

**Improving Primary Special School
Provision for Pupils with Complex Learning
Difficulties**

**A Proposal to Co-locate Stanley Special
School with the new Pensby Primary**

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

**IMPROVING PRIMARY SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION FOR PUPILS
WITH COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES**

**A PROPOSAL TO CO-LOCATE STANLEY SCHOOL WITH PENSBY
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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Introduction

The local authority maintains three primary special schools for children who experience complex learning difficulties (CLD). These are Elleray Park, Stanley and The Lyndale School. All of these schools are in old buildings and, despite having been considerably improved over the years, find it difficult to provide the children with the modern, quality educational environment they deserve.

As a consequence, and following a detailed consultation process, in April 2009 Wirral's Cabinet gave approval for the re-building of Elleray Park and Stanley and for a feasibility study into the establishment of a 2-19 school for children with the most profound needs. It was also agreed that any new special schools would be "co-located" with mainstream schools where possible. Co-location means not only building on the same site but also doing so in a way that enables and promotes children, staff and governors working together to the benefit of them all.

Whilst all three of the above options are being pursued the rebuild of Stanley School has been given priority. This is because, of the three schools, it is the least fit for purpose. The buildings are cramped, demand high maintenance and are not accessible to wheelchair users.

What has happened so far?

Of the three schools Stanley is currently the only one, which is co-located with a mainstream primary school – Thingwall Primary. Given the long-standing and positive working relationship these two schools have built up and with the strong support of staff and governors from both schools the possibility of re-building Stanley on its current site was subject to detailed investigation. Unfortunately this option has proven to be neither practical nor financially viable. Modern special schools are much larger than their predecessors in order to provide better learning spaces, both inside and outside, improved access to therapeutic services and to provide accommodation for parents, visiting professionals and extended services. As a result the proposed new Stanley simply would not fit on its current site. In fact there are few primary school sites on Wirral where a new special school would fit.

Fortunately Pensby Primary School is one of those few sites and is itself subject to a rebuild programme. An initial approach was made to the Chair of Governors and Head Teacher of Pensby Primary proposing to co-locate Stanley School with the new Pensby Primary. This proposal was met with an enthusiastic response. Following further discussions between the governors and head teachers of two schools and officers of the Local Authority a report was submitted to Wirral's Cabinet seeking approval to enter into public consultation regarding a proposal to co-locate a new build Stanley School with the new build Pensby New Primary School. This recommendation was approved by Cabinet on November 26th 2009.

The Proposal

The proposal is for a new Stanley School to be built and co-located with the new build Pensby Primary School the plans for the latter being well under way. The construction of the two schools would retain each of their own identities but would create common areas, which would be to the benefit of each. They would each retain their own head teachers and boards of governors but would work together to the benefit of both the schools and local community. Pooling building budgets would, however, create economies to provide facilities, which neither could afford on their own. These facilities – extended services, hydrotherapy and leisure pools, meeting spaces, indoor sports, gym and drama areas – will also have the potential of being available to the local community.

The Scale of the Proposal

Pensby Primary will be a mainstream primary school for some 210 pupils. The new Stanley School will be a special school for 100 pupils who experience a range of complex learning difficulties including severe learning difficulties, autism, medical and physical difficulties and profound and multiple learning difficulties.

The two newly built schools will occupy a site previously occupied by two separate infant and junior schools and despite being larger overall will be constructed in a way that is sympathetic to their location and will be less intrusive than the current buildings. The current green space will largely be retained and landscaping will provide a more pleasant outlook than previously experienced.

The combination of the two builds will allow for more effective traffic management within the local residential area by providing a one way system through the campus, internal dropping off points and on-site parking, thus eliminating the need for on-street parking.

The whole site will also be made more secure.

Time Scales and Funding

It is currently expected that the new Pensby Primary School building will be open in September 2011. If this current proposal is accepted and passed by Cabinet then the new Stanley School is expected to open in September 2012. Funding for the build will come from central government funding allocated to Wirral and especially designated for this purpose.

