

WIRRAL COUNCIL
EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

**PROPOSAL TO CEASE TO MAINTAIN ST LAURENCE'S CATHOLIC
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Notice is given in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Wirral Council as the local education authority ("the Authority"), Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wallasey, Wirral, CH44 8ED intends to discontinue St Laurence's Catholic Primary School, Park Street, Birkenhead, Wirral, CH41 3JD on 31st August 2010.

Parents of pupils on roll at St Laurence's Catholic Primary School at 31st August 2010 will be given an early opportunity to express a preference for one of the alternative local schools. All St Laurence's Catholic Primary School pupils on roll at that date who opt to transfer to a Catholic primary school will be guaranteed a place at one of the nearby Catholic primary schools. Pupils may transfer to any local primary school, subject to availability of places and the admission arrangements published in the Authority's information booklet for parents.

The travel distance from St Laurence's Catholic Primary School to alternative primary school sites is unlikely to result in any increase in car use. Applications for school transport to alternative schools will be considered on the basis of the Authority's school transport policy published in the Authority's information booklet for parents.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from the Primary Places Review website; www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces or on paper or CD-ROM by writing to the address below.

Within six weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to Howard Cooper, Director of Children's Services, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD.

Signed:



Dated this 21st day of October 2009

Explanatory Notes

1) The purpose of this notice is to close St Laurence's Catholic Primary School and to advise parents of pupils who attend St Laurence's Catholic Primary School, and parents of pupils who live in the parish served by St Laurence's Catholic Primary School, of alternative schools where their children may be educated.

2) After 31st August 2010, those streets in the diocesan designated boundaries of the St Laurence portion of the joint parish of St Laurence's and St Werburgh's will be allocated either to St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School (south of Conway Street) or to Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School (north of Conway Street).

A map showing the proposed changes to the diocesan designated boundaries is available to view at St Laurence's Catholic Primary School or on-line at www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/PrimaryPlaces/North_Birkenhead.asp.

3) The Authority's information booklets for parents are available on request from the Children and Young People's Department by calling 0151 606 2000 during office hours, or on-line at:

www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/admissions/

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL

Extract of Schedule 4 to The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended):

Contact details

1. The name of the LA or governing body publishing the proposals, and a contact address, and the name of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued.

Wirral Council, Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wallasey, Wirral, CH44 8ED
St Laurence's Catholic Primary School

Implementation

2. The date when it is planned that the proposals will be implemented, or, where the proposals are to be implemented in stages, information about each stage and the date on which each stage is planned to be implemented.

31st August 2010

Consultation

3. A statement to the effect that all applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with.

All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with. Public consultations were held during June and July 2009, including a consultation meeting at St Laurence's Catholic Primary School on 2nd July 2009, as well as at neighbouring Cole Street Primary School on 29th June 2009 and at Cathcart Street Primary School on 22nd June 2009. All statutory consultees were consulted in accordance with the relevant DCSF guidance and statutory requirements.

4. Evidence of the consultation before the proposals were published including:

- a) a list of persons and/or parties who were consulted;
- b) minutes of all public consultation meetings;
- c) the views of the persons consulted; and
- d) copies of all consultation documents and a statement of how these were made available.

See Appendices A and B

Objectives

5. The objectives of the proposal.

To discontinue St Laurence's Catholic Primary School.

Standards and Diversity

6. A statement and supporting evidence indicating how the proposals will impact on the standards, diversity and quality of education in the area.

St Laurence's Catholic Primary had 75 pupils on roll in January 2009, having last had more than 210 pupils on roll in 1998 (211), followed by a long decline.

There were a total of just 80 Catholic choice pupils living within the St Laurence's Parish in Summer 2008. Of these, 61% (49 pupils) attended St Laurence's Catholic Primary School. The remaining 39% (31 pupils) principally attended St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School (16%, 13 pupils), Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School (13%, 10 pupils) and St Joseph's Catholic Primary (Birkenhead) (6%, 5 pupils). 31% of pupils on roll in Summer 2008 came from outside the school's catchment parish, however overall there was a small net loss of 8% (6 pupils) to other Catholic primary schools.

There are a large number of surplus places (64%, 135 places), and this situation is not predicted to improve over the next five years.

A three year average of the overall value added score (2006 to 2008) shows that St Laurence's, St Werburgh's, Our Lady and St Edward's and St Joseph's Catholic Primary Schools are making the expected rate of progress (101.3, 100.8, 100.9 and 100.3 respectively). Ofsted reports of these schools are attached as Appendix C.

