

APPLICATION FORM FOR Proposers (other than Local Authorities) TO APPLY TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE, FOR AGREEMENT TO PUBLISH PROPOSALS FOR A NEW FOUNDATION OR VOLUNTARY SCHOOL UNDER SECTION 10 OF THE EDUCATION AND INSPECTIONS ACT 2006

Please complete all sections and submit to School Organisation Unit mailbox at school.organisation@dcsgsi.gov.uk (or by mail: School Organisation Unit, DCSF, 2F Area A, Mowden Hall, Darlington, DL3 9BG).

1. Details of proposer and proposed school including:
Title of Proposing Body: Church of England Diocese of Chester
Local Authority area: Wirral (344)
Site details (e.g. single/split site, freehold/leasehold tenure): Former Millfields Primary School, freehold, single site, no access issues. Children's Centre within school building.
Postal address: Willington Avenue, Eastham, Wirral, CH62 9EB
Age range: 3 to 11
Number of Pupils to be provided for, including details of any nursery (full-time equivalent places), SEN, Boarding or Sixth Form provision: Net Capacity is 168 pupils aged 4 to 11 plus a 26 FTE nursery.
Category (Foundation/Voluntary Aided/Voluntary Controlled): Voluntary Controlled
Proposed opening date: September 2010
Religious category (if any): Church of England
Ethos: Church of England
Secondary Schools only - Proposed specialism (if any): NA
2. If the proposed school is to be a foundation school with a foundation (ie. Trust School), information on the proposed foundation and current plans for membership:
NA
3. Reason for the proposed new school (eg. amalgamation/ reorganisation due to falling rolls, new housing development or population growth)
Wirral's Cabinet has approved the publication of a linked proposal for the closure of the predecessor school, 344 2276 Millfields Primary School, Willington Avenue, Eastham,

Wirral, CH62 9EB in order that a Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school can be established on the Millfields site. This approval was made in order to reinstate diversity of parental preference following the August 2007 closure of nearby St Mary's CE (Controlled) Primary School which was in Special Measures.

4. Will the school replace an existing school or schools? If so, provide details of the closing school(s), (eg. Postal address; Number of Pupils; Age range; Category) and proposed date for closure:

Millfields Primary School, Willington Avenue, Eastham, Wirral, CH62 9EB; 158 pupils 4 to 11, 25 pupils in nursery; age range 3 to 11 including F1; Community; 31st August 2010.

5. Statement on how the school will contribute to raising standards, including how it is proposed it will network with other schools in the area:

The former school already has a strong ethos of caring, links to the community and a commitment to the Every Child Matters agenda. A Surestart Children's Centre is established at the site. As a Church of England Controlled school it will seek to continue to serve all the children in its community, with enhanced links to the local Churches which will develop the existing strong value systems and clearly defined ethos, impacting positively on all areas of the curriculum and on pastoral care. The school will benefit from the additional support available from Diocesan education officers and the network of Church of England schools within this authority and the nine other authorities within the Diocese of Chester.

6. Evidence of levels of parental demand for this school:

Consultation revealed that parents in the area were agreeable or ambivalent to Church of England status at Millfields, which was felt to be beneficial to children in this area of relatively high deprivation. No other promoters expressed an interest during the consultation.

The consultation on changes to schools in Eastham has now been underway since 2005, and a major concern of consultees was that there must be a speedy end to the on-going uncertainty regarding primary provision in this area. Holding a statutory competition will add at least 6 months into an already lengthy process. We believe this delay will add to the levels of stress and uncertainty within the school community in this area, including staff morale, with a potential detrimental effect on educational standards.

7. Evidence of consultation with the local community, copies of consultation documents and notes of meetings. Please list any documents attached.

The Council has been reviewing Wirral primary school provision on an area by area basis since Autumn 2004. The review of the Bromborough and Eastham small planning area, in which Millfields Primary School is situated, began in October 2005 with pre-consultation meetings involving headteachers and chairs of governors of all the schools in the area, as well as Diocesan Authorities and ward members. A number of options for change arose, and were approved for formal consultation by Cabinet. Leaflets and comments forms were provided to all parents, and at schools and local libraries. A dedicated website was established, including a feedback form,

and the consultation was advertised in the press. Public meetings were held during Spring term 2006 at each of the schools named in the options.

