

**Proposal to cease to maintain Pensby High School for Boys
and
Proposal to change the gender intake at Pensby High School
for Girls**

Complete Proposal

**Name and contact details of the Local Authority or governing body
publishing the proposal**

Wirral Council, Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wallasey, Wirral, CH44 8ED

Name, address and category of the school proposed for closure

Pensby High School for Boys, Irby Road, Pensby, Wirral, CH61 6XN

This is a Community Secondary School.

**Name address and category of the school proposed to change gender
intake**

Pensby High School for Girls, Irby Road, Pensby, Wirral, CH61 6XN

This is a Community Secondary School.

Proposal effective dates

Proposed date of closure is 31 July 2015.

Proposed date for change of gender intake is 1st September 2015.

**Objectives, reason for proposals and why closure of the school is
considered necessary**

The proposal is to close Pensby High School for Boys with effect from 31 July 2015, in combination with a linked proposal for a prescribed alteration to Pensby High School for Girls to change the gender intake from girls only, to mixed sex, from 1st September 2015.

Pensby High School for Boys is a single sex, non-selective community secondary school with places for 867 boys aged 11 to 18.

Pensby High School for Girls is a single sex, non-selective community secondary school with places for 883 girls aged 11 to 18.

The schools are located side by side in Pensby.

In May 2010, the two Pensby secondary schools entered into a hard Federation, "The Pensby High Schools Federation". This enabled the two schools to work together more closely under a single governing body led by a single headteacher, building on the existing joint sixth form arrangements, helping to safeguard viable secondary education for both girls and boys in Pensby when rolls were falling.

In September 2014, the Governing body of the Pensby High Schools Federation approached the Council to ask to begin a formal consultation on the amalgamation of the two schools to form a single mixed sex school in Pensby.

The reasons given by the Governing body were:

1. The impact the decrease in pupil numbers in each school is having on providing the broadest curriculum offer, the best teaching and learning and therefore outcomes for students;
2. Numbers across both schools have fallen and will not increase to the pupil admission number of 150 for each school in the foreseeable future if at all;
3. The current numbers in each school mean the schools on their present separate but adjacent sites are financially unsustainable.

Pupil numbers and admissions

The number of pupils in Wirral secondary schools is falling and will continue to do so for a number of years. Not all areas of Wirral are being affected in the same way, but there are significantly fewer children in the Pensby school community. Both schools are already experiencing falling rolls and with this, decreasing budgets. If this is left unresolved it will result in a narrowing curriculum entitlement and reduced opportunities for pupils.

The number on roll at each school has reduced significantly and the reduction is expected to continue for the foreseeable future. By 2023, over half the places in the two schools are expected to be empty.

	2005	2015	2023 (projected)
Total pupils (boys and girls)	1610	890	923
Total places	1750	1750	1750
% occupancy	92%	51%	53%

Table shows number of boys and girls at the Pensby secondary schools ten years ago, now and in 8 years time. Total places includes Sixth Form (250 places). Projections to 2019 are based on current pupils moving through the school, the staying on rate for Sixth Form, and a three year average of parental preference for Year 7, adjusted for the rising roll.

This matters because the main way in which schools are funded is on the number of pupils on roll. The current numbers in each school mean the schools as separate establishments are financially unsustainable.

Amalgamation will enable the mixed sex school to make best use of resources, thereby gaining economies and efficiencies of operation and further driving up educational standards.

As already happens at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, courses that would not be viable in one school alone can be run for students in both schools, thus providing greater choice and improving curriculum opportunities.

As a single, larger school, the Governing body believe that there are more opportunities to provide a broader curriculum, the best teaching and learning and therefore outcomes for students.

Details of the schools at which displaced pupils will be offered places

If the proposal is approved following the completion of the statutory process, parents of pupils who will be on roll at Pensby High School for Boys on 1st September 2015 will automatically transfer to the roll of the mixed school, formerly Pensby High School for Girls.

