



# Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday, 15 April 2010</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.15 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

**Contact Officer:** Brian Ellis  
**Tel:** 0151 691 8491  
**e-mail:** [brianellis@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:brianellis@wirral.gov.uk)  
**Website:** <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

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## SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

3. **BIRKENHEAD ACADEMY (Pages 1 - 52)**

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## WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 15th APRIL 2010

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### REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES: PROVISIONAL REPORT ON OUTCOME OF CONSULTATIONS ON PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ROCK FERRY HIGH SCHOOL AND PARK HIGH SCHOOL IN ORDER TO ESTABLISH AN ACADEMY

#### Executive Summary

This report advises the Cabinet of the provisional outcomes of the consultation process which has taken place in regard to the closure of the predecessor schools; Park High School and Rock Ferry School, as agreed at Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010 as part of the Phase 1 Secondary Review. This report describes the responses, including additional suggestions put forward during the consultation process, and makes recommendations with regard to statutory proposals in this area. It does not cover separate consultations by the lead sponsor, the University of Chester, regarding the opening of an academy. These consultations end on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

#### 1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 29th November 2007, Cabinet instructed that Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review should comprise schools in Birkenhead and Bebington (Wirral South).
- 1.2 On 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, Cabinet approved a consultation option for change comprising the closure of Park High and Rock Ferry High Schools in order to establish an Academy.
- 1.3 Following the announcement that Birkenhead High School for Girls would become a state-funded Academy, and further analysis of demographic trends, this option was altered to incorporate two Academies – a mixed Academy at the Park High site, and a Boys Academy on a site to be confirmed. This proposal was linked to the closure of three existing schools – Ridgeway High School, Rock Ferry High School and Park High School. This was reported to Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2009 and approval was given for the Department for Children Schools and Families Expressions of Interest (EOI) to be prepared on the basis of a “three into two” model. These went to all three predecessor governing bodies in September 2009, and were approved by them albeit with caveats.
- 1.4 On 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009, Cabinet approval was given for the Expression of Interest documents for the two Academies, and for consultation to begin on the closure of the predecessor schools. This timescale was in line with Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) and Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC) guidance.
- 1.5 This decision was called in for scrutiny. The Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee met on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2009 with a single item agenda. This resulted in the decision being referred back to Cabinet on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009, some 9 weeks after the original EOIs had been approved.
- 1.6 At its meeting of 26<sup>th</sup> November 2009, Cabinet decided that the option should revert to that approved on 6<sup>th</sup> November 2008, involving the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools, in order to establish a mixed Academy for their pupils, on either the Park High site or a new site, e.g. Borough Road/Shaftebury Playing fields. The Director was requested to consult with residents associations and Shaftebury Youth Club on the possibility of the Borough Road/Shaftebury playing fields site being utilised, with a report to Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009, two weeks later. The minute is attached as Appendix A.

- 1.7 On 9<sup>th</sup> December 2009, Cabinet approved the Park High site as the preferred site for the Mixed Academy, and asked that further discussions should take place to reach agreement on the composition of the sponsor team for the new Academy. The minute is attached as Appendix B. Negotiations took place with sponsors during the following week. Agreement was secured and a new EOI was prepared. This was sent to the DCSF by the end of December 2009. The governing bodies of the two predecessor schools approved the new EOI in early January 2010, albeit with caveats.
- 1.8 On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2010, Cabinet approved the Expression of Interest for an 11 to 16 Mixed Academy on the Park High site with a sponsor team lead by the University of Chester, with the University of Liverpool, Wirral Metropolitan College, Birkenhead Sixth Form College and Wirral Council as co-sponsors, intended to open on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011. Cabinet also approved the commencement of formal consultations on the closure of the predecessor schools as set out by guidance. The minute is attached as Appendix C.

## 2.0 The Consultation

- 2.1 In order for all stakeholders to have access to relevant background information and have the opportunity to comment and respond, the following methods of consultation have been employed :
- a) A range of documentation has been produced and distributed (See Appendix D) This comprised:
    - (i) the full consultation document and letters sent to parents of pupils at Park High School and Rock Ferry High School; to staff and governors at both schools; to the Central libraries, local libraries, and relevant community centres, to local councillors in those areas and to the local MP
    - (ii) consultation letters to all parents/carers of pupils in Year 4, 5 and 6 at 58 Wirral primary schools including all those in Birkenhead;
    - (iii) all other statutory consultees, including trade union representatives, neighbouring authorities and the Learning and Skills Council have been notified by e-mail
  - b) A dedicated web-site on the Wirral Learning Grid was established and advertised on the council web-site, the council Intranet, and in the parents' consultation leaflets and letters. This site provided access to all the information produced in paper form and allowed e-mail responses to a dedicated e-mail address.
  - c) Meetings were arranged for all interested stakeholders at both schools. These meetings followed the same format, with a presentation on the overall position and the school specific position followed by around ninety minutes of time for audience comments, feedback and questions. The meetings were attended by parents, carers, staff, governors, Ward members and various other interested persons and bodies. Each meeting was chaired by the Cabinet member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning. The dates for the meetings were in the parents' leaflets and on the specific web-site and a general notice was published in the local press.
  - d) Opportunities have been provided for other means of response. Submissions have been received in paper and e-mail formats – all of which will be made available before and at the Cabinet meeting, in addition to the summaries contained in this report.
  - e) All of the relevant LA documentation produced for the consultation has been shared with the Diocesan Bodies.

2.2 The consultation process and the presentation of LA and school data to this wider audience does appear to have persuaded most people of the need to reduce the number of school places, though understandably people wish to advocate the case for their school in respect of closure or amalgamation options. There was general support for the Academy with the sponsor team as constituted.

2.3 In addition to the detail set out below, further records of views put forward during the consultation period are attached as Appendix E. Feedback is set out school by school. The record for each school brings together the responses from the meeting held at the school, together with any points raised in written or e-mail submissions to the Authority.

### 3.0 **Outcome of the Consultation**

Further suggestions in relation to secondary school re-organisation in Birkenhead were made as part of the consultation process:

- Locate the new Academy at the Rock Ferry site
- Locate the new Academy at a new site between the two existing schools
- Amalgamate Rock Ferry High and Bebington High Schools
- Close Rock Ferry High and leave Park High open
- Move Prenton High to the Rock Ferry site and turn the Prenton High site into a mixed Academy
- Keep both schools open
- Make both schools into smaller separate Academies

Further discussion of these suggestions is given below.

3.1 There were several key themes in the combined responses from consultees:

- General understanding of the falling rolls situation
- Support for the Academy in principle and the sponsor team
- Effect of proposed housing and demographic changes on pupil numbers
- Respect for school staff in their skills and relationships with pupils and parents
- Educational standards and quality of provision
- Concern for the fate of closed buildings and sites
- Desire for a new building on a new site
- Travel distance to school and the effect on traffic and road safety
- Disruption to pupils' education and confidence
- Class sizes
- Importance of small schools
- Effect of any change on children with special educational needs
- Importance of out of hours and community facilities
- Staff redeployment
- Continuity of school over several generations
- Maintenance of existing specialisms.

### 4.0 **Responses to the consultation**

The next section of the report contains a summary of comments on the proposal in relation to each school. Numbers on roll are from the January 2010 School Census. An analysis of the responses received and attendance at meetings is included as Appendix E1.

### **Park High School**

With one exception, respondents from Park High School were generally in favour of an Academy with the proposed sponsor team. Some respondents expressed concerns about a short-term expansion in the overall size of the school on that site, whether this would mean increases in class sizes, and about disruption to pupil's education, especially at Key Stage 4. The importance of maintaining community facilities at the site were stressed. Questions were asked about the gender imbalance in school places in Birkenhead. Some respondents were concerned about losing the school's Sports College specialist status, and wanted to be sure that the good work of staff in the current school would be continued in the Academy.

### **Rock Ferry High School**

Respondents from Rock Ferry High School were generally in favour of an Academy with the proposed sponsor team. Many expressed concerns about the travel distance to the Park site, and asked if free transport would be provided. Other concerns involved the impact of change on standards for existing pupils especially those in Key Stage 4 and pupils in the Sanderling Unit, the future of the Rock Ferry site and it's listed building (Ravenswood), relocation of memorials, the cost of new uniforms, and whether children would "fit in" at the Academy which some respondents saw as an "in name only" change to Park High. Some respondents were concerned about losing the school's Performing Arts College specialist status without any consultation on the new specialism, loss of parental choice and loss of staff expertise. A minority were concerned about gender imbalance in mixed schools.

There was a general understanding of the falling rolls and surplus place situation, although a minority of respondents believed that new housing would increase rolls, and one that schools without sixth forms were suffering falling rolls. The long history of the school within a relatively deprived area was raised by some respondents.

In relation to the consultation, some respondents believed a decision had already been made, and that consultation should have started earlier and been more extensive.

The majority of written consultation responses were from Rock Ferry High School staff (but few parents), who in the main advocated a new proposal, whereby the Academy would be in a new building on a neutral site in between the two, with some suggesting reopening negotiations with Shaftesbury Youth Club, or for the Council to purchase land in a central Birkenhead location. A minority wanted the Academy to be at the Rock Ferry site based on overall size and convenience of location for the Rock Ferry area, with single respondents suggesting the Academy should have a sixth form, or incorporate a primary school. The Park site was generally seen as distant, small, unable to expand and unfit for purpose. A single respondent said that existing buildings should be used rather than wasting money on new build.

#### **4.1 Commentary on these responses**

- 4.2 **Size of the Academy** - The two schools together currently have a combined roll of 1,258 pupils, which is equivalent to 252 pupils per year group on average. This is projected to decline to 1,052 by 2019 if school re-organisation is not carried out. The total number of places at the two schools is 2,482, of which 42% in total would be vacant in 2019.

Respondents concerns about the size of the amalgamated Academy should be allayed by the transition arrangements, to be devised in detail during Feasibility. This is likely to include maintaining both sites for at least one year, if not longer. New admissions are likely to be to the Park site, nevertheless the Key Stage 4 group based at the Rock Ferry High site should be allowed to see out their education in situ without disruption or movement. Some pupils will, however, at some point, move sites. The split site arrangement also allows for phasing of staff movements and for any remodelling and refurbishment works to be carried out at the Park site.

- 4.3 **Travel and Transport** – The patterns of parental preference in this area indicate a high level of mobility, facilitated by high levels of surplus places and overlaps between the pupil populations of schools in the area already exist.

The distance between the Rock Ferry and Park High sites is 2.5 miles. Individual travel distances will depend on pupils’ home address. The DCSF and Wirral policy says that pupils aged over 8 can travel up to 3 miles to school before being eligible for free transport, although there are some exceptions - pupils whose parents receive the free school meal allowance or receive the maximum level of Working Tax Credit are entitled to free transport to one of the three nearest appropriate schools between 2 and 6 miles of their home address.

