

**REPORT TO:** CABINET MEMBER - CHILDRENS SERVICES

**DATE:** 18 JANUARY 2011

**SUBJECT:** ST WILFRID'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL: OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL

**WARDS AFFECTED:** CHURCH, DERBY, FORD, LINACRE, LITHERLAND, NETHERTON & ORRELL AND ST OSWALD WARDS

**REPORT OF:** PETER MORGAN  
STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES

**CONTACT OFFICER:** CHRIS DALZIEL (0151 934 3337)

**EXEMPT/ CONFIDENTIAL:** NO

**PURPOSE/SUMMARY:**

To report to the Cabinet Member on the outcome of the consultation on the proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and to seek approval to publish a statutory notice relating to this proposal.

**REASON WHY DECISION REQUIRED:**

The Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families, has delegated powers to approve the publication of a statutory notice relating to a proposal to close a school.

**RECOMMENDATION(S):**

The Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families is recommended to:-

- (i) consider all of the responses to the consultation and the original four reasons for the proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School with effect from 31 August 2011;
- (ii) determine whether approval should be given for the publication of a statutory notice relating to the proposed closure of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School.

**KEY DECISION:** Yes.

**FORWARD PLAN:** Yes – Published 26 November 2010.

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE:** Following the expiry of the "call-in" period for the Minutes of the Cabinet Member meeting.

**ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS:**

Not appropriate.

**IMPLICATIONS:****Budget/Policy Framework:**

St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is funded through the, ring fenced, Delegated Schools Grant (DSG) and other Specific Government Grants. Funds released by the closure of any school are recycled into the schools' system. However where there is no successor to the school the local authority can request that Schools Forum agree to allow the local authority to retain any in-year savings. This funding would be used to support certain transitional arrangements for pupils and to support some of the costs associated with closing the school. This would be on the understanding that future years' savings are recycled into the schools system. Any balances from a closing school, whether positive or negative, become the responsibility of the local authority.

**Financial:**

Based on current projected pupil numbers and staffing levels the school will close with deficit of approximately -£650,000 but this is likely to change depending on January Pupil Census Data and staffing and resources required over the next two terms. There will also be costs associated with contractual costs, severance payments etc. The local authority will endeavour to find alternative employment for as many staff as possible to mitigate the potential severance costs. A number of strategies will be explored to reduce the potential deficit further.

<b><u>CAPITAL EXPENDITURE</u></b>	<b>2010/ 2011 £</b>	<b>2011/ 2012 £</b>	<b>2012/ 2013 £</b>	<b>2013/ 2014 £</b>
Gross Increase in Capital Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Capital Resources				
Specific Capital Resources				
<b><u>REVENUE IMPLICATIONS</u></b>				
Gross Increase in Revenue Expenditure				
Funded by:				
Sefton Funded Resources				
Funded from External Resources				
Does the External Funding have an expiry date? Y/N	When?			
How will the service be funded post expiry?				

**Legal:** The proposal will be progressed in line with current school organisation legislation.

**Risk Assessment:** There are no risks directly associated with this report. However, failure to address the issues of falling rolls, surplus places, poor standards and increasing financial instability will restrict opportunities for the school in the future.

**Asset Management:** Not appropriate.

#### **CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN/VIEWS**

As detailed in this report.

LD0025/11 - The Head of Corporate Legal Services has been consulted and has no comments on this report.

FD608 - The Acting Finance and Information Services Director has been consulted and has no comments on this report.

## CORPORATE OBJECTIVE MONITORING:

<u>Corporate Objective</u>		<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>Neutral Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
1	Creating a Learning Community		✓	
2	Creating Safe Communities		✓	
3	Jobs and Prosperity		✓	
4	Improving Health and Well-Being		✓	
5	Environmental Sustainability		✓	
6	Creating Inclusive Communities		✓	
7	Improving the Quality of Council Services and Strengthening local Democracy		✓	
8	Children and Young People		✓	

## LINKS TO ENSURING INTEGRATION:

Not appropriate.

## IMPACT UPON CHILDREN, SCHOOLS & FAMILIES TARGETS AND PRIORITIES:

Not appropriate

## LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS RELIED UPON IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS REPORT

Report to Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families, 5 October 2010:  
Approval to Consult on the Closure of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School.

