

# Badwell Broadsheet

Issue #33 June 2013



## School Faces Closure

The Governors of Badwell Ash school have written to all parents to inform them that they are considering closing the school.

The governors consider that the school is not financially viable, that pupils are underperforming and that they are not able to get a proper education at the school.

The governors voted on the issue and agreed that closure would be the best outcome for pupils at the school. The proposal is that pupils would be moved to an expanded Norton Primary School in September 2014.

There is now a consultation period during which the governors will accept comments for and against the idea.

**A potted recent history.** In 2008 the school was in financial difficulties with falling pupil numbers. Mrs Roots, headmistress for 23 years, left and the school went into federation with the primary school at Walsham. The schools shared a headteacher, but the arrangement did not work. Since then the school has had a succession of temporary heads. Unsuccessful attempts were made to federate with other schools.

With uncertain leadership, financial difficulties and a quick staff turnover, it was not surprising that teaching was affected. In 2010 Ofsted inspected and deemed the school 'Inadequate.' It was put into Special Measures. Since then the school has improved and in its latest Ofsted in 2011 was classified Satisfactory.

During this turbulent time however some parents in the village were concerned about the quality of

education their children might receive at the school and so moved them to schools in neighbouring villages. This decline in pupil numbers naturally exacerbated the existing situation, as school grants are paid directly by pupil numbers.

## Governors' Consultation Ends 21<sup>st</sup> June

The deadline for the consultation period for the Governors is 21<sup>st</sup> June. Suffolk County Council (SCC) will make a formal decision 6 weeks later.

**Write/ email by 21<sup>st</sup> June** with your comments to:-

- \* badwellashgovernors@suffolk.gov.uk
- \* info@telldavidruffley.com
- \* Roy.Barker@midsuffolk.gov.uk
- \* jane.storey@suffolk.gov.uk
- \* Chair of Governors, Badwell Ash School, Badwell Ash, IP31 3DG.
- \* Education Dept, Suffolk County Council, Endeavour House, 8 Russell Road, Ipswich, IP1 2BX

## Community Effects

Will the school closure affect you?

The knock-on effects if the school closes are an unknown variable. They could include:-

Change in house prices. Families are attracted to villages with local schools.

Change in resident make up. If families don't move in, we may become more of a commuter village.

Parents make up some of the most enthusiastic fund raisers and community volunteers in the village. If their energies go with their children to a different school in a different village, will village events, the Village Hall, etc suffer too?

Will the Under 5s Group, recently resurrected from nearly folding and now thriving, survive? Parents of young children may want them to meet children from the community near their school and take them away from Badwell's group. And if the Under 5s – the primary contributor to the Village Hall - goes, will the Village Hall have enough funds to continue?

Here are some of the Findings of a Report about Rural Schools written for the Commission for Rural Communities:-

“Parents passionately opposed the thought of closure of village schools. In a very particular sense, the loss of the school is more than the inconvenience of children being bussed to school, or even the loss of high quality teaching, but is the loss, or death, of community itself.

A school in a village like this is the beating heart of the village – it gives the village a sense of being alive. The village would die, the school brings in families. It would become a place of second homes, more shops would close.”

“Small schools not only offer more personalised learning, but provide opportunities for interaction between community members which might otherwise disappear. In addition, at a time when there is a new governmental emphasis on democratic renewal and the involvement of people in services, schools as the hubs of rural villages appear to offer an important template.”

### **FACT: Pupil Numbers are Rising. More Primary Places are Needed**

The number of children in England's primary and nursery schools is set to rise by 18% in the next eight years, according to the Department for Education. Is this the moment to close a school?

### ***Extract from the School Website***

Teachers are unable to comment in situations such as these, but here is an extract from the School Website:

The inspection report Ofsted (July 2011) says: “Pupils say they enjoy school. This is clear from the enthusiastic way in which they embrace learning opportunities during lessons and when participating in additional activities at lunchtimes and after school. Their behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.” “They eagerly embrace opportunities to take responsibility for example by becoming members of the school council, and to help around school”

We have recently moved out of special measures and are on a good route for the future.