Public transport connects the two areas throughout the day and into the evening. As an example, the 410 bus runs every 10-15 minutes between Old Chester Road and Birkenhead Park from 8 am to 7pm and then every 20-30 minutes during the evening until late. Park High’s site is a 10-15 minute walk from Birkenhead Park train station, and a 20 minute walk from the major bus terminus on Conway Street from which various buses pass either by the school, or by Birkenhead Park on Conway Street.

The table below summarises the analysis of actual and projected journeys by current pupils to the two existing school sites. This demonstrates that should the Academy be located at the Rock Ferry site, the travel disadvantage to Park pupils is in fact substantially greater than that sustained by Rock Ferry pupils in travelling to the Park site in every respect. The Park High site is also significantly closer to the further education co-sponsor sites in the central Birkenhead area.

<b>Travel analysis – Current Park High Pupils</b>	
Average distance to Park site (walking time)	1.3 miles (26 mins)
<b>Travel analysis – Other site</b>	
Average distance to Rock Ferry site (walking time)	3.0 miles (61 mins)
Closer or similar distance to Rock Ferry site	12% (86 pupils)
Further to Rock Ferry site	88% (635 pupils)
Pupils travelling 3 miles or more to Rock Ferry site	343 (48%)

Pupil addresses taken from January 2010 School Census. Walking time calculated by Google Maps. Similar equates to up to 0.4 miles longer travel distance; Further equates to 0.5 miles or more longer travel distance.

**Travel analysis – Current Rock Ferry High Pupils**

Average distance to Rock Ferry site (walking time)	1.4 miles (27 mins)
<b>Travel analysis – Other site</b>	
Average distance to Park site (walking time)	2.2 miles (43 mins)
Closer or similar distance to Park site	82% (445 pupils)
Further to Park site	18% (95 pupils)
Pupils travelling 3 miles or more to Park site	44 (8%)

Pupil addresses taken from January 2010 School Census. Walking time calculated by Google Maps. Similar equates to up to 0.4 miles longer travel distance; Further equates to 0.5 miles or more longer travel distance.

- 4.4 **Alternative sites** - Respondents related to Rock Ferry who favoured a new site for the Academy cited the proposal as a lost opportunity for major investment. The Council has examined all possible sites of sufficient size in the area between the two existing schools. Under the original "three into two" model, there would have been a mixed Academy at Park High, and a Boys Academy on another site. The Borough Road/Shafesbury playing field site was originally considered as a site for a Boys Academy, as this was the only site of sufficient size in approximately the right location. However, the site is partially owned by Shafesbury Youth Club, whose board of trustees have made it very clear at that time (December 2009) that they would not be prepared to sell their land to the Council, without which any Academy project could not proceed further on that site. In addition, the residents associations bordering the Borough Road/Shafesbury site have made it clear that they would object strongly to the construction of any school on that site. There was little interest in an all boys school, and Ridgeway High School also withdrew from the process at that stage, all of which in combination caused the Cabinet to reject support of the "three into two" model.

This being the case, Cabinet decided to proceed with consultations on the current proposal for a Mixed Academy, which would begin with the Academy on two sites, eventually moving towards the Academy being based on the Park High site, which has already received £10 million of investment through PFI, and would be further improved under the Academies programme.

- 4.5 **Change to Academy status** – The Academy would not be Park High with a new name, it would be a new kind of school, with a new governing body and ethos, and with staff and pupils from both Park and Rock Ferry High Schools. A small number of respondents believed that some parents would not choose the Academy due to a perceived difference in background, however geographical analysis demonstrates there is already an overlap between the pupil populations of the two schools. Staff from both schools have strongly expressed their commitment to ensure that all pupils would be welcomed in any setting, whatever the outcome of the proposal.

- 4.6 **Size of Park High site** - With regard to site size, respondents are correct that the Rock Ferry site is larger than the Park High site, however most were probably not aware that Park High School also has designated playing fields within Birkenhead Park, an all weather pitch at the Joseph Paxton Campus and also uses Birkenhead Park's extensive facilities for PE and sporting events, which would continue to be the case for the new Academy. The building is about the same size as Rock Ferry's in terms of pupil capacity, which in both cases are significantly larger than is required for the number of pupils projected to attend the Academy at Park (approx 1250 capacity, 750 total Academy pupils). Demographics show that there is no need for current or



future expansion of the building, but Park's building would have scope to take additional pupils if required and there are no current plans to purchase any additional land in relation to an Academy on the Park High site.

- 4.7 **Afterschool and community facilities** - Before and after school activities are becoming progressively more essential to schools and their communities. The governing body of the Academy will want to ensure that pupils and their families have access to extended services, and this will be an important factor in the development of the Academy. The Park site is well served with public transport, both bus and rail.
- 4.8 **The Rock Ferry High site** - The Rock Ferry High school site was considered alongside others as a potential Academy site, however the Park site is more centrally located for the population it is intended to serve, Rock Ferry site being at the far south of the Birkenhead area with a great deal of competition for places from other neighbouring schools. The building is about the same size as Park High's in terms of pupil capacity, which in both cases are significantly larger than is required for the number of pupils projected to attend the Academy (approx 1250 capacity, 750 total Academy pupils). In addition, if Park High School were no longer in use as a school, the Council would have to find another use for the building which would pay the PFI contractual costs until 2031, or face a buyout from the PFI contract.

A small number of respondents asked if there were listed buildings on the Rock Ferry site - Ravenswood (currently occupied by the Sanderling Unit) is Grade II listed. Some respondents stated that the proposal was solely motivated by financial considerations due to the potential value of the Rock Ferry site. The reasons for the proposal are clearly in relation to dealing with demographics and surplus places, raising ambition and aspiration and raising standards. There are no plans or planning applications in relation to the Rock Ferry site. Decisions about the future of any school site no longer required as a school are only made when all the educational decisions have been taken.

#### 4.9 **Demographics and Surplus Places**

Park High has 718 pupils on roll, 445 fewer than the peak in 2004 when there were 1,163 pupils at the school. This is projected to reach 701 pupils on roll in 2019. There are a large number of surplus places (43%, 532). This is predicted to rise to 44% (549 places) by 2019. One respondent from Park said that there were no surplus places at Park High School. Net Capacity is determined by a national formula based on the number, size and type of teaching spaces, and the admission number of the school, treating every school equally. The Net Capacity at Park High School is 1250 places.

- 4.10 Rock Ferry High School has 540 pupils on roll, compared with the recent peak of 1,222 in 2002. This is projected to fall further to 351 pupils on roll in 2019. There are a large number of surplus places (56%, 692). This is predicted to rise to 72% (881 places) by 2019. The Net Capacity at Rock Ferry High School is 1232 places. Some respondents said that rolls had fallen at Rock Ferry either because of the review process, or because the school does not have a sixth form. The falling roll at Rock Ferry predates the beginning of the review by several years, and relates to falling birth rates and parental preferences. At time of writing, 11 current pupils have applied via the Pupil Admissions team to transfer to alternative schools since January 2010, which is a relatively small number in terms of the whole school roll. Regarding sixth form provision, it should be noted that neighbouring Bebington High School, which has retained a sixth form department, is also experiencing a significantly falling roll.
- 4.11 The impact of housing development in the area for future pupil numbers has been raised. The Housing Market Renewal Initiative in this area incorporates Church Road in Tranmere, Fiveways in Rock Ferry, and the North Birkenhead/Bidston area. Housing Market Renewal is intended to stabilise the population of an area, not to

significantly increase it. For example in Fiveways, around 230 houses of a relatively poor standard will be cleared and will be replaced with 260 dwellings, of which 57 will be apartments. The number of pupils produced by new housing development is lower than might be expected. Wirral's projection is for 4-6 pupils per year group per 100 homes. The type of home also has an impact, as flats and retirement dwellings produce fewer pupils than houses. Also, the additional pupils are likely to be existing Wirral residents and may already live locally, in which case they may continue to attend their existing school. Local housing changes are unlikely to make a significant impact on the issue of surplus places in this area.

4.12 The establishment of Birkenhead High School for Girls as an Academy in the area was also raised as an issue causing more pressure on the roll of the existing schools and amplifying the existing gender imbalance in local mixed schools. This school admits 100 pupils per year group in the secondary element of the school. At present about 40% reside in the Birkenhead area, and many of these were existing primary pupils from the fee-paying era of the school. As time passes, the impact of an additional Girls school on the local area, as opposed to the wider Wirral area, may increase, and this will be monitored.

#### 4.13 **Standards**

Respondents from both schools valued and praised the excellent work carried out by staff. A minority felt that standards at the two schools had not been made clear enough. The following paragraphs set out the position at the two schools.

#### 4.14 *Contextual Value Added (CVA)*

This is a measure of how much progress pupils make at a school, compared with similar pupils in other schools. It takes into account various background factors – not just how well pupils have achieved at Key Stage 2 (Y6 SATS), but whether they are boys or girls, whether they have special educational needs, the level of deprivation in the area and so on.

In the last three years CVA scores show that pupils in both schools made at least the expected rate of progress, with pupils at Park High (2007, 2008) and Rock Ferry High (2008, 2009) making significantly more progress than similar pupils in other schools.

#### 4.15 *National Challenge*

The Government says that at least 30% of the pupils at every school in the country should get 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C, including English and Maths. Schools that don't meet this target are called "National Challenge" schools and can get additional assistance to help them reach the target. Both Park High School and Rock Ferry High School are "National Challenge" schools. Although both schools remain below the target in 2009, the GCSE results show a year on year improvement.

#### 4.16 *Ofsted*

Ofsted last inspected Rock Ferry High School in March 2008. This is taken from Ofsted's report.

"Rock Ferry High School is a good school providing high quality education and care. It provides an inclusive and attractive learning environment where all pupils are able to flourish in a happy, family, community atmosphere based on mutual respect and excellent relationships...The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding...The school provides its pupils with an outstanding curriculum."

Ofsted last inspected Park High School in January 2009. This is taken from Ofsted's report.

“This is a good school in which the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection because effective and purposeful leadership is driving the school forward strongly...The relentless focus on improvement and rapidly rising standards mean that the school has outstanding capacity to improve even further....The school uses its extensive links with outside agencies outstandingly well.”

The good work carried out by staff at both schools has been recognised. The intention of the sponsor team is to take the best practice from the two predecessor schools and to build on it in the Academy to improve standards and raise ambition and aspiration.

#### **4.17 Needs of Pupils**

Parents at both schools were understandably concerned about disruption to pupils education, particularly for those students who would be in Key Stage 4 at the time of the change, and for the pupils in the Sanderling Unit at Rock Ferry High School. Loss of staff was also raised as an issue.

The Academy will incorporate resourced provision for statemented pupils. Discussions have already begun with staff in the Sanderling Unit, and parents of pupils in the Sanderling Unit will be contacted in the coming weeks regarding discussions about the future of the Unit in relation to the Academy proposal. The local authority, which is responsible for ensuring that the needs of the pupils (as described in their statements of special educational needs) are met, will work closely with all those involved – pupils and their parents/carers, Sanderling staff and the sponsors of the academy – to ensure that the excellent work of The Sanderling Unit, achieved over many years, is not lost.

