

From: Cllr P Davies

Reply to: Town Hall
Brighton Street
Wallasey
Wirral
Merseyside
CH44 8ED

APPENDIX A

to Ms N Magnier
Consultant
PKF (UK) LLP
Farringdon Place
20 Farringdon Road
London
EC1M 3AP

date 4 December 2008

your ref
my ref PD/CB911a/pw

Dear Ms Magnier

Consultation regarding the proposal to establish an Academy at Birkenhead High School for Girls

Firstly may I thank you and the Headteacher for the opportunity to visit the school and participate in the recent consultation meeting. The Council will not be able to make a formal response to the consultation within the timescale. This issue, as you will be well aware, is one of some considerable sensitivity and I have asked the Director of Children's Services to prepare a full report on the proposal to be considered by Wirral's Cabinet at its meeting on 15th January 2009. The Director will then forward to you the considered response of the Cabinet on behalf of the Local Authority.

I would however at this stage set out the key issues which have informed the debate on this proposal since its inception and which will be the critical matters which the Cabinet and I will consider most carefully.

- (1) There is no objection in principle to the establishment of the Academy and the Council would welcome, again in principle, the progress towards inclusivity which would be represented by movement of an independent school to within the wider state funded family of Wirral schools.
- (2) There are however serious concerns regarding the addition at this stage of a new school which is physically located within an area where the Council was already acutely aware of a need to rationalise, and all probability reduce, existing secondary provision.

- (3) The fact that the school would provide exclusively for girls compounds this problem in that the existing provision within Birkenhead for secondary aged pupils already includes one girls' school (which is now over-subscribed). There is a concern regarding equity of provision and the impact that this proposal would have.
- (4) Whilst recognising that the proposal has sought to mitigate any impact upon the secondary schools in Birkenhead through the school's stated intention to continue to draw pupils from a wide area (and the adoption of an admissions policy for the school compatible with this intention) this in itself creates a further issue: the main justification for the establishment of academies is to make significant improvement in provision for the most deprived pupils in the area. If the school continues to draw pupils from a wider area, whilst this may limit the impact on local schools, it is difficult to see how it then would impact upon deprived children.

I trust that this is helpful in setting out the key issues, as I see them, from the perspective of the Local Authority. I will ensure that you are informed of the full response, immediately following the Cabinet meeting.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "P.L. Davies". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Councillor Phil Davies
Deputy Leader of the Labour Group
Cabinet Member for Children's Services & Lifelong Learning