

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides an update of the position in respect of secondary school places in Wirral and describes recent developments, the current position and issues for the future in relation to the proposed Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review. Following various recent developments, the report also recommends that Phase 2 of the review be divided into two sub-phases.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 29th November 2007, Cabinet instructed that Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review should comprise schools in Birkenhead and Bebington (Wirral South). Phase 2 of the Review would then comprise schools in Wirral West and Wallasey, due to begin in Autumn 2009. The report and minute form Appendix A to this report.
- 1.2 Phase 1 has resulted in a complex option for consultation including the establishment of a mixed Academy and a Boys Academy, linked to the closure of three existing schools – Ridgeway High School, Rock Ferry High School and Park High School. The Secretary of State has issued a Statement of Intent for the two new Academies, and the process is currently at the Expression of Interest stage. The Council are acting both as sponsor and as Local Authority for both new Academies, and a separate report on the Expressions of Interest will be brought to Cabinet during the Autumn.
- 1.3 As in Phase 1 of the Review, there are four essential elements in looking to plan future secondary school requirements across the Borough. These are, firstly, the numbers of children expected to enter school over the next seven years (Section 2); secondly the capacity of the current stock of secondary schools, individually and in areas (Section 3), thirdly the impact of school size on standards, including the National Challenge (Section 4), and finally various other factors with implications for place provision (Section 5)
- 1.4 This report updates Cabinet on changes to the four elements in 1.3 above and proposes a subdivision of Phase 2 of the Review.

2.0 Pupil Numbers

- 2.1 The projection method for Years 7 to 11 in secondary schools is as follows. In order to calculate the Year 7 intake for each future year, the actual number of pupils in Wirral primary schools is rolled forward to their equivalent Year 7 intake year, then multiplied by 101.7 to reflect a historical increase at this transition point which is related to movement to the maintained sector from independent schools. Individual school Year 7 intakes are then based on the previous three years Year 7 intake figures. Years 8 to 11 at each individual school are simply rolled forward.
- 2.2 Post-16 projections are not the focus of this report, however, for completeness, Year 12 pupil numbers are calculated from Year 11 actual numbers at individual schools (excluding schools without sixth forms), to which the individual school's historical staying on rate is applied. In a similar manner, Years 12 and 13 are calculated from the actual number on roll for the previous year, using the historical staying on rate.
- 2.3 The number of secondary age pupils has already begun to fall, following as a natural consequence of the longstanding falling roll in primary schools, and will continue to fall in the future, based upon numbers of actual pupils now in primary schools which will translate into intakes up to 2016. Total secondary numbers on roll, actual and projected, to 2016 are as set out below.

	YEAR	PUPILS	ANNUAL CHANGE	CUMULATIVE CHANGE
ACTUAL	2002	21109		
	2003	21432	+323	+323
	2004	21331	-101	+222
	2005	20955	-376	-154
	2006	20581	-374	-528
	2007	20051	-530	-1058
	2008	19439	-612	-1670
	2009	19007	-432	-2102
PROJECTED	2010	18894	-113	-2215
	2011	18485	-409	-2624
	2012	18064	-421	-3045
	2013	17696	-368	-3413
	2014	17283	-413	-3826
	2015	17169	-114	-3940
	2016	17165	-4	-3944

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals are as at the January Census. Projections from 2010 onwards include Birkenhead High Academy for Girls. Cumulative change is measured against 2002 baseline.

- 2.4 The above figures illustrate a significantly falling school roll across the Borough. The levels of reduction are not evenly distributed between areas, or between individual schools within areas. The table below shows 11 to 16 numbers on roll at January 2009 and projected to 2016 by area.

	2009	2016	% Projected Fall
Birkenhead	3734	3302	12%
Wallasey	5244	4350	17%
Wirral South	4442	4095	8%
Wirral West	5896	5417	8%

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals and Wirral areas are as at the January Census. Numbers on roll in 2009 for Birkenhead include Birkenhead High School for Girls to allow proper comparison with 2016. Woodchurch High School and Upton Hall School, previously included within the Birkenhead area, are now incorporated into Wirral West throughout this report in line with Local Authority planning areas.

- 2.5 Pupils attending Wirral secondary schools over the next seven years already exist in Wirral primary schools. Migration is minimal, and while individual school rolls may vary, it seems reasonable to conclude that over the next seven years around 1,800 fewer pupils will require 11 to 16 school provision, continuing a trend which has already resulted in over 2,400 fewer pupils in the system in 2009 than there were in 2003.

3.0 School Capacity and Surplus Places

- 3.1 Establishing the projected number of pupils is the first step in planning ahead, the second step is the calculation of the capacity of both individual schools and overall LA capacity, in order to try to achieve the best match between need and provision, whilst at the same time retaining some flexibility to allow parental preferences to be considered.

- 3.2 The capacity of secondary schools is calculated by the DCSF Net Capacity method, used by all Local Authorities. This method replaced two former measures of school capacity, the Standard Number capacity (SN) and the More Open Enrolment (MoE) method, which produced anomalies and variations year on year. When first introduced in 2002/2003, the Net Capacity method resulted in reductions at some schools and increases in others. It seems likely that the Net Capacity method will continue to be used by the DCSF and LAs in

future years. There is little scope for “on paper” reductions in surplus places using this method.

- 3.3 The Council is required to monitor surplus places, both by the DCSF and by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission recommends that surplus places overall should be no higher than 10%. Below 4%, there may be little scope for parents to exercise their right to express a preference, while above 10% the Council is considered to be wasting resources supporting empty space, rather than directly funding education. In the most recent Supply of School Places return to the DCSF, the overall surplus percentage for secondary schools was calculated at 15%.
- 3.4 DCSF also uses the number of schools with more than 25% and more than 30 surplus places as a measure of how effectively the LA is managing places. In January 2009, five of Wirral’s 22 secondary schools were in this category. The Authority is obliged to make a statement about schools in this category, stating how and when the surplus place issue is to be addressed, or if no action is to be taken, the reasons for this decision.
- 3.5 Wirral is already above the Audit Commission’s recommended 10% maximum for surplus places, and has two schools in the 25% and 30 places category. No action is taken to address these issues, and applying the pupil projection methods given in 2.1 and 2.2 above, the overall Wirral surplus place percentage in secondary schools will increase to 24% by 2016, more than double the Audit Commission’s maximum acceptable level.
- 3.6 With regard to the DCSF 25% and 30 places measure, it is estimated that the number of schools exceeding this benchmark would rise from five to nine secondary schools by 2015/2016, 40% of the total.
- 3.7 Projections for percentage surplus and numbers of schools exceeding the 25% and 30 places measure by area are given in the table below.

	2009 number on roll	2009 Capacity	% 2009 Surplus	% 2016 surplus (projected)	No. schools with 25% & 30 places
Birkenhead	4001	5838	32	35	3 out of 6
Wallasey	6410	7539	15	30	3 out of 5
Wirral South	5398	6249	13	19	1 out of 5
Wirral West	7299	7902	8	16	2 out of 7

The numbers set out above are for secondary and post-16 age pupils (11–19) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools. Actuals are as at the January Census. For comparison purposes, 2009 NOR and Capacity include Census and provisional Net Capacity data from Birkenhead High School for Girls.

- 3.8 The two areas upon which the falling roll has and will continue to have most impact are Birkenhead and Wallasey. It should however be noted that surplus places are projected to increase in all parts of Wirral, and that by 2016 all four areas are expected to exceed the Audit Commission’s 10% maximum benchmark.
- 3.9 As in the primary school sector, there are a number of methods of removing surplus places.
- Re-allocation of space within schools for non-core purposes, such as extended services and other community provision.
 - Removal of temporary accommodation.
 - Changes in accommodation to meet the needs of a changing curriculum
 - Proposals for school re-organisation where other measures are insufficient to reduce surplus capacity to an acceptable level.
- 3.10 The intention is that these methods will continue to be applied but increasingly it is the final one which will have most relevance.
- 3.11 Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review is intended to address falling rolls in the Birkenhead area, the outcome of which will necessarily also impact upon schools in the Wirral South area. Phase 1 will be the subject of a report to Cabinet during the Autumn.

3.12 The surplus place situation in Wallasey remains the next most significant, however other factors lead to a recommendation to Cabinet to split Phase 2 into two sub-phases; the first being Wirral West, the second being Wallasey.

4.0 School Size and Standards

4.1 Section 4 of Appendix A covers this element in some detail, which will not be repeated here.

4.2 At time of writing, no secondary school is in an Ofsted category of concern.

4.3 On 10th June 2008, the DCSF announced the National Challenge, a three year £400 million programme targeting 638 schools in England where fewer than 30% of pupils achieved at least five GCSEs at A* to C, including English and maths in 2007, with the target of no schools in the below 30% category by 2011.

4.4 Six Wirral secondary schools were identified as part of the National Challenge, three of which are included in the Phase 1 review area. They are: Ridgeway High School, Park High School and Rock Ferry High School.

4.5 The remaining three schools fall within the Phase 2 review area. They are Wallasey School, Oldershaw School and Pensby High School for Boys.

5.0 Other factors impacting on school capacity

5.1 On 13th August 2009, the Planning Committee approved an application in relation to Plot 1 (Northbank East) of the Wirral Waters development which would create 141 apartments in the Seacombe area. Outline planning permission has also been granted for an additional 1,531 residential units divided between the Birkenhead and Seacombe sides of the waterfront area.

5.2 The number of pupils generated on average by new housing developments is lower than is often thought to be the case. The Audit Commission recorded a range of three to six pupils per year group for every one hundred new homes built in their 1997 study 'Trading Places'. In addition, family movement within Wirral means that some children moving to new developments will already be on roll at a Wirral secondary school. The first phase of 141 apartments could reasonably be expected to produce an additional 40 pupils aged 11 to 18 in the Seacombe area, although the majority of these would be expected to be existing Wirral residents. If fully realised and occupied, the entire Wirral Waters development could be expected to accommodate around 470 pupils aged 11 to 18.

5.3 The majority of the Wirral West review area remains within the Council's West Wirral planning restraint area for new housing development, and as such, new housing is unlikely to impact greatly on secondary schools in this area.

6.0 Birkenhead High School for Girls Academy update

6.1 Following final approval from the Secretary of State in Spring 2009, this former fee-paying independent school for girls is now a 3 to 19 Academy for girls from September 2009. The admission number for entry to Foundation 2 is 40 pupils, with an admission number of 100 pupils to Year 7.

6.2 There are substantial and wide-ranging implications to the Authority, not only in terms of school place planning and data sharing with the new Birkenhead High Academy, but in terms of financial and staffing implications of the Authority's involvement with the procurement and delivery of £10.5 million of capital works at the Birkenhead High Academy sites. This capital is in addition to previous indicative allocations to the Authority for BSF.

6.3 Using the Partnerships for Schools framework, Mott MacDonald has now been appointed as an external technical advisor in relation to the proposed capital works at Birkenhead High Academy. Mott MacDonald Group is a management, engineering and development consultancy serving the public and private sectors worldwide. In 2009, the company was named Best Technical Advisor in the Infrastructure Journal Awards.

6.4 In terms of admissions, the current allocation for entry to Birkenhead High Academy in Year 7 in 2009 breaks down as follows:

Birkenhead	-	42%
Wirral West	-	29%
Wallasey	-	14%
Wirral South	-	10%
Out of Borough	-	5%

38% of allocated pupils had previously attended Year 6 of the former independent school, of whom a third had joined Birkenhead High School for Girls for all or part of Year 6 only. Pupils on roll at Birkenhead High School for Girls at the end of Year 6 in Summer 2009 were guaranteed a place in Year 7 at the Girls Academy in September 2009.

- 6.5 If this pattern of admission from the various areas of Wirral continues into future years, there is likely to be further significant impact on numbers of girls entering existing schools not only in Birkenhead, but also in the Wirral West area.

7.0 Inclusion

- 7.1 At its meeting of 23rd April 2009, Cabinet approved the development of a new build 11 to 19 school for young people with complex learning difficulties on a split site. The 11 to 16 provision of approximately 135 places is to be co-located with a mainstream secondary school. In reorganising Wirral's secondary school provision, potential sites for co-location should be considered.

- 7.2 There may be further opportunities to locate special needs bases/places within mainstream secondary schools, meeting the increasing national emphasis on inclusive education. Given the small numbers of pupils involved, any impact on rolls or surplus places is expected to be minimal.