Transition arrangements, to be decided during the Feasibility stage, will protect pupils from disruption as far as possible. It may be that Key Stage 4 pupils continue and finish their secondary education on their existing site. If the proposal is approved, the support of all concerned is vital to ensure a smooth transition and minimise disruption to all pupils and their families, as well as staff.

#### **Other suggestions raised during consultation for these schools**

#### **4.18 Alternative site options**

During the consultation, four alternative sites for the Academy were raised. This included the Shaftesbury/Borough Road playing field site (see 4.4) and the Rock Ferry site (see 4.8).

- 4.19 One respondent to consultation suggested the Prenton High site as the site for the Mixed Academy, as a “site swap” with the Rock Ferry High site. This site is shared with Bedford Drive Primary School – the total site size is 34,760 m<sup>2</sup>, which would technically require use of off-site pitches. The site is in Council ownership. The portion of the site occupied by Prenton High School is subject to a PFI contract until 2031.

There are no current plans to close or relocate Bedford Drive Primary School. This site is not recommended for further consideration.

- 4.20 A further site was suggested as the Hind Street former gasworks site. The site is large enough to house a 750 place Academy. It lies adjacent to Rock Retail park, and is close to Birkenhead town centre, Birkenhead Central station and the central bus hub.

However, only a small area of the total site is in Council ownership, and it is next to two large gasometers. The rules about exclusion zones around hazardous sites were tightened in the wake of the 2005 Buncefield oil depot explosion in Hertfordshire, and the Health and Safety Executive will not approve any development within 150 metres of a gasometer. A visually low grade brownfield site with major redevelopment costs, there are existing approved plans in place for commercial development and a new

access road which will divide the site. In addition to site purchase and brown field costs, removal of the gasometers, even if practical, is likely to require very significant Council funding. This site is not recommended for further consideration.

#### 4.21 **Amalgamate Rock Ferry High and Bebington High Schools**

In this option, both Rock Ferry High School and Bebington High Schools would close and be replaced by a school, presumably at the Bebington High School site. There is extensive overlap between the pupil populations of the two schools, which are 1.7 miles apart. Bebington High School, like Park High School, is also a PFI school with all the same obligations and issues. It is also a Foundation Trust school, which means that the governing body of the school could refer a proposal to close or amalgamate the school to the School's Adjudicator.

If the Council is minded to proceed with this option, consultation would need to begin again. This option is not recommended for further consideration.

#### 4.21 **Close Rock Ferry High School**

This option would retain Park High School as a community school. Parents of pupils currently attending Rock Ferry High School would be asked to express a preference for an alternative local school, which could include Park High School, however staff and pupils would not have the opportunity to participate and benefit from the Academy sponsor team's expertise and vision. Particularly for staff, in an amalgamation, both sets of staff are made technically redundant and can apply for posts in the new school. Under this option, only Rock Ferry staff would be made redundant and would be eligible for redeployment. The Sanderling Unit would also need to be rehoused in an alternative local secondary school by agreement with the governing body of that school.

The Governing body of Rock Ferry High are aware of this and made this point in their response to consultation:

*"The demographic argument (pupil numbers) for closing Rock Ferry High School is clear.*

*Either:*

*(i) The school will simply close and pupils, the community and staff will have nothing,*

*Or:*

*(ii) Rock Ferry High School will close and join with Park High School, which will also close, to form a new Academy with the University of Chester as Lead Sponsor."*

Should the Academy proposal fall at any stage, this option may require consideration. This option is not recommended to proceed at this time.

#### 4.22 **Keep both schools open; either as community schools or as Academies**

This option does not deal with surplus places or demographics, and leaves both schools vulnerable to the considerable challenges of operating small schools.

As reported in Section 4 of the November 2007 Cabinet report, the Wirral working group agreed that a definite size beyond which a school was no longer viable was impossible to determine in Wirral. However, the discussion group did agree that compromises became increasingly difficult for cohorts approaching 100 pupils or less. National research on secondary school size has been scarce, but a study carried out in 2002 suggests that the optimum cohort size for a comprehensive school is **between 175 and 200** pupils. For an 11 to 16 secondary school, this would result in

between 875 and 1000 total pupils. The past, current and projected average cohort size at each school in the Birkenhead part of the Phase 1 review area is shown in the table below. Shaded cells indicate a fall in average cohort size.

Average Cohort Size	2008 11 to 16	2010 11 to 16	2019 11 to 16 projected	Difference 2008 to 2019
Park	174	144	140	-34
Prenton	128	127	144	+16
Ridgeway	152	140	123	-29
Rock Ferry	138	108	70	-68
St Anselm's	128	129	131	+3
Upton Hall	136	139	145	+9
Woodchurch	259	261	273	+14
BHS Academy	64	70	100	+36

Actual and projected average year group (cohort) size by school. Actuals are from January School Census 2008 and 2010.

- 4.23 Over the next five years, average cohorts at Prenton High, St Anselm's College, Upton Hall, Woodchurch High and Birkenhead High School Academy are projected to remain stable or grow in size, while average cohorts at Rock Ferry High, Ridgeway High and Park High are likely to experience a significant fall.
- 4.24 The Authority had expressed its concerns to the DCSF and GDST about the proposed size of Birkenhead High School Academy for Girls during the Feasibility stage for that Academy, and will continue to monitor the situation over the forthcoming years.
- 4.25 Overall in the Birkenhead area, the Authority projects a planning requirement for 32 classes per year group by 2019, however there are currently 38 classes worth of places in Birkenhead schools – we must look to reduce by one school. This “no change” option is therefore not recommended for further consideration.

## 5.0 Closure Consultation process

- 5.1 In order to establish the Academy, it is necessary to follow the statutory procedures to close the existing community secondary schools. The process must be completed during Feasibility before the Funding Agreement with the DCSF can be signed.
- 5.2 Currently the Academy is due to open in September 2011, as stated in the Expression of Interest. It is anticipated that the Funding Agreement between the sponsor team and the DCSF to finance the Academy will be signed by September 2010. For this to happen, it is necessary for the Council to secure the necessary approvals to close the existing schools. If the Council were to approve the current proposal, as consulted upon, involving the Academy on the Park site, it may just be possible to formally open the new Academy from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011 if this earlier date is agreed by the Sponsor team as outweighing the notable advantages of a 1<sup>st</sup> September start date. However if

further consultation is required, for example, in relation to the eventual single site for the Academy, the January 2011 date is no longer a possibility.

- 5.3 The Local Authority's closure consultation ended on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2010. If Cabinet's view is that the Academy proposal should proceed, the next step is for statutory notices to be published, followed by a six week representation period during which comments and objections can be made by any person or organisation in relation to the proposals. Council's Cabinet, as the Decision Maker, would then be asked to determine the notices taking into consideration the representations received, to decide whether the predecessor schools should close, with a proviso that approval of the closures is conditional on the Funding Agreement for the new Academy being successfully signed. This decision is expected at the end of July 2010. The 6 week representation period following notice publication is statutory and cannot be compressed any further.
- 5.4 The sponsor team is currently undertaking the official consultation on the opening of the Academy. This consultation finishes on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2010. The consultation outcomes are reported to the Secretary of State as part of the required documentation for the Funding Agreement. The consultation is on-going, but has included meetings for stakeholders at both schools, and provision for written and e-mail submissions. The consultation website address is [www.proposeduab.co.uk](http://www.proposeduab.co.uk).
- Cabinet may feel that it is premature to agree a closure process on schools whilst the consultation process for the replacement school is still open. Cabinet may decide that it needs to see a response from the lead sponsor concerning their proposals after a full consideration of the consultation responses. In that case, the Director would submit a report agreed with the University of Chester to the Cabinet meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> May. The timetable would then be the column marked with an asterisk \* on the table in 5.5 below.
- 5.5 The timetable below outlines the necessary stages of consultation for each school concerned. Consultation will involve staff, governors, parents and the local community in relation to each affected school, as well as other statutory consultees set out in guidance.

Action	Date	
Report to Cabinet	14 <sup>th</sup> January 2010	
Formal closure consultation begins (6 weeks)	24 <sup>th</sup> February 2010	
Formal closure consultation closes	7 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	
Report to Cabinet	15 <sup>th</sup> April 2010	27 <sup>th</sup> May 2010*
Statutory closure consultation begins (6 weeks)	12 <sup>th</sup> May 2010	9 <sup>th</sup> June 2010*
Statutory closure consultation closes	21 <sup>st</sup> June 2010	21 <sup>st</sup> July 2010*
Report to Cabinet	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2010	2 <sup>nd</sup> September 2010*

Dates marked with \* indicate the timeline if the report is deferred until 27<sup>th</sup> May Cabinet. Note that Cabinet dates after 15<sup>th</sup> April 2010 have not yet been set – indicative dates are given here as a guide only.

- 5.6 If the decision on the closure proposals is deferred to 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010 to coincide with the conclusion of the separate yet linked Academy consultation, it would not be possible to establish the Academy on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2011. It would certainly be possible to establish the Academy on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011, unless there were further delays, for example concerning the choice of site. Should the lead sponsor and the Cabinet wish to pursue a new site, it is impossible at this stage to define what the timescale would be. It is inevitable, however, that the timescale would be longer than shown in 5.4 above.

## 6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Operating a public consultation as part of the Feasibility stage of the Academy process has financial implications to the Council in terms of resources and staff time.
- 6.2 Capital funding for new and refurbished Academy buildings is from the national Building Schools for the Future programme. The responsibility to provide sites for Academies rests with the LA. There are likely to be significant costs in the management of the Academy programme and the transition stage which will be the subject of future reports.
- 6.3 Establishment of an Academy will result in an on-going impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The Academy would be funded via an adjustment to the DSG through replication of the local formula, in addition, funding would also be removed based on the level of central expenditure within the schools budget. This funding adjustment may require the LA to cut central expenditure in line with the reduction in funding. Due to fixed costs, economies of scale and varying support provided for individual schools the budget reduction is unlikely to match the cost reductions achievable by no longer providing certain services to an Academy.
- 6.4 As the Academy would be located on the former Park High site, a leasing arrangement will need to be in place, otherwise at the end of the PFI term in 2031, the buildings and land which under Community status would previously have reverted to the Local Authority will be signed over to the Academy Trust without any payment or compensation to the Authority
- 6.5 Academies that open in the predecessor school buildings may be entitled to a small additional capital grant to cover costs such as renewed signage and other small capital projects required to open the school as an academy.

## **7.0 Staffing Implications**

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.
- 7.2 The creation of the Mixed Academy will require significant staff transfers under TUPE, provision of staff matched to the transition arrangements and the management of the transfer from existing staffing structures to those of the new Academy.
- 7.3 Costs arising from redundancies agreed prior to establishment of the new Academy are shared between the LA and the DCSF. Any redundancy costs arising following the establishment of the Academy are to be met from the Academy's budget.
- 7.4 As a PFI school, the Academy Trust will not be able to directly employ staff providing services under the PFI contract until the end of the contract.
- 7.5 There are contractual issues to be considered, for example existing contracts with private providers at Rock Ferry, e.g. catering.