## **ST WILFRID'S CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL: OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 Members will recall that approval was given on 5 October 2010 for the consultation on a proposal for the closure of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, Litherland, with effect from 31 August 2011.
- 1.2 The four main reasons for the proposal were:-
- Demographic changes;
  - Surplus places;
  - Financial constraints;
  - Standards.
- 1.3 The consultation process began on 1 November 2010, immediately following the half-term holiday. Prior to that date, Governors, staff and parents of pupils at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and the four feeder primary schools, were sent a consultation leaflet and invited to attend consultation meetings on the 2/3 November 2010.
- 1.4 Prior to 1 November 2010, fifty one emails were received from parents, pupils, staff and the wider community via the dedicated website which became live on 15 October 2010. A petition with 3,591 signatures, collected in hard copy and electronically, was received with the following request. 'We the undersigned, want Sefton Council to reconsider the proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and commit to explore all other options including the amalgamation with Savio High School'. This was presented to the Cabinet Member at the meeting on 5 October 2010.
- 1.5 Other consultees were informed via letter and invited to give their views. These consultees included headteachers of all Sefton schools, local ward councillors, the local MP, the Young Peoples Learning Agency, and the Executive Director of Children's Services, Liverpool City Council. Young people were consulted via the Student Council which was attended by the Strategic Director, Children, Schools & Families and senior representatives from the Archdiocese.
- 1.6 Questions and answers from the consultation meetings and those received prior to the consultation are summarised below and in more detail at Annex A.
- 1.7 A second petition with 4,003 signatures (including 320 online) was presented at the Cabinet Member meeting on 7 December 2010 and a copy of the presentation was also provided. The petitioners stated that: -

'We the undersigned are against any proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School. We support the alternative proposal being developed by governors of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and St George of England High School, to develop a merged school on one site, using the best

practice and specialisms of each school. We call on Sefton Council to support this proposal in principle and work with partners to develop an excellent school offering parents a choice of school in the Bootle and Litherland area'.

1.8 The consultation lasted for six weeks, ending on 10 December 2010.

## **2. Responses Received Prior to the Consultation Meetings**

2.1 The main concerns raised by the parents, pupils, staff and other interested parties prior to the consultation meetings are summarised below.

- The proposal appeared in the press before parents and staff were informed by the Council.
- The education of Year 10 pupils will be disrupted as other schools may use different exam boards and may teach different options.
- Year 9 pupils will need to choose their options for their GCSE courses.
- Pupils are happy at the school and some have gone onto university and have good jobs.
- Pupils are becoming stressed and this will affect their academic performance.
- The school has not been given the opportunity to get out of special measures.
- This is a deprived area and the closure will increase inequalities in education, health and well being and will break up the community.
- The suggested merger with St George of England would help keep a local school.
- The school provides an excellent standard of education and an environment where children thrive.
- The teachers are good.
- The future use of the site was queried.
- Children should not be taught in Portacabins.
- Resources have been withheld from the school in recent years which has caused the poor Ofsted report and recent performance.
- Transport to other schools will be costly.
- Pupils will be split up from their friends.

## **3. Main Points from the Five Consultation Meetings**

3.1 All meetings were attended by the Strategic Director, Children, Schools & Families, Senior Officers from Children, Schools & Families and senior representatives from the Liverpool Archdiocese. At the start of each meeting the Strategic Director outlined the four reasons for the proposal and then took questions from the floor.

### 3.2 Meeting for Staff – 2 November 2010, 3.30-5.00pm approximately

This was attended by approximately 65 teaching and non-teaching staff together with representatives from the NASUWT, NUT and ATL professional associations. The main concerns raised by staff are detailed below:-

- The proposed closure in 2011 is far less time than Bootle or St George of England High Schools were given.
- The proposed merger between St George of England and St Wilfrid's Catholic High Schools makes sense and would give a school of over 600 pupils.
- St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is one of the most improved schools this year.
- What will happen to Year 10 pupils?
- When did discussions between the Archdiocese and LEA first take place?
- Is this part of Government cuts?
- Why did you write to Year 6 parents?
- Why did the press know about the proposal first?

### 3.3 Meeting for Governors – 2 November 2010, 5.30-7.30pm approximately

The main questions and comments raised by the Governing Body are detailed below:-

- Why were Year 6 parents contacted?
- The perception of parents who attended the Year 6 meetings was that the school was not going to close. What has changed?
- What are the numbers at Savio Salesian College and why are they not being closed?
- Why has the LEA allowed standards to be unchallenged for four years?
- The proposed amalgamation with St George of England High School has not been discussed but it has overwhelming support from parents.
- How will all of the St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and St George of England High School children fit into other schools?
- Can the Year 10 pupils be properly accommodated in another school?
- Why is the timescale for the proposed closure less than one year?
- Have housing developments been taken into consideration?
- If pupils transfer, will teachers go as well?

### 3.4 Meeting with Parents of Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School – 2 November 2010, 7.45-9.30pm approximately

Over 150 parents and pupils attended this meeting and a summary of the main points raised are given below:-

- Will the proposal to amalgamate with St George of England High School be supported?
- What is being done about the emotional turmoil that children are

suffering?

- What support is being given to the school?
- What are your plans for the site? – Is there a hidden agenda?
- What will happen to Year 10 if they do not all move together?
- Will pupils with Special Educational Needs continue to receive the support they get now?
- Why is this being rushed through in less than a year?
- The whole process has been shambolic.
- The new Headteacher should be given time to turn the school around.

### 3.5 Meeting with Parents of Pupils from Feeder Primary Schools – 3 November 2010, 6.00-7.30pm approximately

Approximately 50 parents attended this meeting and the main concerns raised are detailed below:-

- Have the poor exam results contributed to the fall in pupil numbers?
- Who is the National Challenge Advisor responsible to?
- Why is the Interim Headteacher not being given time to turn the school round?
- What are the surplus places at other schools?
- Why is this proposal being rushed through?
- What is being done to improve standards in all South Sefton schools? They are all below the Sefton average.
- Have the potential savings presented by the interim Headteacher been taken into account?

### 3.6 Meeting with Parents of Pupils in Years 10 and 11 at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School – 3 November 2010, 7.45-10.00pm approximately

Over 200 people attended the meeting, including a high proportion of pupils of the school. A summary of the questions and comments is detailed below:-

- Pupil numbers are fairly stable and if St Wilfrid's Catholic High School drew all of the pupils from the four primary schools then they would have between 122 and 139 pupils.
- Please explain how you get the average teacher cost to £50,400.
- If all of Year 10 move to the CLC at Savio Salesian College, how will they access the whole curriculum and how will their needs to met?
- What is being done to reassure the children?
- Why was the proposal leaked to the press before the school?
- Can you guarantee that if Year 10 pupils stay next year that they will not just have supply teachers?
- Parents and pupils expressed support for the staff and school.
- Why have the LEA not done anything if the school has been failing for the last four years?
- What plans do you have to help parents fund changes if the school closes? – Bus fares etc.



3.7 Main Points Raised at the Meeting Held with Members of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School Council on 7 December 2010

- Has the effect on the community been considered?
- Should the responsibility for funding an alternative school place be the responsibility of the Council and not individual families?
- Friendship groups will be split up if we have to move.
- Why did some people find out about the proposal from Facebook?
- Will the Council pay for our bus fares and a new uniform if we move?
- Why are we being closed so quickly? St George of England were given 3 years.
- What will happen to the land?
- Why is the Archdiocese not trying to keep the school open?
- What about the different subjects and exam boards for Year 10 pupils?

3.8 All correspondence received both before and during the consultation has been copied to the Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families and to the spokespersons for Children, Schools & Families from the other two political parties. This correspondence consists of over 200 letters and emails sent to the Chief Executive, Councillors, the Strategic Director Children, Schools & Families, senior officers, the Sefton Children's Complaints Officer and via the consultation website. Many of the issues discussed at the consultation meetings were brought up in the correspondence and the main concerns, together with the number of references to each concern are detailed in the table below.

<b>Issue/Concern Raised</b>	<b>Number of References Made to this Issue/Concern</b>
The announcement of the proposal by the press.	33
The letter sent to Year 6 parents regarding the outcome of the Ofsted inspection.	3
The consultation process itself.	4
The timescale for the process – only 10 months whereas other schools have had up to 3 years.	8
The decision has already been made.	5
Savio was also judged to be 'inadequate' but was not proposed for closure.	3
The school should have been given more support in the past and should be given the chance to get out of special measures.	16
The site will be used for house building and these families will not have a school for their children.	8
Year 9 pupils are due to take their options.	18
Year 10 pupils need continuity of curriculum as they are part way through their GCSE courses.	80

<b>Issue/Concern Raised</b>	<b>Number of References Made to this Issue/Concern</b>
<b>Continued</b>	
Pupils are upset/under stress and do not want to move or lose their friends.	23
St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is a good school/pupils are happy/pupils achieve well.	68
Pupils will have to travel further/travel costs.	21
The school is part of the community and inequalities will be increased.	21
There are not sufficient Catholic places for all the pupils and some families will move into community schools.	12
Concern for continuity of provision for pupils with SEN.	5
Concern regarding the choice of high school for Year 6 pupils.	6
Support for the proposal to merge St Wilfrid's Catholic and St George of England High Schools.	35

3.9 The St Wilfrid's Parents' Group have also designed, distributed, collected and submitted 1,500 forms, the majority of which are opposed to the closure and in favour of the merger with St George of England High School. These have come from parents of pupils at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, St George of England High School, feeder primary schools, pupils at the school and local residents. The Parents' Group have also provided a formal response to the proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School.