The school serves the St Laurence's Parish which is part of the wider parish of St Laurence and St Werburgh's, also served by St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School. Following closure, the Parish will continue to be served by St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School.

Small schools inevitably cost more to maintain than larger schools. Wirral policy says that schools become increasingly more difficult to maintain as they fall below 180 pupils on roll. DCSF guidance says that "Schools with fewer than 150 pupils may be educationally and financially sustainable only through substantial subsidies via their local authorities funding formula". Financially, the total sum available for spending on all our children does not increase if we choose as an Authority to organise our children in more schools than is necessary for the efficient and effective delivery of education. It follows that the maintenance of small schools, where this is not necessary, comes at the expense of all other children. In 2006-2007, expenditure per pupil at St Laurence's was £5,520 compared with the Wirral average of £3,249. This was the highest expenditure per pupil of any Wirral primary school. Closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School saves money for the overall schools budget.

The saving is ring-fenced to the Wirral schools budget, which allows more funding to be spent on all Wirral's children and young people in order to raise standards across the borough.

Provision for 16-19 year olds

7. Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, how the proposals will impact on:

- a) the educational or training achievements;
- b) participation in education or training; and

- c) the range of educational or training opportunities,
for 16-19 year olds in the area.

Not applicable

Need for places

8. A statement and supporting evidence about the need for places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

There are 26 alternative primary schools within a 2 mile radius, at which in January 2009 there were 1,471 surplus places, compared to the number on roll of 75 pupils. In alternative Catholic primary schools there were 224 surplus places, which is projected to rise by September 2010 to 366 surplus places, in part due to the expansion of neighbouring Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School from 266 places to 420 places.

Excluding those schools in the South Wallasey planning area, there are projected to be 958 surplus places within 2 miles in 2010, of which 236 surplus places are in alternative Catholic primary schools.

The number on roll at January 2009 at St Laurence's Catholic Primary was 75 pupils, and in September 2009 had fallen to 51 pupils. Excluding those pupils in Year 6 who will have moved onto secondary school in September 2010, there are expected to be 39 pupils to transfer to an alternative local primary school.

At alternative Birkenhead primary schools in the Birkenhead area within just 1 mile, there were 488 surplus places in January 2009, rising to 610 surplus places in 2010. Dependant on parental preferences, additional accommodation may be required locally at St Werburgh's and/or Our Lady and St Edwards Catholic Primary Schools.

9. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

The historic ratio of community to denominational places in Wirral has been approximately 70:30. The outcome of previous phases of the school rationalisation programme has already removed a higher proportion of community places, thereby increasing the proportion of denominational places. If the closure of St Laurence's was to be approved, the overall ratio of community to denominational places would remain relatively stable at 69:31.

Current School Information

10. Information as to the numbers, age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is made at the school.

St Laurence's Catholic Primary is a mixed sex Catholic Voluntary Aided primary school providing 210 places for day pupils aged 4 to 11. In January 2009 there were 75 pupils on roll, falling to 51 pupils in September 2009. There is a "half" nursery (F1) class with 26 places. In January 2009 there were 8 pupils in the F1 class.

Displaced Pupils

11. Details of the schools or FE colleges which pupils at the school for whom provision is to be discontinued will be offered places, including:

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) where the school included provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for children with special educational needs, the alternative provision to be made for pupils in the school's reserved provision; and
- c) in the case of special schools, alternative provision made by LAs other than the authority which maintains the school.

All current and projected pupils from St Laurence's Catholic Primary could be accommodated at primary schools within a reasonable distance without requiring any new classroom provision. See S.8 above. The Local Authority and the Diocese of Shrewsbury have agreed that all parents who opt for a Catholic primary place for their child will be accommodated in one of the nearby Catholic primary schools. An additional 154 places have already been created by the Diocese of Shrewsbury at Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School.

- a) none
- b) not applicable
- c) not applicable

12. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or FE college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

Depending on parental preferences, additional accommodation (temporary or permanent) may also be required at Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School and/or St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School.

Impact on the Community

13. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

A significant proportion of parents living within St Laurence's catchment parish already choose alternative Catholic primary schools (39%) – principally St Werburgh's (16%), Our Lady and St Edward's (13%) and St Joseph's Birkenhead (6%) and there are 27 alternative primary schools within a 2 mile radius of the school. The Parish of St Laurence's and St Werburgh's would retain a Catholic primary school at St Werburgh's.

In January 2009, there were 8 part-time pupils in the F1 class (4 FTE) at St Laurence's Catholic Primary School. In school nurseries within 2 miles there were 244 empty F1 places, 46 of which were at Catholic school nurseries, including 9 at St Werburgh's. Our Lady and St Edward's has a pre-school playgroup on site with 32 FTE places (64 pupils).