## **8.0 Equal Opportunities Implications**

- 8.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.
- 8.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

## **9.0 Community Safety Implications**

- 9.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

## **10.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement**

- 10.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

## **11.0 Planning Implications**

- 11.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.
- 11.2 All capital works will be subject to the relevant national and local planning legislation.

## **12.0 Anti-Poverty Implications**

- 12.1 The capital investment in refurbished Academy provision is intended to contribute to "narrowing the gap" which is one of the Council's priorities.
- 12.2 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

## **13.0 Social Inclusion Implications**

- 13.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the forthcoming Building Schools for the Future programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families.

## **14.0 Local Member Support Implications**

- 14.1 Secondary school re-organisation and potential surplus place removal have relevance to all Wards.
- 14.2 The secondary schools named in this report are located in Claughton and Rock Ferry Wards.



## **15.0 Background Papers**

Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.

School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DCSF).

School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DCSF requirements.

Consultation Documents

Other data held in Department including that provided by Wirral Health Authority.

## **16.0 Appendices**

See list attached.

## **17.0 Summary**

17.1 No one closes schools lightly. However, there is general agreement amongst all stakeholders that action must be taken to address the issue of surplus capacity. Officers are required to offer clear advice as to appropriate action in order to spend public money wisely and ensure all Wirral's children benefit equitably from the funding available. The recommendations below I believe will ensure best value for the future generations of children in the review areas, and more equitable spending for the benefit of all Wirral's pupils, from the savings made.

## **18.0 Recommendations**

The Cabinet instructs the Director to follow one of two courses:

Either 1a:

- 1) That statutory proposals be published in respect of the following proposals  
To close Rock Ferry High School and Park High Schools
- 2) That the closure date for the two schools be set in accordance with the proposed opening date for the new Academy, by agreement with the University of Chester as lead sponsor and the Department for Children, Schools and Families
- 3) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish these proposals, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including requesting permissions from the Secretary of State, in furtherance of the proposals.

or 1b:

- 1) That the Director reports to the Cabinet meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> May 2010 setting out the views of the lead sponsor following the end of the consultation period.
- 2) That consideration of the current report be deferred until that time.

**Howard Cooper**

**Director of Children's Services**

# List of Appendices

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Description</b>
A	Minute to Cabinet report of 26 <sup>th</sup> November 2009
B	Minute to Cabinet report of 9 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
C	Minute to Cabinet report of 14 <sup>th</sup> January 2010
<i>Consultation</i>	
D	Consultation document and letters
E1	Analysis of Consultation
E2	Summary of responses

# CABINET

Thursday, 26 November 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	Finance & Best Value
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly M McLaughlin R Moon J Stapleton	Corporate Resources Housing & Community Safety Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Environment Community & Customer Engagement Social Care & Inclusion Culture, Tourism & Leisure Regeneration & Planning Strategy
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillor	J Quinn	Streetscene & Transport Services

## 190 MINUTES

**RESOLVED - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 5 November 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.**

## 191 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest in Item No.3 on the agenda – Committee Referral – Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Review of Secondary School Places Phase I (Minute No. 197 refers), by virtue of being a Governor of Park High School. He left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Councillor S Kelly informed the meeting that he would be leaving the room whilst the next item of business was under discussion because it included reference to Ridgeway High School and when the previous decision was called-in, he had attended the call-in meeting and expressed his views in relation to that school. Consequently, he had pre-determined himself.

## 192 COMMITTEE REFERRAL - CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1

A special meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee was held on 3 November 2009, to consider the call in of Minute 143 of Cabinet (1/10/09) relating to the above by the Conservative Group. Councillor P Davies informed that new information had been brought to his attention since the decision the Cabinet had made on 1 October 2009. He recommended that the Council should continue to support Ridgeway High School and that a report detailing options to re-organise Secondary Education in Wirral be presented to the Cabinet in due course.

**RESOLVED - That**

- (1) Cabinet notes the resolutions discussed at the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 3 November 2009;**
- (2) Cabinet reiterates its determination to tackle the surplus places issue in secondary education in order that public money is spent wisely and pupils receive the best possible education;**
- (3) Cabinet notes the concerns expressed by parents and Governors of Ridgeway High School about its closure and the wishes of the governing body that it cannot agree to a proposal that would ultimately see the closure of Ridgeway High School;**
- (4) In view of these representations, Cabinet believes that the '3 into 2' model which would see the closure of Park High, Rock Ferry High and Ridgeway High Schools and their replacement with two new Academies should be formally withdrawn';**
- (5) Whilst Cabinet notes the professional view of the Director of Children's Services remains that the '3 into 2' model is the best solution to tackle the issue of surplus places and the gender imbalance in Birkenhead, the Authority pledges to continue to give its full support to Ridgeway High School through school improvement activities as it has always done;**
- (6) In light of the above, there is clearly a need to identify a new options for reorganising secondary education in Birkenhead in order to reduce surplus places. Cabinet is also mindful of the window of opportunity available to attract significant additional funding from the current government for improving secondary education in Birkenhead;**
- (7) Cabinet, therefore, agrees to revert to the original '2 into 1' model, which it agreed on 6 November 2008, and to recommence discussions and pre-consultation on the closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High in order to establish a new mixed Academy for pupils on either the Park High site or a new site, i.e. Borough Road Playing Fields. The Director is requested to consult with representatives of Park High School and Rock Ferry High School and representatives of residents from the Tranmere Hall and Mount Estates and with Shaftsbury Youth Club on the siting of the new Academy and report back to Cabinet on 9 December 2009;**
- (8) Cabinet also asks the Director to begin discussions with other key stakeholders on the '2 into 1' model outlined above. This should include working with the Office of the Schools Commissioner and the Department of Children, Schools and Families to form a sponsor team and produce a new Statement of Intent. The Cabinet's view is that the previous Mixed Academy sponsor team should be put forward to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee;**
- (9) The Director be also authorised to undertake pre-consultation on the closure of predecessor schools;**

- (10) **A further report, including the new Expression of Interest (EO1) be brought back to the Cabinet as a matter of urgency. It is proposed that if the Cabinet approves the EO1 it will also approve commencement of consultation on closure of the two schools as part of the Feasibility Stage; and**
- (11) **In view of the urgency of this item, the Cabinet agrees to waive the call-in process.**

## 193 **RECENT COUNCIL ACHIEVEMENTS**

The Leader reported that the Council had been successful recently in respect of the following:

- (a) **Equality Standard for Local Government – Level 3 Re-Assessment**

This assessment involved a successful review of the whole Council and its approach of embedding equality and diversity across everything that it does as an employer, a service provider, a commissioner and in its leadership role within communities. Level 3 was recognised nationally and showed that the Council had developed and implemented the necessary systems and processes to promote equality and opportunity for all.

- (b) **Investors in People Standard**

The Council had successfully retained Investor in People status. The Investors in People Standard was a business improvement tool designed to advance an organisation's performance through its people. The Council was prepared for re-assessment against ten indicators of the Investors in People Standard. The review not only involved interviews with all staff, including senior managers, but also included Councillors and Trade Unions.

### **RESOLVED -**

**That all staff involved with these two initiatives be congratulated and thanked for all their hard work.**

## 194 **PROPOSAL FOR THE RELOCATION OF STANLEY SCHOOL**

The Director of Children's Services reported that on 23 April 2009 the Cabinet had given approval to:

- (1) The rebuilding of both Stanley and Elleray Park Schools on new sites, each co-located with a mainstream primary school;
- (2) The implementation of a feasibility study regarding the possible creation of a 2-19 special school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and;

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# CABINET

Wednesday, 9 December 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	Finance & Best Value
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn	Corporate Resources Housing & Community Safety Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Environment Community & Customer Engagement Social Care & Inclusion Tourism & Leisure Streetscene & Transport Services
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	J Stapleton	Regeneration & Planning Strategy

## 219 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor P Davies declared a personal interest in agenda item 14 (minute No 221/2009 refers) review of Secondary School Places Phase 1 – site for a possible Academy by virtue of him being a Governor of Wirral Metropolitan College.

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest in the same item by virtue of him being a Governor of one of the schools referred to in the report. He left the meeting whilst this item of business was under discussion.

## 220 MINUTES

### RESOLVED:

**That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet on 26 November 2009 be confirmed as a correct record.**

## 221 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1 - SITE FOR A POSSIBLE ACADEMY

Following the Cabinet's decision on 26 November 2009 (Minute No 192/2009 refers) to revert to an earlier option for secondary school reorganisation in Birkenhead, a report by the Director of Children's Services advised of a result of consultations with various stakeholders on the possibility of a new Academy being constructed on the Park High site of the Shaftsbury/borough Road playing field site, provided a likely timetable for the Academy process and updated on developments in relation to the Sponsor team for the Mixed Academy.

The Director was in attendance at the meeting and took Members through the detail of his report answering their questions as appropriate.

Councillor P Davies paid tribute to Park High and Rock Ferry High Schools, in particular, the contributions of their pupils, staff and Governors had made resulting in the excellent standards both schools had achieved.

It was noted that the Cabinet had waived the Call-in in respect of this matter when it was discussed on 26 November but had made it clear, at the time, that it would not be waiving it again in respect of the decision to be made at this meeting.

Councillor P Davies moved the following motion:

“Cabinet agrees to:

- (1) the inclusion of the Park High site and the Shaftsbury / Borough Road playing field site as potential sites for the Mixed Academy in the Expression of Interest, subject to a Statement on Intent being issued by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Full public consultation with residents and businesses should take place on the Shaftsbury / Borough Road site and a final decision on the preferred site to be taken by the Cabinet in January 2010;
- (2) the inclusion of Birkenhead Sixth Form College and the University of Liverpool within the Mixed Academy Sponsor team, for inclusion in the Statement of Intent and Expression of Interest to be sent to the Minister;
- (3) the Director of Children’s Services to have urgent discussions with the sponsor team with a view to confirming the leader sponsor for the Mixed Academy; and
- (4) and pays tribute to the excellent contribution made by the Staff, pupils and Governors of Park High and Rock Ferry high Schools to education in Birkenhead.”

The following **AMENDMENT** was moved by Councillor S Holbrook

“Cabinet agrees to:

- (1) the current Park High site as the preferred location for the mixed academy to replace Rock Ferry HS and Park HS. This should be included in the Statement of Intent and the Expression of Interest to be sent to the Minister.
- (2) to (4) as above.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared carried as 4 Members voted for the amendment and 3 voted against it.

The amendment then became the Substantive Motion and was put to the vote and declared carried as 7 Members voted for it and no Members voted against it.

**RESOLVED: That Cabinet agrees to:**

- (1) the current Park High site as the preferred location for the mixed academy to replace Rock Ferry HS and Park HS. This should be included in the Statement of Intent and the Expression of Interest to be sent to the Minister.**



**(2) the inclusion of Birkenhead Sixth Form College and the University of Liverpool within the Mixed Academy Sponsor team, for inclusion in the Statement of Intent and Expression of Interest to be sent to the Minister;**

**(3) the Director of Children's Services to have urgent discussions with the sponsor team with a view to confirming the leader sponsor for the Mixed Academy;**

**(4) and pays tribute to the excellent contribution made by the Staff, pupils and Governors of Park High and Rock Ferry high Schools to education in Birkenhead."**

## 222 GOVERNANCE REVIEW - PROPOSED GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

A report by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ("the Act") required the Council to review its governance arrangements and move to either:

- a new style 'Leader and Cabinet' model; or
- a 'directly elected Mayor and Cabinet' model.

Before drawing up its governance proposals, the Council was required to take reasonable steps to consult local government electors and any other interested persons, in the authority's area. The Council's consultation period commenced on 6 October 2009 and ended on 30 November 2009 and the steps taken to consult local government electors and interested parties included:

- a press release was placed in a local newspaper (Wirral Globe) on 8 October 2009 (although the press release was issued on 7 October 2009);
- the Council's Website was amended to advertise the new governance arrangements and to invite local electors and other interested persons to make comments and express their views/opinions on the proposals;
- the Cabinet report dated 24 September 2009 detailing the proposed governance arrangements as highlighted at all eleven Area Forum meetings by the Chairperson and copies of the report made available to the public.

Furthermore, both the Daily Post and Wirral News featured a discussion forum on the proposed governance arrangements; and Heart FM Radio, Severn Waves Radio and BBC Radio Merseyside all featured the proposed governance proposals. The Wirral Globe further published letters received in relation to the governance proposals on 29 October, 5, 11 and 18 November 2009.

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# CABINET

Thursday, 14 January 2010

Present: Councillor S Foulkes (Chair) Finance and Best Value  
Councillors S Holbrook Corporate Resources  
G Davies Housing & Community Safety  
P Davies Children's Services & Lifelong Learning  
G Gardiner Environment  
M McLaughlin Social Care & Inclusion  
R Moon Tourism & Leisure  
J Quinn Streetscene & Transport Services  
J Stapleton Regeneration & Planning Strategy

Apologies Councillor S Kelly Community & Customer Engagement

## **249 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The members of the Cabinet were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on this agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Steve Foulkes declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 3, 'Outcome of Proposal for the Closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School' (see minute 252) by virtue of his friendship with the caretaker of one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor Simon Holbrook declared a personal interest in agenda item 15, 'Regional Waste Strategy – Draft Update' (see minute 264) due to his employment.

Councillor Bob Moon declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 38, 'New Ferry Butterfly Park - Request for Compulsory Purchase Order Powers' (see minute 287) due to his involvement with the volunteers.

Councillor Phil Davies declared personal interests in agenda items 4 and 6 'Outcome of Statutory Notice Consultation on the Proposed Relocation of Gilbrook Special School' and 'Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1 – Mixed Academy' (see minutes 253 and 255 respectively) by virtue of him being a school governor and on the governing body of Wirral Metropolitan College. Also a personal interest in agenda item 8, 'Valuing People Now – A Three Year Strategic Commissioning Framework for People with Learning Disabilities' (see minute 257) by virtue of him being a nonexecutive Director of NHS Wirral.

Councillor George Davies declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 6, 'Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1 – Mixed Academy' (see minute 255) by virtue of him being a governor of Park High School.

The Chief Executive, Steve Maddox, declared a personal interest in agenda item 6, 'Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1 – Mixed Academy' (see minute 255) by virtue of him being on the governing body of Wirral Metropolitan College.

## **255 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1 - MIXED ACADEMY**

(Councillor G Davies, having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 249) left the room during its consideration)

The Director of Children's Services sought ratification for the Expression of Interest for a Mixed Academy on the site of Park High School, and asked for approval to commence the statutory consultation process for closure of the predecessor secondary schools.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning expressed his

thanks to the Director and all his staff who had contributed to turning around the Expression of Interest in such a short timeframe following the decision of Cabinet on 9 December, 2009 (minute 221 refers), the Statement of Intent being signed by the Minister for Schools and Learners on 21 December, 2009. He also thanked the DCSF and Governing Bodies of both Park and Rock Ferry High Schools and expressed his delight that both universities, Chester (as lead sponsor) and Liverpool were on board as part of the sponsor team.

Resolved – That:

- (1) the Cabinet notes Ministerial approval of the Expression of Interest for the Mixed Academy and the commencement of Feasibility; and
- (2) approval be given to the Director of Children's Services to undertake all necessary formal consultations on the closure of the two predecessor schools as set out by guidance.

## HAVE YOUR SAY ON SCHOOL CHANGES IN BIRKENHEAD

### About this document

This document has been produced by Wirral Council as the first part of the consultation process with parents, the local community and other interested parties. The Council considers that the proposal is in the best interests of children, parents and staff at both Park High School and Rock Ferry High School and within the Birkenhead area as a whole. This proposal would bring together the two schools to create a single Academy to serve the Birkenhead area, increasing the opportunities for, and raising the performance of, all students in this area. The Governing Bodies at both schools have voted to support the development of an Academy in principle.



The sponsors backing the Academy are as follows;

- **University of Chester** (lead sponsor),
- **Birkenhead Sixth Form College** (co-sponsor)
- **University of Liverpool** (co-sponsor)
- **Wirral Metropolitan College** (co-sponsor)
- **Wirral Council** (also a co-sponsor)

### The Closure Consultation

By law, Wirral Council as the local authority must consult on the closure of the two secondary schools separately from the consultation on the establishment of the new Academy, although the two consultations will take place around the same time.

We would like to hear your views about the following proposal. The closure consultation will run until 7th April 2010.

**To close Rock Ferry High School and Park High School on 31 August 2011 and replace both schools with one Academy on 1 September 2011**



## Statutory School Closure Consultation

Closure of Rock Ferry High School and Park High School  
in order to establish an Academy

February - April 2010



Children and Young People's Department

## ABOUT THE SCHOOLS

### Rock Ferry High

Rock Ferry High is a mixed community school for students aged 11-16. The number of students has been going down and in January 2009, it had 584 on roll. Forecasts show the numbers will continue to fall, remaining low over the next ten years.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in March 2008 when it was judged to be a good school. The percentage of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes including English and Maths has consistently been below 30% and the school is therefore in the government's National Challenge programme.

### Park High

Park High is a mixed community school for students aged 11-16. The number of students has been going down and in January 2009 it had 811 on roll. Forecasts show the numbers will continue to fall, remaining low over the next ten years.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in January 2009 when it was judged to be a good school with outstanding features. The percentage of students achieving 5 or more GCSE passes including English and Maths has consistently been below 30% and the school is therefore in the government's National Challenge programme.



## ABOUT THE PROPOSAL

### Why close these two schools and replace them with an academy?

Following the Secondary Places Review in 2008/2009, the Council has worked with the sponsors to develop a transformational vision for learning and raising educational attainment in this area. Although both schools have been judged to be good schools by Ofsted and have done good work within their specialisms, GCSE results at the two schools mean that they are among the lowest performing schools in the country. Other equally deprived areas in the country have shown that it is possible to achieve better results for pupils.

In addition, there are not enough pupils to keep two secondary schools going. There are already more than 1000 empty pupil places in Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools. The Council has to address this so that resources are not wasted and all pupils get a good education.

The Council is supporting the creation of an Academy to replace Rock Ferry High and Park High, with strong educational sponsors who have the extra skills and resources to support the Academy in the long run. We believe this is a powerful combination of sponsors with a range of relevant experience, skills and expertise. If the proposals are approved, then these sponsors would be responsible for

running the academy. The Academy, working with the sponsors and other local partners, will provide a full range of courses to meet students' academic and vocational aspirations. The Academy would specialise in Applied Learning with a focus on Science and Technology and Health and Social Care.

The proposed new Academy would have around 1100 students initially, gradually decreasing to around 750 pupils. This is the same size as Prenton High School for Girls. The sponsors will put in place a structure and organisation that will ensure the friendly and caring atmosphere associated with smaller schools.

### What are the benefits?

We believe some of the advantages the new academy would offer include:

- Providing long term, sustainable high quality secondary education for Birkenhead's children
- Generating significant support from the sponsor team who have a wide range of expertise in higher and further education
- Refurbished buildings within 2 to 3 years
- New ways of learning for young people to achieve their maximum potential
- Specialism in Applied Learning focusing on Science and Technology and Health and Social Care
- Improving educational opportunities for pupils of all backgrounds with a major focus on literacy and numeracy
- New improved facilities for pupils with special educational needs
- Latest information and communication technologies to equip students for the 21st century
- Enhancing the range of specialist provision in secondary schools
- A wider range of services and facilities to be made available to the community
- Removing surplus capacity from secondary schools

### Why can't we keep the schools as they are?

This is not a viable option.

Pupil numbers are already falling and will continue to fall for years to come. This is important because the budget a school receives is based largely on the number of pupils on roll. As the school roll falls, the budget shrinks and schools have to make difficult decisions about staffing levels and curriculum delivery.

The proposal will address the falling roll by merging the two schools into a single Academy ensuring that secondary provision in the area remains sustainable for the future whilst delivering the highest quality of teaching and learning in premises fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.



### **What about other options?**

Other options have been considered.

We could re-organise the two schools by closing one of them and keeping the other school open, possibly as a Trust school, but then we would not receive the additional Academy programme funding to refurbish the remaining school.

You may be aware that an alternative option under consideration was to close three schools, and to open two Academies – one Mixed and one for Boys only. Following initial consultation with sponsors, schools, governing bodies and community groups, this option was replaced by the current proposal which establishes a Mixed Academy to replace two schools.

### **What are the sponsors proposing?**

The sponsor team are consulting separately about their proposal, which they will set out in a separate consultation document. You should read this carefully to understand what they are proposing and, if you wish to comment, fill in their questionnaire. The sponsors website, [www.proposeduab.co.uk](http://www.proposeduab.co.uk) will be live soon, or call 020 7924 5109 for more information.

The Expression of Interest drawn up by the Sponsors is available on-line now at [www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview](http://www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview).

### **If the schools close, what would this mean for the existing students in the two schools?**

All students on the roll of both schools would be entitled to an automatic place at the Academy from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2011.

The Sanderling Unit, a Local Authority funded unit for pupils with statements of special educational needs, which is currently sited at Rock Ferry High School, will be replaced by funded provision at the new Academy.

Transition arrangements will aim to ensure the move from two schools into one is as smooth as possible for everyone concerned.

### **If the schools close what would this mean for parents and pupils in local primary schools?**

The admission criteria for the Academy will be the standard rules for admission to Wirral maintained community secondary schools. Pupils will not be selected by ability or faith. Anyone can apply for a place at the Academy.