The outcome of this consultation was described in the 16th March 2006 report to Cabinet (Sections 6 and 7). At this time, Cabinet's decision was that an option that arose from the consultation, namely the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School and Millfields Primary School combined with the establishment of a CE Controlled primary school at the Millfields site, should proceed as a statutory proposal. The Cabinet report and minute are attached as Appendix A.

Following legal advice, it was decided that consultation should be continued to allow consultees to express their opinions about the new option, led by the Diocese of Chester and facilitated by the Authority. Further consultation meetings were held for stakeholders of the two schools. The outcome of the additional consultation period which concluded on 6th July 2006, was reported to Cabinet on 27th July 2006. The Diocesan Board of Education were impressed by various aspects of Millfields Primary School, including the Christian ethos and existing links with local churches and *"would be delighted to have Millfields as a part of its family of Church schools"*. However, the Diocesan Board of Education felt unable to support the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School, and therefore rejected the Council's preferred option to close the two schools and open a new Church of England school on the Millfields site. One of the factors the Diocesan Board gave as a reason not to support the amalgamation was that the standards achieved by the two schools were "not significantly different". The Council's preferred option of amalgamating the two schools in order to create a new school could not therefore proceed. At its meeting of 27th July 2006, the Council decided not to press ahead with the proposal to close St Mary's CE Primary School, deciding instead to make an interim measure to reduce surplus places and enhance provision in the area by locating a Children's Centre at Millfields Primary School. A further recommendation was made that the Bromborough and Eastham area should be monitored and reviewed again during the Primary Places Review. The Cabinet report and minute are attached as Appendix B.

St Mary's CE (Controlled) Primary School was inspected by Ofsted on the 13th and 14th September 2006, and was placed in the Ofsted category of Special Measures. This was reported to Cabinet on 14th December 2006. At this meeting, Cabinet's decision was to proceed to statutory notices in respect of the closure of St Mary's CE (Controlled) Primary School. As a further recommendation, Cabinet agreed to give all necessary support to any proposal made by the Church of England Diocese of Chester regarding the closure of a Community Primary School in order to open a new CE Primary school on the same site, subject to the agreement of the relevant Governing Body. The report and minute are attached as Appendix C.

The statutory notices were published on 10th January 2007, followed by a representation period for comments and objections. The proposal for closure of St Mary's CE Primary School was considered by the School Organisation Committee (SOC; now abolished) on 21st March 2007. A unanimous decision could not be reached. The proposal was consequently referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator according to guidance.

The Adjudicator held an additional consultation on the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School ending on 9th May 2007, including a further meeting for stakeholders of St Mary's CE Primary School on 2nd May 2007. The Adjudicator's final decision was to approve the closure of St Mary's CE Primary School from 31st August 2007.

Cabinet's decision on 14th December 2006 regarding support for the possible establishment of a CE Controlled primary school in the Eastham area remains in place. Discussions on the possibility of Millfields Primary School becoming a CE Controlled Primary School have been ongoing through 2007/2008, including the governing body of Millfields Primary School, the Diocese of Chester and the Local Authority. All three parties agreed that the option had been positively received during the original consultation. As demonstrated above, there has already been extensive consultation on this option in the Eastham area over an extended period of time. However, as it has been more than 12 months since the conclusion of the last consultation in May 2007, guidance states that a fresh consultation should be carried out in order to allow stakeholders who were not consulted in the original consultation an opportunity to express their views.

Accordingly, a further consultation was held during February and March 2009. This was reported to Cabinet on 28th May 2009.

Attachments:

Appendix A: Cabinet report and Minute 16th March 2006

Appendix B: Cabinet report and Minute 27th July 2006

Appendix C: Cabinet report and Minute 14th December 2006

Appendix D: Cabinet report and Minute 28th May 2009

CD containing consultation responses from both consultations including recordings and notes from consultation meetings and consultation documents.

8. Contact details:

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Date: