



Closure of Millfields Primary School and establishment of a Church of England Controlled Primary School

Closure of Millfields Primary School and establishment of a Church of England Controlled Primary School 2009 Consultation

This leaflet

- **describes the option**
- **outlines the timetable for consultation and possible implementation**
- **tells you how to respond to consultation**

Dear Consultee

Some of you may remember that following the Council's 2006 review of primary schools in the Bromborough and Eastham area, the Council's preferred option for the Eastham area was to close St Mary's CE Primary School in Eastham Village, and to change Millfields Primary School into a Church of England primary school.

Following the decision of the national School's Adjudicator, St Mary's CE Controlled Primary School was closed in August 2007. Since then, the Anglican Diocese of Chester, the governing body of Millfields Primary School, and the Local Authority, have been discussing the possibility of Millfields Primary School becoming a Church of England Controlled Primary School.

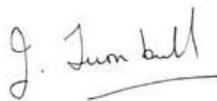
It is now time to hold a wider consultation with parents, staff, governors and any other people related to Millfields Primary School, in order to help decide whether this change to Church of England Controlled status should go ahead.

Your views are important to us. Please take this opportunity to have your say.

Yours sincerely



Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services



Mr J Turnbull
Director of Education
Diocese of Chester

The Consultation

We have tried to think of questions you may have about the option to close Millfields Primary and open a Church of England primary school. We are also sure you will have plenty more! Please ask your headteacher, or write to the Local Authority at the address at the end of this leaflet.

What is a Church of England school?

Millfields Primary School is currently a Community primary school. Church of England schools are different because they have a Christian, Church of England ethos or character.

There are three kinds of Church of England primary schools : **Aided, Controlled and Foundation**. This option is to establish a Church of England Controlled primary school.

Controlled schools differ from Community schools because they have a Church of England ethos and collective worship. In all other respects, including staff employment, admissions, funding, following the National Curriculum, provision for special needs and Ofsted inspections, they are the same as Community primary schools. Controlled schools serve their local community, regardless of background or faith, just as in Community schools. In a Controlled school, the Church appoints some of the governors.

Aided schools have more differences. Staff are employed by the governing body, not by the Local Authority, and the governing body sets its own admissions policy, but still within the Admissions Code. For funding, National Curriculum, special needs and Ofsted inspections, Aided schools are the same as Community and Controlled primary schools. In an Aided school, the Church appoints the majority of the governors.

As well as Ofsted inspections, all Church of England schools have an additional inspection of the character and collective worship offered by the school.

Why change? What are the benefits?

Since St Mary's CE Primary School closed, parental choice of Church of England primary school provision in this part of Wirral has been reduced. The nearest Church of England primary schools are either in Cheshire - Little Sutton CE Controlled Primary School (2 miles) and Willaston CE Controlled Primary School (2.5 miles) or more than 3 miles away at St Andrew's CE Aided Primary School in Bebington (3.5 miles). Both the Local Authority and the Anglican Diocese of Chester are keen to maintain parental choice of community and faith ethos schools wherever possible.

Millfields Primary School becoming a Church of England school would mean that parents in the Eastham area would again have a choice of a local Community school (Heygarth), Catholic school (Christ the King) and a Church of England school (at Millfields).

As well as providing choice, many parents welcome the values and principles provided by Church schools. Staff at Millfields Primary School already have a caring approach, promoting good behaviour and positive attitudes, helping young people to develop a sense of right and wrong and to grow into responsible members of society. This excellent work would continue to be developed in a Church of England school.

The Anglican Diocese of Chester says, "Church schools pride themselves in providing an education for the whole child in a Christian environment. They seek to ensure that all children and young people achieve the best of which they are capable in a caring atmosphere that recognises the special gifts of each individual."

"The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of all is fostered within a Christian environment. Moral teaching is based firmly within the teaching of the Bible. They enable children and their families to explore the truths of Christian faith, to develop spiritually and morally, and to have a basis for choice about Christian commitment. They are places where the beliefs and practices of other faiths will be respected".