1. Pupils due to transfer in Y7 to Rock Ferry High or Park High Schools in September 2010, would do so in the usual way.
2. In Autumn 2010, parents will be selecting the secondary schools they want their Y6 children to attend in September 2011, and the new Academy will be one of the options available.

### **If Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools close what will happen to the staff?**

A full consultation process will be undertaken with staff and their professional representatives throughout the development of the proposals for the Academy. It is hoped that the majority of staff would transfer to the new Academy under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) regulations.

The effect of the TUPE regulations is to preserve the continuity of employment and terms of conditions of those employees who are transferred to a new employer.



Sponsors recognise that continuity with excellent teachers and support staff is a decisive factor in a successful school and will actively work to achieve this as a priority in the development of the Academy.

### **What would happen to the Rock Ferry site?**

The Rock Ferry site is owned by the Council. There are no plans or planning applications in relation to the Rock Ferry site. Decisions about the future of sites no longer required for school use are only made after all the educational decisions have been finalised.

### **Is the closure date for the schools fixed?**

The closure date for the two schools is linked to the establishment date of the Academy. There are benefits to carrying out changes to school organisation at the natural end of an academic year. However, if during the Sponsors Academy consultation there is a strong view that the Academy should open on a different date, the closure date for the existing schools would be adjusted to match.

We would appreciate your views on the proposed opening date for the new Academy.

### **What happens next?**

The result of this consultation will be reported to Wirral Council Cabinet later this year. Cabinet will make a decision whether or not the two schools should close in order for an Academy to open. The Council will also consider any other options raised during the consultation.

If Cabinet's decision is to go ahead with the closures, statutory notices would be published in the local newspaper and at the schools. This is followed by a six week representation period during which any objections or comments in relation to the proposal can be sent to the Council.

At the end of the notice period, the closure proposals would be referred to the Cabinet. The Cabinet would see all responses received and decide whether to approve the proposals to close the schools in order to make way for the new academy.

The final decision about whether the academy goes ahead is made by the Secretary of State and the Schools Adjudicator. If the Academy does not go ahead, the schools would remain High Schools for the time being while further consultation takes place about the future of secondary education in Birkenhead.

## CONSULTATION TIMELINE

<b>Consultation begins</b>	<b>Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2010</b>
Park High parents/carers meeting	7pm, 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
Rock Ferry High parents/carers meeting	7pm, 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
<b>Consultation ends</b>	<b>Wednesday 7th April 2010</b>
Report to Wirral Cabinet to consider consultation outcomes and decide whether to proceed to the next stage	May 2010
If approved, public notices published for the closure of existing schools	June 2010
Report to Wirral Cabinet for a decision whether or not to close existing schools	September 2010
If approved, Funding Agreement signed by all sponsors	September 2010
Development of Academy implementation programme	September 2010 to September 2011
Academy opens	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2011

**Note: Timeline dates for post-consultation events are given as a guide only and may be subject to change.**

**The final decision is likely to be taken by Autumn 2010.**

## HAVING YOUR SAY

### If you want more information

Find out more by going to: [www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview](http://www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview)

Otherwise, if you have any queries or you need copies in a different format such as **large print** or in a different language, you can contact the Secondary Places Review team by phone on 0151 666 4351 or by email at [secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

### Consultation events

These events are about the closure of the two schools. The Academy lead sponsor will also attend. This means that you will be able to hear about the proposal to close Park High and Rock Ferry High in order to open the new Academy, and the exciting proposal that is being developed for the Academy.

School	Date
Park High School	7pm, Tuesday, 9 <sup>th</sup> March 2010
Rock Ferry High School	7pm, Thursday, 11 <sup>th</sup> March 2010

The meeting is an opportunity for parents, staff, governors and other people directly related to the school to have their views heard and noted by senior staff from the Department of Children's Services and the Council's Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning.

People associated with other local schools, and members of the public who want to, can write in with their views. **Anyone who wants to can write and say what they think.**

### HOW TO RESPOND

What do you think? Please make sure your response is received by

**Wednesday 7th April 2010**

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. The address is on the back of this leaflet.

Your comments can be sent by post, through the two schools, or by e-mail. If you find it helpful you can complete and return the **feedback form** on the next page. There is also a feedback form on the Consultation website:

[www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview](http://www.wirral-mbc.gov.uk/primaryplaces/secondaryreview)

Let us know what aspects you support and if there are any areas which particularly concern you.



## Closure of Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know the main relationships you have with the school(s) by putting a tick in the appropriate box or boxes. You might be a parent and a member of staff, for example.

School	Parent	Staff	Governor	Other person
Park High				
Rock Ferry High				
Other (please say which one)				

**Do you agree with the proposal to close both schools and replace them with an Academy?** Tick one box only. Yes  No  Undecided

### Comments

Please use this space for your comments. You can write more on another sheet if you need to.

*Continued...*

Please tell us your name and address, postcode and e-mail address if you have one. We will not use your personal information for anything other than this consultation.

Name:

---

Address:

---

Postcode:

---

Telephone:                      e-mail:

---

Please note: In order to ensure that this process is fully open and transparent, other people will be able to read all the responses to this consultation.

Address:                      Secondary Places Review – Closure Proposals  
 Director of Children's Services  
 Hamilton Building  
 Conway Street  
 Birkenhead  
 CH41 4FD  
 E-mail                      [secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

Make sure your response is received by:

**WEDNESDAY 7th APRIL 2010**

*Continued overleaf...*





Academy would provide a full range of courses to meet students' academic and vocational aspirations.

Also, there are not enough pupils to keep two secondary schools going. There are already more than 1000 empty pupil places in Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools. The Council has to address this so that resources are not wasted and all Wirral pupils get a good education.

This proposal would bring together the two schools to create a single Academy to serve the Birkenhead area, increasing the opportunities for, and raising the performance of, all students in this area. The Governing Bodies at both schools have voted to support the development of an Academy in principle.

### **The Consultation**

The Council would like to hear your views about the following proposal.

**To close Rock Ferry High School and Park High School on 31 August 2011 and replace both schools with one Academy on 1 September 2011**

Consultation meetings for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties will take place at

**Park High School on Tuesday 9th March 2010 at 7pm**

and at

**Rock Ferry High School on Thursday 11th March 2010 at 7pm**

Although this consultation is about the **closure of the two schools**, the University of Chester will attend these meetings as Lead Sponsor to explain more about the Academy.

### **Finding out more**

The closure consultation document is available to view:

- On-line at [www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/PrimaryPlaces/SecondaryConsultation.asp](http://www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/PrimaryPlaces/SecondaryConsultation.asp)
- at **your school**
- at local libraries and community centres

If you would like your own copy of the consultation document, please e-mail [secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk), or call the number at the top of this letter and give your address details.

### **Having your say**

If you want to write in, you can hand your comments in at your school, or by post to:

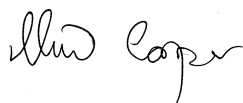
Secondary Places Review – Closure Proposals  
Director of Children's Services  
Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD

or via e-mail to [secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

**All comments must be received by WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2010**

It is important to remember that a final decision has NOT been made. All opinions received either in writing or at the meetings will be taken into account before a decision is made. Your views are important to us; please take this opportunity to have your say.

Yours sincerely



Howard Cooper  
*Director*Hamilton Building  
Conway Street  
Birkenhead, Wirral,  
Merseyside CH41 4FD  
Telephone: 0151- 606-2000  
Direct Line: 0151 666 +ext  
Fax: 0151-666- 4207  
Email: children@wirral.gov.uk

to Parent/Carer consultees

date 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010

your ref

my ref SRPh1/Consultation/SGAcademy0310Reminder

tel ext 4351

please ask for

Sally Gibbs

Dear Parent/Carer

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE ROCK FERRY HIGH AND PARK HIGH IN ORDER TO OPEN AN ACADEMY**

The Council recently began a consultation on the proposal to close Park High and Rock Ferry High Schools in order to establish an Academy school in Birkenhead. Several people have since asked for more information about the proposal. This letter gives more information about **the review**, about **the Academy**, about **standards**, and also has a reminder about the upcoming consultation **meeting dates**.

**THE REVIEW**

The Council began to review Wirral's secondary school provision in 2008. This is because pupil numbers were already falling and will continue to fall for years to come. This is important because the budget a school receives is based largely on the number of pupils on roll. As the school roll falls, the budget shrinks and schools have to make difficult decisions about staffing levels and curriculum delivery.

The proposal addresses the falling roll and surplus places by merging the two schools into a single Academy ensuring that secondary provision in the area is sustainable for the future whilst delivering the highest quality of teaching and learning in premises fit for the 21st Century.

**BUILDING AMBITION AND ASPIRATION**

The Council is supporting the creation of an Academy in the Birkenhead area to bring together Rock Ferry High and Park High Schools as a single school with strong educational sponsors who have the extra skills and resources to support the Academy in the long run. If the proposals are approved, then these sponsors would run the Academy. The Academy would provide a full range of courses to meet students' academic and vocational aspirations, increasing opportunities and raising the performance of all students.

Opening an Academy would also allow the Council to access £250 million of funding for "Building Schools for the Future" earlier than originally planned. This funding would potentially benefit every secondary age pupil in mainstream and special schools across Wirral through rebuilding or refurbishing school buildings.

## **ABOUT THE ACADEMY**

The Expression of Interest says:

- The Academy would be sponsored by the University of Chester, with Birkenhead 6<sup>th</sup> Form College, Wirral Met, the University of Liverpool and Wirral Council as co-sponsors.
- The Academy would be for boys and girls aged 11 to 16
- The Academy would specialise in Applied Learning with a focus on Science and Technology and Health and Social Care.
- The Academy would open in September 2011
- Pupils on roll at Park High and Rock Ferry High would automatically transfer to the Academy when it opens
- Admission to the Academy would follow the Council's standard admission policy – there will be no selection (an Academy is not a Grammar school)

## **STANDARDS**

### **Contextual Value Added (CVA)**

This is a measure of how much progress pupils make at a school, compared with similar pupils in other schools. It takes into account various background factors – not just how well pupils have achieved at Key Stage 2 (Y6 SATS), but whether they are boys or girls, whether they have special educational needs, the level of deprivation in the area and so on.

In the last three years CVA scores show that pupils in both schools made at least the expected rate of progress, with pupils at Park High (2007, 2008) and Rock Ferry High (2008, 2009) making significantly more progress than similar pupils in other schools.

### **National Challenge**

The Government says that at least 30% of the pupils at every school in the country should get 5 or more GCSEs at grade A\* to C, including English and Maths. Schools that don't meet this target are called "National Challenge" schools and can get additional assistance to help them reach the target. Both Park High School and Rock Ferry High School are "National Challenge" schools. Although both schools remain below the target in 2009, the GCSE results show a year on year improvement.

### **Ofsted**

Ofsted last inspected Rock Ferry High School in March 2008. This is taken from Ofsted's report.