8.0 Building Schools for the Future and PFI

- 8.1 The Council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has resulted in the rebuild or significant remodelling of 9 secondary schools and one primary school. A unitary charge is payable on these buildings for twenty-five years after the building is handed over the Local Authority. This liability remains whether or not the building remains in use as a school, however it does not preclude options affecting schools occupying PFI buildings.

- 8.2 Due partly to Wirral's participation in PFI, the Council's place in the original ranking for the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme was in wave D, which meant full participation by 2016. In advance of the full BSF programme, Wirral was invited to take part in a One School Pathfinder scheme to fully re-build one secondary school, and the rebuilding of Woodchurch High School was approved by Cabinet on 15th November 2006. Building work officially began on site in May 2009. The new building is due to be open in September 2010.

- 8.3 The national BSF programme has subsequently been re-ordered by Partnerships for Schools (the national body managing BSF) and Wirral now have a three phase listing rather than the single start in 2016. Wirral's Phase 1 is listed as a priority entry into BSF at a date yet to be determined.

- 8.4 As part of the full BSF programme, the Council will be required to draw up a Strategy for Change and an Outline Business Case articulating its vision for transforming secondary school provision and outlining the principles that would underpin the programme.

These principles are likely to include:

- Meeting the demands of 21st century learning activities and curriculum changes
- Access to ICT
- Inclusion
- Extended schools provision
- Specialist facilities
- Promoting physical and mental well-being

8.5 It is important to start planning and consulting early with schools, parents/carers and other stakeholders, and to begin thinking in depth about what modern schools should look like and where funding and work can be targeted most effectively.

9.0 **Dividing Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review**

9.1 In thinking about how to provide the best educational opportunities for Wirral's future children and young people, we must give consideration as to whether we have not only the right number of schools, but the right size of schools to meet the needs of Wirral's secondary school population.

9.2 Cabinet are asked to approve the sub-division of Phase 2 into two phases – 2A to comprise Wirral West, 2B to involve the Wallasey area.

9.3 The factors involved in this recommendation include:

- The limited availability of staffing resource to support the review process
- The recent approval of the Wirral Waters development in Seacombe and the subsequent potential impact on school rolls in that area
- The implications of the National Challenge
- Opportunities for change, linked to Building Schools for the Future
- The impact of Birkenhead High Academy for Girls
- The falling roll situation in the Wirral West area, which, although impacting on all schools (including Grammar schools) is relatively localised to the Pensby area.

9.4 All schools in the Wirral West area would be reviewed in Phase 2A, which would involve Calday Grange Grammar School for Boys, Hilbre High School, Pensby High School for Boys, Pensby High School for Girls, Upton Hall School, West Kirby Grammar School for Girls, and Woodchurch High School. The last bullet point above indicates that the falling roll is most localised to the Pensby area, and these two schools are discussed in more detail below.

9.5 Pensby High School for Boys is in the 25% and above surplus place category. By 2016, both Pensby High School for Boys and Pensby High School for Girls are projected to fall into this category. There are 1,422 pupils on roll between the two schools in 2009, and 328 surplus places (19% overall). By 2016, the total roll is projected to fall to 1,163 pupils, while surplus places rise to 587 (34% overall).

9.6 Pensby High School for Boys is also one of the six schools identified in 2008 as part of the National Challenge (Section 4).

9.7 The two schools are located on the same site, and already share alternating floors in the central "tower". The two schools have successfully operated a joint Sixth Form, albeit with two separate heads of Sixth Form, for around 20 years. This enables what would otherwise be two small school sixth forms – approximately 100 pupils each – to offer a wider range of post-16 subjects and curriculum opportunities.

9.8 Individually, each school is relatively small in overall pupil numbers. As a combined school, either by amalgamation, or hard federation, the total number on roll should secure the viability of secondary school provision for boys and girls in Pensby.

9.9 A hard federation differs from amalgamation in that it involves the two schools remaining separate in terms of budgets, admissions and performance data, each school being inspected separately by Ofsted. The two schools would operate under a single governing body. There are a range of possible senior leadership structures. Federations can only be proposed by the Governing bodies of two or more schools.

