

Confidential to Trust Board.

This analysis has been undertaken with significant use of AI tools to provide it in sufficient time for the extraordinary FTB meeting. It has had manual checking and editing.

Analysis of consultation responses provided via email

Through the public consultation to date, we have encouraged respondents to express their views via the online survey to facilitate our detailed analysis. However, we have also received several detailed responses via the designated consultation email inbox. This document provides a summary of those email responses and should be read alongside the summary of the survey responses.

Overall headline

There is very strong and often emotional opposition to the prospect of an amalgamation resulting in St. George's no longer sitting in the heart of the village community of Langton Matravers. This opposition is combined with a deep mistrust of the consultation process and a perception that the decision has already been made. Alongside this, there is a consistent demand for greater transparency, more detailed evidence, and more genuine engagement.

Core Themes Identified

1. Perception that the decision is already made (lack of trust in the consultation)

This is one of the most dominant and repeated concerns.

- Many respondents believe the outcome of the consultation is already decided.
- The structure of questions is seen as biased toward a preferred option
- Requests for:
 - Rewriting consultation questions
 - Extending consultation timelines
 - Restarting the process entirely

What this tells you:

- The process currently lacks legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders
- Even strong educational arguments may be rejected because the process is not trusted

2. Strong emotional attachment to St George's

There is highly personal, values-led language about the school.

- Described as:
 - “heart of the community”
 - “special,” “nurturing,” “family-like”
- Multi-generational connections (parents, grandparents, children all attended)
- Emotional testimonials from children and families

What this tells you:

- This is not viewed as a rational estate decision — it is identity, heritage, and belonging
- Not having a school directly in Langton Matravers is interpreted as loss, not transition

3. Importance of the school to the village's survival

A major strategic theme.

- Repeated claim: “the village depends on the school”
- Concerns that closure would:
 - Reduce families moving in
 - Increase second homes/holiday lets

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- Damage local cohesion and sustainability

What this tells you:

- Respondents see the school as critical infrastructure, not just education provision
 - Impacts are framed as long-term socio-economic decline
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4. Belief that St George's is being unfairly targeted

There's a recurring narrative of inequity.

- Claims that:
 - St George's is academically stronger than St Mark's; the former is being used to "prop up" the latter
 - Recent decisions (like mixed-age classes) have deliberately weakened it

What this tells you:

- A "justice/fairness" narrative is forming
 - Without counter-evidence, this perception may harden into reputational damage
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5. Concern about immediate harmful impacts of the consultation itself

This is a critical operational issue.

- Reports of:
 - Parents withdrawing children
 - Reduced enrolment in preschool
 - Increased anxiety among pupils
- Claim that consultation is accelerating decline it seeks to solve

What this tells you:

- The process is seen as actively destabilising the school
 - Stakeholders fear a self-fulfilling outcome of losing the village school
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6. Demand for transparency, data, and evidence

There are extensive and detailed requests for information.

Common requests:

- Historical and projected pupil numbers
- Financial models and assumptions
- Governance minutes
- Alternative options considered
- Community and equality impact assessments

What this tells you:

- Some respondents are engaging at a high analytical level
 - There is a perception that key evidence has not been disclosed
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7. Criticism of consultation quality and compliance

More technical/legal objections are emerging.

- References to:
 - Gunning Principles (lawful consultation standards)
- Claims that consultation:
 - Is not at a formative stage

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- Lacks sufficient information
- Does not allow enough time

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

8. Impact on children's wellbeing

A recurring moral argument.

- Children described as:
 - Distressed, anxious, unsettled
- Concern about:
 - Loss of stability
 - Loss of relationships and environment

What this tells you:

- The debate is framed as child-centred vs system-centred
- Emotional arguments are anchored in wellbeing and psychological impact

9. Concerns about logistics and practicalities

Many practical challenges are raised:

- Transport from rural villages
- Road safety and parking at St Mark's
- Access to community facilities (church, allotments, etc.)
- Feasibility of daily travel for young children

[REDACTED]

■

[REDACTED]

10. Alternative solutions not fully explored

Repeated calls for different options:

- Merge on St George's site
- Merge with other schools
- Improve recruitment and numbers
- Change trust arrangements

What this tells you:

- Stakeholders believe closure is not the only viable solution
- They feel excluded from solution design

11. Minority support for St Mark's option

A small number of responses support the proposal to merge onto St. Mark's.

- Arguments include:
 - Better facilities
 - Central location
 - Easier transport

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- Although there is some support, it is limited and less vocal. The dominant narrative remains strongly opposed

Cross-cutting insight

The responses combine three powerful dimensions:

1. Emotional (loss, identity, children)
2. Procedural (fairness, legality, transparency)
3. Strategic (community sustainability, rural access)

These reinforce each other:

- Emotional concern → fuels mistrust
- Mistrust → increases demand for data
- Lack of data → reinforces belief decision is pre-made

What the emails are really telling you (plain English)

- “We don’t believe this is a genuine consultation.”
- “You are underestimating what this school means to our community.”
- “You haven’t shown us the evidence or alternatives.”
- “The process is already harming our children and school.”
- “Losing this school will damage the village long-term.”
- “We want to be properly involved in shaping the outcome.”

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- [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]