

Rye Academy Trust (the Trust) – Rye Studio School (the School) Closure in August 2018

The Trustees of Rye Academy Trust (the Trustees) have confirmed their intention to close Rye Studio School at the end of August 2018. The Trustees had hoped to be able to broaden the educational offer of the Studio School, however, this is not financially viable. Trustees have received in principle approval by ministers at the Department of Education supporting the closure of the School.

As a part of a national initiative promoting the creation of studio schools, the School was set up in 2013 in order to provide a vocational curriculum, focusing on the arts, for students aged between 14 and 19 years with a published admission number of 300.

Unfortunately, since its inception, the School has been unable to recruit more than 50% of the students required. Due to these low student numbers the School has not developed in the way originally planned and no students were admitted in September 2017 or recruited for September 2018. Following discussions between the Department of Education and Trustees, both parties believe that the School is not financially viable long-term in its current form.

Currently, the School only has students in Year 11 and Year 13. Those in Year 13 will leave as usual at the end of the academic year whilst those in Year 11 have been supported through CIAG (Careers Information, Advice and Guidance) to select alternative further education provision.

As a result of the reduced numbers at the School, the Trust has over the last few years rationalised the staffing structure. With no students having been recruited for entry in September 2017 or 2018, remaining staff will be consulted, in conjunction with their Union representatives, on redeployment or redundancy. Following this process, there will no longer be any employees retained to work solely at the Studio School.

A Department for Education spokesperson said:

"We have agreed, in principle, to the closure of Rye Studio School following a request from Rye Academy Trust. A number of options have been explored but ministers have decided that the school, which has not admitted any new pupils for September 2017 or 2018, should close by the end of August 2018."

Barry Blakelock, the Head Teacher of the School said:

"It is with great regret that the School finds itself in this position. Despite all the efforts of Trustees and dedicated staff, who have all done an excellent job, the School has never been fully utilised."

This provisional decision, is subject to a four-week listening period, after which a final decision will be made by the Department of Education, in conjunction with the Trust.

During the listening period, which runs until 5pm on 5 July, parents, staff and interested persons are invited to submit their views on the proposed closure of the School to the Trust by emailing office@ryeacademytrust.org and inserting 'Rye Studio School' in the subject box or writing to the Lead Executive at the Rye Academy Trust, The Grove, Rye, East Sussex, TN31 7NQ.