

11. Procedure for responses

Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Rebecca Prowting, Children's Services Department, EII Court North, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG; e-mail: strategicplanningunit@hants.gov.uk

12. What happens next?

The following table sets out the key dates for consultation and decision making. At any point the proposal may be withdrawn. The dates set out below meet the Department for Education requirements for consultation on school organisation proposals.

School organisation process	Date
Public Notice published	Friday 6 November 2026
Statutory consultation (representation stage)	Friday 6 November 2026 to Friday 4 December 2026.
If approved, changes implemented from	31 August 2027