The Benefits

Staff and pupils from both schools will gain enormously from the opportunity to learn, live and work in new, purpose built, stimulating and modern school environments. This experience will be greatly enhanced by bringing the two schools together.

Pupils from Stanley will gain greatly from increased opportunities for inclusion, enhanced learning environments (internal and external), greater freedom of movement and independence and enhanced medical and therapeutic services.

Pupils from Pensby Primary School will also benefit from the enhanced resources Stanley School will bring – the opportunity to learn with and from pupils with disabilities, access to pools, sensory rooms and sensory gardens and improved indoor sports, arts and drama and other facilities.

Staff will benefit from opportunities for joint working and collaboration and sharing of expertise. Enhanced space and provision will improve curriculum delivery. Shared space and facilities provides greater opportunities for the quality of education provided for all pupils.

All new build schools need to focus on the benefits and services they are able to provide for the local community. In the case of the proposal to co-locate Stanley and Pensby schools the following are envisaged;

The proposed joint areas of the new school complex, including hall and gymnasium spaces, meeting rooms, hydrotherapy and leisure pool could potentially be made available, evenings, weekends and school holidays, for;

- Local society meetings and presentations
- Amateur theatrical performances
- Sports and leisure clubs
- Individuals/ groups of all ages with therapeutic needs
- Parties and functions

In addition the facilities will lend themselves to holiday clubs, crèche and other extended school facilities for children.

These are only examples and the two governing bodies would be pleased to work with the local community to maximise the benefits that could be achieved.

The Consultation

The proposed new Stanley School will clearly bring significant benefits to the children who attend there. However, the local authority is also determined that the major investment involved also benefits the local community and that any impact is minimised. The Council is, therefore, committed to consulting with all

stakeholders – children, parents, staff, the local community and others to enable us to achieve our aims and achieve a school that is fit for the demands of the 21st century.

It is important for you to understand that a decision has not already been made. The Council's Cabinet will want to see the comments made during the consultation before making any decision about what happens next.

The Consultation process will begin on 6th January 2010 and end on 17th February 2010.

What the change would mean for children and young people.

The SEN Improvement Test

Whenever the Local Authority makes any significant changes to its special educational needs provision it is required to demonstrate that this involves improvement rather than simply replacing like with like. In order to demonstrate this improvement the government requires that we 'test' our proposals against the following criteria;

improved access to education and associated services including the curriculum, wider school activities, facilities and equipment, with reference to the LA's Accessibility Strategy

improved access to specialist staff, both education and other professionals, including any external support and/or outreach services

improved access to suitable accommodation

improved supply of suitable places

The new build we are considering will meet all these criteria. The new school will be fully accessible and the internal and external learning spaces will greatly enhance the curriculum and leisure opportunities available to the children. Pupil numbers will be increased from 80 to 100 and the school will be able to accommodate children with the most profound needs, which Stanley is not currently able to do.

Increased and improved space will be made available for the essential therapeutic services needed by Stanley pupils as well as rooms for visiting professionals and for multi-agency working. There will be spaces for parents and for additional extended services.

Like many of us a number of the children who attend Stanley sometimes find change hard to manage. To overcome this the children will be fully involved in the design and build of the new school and there will be an extensive transition programme to ease the transfer from one school building to the other.

Criteria for the entitlement to free Local Authority transport would not change. As the new school would be within 2 miles of the old there will be no significant changes to travel arrangements.

What the change would mean for staff

All teaching, teaching support and administrative and ancillary staff would transfer to the new school building. Over time, as the school's pupil numbers increase then it is likely that additional teachers and teaching assistants will be recruited.

As the new school will be co-located when it opens some staff may have roles, which encompass the whole of the new school campus. Any changes that this may bring will be subject to full consultation with any staff affected and their trade union representatives.

What would the change mean for the local community

As now, there will be two school buildings on the Pensby Primary site. They will, however, be constructed as single entity and be new and more attractive schools designed and built to blend into their environment. Landscaping will further enhance the outlook.

Intelligent traffic management, a one-way system through the site, increased on-site parking and drop-off/pick-up points will minimise the impact of any increase in the number of vehicles.

The proposed new school will be subject to the full planning process. In environmental terms, the new school building will achieve BREEAM (BRE Environmental Assessment Method) rating "Very good" with an aspiration to achieve "Excellent" www.breeam.org.

When built the new two school campus would offer the potential for a range of services to be available to the local community, such as hall and gymnasium spaces, hydrotherapy and leisure pool, all weather 5-a-side pitch and meeting/function rooms.

Finding out more

If you want further information about the proposal you can find out more on the Internet. Go to www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/specialreview/specialreview.asp and click on Primary CLD provision. You will find;

- The Consultation document
- The Cabinet report of April 2009 and the minutes of Cabinet's decision
- How to send your comments to the Director of Children's Services

If you do not have access to the Internet at home you can go to your local library where staff will help you log on and print out the information.

The Consultation document is also available for you to read at both Pensby Primary and Stanley schools, and at Pensby Library and Pensby and Kylesmore Drive Community Centres.

You can also look at the documents at Wallasey Town Hall. If you want a printed copy, please contact the Asset Management Team, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD, 0151 666 4351, or by email at specialreview@wirral.gov.uk.

Next Steps

Step 1. The first step is for the Consultation document to be distributed asking for views and comments.

What happens next?

Consultation meetings

There will be consultation meetings held at both Pensby Primary and Stanley schools where the proposal will be explained in detail and there will be opportunities for questions and discussion.

The time and dates for these meetings are:

Tuesday January 12 th 2009, 1.30 pm at Pensby Primary, and Thursday January 14 th 2009, 9.30 at Stanley School

These meetings will be an opportunity for parents/carers, staff, governors, members of the local community and other people directly related to the schools to have their views heard and noted by senior officers from the Children and Young People's Department.

A drop-in session will also be held at Stanley School on Monday, January 18th 2010 between 1.30 and 5.00 pm

This drop-in session will an opportunity for individual or small groups of parents/carers, staff and governors to find out more information and speak personally to senior staff from the Children and Young People's Department.

To make an appointment to speak to someone at the drop-in session please telephone Stanley School on 0151 648 3171.

Writing in

People associated with any mainstream or special schools on Wirral and members of the public who wish to can write in with their views. These should be addressed to Primary CLD Provision Review, Director of Children's Services, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD.

Step 2

When the Consultation ends all the views and opinions received in writing or expressed at the public meetings and drop-in sessions will be combined in a report to Council's Cabinet. Cabinet members will read the report and decide what to do next. They may decide not to go any further at this stage. Members might make changes to the proposal, consider other ideas put forward during the consultation, or they could decide to consult further.

Step 3

If Cabinet approves the proposal then Stanley School would move into the design and build phase with completion expected in September 2012.

Having your say

What do you think? Please make sure your response is received no later than Wednesday, 17th February, 2010.

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. Your comments can be sent by post, by handing them in at one of the schools or by email. If you find it helpful you can complete the feedback form on the next page. There is also a feedback form on the Consultation web site: www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/specialreview/specialreview.asp

The postal address for return of questionnaires or written comments is:

Primary CLD Provision Review
Director of Children's Services
Hamilton Building
Conway Street
Birkenhead
CH41 1FD

Or by email to specialreview@wirral.gov.uk

Please note: To make sure the Consultation is fully open and transparent, all the responses to the Consultation will be made available to Cabinet members. Information provided will be dealt with in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000, the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.



Consultation Feedback Form

Proposal to Co-locate Stanley School with Pensby Primary

Please let us know the main relationship 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 instance.

School	Parent	Member of Staff	Governor	Other e.g. local community
Stanley School				
Pensby Primary				
Other (please say which)				

Comments

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

Please tell us your name and address, including postcode, telephone number and email address if you have one. We will not use your personal information for any reason other than this consultation.

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

email

Please note: In order to make the Consultation process open and transparent members of the Council's Cabinet will be able to read all the responses to this consultation.

Address: Primary CLD Provision
Review
Director of Children's Service
Hamilton Building
Conway Street
Birenhead
Ch41 4FD

Make sure your response is received by:

Wednesday 17th February, 2010

Email specialreview@wirral.gov.uk