



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

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

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 21st 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 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.

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 1st 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

Consultation begins	Wednesday 24th February 2010
Park High parents/carers meeting	7pm, 9 th March 2010
Rock Ferry High parents/carers meeting	7pm, 11 th March 2010
Consultation ends	Wednesday 7th April 2010
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 st 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-abc.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

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 th March 2010
Rock Ferry High School	7pm, Thursday, 11 th 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-abc.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 overleaf...

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

Make sure your response is received by:

WEDNESDAY 7th APRIL 2010



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
- 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, 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

All comments must be received by WEDNESDAY 7th 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

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 5th 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 6th 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.

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:

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Director of Children's Services
Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD

or via e-mail to secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk

All comments must be received by WEDNESDAY 7th 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