9.10 As discussed in Section 8, it is vital for BSF to begin thinking early how capital funding can be targeted most effectively. It is recommended that the Wirral West area be targeted in Phase 2A of the Secondary School Review, beginning in Autumn 2009. It is hoped that Phase 2B (Wallasey) would then commence in Autumn 2010.

10.0 Secondary Place Review Process

- 10.1 This report proposes that in addition to the existing measures set out in 3.9 above that a review of secondary school places in the Phase 2A area is begun in Autumn 2009 to match current provision against future predicted need and draw up proposals for discussion and further consultation, leading to formal proposals, where appropriate. This will also enable the Authority to be prepared for BSF, and for any further “advance” projects that might arise of a similar nature to the current One School Pathfinder at Woodchurch High School.
- 10.2 Should a school be placed in an Ofsted category of concern during this time, it may alter the timescale for schools in that area.
- 10.3 As Phase 1 of the Secondary Places Review, and in the on-going Primary Places Review, it is proposed that a review document be produced for each area, including the following information:
- (a) Relevant cabinet reports
 - (b) Maps of the area
 - (c) School data, including Aided provision.
 - (d) Demographics and projections
 - (e) Current school populations plotted by address.
 - (f) Asset Management Data
 - (g) Other services / provision currently located on school sites.
 - (h) School performance data
 - (i) Diocesan Body statement

This document would be used as the basis for pre-consultation discussions with school governors and headteachers, Diocesan Bodies, other Council departments and relevant external bodies, with a view to producing options for more formal consultation as appropriate.

- 10.4 The outcome of the pre-consultation, including any options for formal consultation, will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet. If Cabinet approves options for formal consultation at that stage, the next step would be to publish the options and hold wide consultation with stakeholders including parents/carers.
- 10.5 Following consultation, a further report will be brought to Cabinet, containing recommendations for next steps, which may include statutory proposals. The earliest date for implementation of such proposals would be September 2011.
- 10.6 The challenges created by the falling roll also offer an opportunity to make a significant investment and complete the transformation of Wirral’s secondary schools, begun by PFI, to ensure that all pupils and their communities have access to high-quality secondary education, in high quality facilities, fit for purpose for 21st century education and provide stability in this sector for a significant period of time.
- 10.7 The review process proposed in this report will enable the Council to be well-placed to make best use of BSF and other funding streams, by developing a comprehensive strategic vision for the future of secondary school provision in Wirral.

11.0 Financial Implications

- 11.1 Inaction will mean spending larger proportions of the overall schools budget on fixed costs, and consequently less directly on pupils. The decisions on school re-organisation emanating from the Primary Places Review have already demonstrated value for money and enabled the Authority to devote more resources to children’s education in order to produce better quality outcomes, leading to higher standards and more efficient use of capital. The first three phases of the Primary Places Review will enable more than £500,000 to be redistributed each year which would otherwise have been spent on fixed costs.
- 11.2 The Council’s existing consultation option for Phase 1 of the Review, if implemented, will not be funded directly through the Building Schools for the Future programme, but will impact on the amount of capital funding available to the Council when Wirral enters the full BSF programme.

12.0 Staffing Implications

12.1 Current staffing levels are one of the factors involved in proposing a division of Phase 2 into two sub-phases.

13.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

13.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.

13.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

14.0 Community Safety Implications

14.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

15.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications

15.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

16.0 Planning Implications

16.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.

16.2 Any proposals that may arise out of options after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

17.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

17.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

18.0 Social Inclusion Implications

18.1 School re-organisation and transforming secondary mainstream and secondary special accommodation through BSF and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of new school buildings through BSF, raising the school's profile within the community.

19.0 Local Member Support Implications

19.1 Secondary school re-organisation has relevance to all Wards.

19.2 Wirral West secondary schools are located in the following Wards: Hoylake and Meols, Pensby and Thingwall, Upton, West Kirby and Thurstaston.

20.0 Background Papers

20.1 Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.

Asset Management Plan and Statement of Priorities.

School Census, January 2009

Supply of School Places return, August 2009, to DCSF requirements.

Other data held in Department

Recommendations

- (1) That approval be given to the division of Phase 2 of the review of secondary school provision into Phase 2A and Phase 2B, beginning with pre-consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Wirral West.
- (2) That options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with my recommendations for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal, consultation with all stakeholders.

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