14. Details of extended services the school offered and what it is proposed for these services once the school has discontinued.

The school is the site for a satellite to the main Birkenhead and Tranmere Children's Centre located at St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School. The satellite comprises a multifunction room from which outreach services are delivered. This will be relocated to an alternative primary school in the area.

Travel

15. Details of the length and journeys to alternative provision.

All former St Laurence's pupils on roll at this date who opt to transfer to a Catholic primary school will be guaranteed a place at a nearby Catholic Primary School. The three principal alternative Catholic primary schools to which pupils living in this area travel at present are St Werburgh's Catholic Primary School, Our Lady and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, and St Joseph's Catholic Primary School (Birkenhead). An aerial photo showing the relative positions of these schools is attached as Appendix D.

Of the 39 pupils expected to be on roll at September 2010, two would travel more than 2 miles to all three schools, but already travel more than 2 miles to St Laurence's Catholic Primary, so can be expected to use whichever means of transport they are already utilising.

NCY at Sept 2010	St Laurences	St Werburghs	Our Lady St Edwards	St Joseph's Birkenhead
1	0.43	0.8	0.67	1.68
1	0.91	0.7	1.4	1.49
1	0.51	0.77	1	1.65
1	0.54	0.8	1.03	1.68
1	0.79	1.07	0.48	1.86
2	0.44	0.7	0.81	1.58
2	1.09	1.35	0.2	1.87
2	1.65	1.21	1.95	0.23
2	1.8	1.04	2.4	1.56
3	0.53	0.79	0.78	1.48
3	0.38	0.64	0.87	1.52
3	0.41	0.87	0.87	1.75
3	0.46	0.92	0.91	1.8
3	0.46	0.92	0.92	1.8
3	0.88	0.67	1.36	1.45
3	0.93	0.71	1.32	1.42
3	0.39	0.65	1.03	1.53
3	0.53	0.79	1.02	1.67
3	1.11	1.37	0.32	1.9

3	5.04	4.95	4.17	4.64
3	5.04	4.95	4.17	4.64
4	0.45	0.91	0.92	1.79
4	0.47	0.93	0.7	1.81
4	0.47	0.94	0.94	1.82
4	0.66	0.92	0.55	1.71
4	0.83	0.61	1.22	1.32
4	0.88	0.67	1.36	1.45
4	0.4	0.66	1.03	1.54
4	1.01	1.09	1.46	2.14
4	1.8	1.04	2.4	1.56
5	0.24	0.71	0.88	1.59
5	0.39	0.65	1.03	1.53
5	0.7	0.49	1.16	1.25
5	0.84	0.62	1.23	1.33
6	0.35	0.61	0.99	1.49
6	0.47	0.93	0.7	1.81
6	0.79	0.44	1.29	1.09
6	0.79	1.07	0.48	1.86
6	1.01	1.09	1.46	2.14

under 1 mile	under 1.5 miles	under 2 miles	over 2 miles
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In terms of catchment parish – 29 of the 39 pupils on roll in 2010 reside within the joint parish of St Laurence and St Werburghs, 5 within the parish of Our Lady’s, and 1 within the parish served by St Joseph’s (Birkenhead). The remaining 4 reside in the parishes of St Anne’s and Sacred Heart, respectively. For 100% of pupils on roll, travel to one or more alternative Catholic primary school would be shorter or similar in length.

Maps showing the current and proposed Diocesan boundaries for admissions following closure of St Laurence’s Catholic Primary are attached as Appendix E.

16. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how they will help to work against increased car use.

The distance to alternative primary schools is not significantly longer than the current journey distance and pupils can be expected to continue to travel to school by whichever means they are currently using, with no significant increase in car use.

Pupils may transfer to any local primary school, subject to availability of places and the admission arrangements published in the Authority’s information booklet for parents.

There are a total of 26 alternative primary schools within a 2 mile radius.

Related Proposals

17. A statement as to whether in the opinion of the LA or governing body, the proposals are related to any other proposals which may have been, are, or are about to be published.

There are no related linked proposals that are, have been or are about to be published.

Rural Primary Schools

18. Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15, a statement that the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) considered:

- a) the likely effect of discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- b) the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools;
- c) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- d) any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school,

as required by section 15(4)

Not applicable

Maintained nursery schools

19. Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:

- a) the consideration that has been given to developing the school into a children's centre and the grounds for not doing so;
- b) the LA's assessment of the quality and quantity of alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- c) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

Not applicable

Special educational provision

20. Where existing provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the LA or the governing body believes the proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

Not applicable