More information on schools in the Diocese of Chester can be found on-line at:

<http://www.chester.anglican.org>

Why are you consulting us again?

Some people may remember the previous consultation on this option, which was carried out in 2006. At that time, very few people raised any concerns about the possibility of Millfields Primary becoming a Church of England primary school, and the majority were very positive about the idea.

However, this consultation is now almost three years ago. Guidance says that if there has been more than 12 months since consultation on changes to schools was carried out, it should begin again. This is because circumstances can change, and also there may be different parents, staff and governors in the school who did not have an opportunity to have their say in the original consultation.

Why does Millfields have to close – can't it just change status?

By law, a school can't gain, lose or change religious character by simply publishing a "prescribed alteration" notice. In order to become a Church of England Controlled School, the existing school closes, and a new school with a religious character opens immediately

on the same site. The Authority would propose the closure of Millfields Primary School, with a linked proposal to establish a new CE (Controlled) School being made by the Diocese of Chester.

What is a statutory competition?

New regulations introduced in 2007 mean that the establishment of any new primary school is subject to a “**competition**” to find providers for the new school. The provider could still be the Diocese of Chester, but other bidders may come forward, for example a business, college, university or another local school. The competition process includes further consultation and is likely to add at least six months into the process of establishing a new school.

This option has already been consulted on during 2006, and has been under discussion now for some time. If the option becomes a formal proposal, the Authority and Diocese of Chester would jointly write to the Secretary of State to ask for permission not to hold a competition in order to attempt to reduce the time spent in uncertainty. The Secretary of State takes about 6 weeks to make the decision.

If permission to waive the competition regulations is received, notice publication would go ahead as soon as possible. Public Notices need to stand for 6 weeks so that anyone who wants to can make comments and objections. Proposals would then pass to Council’s Cabinet for a decision to be made. In some instances, the decision would be made by the national Schools Adjudicator.

How would Admissions be different?

The process for admissions would be the same as now.

If the option goes ahead, all pupils currently on roll at Millfields Primary School would be **guaranteed a place** at the Church of England school. If parents want to apply for places at alternative local primary schools, they can complete an admissions preference form. Places at alternative schools would then be allocated according to the Admissions Code, the availability of places and the KS1 class size limit.

For admissions to Foundation 2 in September 2010 and afterwards, the Local Authority’s admission policy would apply, just as now. The Church of England primary school would have the **same catchment zone** as Millfields Primary School.

Admissions to Church of England Controlled primary schools are made by the Local Authority. Unlike Aided schools, Controlled schools do not operate any kind of selection on background, faith or church attendance.

Is there any difference in the National Curriculum?

No. Church of England schools are bound by the same legal requirement to follow the National Curriculum as community schools, and are inspected by OFSTED in the same way. Voluntary Controlled schools teach Religious Education according to the Wirral Agreed Syllabus – the same syllabus used by community schools. All RE syllabuses taught in church schools are multi-faith and require students to learn about major world faiths.

Would the school have a new name and uniform?

The name of the new school and any changes to uniform arrangements would be decided by the Governing body of the school in conjunction with the Diocese of Chester.

Do Church of England schools only employ Christian staff?

No. The teaching and non-teaching staff of Church of England schools are diverse, with members drawn from all faiths and backgrounds.

What about existing staff?

The closure of Millfields Primary is a legal requirement in order to open a new Church of England primary school. There would still be a primary school at the Millfields site.

When a school closes, technically all the staff, teaching and non-teaching, are made redundant and could be considered for redeployment. As in any school, staff members may leave, for example by taking up posts elsewhere, or through retirement. The new school would of course need staff, and we would expect the new Church of England school governing body to make appointments from those staff who were on the redeployment list.

Wirral Council has an excellent record on redeployment both for teachers and other school staff.

The Consultation

It is important for you to understand that a decision has not already been made. The Council's Cabinet will want to see the comments made during consultation before making any decision about what happens next.

Finding out more

If you want more information about the options, you can find out more on the Internet. Go to www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces, and click on Eastham.

You will find:

- This consultation leaflet
- How to send your comments to the Director

If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you can go to your local library where staff will help you log on and print out the information.

The leaflet will also be available to read at the following places:

Libraries

Birkenhead Central

Bromborough

Eastham

Wallasey Central

Community Centres

Delamere

One Stop Shops

Bromborough, Port Causeway House

Eastham, Mill Park Drive

You can also look at the documents at Wallasey Town Hall. If you want more printed copies, please contact the Asset Management Team, Hamilton Building, Conway Street, Birkenhead, CH41 4FD, 0151 666 4351, or by e-mail at primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk.

What are the next steps?

Step 1. The first step is to distribute the consultation leaflet and ask for views and comments.

There will be a consultation meeting at Millfields Primary School on 4th March 2009.

The meeting starts at 7 o'clock in the evening.

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 representatives of the Children and Young People's Department and the Anglican Diocese of Chester.

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.

When the Consultation ends, all the views and opinions received in writing and at the consultation meeting will form part of a report to the Council's Cabinet. Cabinet members will

read the report and decide what to do next. They may decide not to go further with this option at this stage. Members might make changes, consider other options put forward as part of the consultation, or they could decide to do more consultation.

Step 2. If Council's Cabinet decides to go ahead with this option, the Local Authority and Diocese of Chester will write to the Secretary of State asking for permission to waive the statutory competition process.

The Secretary of State's decision is likely to take about 6 weeks.

- If **approval to waive** the competition is received, formal proposal notices will be published. Then there are six weeks when formal written objections and comments can be sent to the Director of Children's Services.
- If **rejected**, a statutory competition must be held. This involves further consultation, and the invitation of bids to operate the new school. The Local Authority sets out the criteria for the new school. As well as the Church of England, other groups could bid, for example a business, or a college, university or another local school. This process takes about 6 months. At the end of the competition, the final decision on the winning bidder is made by Council's Cabinet, or in some cases by the School's Adjudicator. Formal proposal notices can then be published, followed by six weeks for formal written objections and comments to be sent to the Director of Children's Services.

Step 3. Whether there has been a competition or not, after the six week representation period ends, the proposal, with the objections and comments, is sent to the Council's decision making body, which is Council's Cabinet. Cabinet can decide to:

- Approve the proposal
- Approve the proposal with changes
- Approve the proposal subject to other factors, such as obtaining planning permission
- Reject the proposal.

If Cabinet can't agree a decision, the Schools' Adjudicator will make the final decision. The Adjudicator is independent, and is appointed by the Government to make decisions on school proposals.

Step 4. If the proposal is approved, either by Cabinet or by the School's Adjudicator, it will be put into practice.

HAVING YOUR SAY

What do you think? Please make sure your response is received by **Friday, 20th March 2009.**

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. Your comments can be sent by post, by handing them in at your school 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.

The postal address for return of questionnaires or written comments is:

**Primary Places Review - Millfields
Director of Children's Services
Hamilton Building
Conway Street
Birkenhead
CH41 1FD**

Or by e-mail to primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk

Please note: To make sure the Consultation is fully open and transparent, all the responses to this consultation will be made available for inspection.

Millfields Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know the main relationships you have with the school by putting a tick in the appropriate box or boxes. You might be a parent and a member of staff, for example.

School	Parent	Member of staff	Governor	Other person
Millfields Primary				
Other (please say which one)				

Do you agree with the proposal to close Millfields Primary School and open a new Church of England Controlled primary school? Tick one box only.

YES

NO

Comments

Please give your reasons or comments in the box below. You can write more on the back of the form, or on another sheet if you need to.

Please tell us your name and address, and e-mail address if you have one. We will not use your personal information for anything other than this consultation.

Name

Address

Postcode

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: Primary Places – Millfields
 Director of Children's Services
 Hamilton Building
 Conway Street
 Birkenhead
 CH41 4FD

Make sure your response is received by:

FRIDAY 20th MARCH 2009

E-mail primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk