

## APPENDIX F – LEAD SPONSOR STATEMENT

The consultation period for the proposals for a new Academy, the University Academy of Birkenhead, to replace Rock Ferry High School and Park High School started on Monday 22 March 2010 and concluded on Friday 30 April 2010.

The consultation process used a number of different communications methods to engage and inform a wide group of stakeholders including parents of students at both predecessor schools, governors and staff at both predecessor schools, students at both predecessor schools, local community and faith groups, teachers, parents and pupils of local primary schools. Methods included questionnaires, postcards and public meetings. The two main concerns to emerge from the public consultation were the implications of the new Academy not being based on a new and neutral site and the loss of the existing specialisms at both schools.

A total of 184 questionnaires were received and six separate communications via letter or email. In addition, one petition was received from parents and staff at Rock Ferry High School supporting the Academy proposals but expressing a wish that the Academy should be built on a separate site. A total of 411 signatures were received from parents/carers and 102 from staff. The petition states:

'I, the undersigned, am a parent/carer of a pupil (or staff member) at RFHS. I wish to urge Wirral Borough Council to make every effort to ensure that the proposed Birkenhead Academy is housed in new buildings, on a site convenient both to the children of Rock Ferry High School and Park High School.'

The concern over the site of the Academy was echoed through the postcards received from students. A total of 370 students from Rock Ferry High School wrote their thoughts on the proposed Academy on the blank postcard provided. Out of this 370, 328 mentioned the location of the Academy, with 233 saying that they wanted a brand new school on a new site. The remainder of the 328 occasionally commented on their preference for being able to walk to school, to keep Rock Ferry High open and that they did not want to go to a site on the former Park High School. A total of 102 questionnaire responses out of 184 ask for a brand new site. Park High students submitted 20 postcards and mainly focused on keeping their existing teachers.

Many people, a total of 56 of the 184 questionnaire respondents, expressed concern about the loss of skills and expertise gained at both predecessor schools regarding the loss of their existing specialisms - sport and performing arts. This issue was raised 29 students from both schools who used their postcards to confirm they wanted to keep the school's specialisms. Many stated that they had chosen their school because of the specialisms offered and were really concerned that they would lose what to them had been a significant advantage.

The concerns above were echoed by feedback gathered during a student consultation session with 23 pupils from both predecessor schools held as part of the consultation process.

Broadly, the proposed Academy received support with 117 questionnaire respondents out of 184 saying they supported the proposed Academy. However, many said their support was conditional on a new building based on a new and neutral Academy site and retaining the current specialisms of both schools. The evidence and wealth of opinion collected through the consultation process indicates strongly that a new site neutral to both schools is required and that the existing specialisms should be kept, and we would therefore recommend that both are seriously considered going forward.