"Rock Ferry High School is a good school providing high quality education and care. It provides an inclusive and attractive learning environment where all pupils are able to flourish in a happy, family, community atmosphere based on mutual respect and excellent relationships...The personal development and well-being of pupils is outstanding...The school provides its pupils with an outstanding curriculum."

Ofsted last inspected Park High School in January 2009. This is taken from Ofsted's report.

"This is a good school in which the quality of care, guidance and support is outstanding. The school has made very good progress since the last inspection because effective and purposeful leadership is driving the school forward strongly...The relentless focus on improvement and rapidly rising standards mean that the school has outstanding capacity to improve even further....The school uses its extensive links with outside agencies outstandingly well."

The full reports are available from the school, or on-line from [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk).

## THE CONSULTATION

To remind you, consultation meetings for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties will take place at:

**Park High School on Tuesday 9th March 2010 at 7pm  
and at  
Rock Ferry High School on Thursday 11th March 2010 at 7pm**

Although this consultation is about the **closure of the two schools**, a representative of the University of Chester will attend these meetings as Lead Sponsor to explain more about the Academy.

There will be a lot more detailed discussion about how the Academy will operate in the next few months. This is called the Feasibility stage. The Academy Sponsors will hold their own consultation about the Academy later this term.

### Having your say

If you want to write in, you can hand your comments in at your school, or by post to:

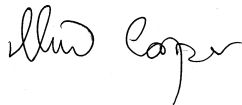
Secondary Places Review – Closure Proposals  
Director of Children's Services  
Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD

or via e-mail to [secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

**All comments must be received by WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2010**

It is important to remember that a final decision has NOT been made. All opinions received either in writing or at the meetings will be taken into account before a decision is made. Your views are important to us; please take this opportunity to have your say.

Yours sincerely



pp Howard Cooper  
Director of Children's Services

# **APPENDIX 4A**

## **Analysis of Consultation**

### **Consultation Meetings - CLOSURE**

#### **Park High School**

##### **Present:**

Cllr Phil Davies (Chairman)  
Mark Parkinson – LA  
Gordon Fair – LA  
Stuart Bellerby – LA  
Peter Bishop - LA  
David Armstrong – LA  
Sally Gibbs – LA  
Phil Edwards – Technician  
Steve McMahon – Headteacher

Attended by 20 parents (42%), 4 staff members (8%), 5 governors (10%), and 18 other interested persons (38%). 4 councillors also attended.

Of parents – 8 were Park High parents, 2 were Rock Ferry High parents, 8 were primary school parents and two were unidentified parents.

1% of Park High pupils were represented by at least one parent/carer.

#### **Rock Ferry High School**

##### **Present:**

Cllr Phil Davies (Chairman)  
Mark Parkinson – LA  
Gordon Fair – LA  
Stuart Bellerby – LA  
Peter Bishop - LA  
David Armstrong – LA  
Sally Gibbs – LA  
Phil Edwards – Technician  
Peter Bennett - Headteacher  
Cllr Walter Smith – Chair of Governors

Attended by 50 parents (40%), 44 staff members (31%), 12 governors (6%) and 25 other interested persons (20%). 3 councillors also attended.

Of parents –38 were Rock Ferry High parents, 7 were primary parents, and 5 were unidentified parents.

8% of Rock Ferry High pupils were represented by at least one parent/carer.

## Number of responses received by school

Responses	Total	Directly related	Others
Park High	8	8	0
Rock Ferry High	85	65	20
Other	11		

### All written responses (forms, letters, e-mails) by respondent category and area at 6<sup>th</sup> April

	Number	Percentage in category	Percentage of Total
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>104</b>		
<b>Total Parents</b>	<b>28</b>	100	<b>27</b>
Rock Ferry	16	57	15
Park	5	18	5
Primary	6	21	6
Other secondary	1	4	1
<b>Total Staff</b>	<b>49</b>	100	<b>47</b>
Rock Ferry	47	96	45
Park	2	4	2
<b>Total Governors</b>	<b>3</b>	100	<b>4</b>
Rock Ferry	2	67	3
Park	1	33	1
<b>Total Others</b>	<b>24</b>	100	<b>23</b>
Rock Ferry related	20	83	19
Other Secondary	2	8	2
Unknown/No relationship	2	8	2

Note - respondents with multiple relationships are counted once in their "top level" category; e.g. A parent governor will count as a parent; a staff governor will count as staff. The exception is for staff who are also parents of pupils at other schools, who are counted as staff only



## **APPENDIX E2**

### **Summary of responses by school**

### **People allied to Park High School**

#### **Falling rolls**

- Understand rolls are falling and surplus places are high
- Introduction of Birkenhead High School for Girls alongside Prenton has made the gender imbalance worse in mixed schools
- Just because there are rooms with chairs in doesn't mean there are surplus places
- Standards cannot be sustained when rolls are falling

#### **Staff and Standards**

- Standards are improving year on year at both schools
- Excellent ethos
- Pupils have a good rapport with staff
- Labelling both schools as National Challenge reinforces local snobbery against the schools
- A very good school
- Staff are very supportive and encouraging, give pupils best educational opportunities despite uncertainty
- My child went to the Sanderling Unit and the teachers helped him a lot
- Larger schools have worse GCSE results
- Concerns that class sizes would rise
- Concerns about loss of Sports specialism
- Concerns about the impact of amalgamation on GCSE results
- National Challenge is an arbitrary figure made up by Ed Balls
- National Challenge does not take into account socioeconomic background or grammar schools
- Last year 46% of pupils here passed English and 36% passed Maths
- Science has gone from 25% to over 80% C or above
- Park is not a failing school, it is unfair to staff to say so
- School educates some extremely challenging students to achieve the best possible grades
- Staff give up a lot of their time after school
- Standards will improve because of staff, parents and ethos, not buildings

- Inclusive school, takes anyone who wants to come
- Proud of Park
- Important that sporting links with the community are continued
- Concerns about compulsory redundancies

### **Pupils**

- Children love coming to school here
- Concerns about disruption to childrens education
- I chose Park because of the Sports specialism, you are taking away my choice
- My school closed because of lack of numbers and it cocked up my education, you have to be very careful

### **Building and site**

- Sports fields should not be sold or there will be no fit children
- What will happen to the community programme run from Park?
- When the other site closed there were 1100 pupils here and it felt crowded
- 700 to 800 pupils is a good number
- Have already had £10 million investment in the building
- Don't need material things to improve standards
- Prime location to serve the whole community
- Next to Birkenhead Park
- Good facilities thanks to PFI
- Schools are more than geographical physical sites

### **The Academy and Sponsors**

- Could be a positive move for the children of both schools
- Not in favour of Academies, they're a political creation
- Sponsors will meddle with affairs of the classroom
- No connection between University of Chester and Park High School
- Only 50% of academies have been successful
- Forecasts for Ellesmere Port Academy are not evidence of success
- Concerned that Academy governing body will not represent local views
- Academy should keep elements of former schools best practice and good work including specialisms
- Can have confidence that the sponsor team will be successful
- Sponsors are enthusiastic and willing to make an even better school

## **The Proposal**

- The Sanderling Unit should move to Park High School
- Pupil maps show that the Academy should be in central Birkenhead
- Ridgeway is too close to the edge of the area and too close to Woodchurch High
- Understand that the Academy will not be Park High
- Once in a lifetime opportunity for change
- Failure to act puts all schools at risk of a crisis in numbers
- Would the Academy be a large school?
- School would have a lot more pupils for three years which will mess up my child's education
- Will be massive redundancies in three years as the number on roll falls
- Proposal is a lifeline to Rock Ferry at the expense of Park

## **Alternative options**

- Should close Rock Ferry High and leave Park open
- Neither school should be closed

## **The Process**

- Children should come first not money
- This is about the community, must set aside the interests of individual schools
- We should have known about this when we were choosing secondary school options
- Consultation presentation told us nothing
- Should know what the Academy would be like before you close the schools
- Staff don't know what's going on, there has been three proposals so far
- Birkenhead High School for Girls should have closed, it was a failing business
- No point opposing the proposals because the consultation is a sham

## **Traffic and transport**

- Rock Ferry pupils will not travel to Park, there are closer schools like Bebington, Prenton and Plessington

## **Financial**

- This is all about selling the land at Rock Ferry High to make money
- If schools need money the government should give them money
- Better to get a substantial investment than no investment

## **Other Comments**

- Heart of the community
- Generations have come to this school

## **People allied to Rock Ferry High School**

### **Falling rolls**

- New housing estates are being built which means more children
- You have already taken away The Dell Primary School
- Parents who would come here are put off by the closure consultation
- Pupils are haemorrhaging from Rock Ferry because they don't want to go to Park
- Understand the demographic issues and reasons why change is necessary
- Falling rolls mean schools have to close
- There is more competition for nursery places now
- Why is it acceptable for Birkenhead High School for Girls to have 100 pupils per year group and not for Park High and Rock Ferry High?
- Surplus space could be used for community purposes
- We lose a lot of kids to Bebington High School
- Numbers have fallen because Birkenhead schools do not have sixth forms
- If Rock Ferry was an Academy more kids would come here

### **Staff and Standards**

- Good links with the community
- After school dance and drama classes are well attended
- Standards are improving
- CVA is good
- Teachers are passionate
- Small schools are better because they have small classes
- Sanderling Unit is very successful
- Excellent school
- Media have reported that Rock Ferry is failing, this is not the case
- Concerns about loss of staff expertise at Sanderling Unit
- Concerns about loss of Performing Arts College specialism
- Concern about continuity of GCSE courses for existing pupils
- No other schools do GCSE Dance and Performing Arts
- Both schools have good Ofsted reports

- Grammar schools cream off the best pupils which means results are not as good as other similarly disadvantaged schools in the country
- Small schools have smaller teaching groups
- Council letter to parents hinted that Park were not as failing as Rock Ferry, which has planted a seed of worry in the community
- How are you going to merge two staff rooms?

### **Building and site**

- Only green space in the area
- Wonderful art deco architecture
- At 24 acres, a larger site than Park, more flexible
- Easy access to bus and rail routes at Rock Ferry
- Both schools are on sites with room for development
- New is not necessarily best
- You could build an Academy at Rock Ferry without any disruption to children
- Rock Ferry is surrounded by houses and shops so there is always help available if it is needed
- Park site is too small, very cramped and unfit for purpose
- Park site has been chosen for purely financial reasons, you owe money
- The Park site will undermine the sponsors vision
- Park High may have been refurbished but you can't tell from its decorative state
- Park site is satisfactory but it's location is not suitable for Rock Ferry parents
- Park's architecture is antiquated and cannot expand outwards, what if it needs to be expanded in 20 years time?
- Building Schools for the Future is about new build not refurbishment
- Will Sanderling Unit have it's own building?
- Building work at Park site will be disruptive for years
- Academy should have adult education and lifelong learning facilities
- A lot of outside groups use Rock Ferry High School, what will happen to them
- Rock Ferry site could accommodate community facilities, Sure Start, health care, mental health care, social services etc
- Park site does not allow for future expansion
- Rock Ferry has had a lot of money spent on it and could be refurbished further

- Ravenswood is an 1874 manor house, it will be stripped and demolished

### **Pupils**

- Pupils love coming to school
- Pupils would go to another school rather than the Academy and would miss out on the benefits
- Concerns about disruption to children in Key Stage 4
- Concerns about integration of Sanderling Unit pupils into mainstream classes and vulnerability of pupils
- Sanderling pupils are the most vulnerable and need great care planning their futures
- Change should not be at the expense of children's education
- More boys than girls in a class will disadvantage girl's education
- I chose this school because of the Performing Arts college status, you are taking away my choice
- If I had wanted Park High I would have sent my child there
- There would be more lateness and truancy if children had to travel further to school
- New build would raise children's self-esteem
- There's more overlap between Rock Ferry and Bebington than between Rock Ferry and Park High
- I moved school in my O level year and it was an absolute nightmare
- My child is settled here
- Children are well behaved coming out of school

### **The Academy and Sponsors**

- Academy will be Park High with a new badge
- Academy will benefit the community
- Sponsorship team is tremendous, strong and impressive
- Happy with the University of Chester as lead sponsor
- Will breathe new life into the system
- Sponsors are suitable and have made a favourable impression
- The Academy will reach the ambitions and targets needed in education
- Links with HE and FE and Local Authority support are invaluable and will provide the best opportunities for pupils
- Staff at both schools are ready willing and able to play their parts
- There has been no consultation about the proposed specialism

- The Academy should have a sixth form
- The Academy should go from age 4 upwards

### **The Proposal**

- Why deprive a deprived area of it's school and disadvantage it further
- This is just the closure of Rock Ferry by another name
- Changing the sign at Park High will make no difference, it is an in name only change
- Standards at the Academy will stay low if it is at Park
- Taking away parental choice
- Don't waste money on new build when established schools can be transformed into ultra modern sites
- Should stop intake and let the existing children and staff stay on site until all the children have finished, then transfer staff
- A school 5 miles away will not feel like our school
- This is a silly idea, there will be trouble
- Proposal is a missed opportunity for transformational change
- This is hastily and poorly thought out
- Should not have to settle for the second best cheap compromise option
- Rock Ferry would have no secondary school for boys
- Politicians lack ambition, this is short sighted
- It will be "them and us"
- Academies that have failed have been in existing premises
- Sponsors would prefer to work on a fresh canvas, this will hinder their academic vision
- Either Rock Ferry closes and has nothing, or it joins with Park High to form a new Academy
- Are parents who don't want to travel to Park guaranteed a place at a different local school?
- Got to think about the next 50 years

### **Alternative options**

- Make both schools smaller academies
- If the Academy was at Rock Ferry there would be no conflict as to whose school it is
- There is room at Rock Ferry to build an Academy
- Why can't it be built on a site closer to my house?
- This area deserves a state of the art new build as promised

- New purpose built “superschool” will provide vision, optimism and ambition
- Should find a neutral site equidistant between the two schools
- An extended search for appropriate venues is required
- All £30 million should be spent on a new school, not £10 million on a paint job
- Both schools should stay open as small schools
- Should stick to the original “three into two” plan
- Should move Prenton High to Rock Ferry and establish a Mixed Academy at Prenton High site
- Why can’t it be built on the Shaftesbury site?
- You should ask Shaftesbury again now that David Hughes has withdrawn
- A small number of residents and a youth club should not compromise educational opportunities for generations to come
- Should move Acre Lane to the Park High site
- Shaftesbury site was never a deliverable option
- What other sites were looked at?
- Find the land, make it happen
- Take over the whole of the Priory commercial site which is near to transport hubs

### **Traffic and transport**

- Pupils from Park High would not come here
- Concerns about distance to Park site
- Concerned about safety of children travelling home after dark
- Park Road North is dark and has trees, children could be attacked on the way home
- Most people in this area do not drive
- It is unfair to expect children to travel out of the area to Park High site or Bebington High
- Parents cannot afford travel costs
- Will there be free transport to the Academy?
- We chose Rock Ferry High because it is within walking distance
- No pupil is in walking distance of Park site
- This is against the Council’s green policies as pupils will not be able to walk to school
- Park is on the other side of the Wirral



- Pupils and parents will not be able to attend after school activities unless they have their own transport
- Bussing children to Park site is possible
- Truancy will go up if children have to travel in the dark and rain
- Why is it difficult for the children from the north end of Birkenhead to travel south, but not difficult for the children from the south of Birkenhead to travel north

### **Financial**

- Why is money being spent on Birkenhead High School for Girls? Wouldn't it be better spent here?
- This is all about making profit from selling Rock Ferry's land
- Will pupils have to have a new uniform?
- Investment in this area is long overdue
- Understand that schools are not financially viable with falling rolls
- Funding has already been allocated for Park High, but not for Rock Ferry, you have already made your decision

### **The Process**

- You should put children and community first
- Parents should have been consulted earlier
- There were a lot more people at the Rock Ferry meeting than at the Park meeting and most of those were staff
- This is all about saving money
- This is not a child focussed decision
- Have other secondary school heads, staff and parents been consulted?
- Will everyone's views be made public?
- Have parents at the five local primary schools been consulted?
- How has the local community been consulted, as many people do not get free papers?
- A poster in the library does not constitute consultation
- Consultation should have been better and wider
- As a local resident I didn't know about the original proposal
- Why are consultation meetings not open to the public?
- You should not rush this through just for political expediency
- Needs more consultation with residents associations
- Council's letters to parents were biased towards Park
- You have already made your decision

- There are two girls schools at the cost of a mixed school closing

### **Other comments**

- Generations have gone to this school
- Open for 80 years
- Rock Ferry has lost Byrne Avenue, what will be left if the school closes
- Both schools are old and well established
- Life expectancy is 10 years below other parts of Wirral
- Pupils are entitled to a local school

## **Other people**

### **Falling rolls**

- Pupils are transferring out of Rock Ferry because they don't want to go to Park
- New housing estates are being built which means more children
- How many children are on roll at both schools now?
- In London schools have closed, only to build new ones
- Why aren't smaller schools viable?
- Is the roll going to rise again?
- Would a lottery system help the falling roll situation?
- Understand the need to reduce schools because of the falling birth rate

### **Staff and Standards**

- Sanderling Unit is very successful
- Rock Ferry has made progress over the years, confirmed by Ofsted
- Rock Ferry has its fair share of SEN pupils who are well served
- Need a good ratio of staff to pupils
- Small is beautiful
- Both schools are hugely successful, combining them will create a world class education
- What will happen to the Sanderling Unit?
- Learning and teaching is not just about exam results
- Qualifications guarantee nothing
- Concerns about loss of specialisms
- What would the class sizes be in the Academy?
- Concerns about breaking up good staff teams

- More boys than girls which has an effect on standards
- All schools have to raise their game to compete in the world economy

### **Building and site**

- Park site is restricted with no room for expansion
- There is more potential at the Rock Ferry site
- Park High is spread across two sites
- Rock Ferry site can accommodate all the pupils from both schools in September 2010
- Both schools are underutilised, in industry you would close one site not both
- Are the main building at Rock Ferry and Ravenswood listed?
- What would happen to memorials and trees at the Rock Ferry site?
- Rock Ferry is a lung for the area with extensive grounds and playing fields
- Money spent refurbishing Rock Ferry would be wasted
- Who do Rock Ferry's land and buildings belong to?
- Are there any tree preservation orders?
- Both buildings are old
- Has the Council had any government advice about the condition and suitability of Park High as an Academy?

### **Pupils**

- Sanderling unit pupils hate change and would not survive in a mainstream school setting
- Pupils would be anonymous in a large Academy

### **The Academy and Sponsors**

- Academy is the way forward
- Support the sponsors
- Need to keep pace with educational advancement
- Academy should have dynamic leadership, be child focussed and inspirational and aspirational in ethos
- Children will benefit immensely from an academy
- Does the specialism mean our children are just being made ready for the service industry?
- The specialism assumes there is no culture in the area
- There is no business sponsor, isn't this essential for their financial contribution?

- How will sponsors pay for the new school if they have budget cuts?
- Suggest Birkenhead Institute Academy as the name

### **The Proposal**

- Must look to the future
- Anything other than a new school is an insult to the children and tax payers of Wirral
- Short changing and fobbing off the children of Birkenhead by being educated in a less than adequate building just because of PFI
- What will happen to community facilities?
- Will the Academy merge with Birkenhead High School Academy as they are so close together?
- Most people seem to be in favour of the Academy by not the move away from Rock Ferry
- The combined roll is much higher than the 750 Academy number, what will happen to the additional pupils
- If Park High closes, does the land revert to park land?
- What happens when TUPE finishes?
- Will staff be paid below national rates, if so will only mediocre staff be attracted
- Different rates of pay for the same job is not conducive to good team working
- Concerns about damage done in running a school down in transition period
- Closing Rock Ferry High school is an act of pure vandalism
- We want good schools for boys in the area
- Must not make a decision that puts pressure on Ridgeway

### **Alternative options**

- Should be a new building not make do and mend
- Should find a neutral site equidistant between the two schools
- If there are no other sites, should build the Academy at Rock Ferry
- All £30 million should be spent on a new state of the art school
- School should be centrally located
- Should keep Rock Ferry open
- Could Park be closed if it's in a PFI contract to 2031?
- Park site could be used by Wirral Metropolitan College which has increasing student numbers given the recession
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### **Traffic and transport**

- Pupils would not travel miles to a new school
- Truancy would go up
- Carbon footprint would go up
- People want local schools where they live
- How will children get to Park site?
- Increased travel distance to Park, particularly dark in winter months
- Would the Council pay for buses and for how long?
- Lines of communication will be stretched
- Where do pupils live now?
- Concerns about distance to Park site

### **Financial**

- This is a finance led agenda
- Understand Council needs to make cuts but should look at the long term
- Rock Ferry High School is a prime piece of land for residential development
- Cost of new uniforms
- Has the Council considered the cost of redundancies and early retirements?
- Has the government withdrawn the £30 million for the new Academy?
- Are property developers involved?

### **The Process**

- You should put children and community first
- Academy consultation meeting was not what I expected, only had 15 minutes to respond in small groups
- Why was Ridgeway dropped from the original proposal?
- Can the consultation be extended past 7<sup>th</sup> April?
- Can school governors prevent schools from closing?
- How would a change of government affect the proposals?
- You've already made a decision behind closed doors
- Consultation is a sham

### **Other comments**

- Generations have gone to this school
- Would regret seeing the school's name disappear

- People are proud of their school
- Rock Ferry will be the poorer if the school closes
- What will happen to the land at Rock Ferry, will our property be overlooked?
- This is an area of high social and financial deprivation
- Politicians should band together to prevent schools from closing
- Birkenhead Institute closed due to falling numbers despite it's rich local history