From [www.badwellash.suffolk.sch.uk](http://www.badwellash.suffolk.sch.uk), written by Mrs C Clarke,  
*Acting Headteacher*

### **Parents' committee writes open letter**

Some concerned parents from the school have set up a committee to try and coordinate the fight to stop the school closing. If you would like to help them, please email [badwellashsos@gmail.com](mailto:badwellashsos@gmail.com)

The committee has written a letter to Suffolk County Council (SCC) and aims to knock on every door in Badwell parish and surrounding villages asking for people to sign a copy. They then intend to take the letters to the SCC to show the level of support for the school in the area. They already have over 100 signed letters. If you have not been contacted already, expect a knock at your door!

Quotes from the letter:- ‘Badwell Ash is a thriving and expanding village and the status of the school would seem to defy these facts. The Church and other appointed Governors seem to have paid little or not interest in the past to the immediate problems of financial viability. Since the news broke in the press about the proposals, other school have indicated interest in a full federation which our Governors have dismissed as unworkable. ...A conflicting tension has been noticed between Governors, staff and parents regarding the poor running of the school over the last few years and this has resulted in a lot of pupils being removed from the school by families who live in the village. With the number of children who live in the village and the pre-school numbers being as high as they are, pupil numbers would not be a concern so long as confidence in the management abilities of the school could be restored.’

### **Some thoughts from locals:-**

I feel this would have quite a negative impact on all of us as a community; I often drive through Badwell and see the parents all chatting together. There are also various events held each year that bond the school and local community. I think it would be an awful shame to lose this school and it would I think cause a lot of damage to village life here.

The trend for one school to flourish while another goes through a bad patch keeps recurring. I remember when Walsham wasn't doing well and their children came here and Badwell had 100 pupils. We should ride out this storm.

The school was a big plus factor in our decision to move here. All of the families I know of who have moved to Badwell in the last ten years moved here with children of first school age or younger. Without the incentive of the school this village will become more and more a silent commuter ghosttown.

Let the school stay, let more children come to the village, let it become vibrant again, and the village will benefit as well.

*Names supplied*

### **A solution? : a 2 site School?**

It has been suggested that as Badwell school's buildings are perfect for earlier primary years, that one head teacher could head a 2-site school, with Reception and Key Stage One here in Badwell and Key Stage Two at Norton. Norton would not have to build lots of extra classes, Badwell's buildings would be used for their designed purpose, and Badwell would retain a community of children. Like this idea? Write/email the addresses on p1.

### **David Ruffley MP tells the Broadsheet:-**

"Obviously, the closure of any rural school in a village is a cause for regret. I know how the small class sizes are valued by parents.

I have spoken with Councillor Jane Storey. Apart from being a local Councillor and former resident of Badwell Ash, she also sits [Ed: used to] as the Chair of the Education Scrutiny Panel at County Hall. Her preliminary view is that the school pupil roll has fallen to such a degree that the primary school is not financially viable in the long term. From my own inquiries this is partly because parents in the catchment have been choosing other primary schools for their children.

I had a long discussion on Saturday 8 June with a senior Governor at Gislingham Primary School, who had expressed an interest in confederating with Badwell Ash. Unfortunately, he told me that it was too big a project for Gislingham to take on this year.

The County Council have jurisdiction on school closures, not me. Nevertheless, I know that existing parents at Badwell Ash need to know what the future holds after the consultation period ends. So I have written to the Director of Education for a full briefing on this as a matter for urgency."

Yours sincerely, David Ruffley MP

The Broadsheet asked Roy Barker, SCC Councillor, Jane Storey, Mid Suffolk Councillor, and Karl Hortt, Chairman of the Parish Council to give their views to the paper at short notice, but received no comment by the time of going to press.

**FACT: The Government have declared they have a presumption against the closure of rural schools and have stated that they want to protect them.**

**FACT: The SCC promised when they abolished Middle Schools that they would not close any primary schools. What happened to this promise, Jane Storey?**

### **One more thing to think about: the Land**

If the school is closed, are you willing for the council to sell the land in the centre of the village for housing to fund building in Norton? Is this fair to Badwell residents' values and right to rural life? Should the school building be given to the community as a new village hall? A community centre? If you have views on this issue, write/email the addresses on page 1.

