

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SCHOOLS FORUM - 28th September 2016

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

AMALGAMATION OF PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS AND PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report updates the Schools Forum on a request to the Education Funding Agency for Pensby High School to retain their combined lump sum formula funding in 2017-18. This request will give the school an additional protected amount of £40,000 in their 2017-18 delegated budget.

BACKGROUND

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:

- 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;
- 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;
- The current numbers in each school mean the schools on their present separate but adjacent sites are financially unsustainable.

In November 2014, Cabinet approved a six week public consultation be held on the proposed amalgamation of the two schools, through closure of Pensby High School for Boys, and changing the gender intake of Pensby High School for Girls to form a mixed sex secondary school in Pensby.

In March 2015, Cabinet approved the following proposals:

- 1) The closure of Pensby High School for Boys from 31st August 2015
- 2) A prescribed alteration to the gender intake of Pensby High School for Girls from 1st September 2015.
- 3) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish these proposals and ensure the prescribed procedures are followed in furtherance of the proposals.

SCHOOL FUNDING

In 2016-17 School Funding Guidance says that where schools have amalgamated they will retain 85% of their combined lump sums in the following year. This has been the case for Pensby who have received £170,000 in 2016-17 i.e. £70,000 above the existing single school Lump Sum entitlement.

In doing this the additional funding helps to take account of costs in school following amalgamation, such as premises, reorganisation or ongoing restructuring, all of which have been and are factors at the school.

In 2017-18 guidance says Local Authorities may apply to provide a second year of protection. Applications must specify the level of protection sought, "although in general we would not expect the additional protection to exceed 70% of the combined lump sums".

At the July 2015 meeting the Forum endorsed a second application to the EFA, but on the basis of protecting 85%. It is proposed that a revised approval is sought on the basis of 70%; recognising that whilst this will provide additional funding for the school, it will defer the redistribution of £40,000 within the Schools Funding Formula for a further 12 months.

RECOMMENDATION

Schools Forum supports the proposal that there is an application to the Education Funding Agency (EFA) for a revised Exceptional Sum Factor for Pensby High school using 70% of the schools combined lump sums in 2017-18.

Julia Hassall
Director of Children's Services