Alternative schools and Parental choice

Parents at either school involved in the proposals can apply to transfer their child to an alternative Wirral secondary school by following the standard in-year transfer process set out in the Wirral co-ordinated scheme.

The Council aims to meet parental preferences for a Community or Voluntary Controlled school as far as possible provided that there are vacant places in the preferred school. In the case of Voluntary Aided schools and Academies, the governing body of those types of school decides the criteria for admission to their particular school, and transfer applications for such schools will be co-ordinated by the Council, however the decision as to whether a place can be offered will be made by the relevant governing body and not the Council.

In addition to Wirral secondary schools, there are nearby schools in Cheshire West and Chester Authority that parents may wish to consider. Application to these schools would be made directly to the school concerned.

Impact on the community

Community (non-school) and extended school use of Pensby High School for Boys

The governing body indicate that they intend to relocate all classes currently situated in the Boys building, into the Girls building, from September 2015, with the exception of the music and drama facilities which will remain in the Boys building. The school will also retain the joint Sports Hall and the entire playing field. There are no plans to release any part of the site.

All existing community and extended school use of the buildings and/or grounds will continue. The Principal of the Pensby High School Federation is keen to extend community usage of the building and is investigating possibilities in this area.

An Equality Impact Assessment is available on-line at www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-april-2014/eias-families-wellbeing

Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable as the school does not have a religious character.

Rural primary schools

Not applicable as the school is not a rural primary school.

Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable as the school is not a maintained nursery school.

Provision for 16-19 year olds

The two schools already operate a Joint Sixth Form provision. Existing collaboration between the Pensby Sixth Form and other local schools and colleges will continue.

Sixth form lessons and many Key Stage 4 classes are already taught in mixed classes.

Special educational needs (SEN) provision

Not applicable as the school is not a special school.

Travel

If the proposal to close the school is approved after the statutory processes have been followed, young people attending Pensby High School for Boys at 1st September 2015 will transfer automatically to the mixed school, formerly Pensby High School for Girls, which occupies the same site and will have no significant effect on home to school journey. The proposal is unlikely to result in any increase in car use overall.

Consultation

The Council has complied with all applicable statutory requirements in relation to the proposal.

The public consultation on the proposal to cease to maintain Pensby High School for Boys and the linked proposal to amend the gender intake at Pensby High School for Girls began on the 7th January 2015 and ended on the 20th February 2015.

Copies of the consultation leaflet were distributed to the parents/carers, teachers and governors. Local primary schools from which children would be likely to attend either school were provided with consultation leaflets and a poster, and asked to advertise the consultation in their internal newsletters. Leaflets were provided to the Central libraries, local libraries, and relevant community centres, one stop shops and children's centres. All Wirral head teachers and governing bodies were notified by email along with Trade Unions, Wirral MPs and Councillors, neighbouring Councils, diocesan bodies, Council departments and other interested persons. The leaflet was also published on the Council's website for residents to gain access, and an advert was placed in a local newspaper.

A public meeting was held at Pensby High School for Girls on 21st January 2015.

The consultation leaflet is part of the complete proposal document.

In brief, key themes that emerged from the consultation were in relation to:

- Falling rolls
- Educational standards and quality of provision
- Concern for the building and site
- Disruption to education
- Financial
- Choice of single sex education
- The consultation

A summary of points raised during the consultation and notes taken at the public meetings held as part of the consultation process are provided as an appendix to the Cabinet report of 12th March 2015, which is part of the complete proposal.

The majority of respondents were in support of the proposals.

Related proposals

The proposal to cease to maintain Pensby High School for Boys is linked to a proposal for a prescribed alteration to the gender intake at Pensby High School for Girls.

The two proposals are being published together as a single notice.

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, i.e. by 10th June 2015, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by sending them to:

Julia Hassall, Director of Children's Services, Children and Young People's Department, Wirral Council, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD or to secondaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk by Wednesday 10th June 2015.