### **TOADS SAY THANKS**



It was a very unusual toad patrolling season this year. Last year patrols were completed by 9 April, this year we had hardly begun due to the arctic conditions in March. Again, it was a real team effort with people not just contributing their time but also their skills, eg making signs. **A big thank-you to all those involved.** Many rural areas have experienced declines of over 50% in their toad populations including extinction of some populations, so the work of toad patrollers is vital. It was great to welcome back so many volunteers and lovely new ones, including two intrepid American patrollers from the USAF base at Lakenheath who wanted to experience this strange British tradition of helping toads across roads!

We saved about 855 toads - slightly up from the 2012 figure. However, we have seen much less toad spawn this year. This may be because bad weather in March affected the ability of the toads to mate successfully. The true test will be how many toadlets emerge later

Also, a big thank-you to all the drivers who slowed down and even stopped to let us help the toads across. Thanks, too, to the couple who let us to use their yard to park and store equipment. Thanks to the owners of Badwell Ash Lodges for allowing us access to their property to put the toads in a safe place by their beautiful ponds. Sadly, we still experienced significant road-kill - nearly 100 while we were patrolling and probably quite a few more when we were not. It would be great to do more next year - if you are interested do get in touch. The more volunteers, the more toads we can help. **please contact Frances Bee on 01284 828284 or e-mail: [francesbee@btinternet.com](mailto:francesbee@btinternet.com)**

### **Silver Ash Report**

Thanks to everyone who supported our Jumble Sale. We raised £479.74 for the Silver Ash Club. This money helps fund our members' monthly summer outings, and our Christmas Meal. Our outings this summer will include a trip to Cromer.



## Meetings Coming Up

July 11th - History and uses of Lavender.

August 8th - Garden Meeting - an informal

afternoon of tea, cakes and chat

September 12th - An evening with 'Joyce Grenfell'

Further details from Sue Perkin-Ball 01359242422 or

Lyn Andrews 01359259637



## School Report

What an amazing and exciting term we have had so far. The children are very busy exploring Castles and life through the ages. Willow Class visited West Stow Saxon Village and investigated artefacts and clues about Saxon Life. They enjoyed trying to drill holes with hand bores as well as imagining a family meeting in the great hall.

The school went to Mountfitchet Castle near Stansted, a reconstruction of a Norman Mote and Bailey Castle. We enjoyed opportunities to see what being in the stocks felt like, grinding flour using a rolling stone, visiting the castles church and listening to the Priest, as well as learning about the ducking stool and the life of a Baron. The day was amazing, bringing the time period to life, and pupils have since written diaries of Norman people. A big Thank you from the children to the PTFA for paying for the transport.

Classes have also been planting for our "How does your garden grow?" topic and every child is caring for a sunflower for our tallest sunflower competition. The challenge is on to see if any will grow taller than Mrs Clark.

Coming up: an activity day with an overnight stay for Willow class, who are planning a menu and shopping list while I look at routes for hikes. Willow Class are also taking part in the Suffolk Maths challenge organised by the East Anglian Daily Times and are learning about how maths can be found in everyday life. More visits are planned for this term including a Seaside extravaganza, an interschool sports competition and as well as Sports Day and End of Term Service plus visits from our new Reception Children and a Maths Share.

*Kelly McGrath-Wells Senior Teacher*

## Parish Council Report

The Parish Council held its annual council meeting on Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> May following on from the Badwell Ash parish meeting. Fifteen members of the public attended and all parish councillors were in attendance. Mr K Hortt was re-elected Chair and Mrs E Miles was elected vice-chair, and the Council's accounts were approved.

The dates of the next year's meetings were agreed as the first Wednesday in every other month.

Street cleaning, dog waste bins and whether a litter pick could be arranged in the future were all discussed during the public forum.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> July in the village hall starting at 7.30pm. As usual, all members of the public are invited to attend and an opportunity will be given at the start of the meeting for you to raise any matter concerning the parish with the council.

*Sandra Brown, Parish Clerk. Tel: 01359 242304  
E-mail: Sandra\_brown60@hotmail.com*