3.10 The Chair of Governors at St George of England High School has submitted a document entitled 'St Wilfrid's Catholic High School. Response to the Consultation Process'. This aims to address the four main issues identified by the Council as the reasons for the proposal. The document makes a further proposal which is to close both St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and St George of England High School in August 2012 and to open a new school on the site or one of the above schools in September 2012.

#### **4. Options**

4.1 The Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families, after considering all of the responses to the consultation and the original four reasons for the proposal, is asked to make a decision on the three options available.

- (i) Proceed to the publication of a statutory notice for the closure of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School, with effect from 31 August 2011. This would be immediately followed by a 6 week representation period with the determination of the proposal likely to be in April 2011.

- (ii) Proceed to the publication of a statutory notice for an amended proposal which was raised during the consultation period.
- (iii) Do not proceed with the proposal.

## **5. Recommendation(s)**

5.1 The Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families is recommended to:-

- (i) consider all of the responses to the consultation and the original four reasons for the proposal to close St Wilfrid's Catholic High School with effect from 31 August 2011;
- (ii) determine whether approval should be given for the publication of a statutory notice relating to the proposed closure of St Wilfrid's Catholic High School.

**Questions and answers compiled from the five consultation meetings held on 2/3 November 2010 with Governors, staff and parents of pupils at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and parents of pupils at English Martyrs, Our Lady Queen of Peace, Our Lady Star of the Sea and St Elizabeth's Catholic Primary Schools. Representatives from the teaching unions also attended the meeting for staff.**

The Strategic Director - Children, Schools & Families, Mr Peter Morgan, outlined the four reasons behind the proposal:-

- Demographic changes;
- Surplus places;
- Financial issues;
- Standards.

### **Communication and the Statutory Process**

**Q** Why did we find out about the proposal from the press?

**A** The committee report seeking approval to consult on the closure proposal was due to be published on the Sefton website at 5pm on Wednesday 22 September 2010. As with many important reports a briefing was held with the press so that the report could be put into context and it was our understanding that any article resulting from that briefing would not appear until Thursday 23 September. The briefing focussed the four reasons for the proposal rather than a single focus on a 'failing school'. The press article reflected this context. The Strategic Director - Children, Schools & Families, Mr Peter Morgan together with Alan Bell, Archdiocesan Schools Officer, briefed the Chair of Governors on Tuesday 21 September 2010 and the Vice Chair of Governors and Senior Leadership Team at the school on Wednesday 22 September 2010 and the intention of the school was that other staff would be briefed on Thursday. I regret that it was difficult to communicate to the large number of people in the school and broader community in a way that everyone received the consistent message at the same time.

The previous press article on 31 July 2010 referred to 'Failing School Threatened to Close'. The press will be aware from similar situations that if a school requires Special Measures that the LEA may have to consider closure as one of the options.

**Q** Why was a letter sent to families of primary school children asking them to change their preference and why were these parents harassed by Council staff?

A St Wilfrid's Catholic High School provided details of the Ofsted report to parents of children already attending the school. However, as the school did not write to families of prospective Year 7 pupils, the Local Authority wrote to parents to inform them of the material change from a satisfactory school to one requiring Special Measures. Parents were given the option to sustain their preference or to request an alternative school place. As the letter was sent out at the start of the holiday period families were contacted by telephone, if a response was not received, to ensure that all families had the opportunity to respond. There was no intention to harass parents.

Q Why were Year 10 not given the same option as the prospective Year 7 pupils in August?

A Year 10 had been made aware of the Ofsted report by the school. Students, in accordance with parental wishes, can move at any time during the school year.

Q Hasn't the decision already been made to close the school?

A No. This consultation period is just the start of the process. The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the Cabinet Member, Children, Schools & Families, in January 2011. The Cabinet Member will consider all of these responses, together with the reasons for the proposal and can make one of three decisions.

1. To proceed with the proposal as it is;
2. To proceed with the proposal with modifications; or
3. To reject the proposal.

If either decision 1 or 2 is made, then the next stage is the publication of a public notice followed by a six-week representation period. The final decision would be made in April 2011.

Q Why is the school being given less than a year before the proposed closure? St George of England and Bootle High Schools were given longer.

A The closure of Bootle High School was linked to the rebuild and enlargement of Litherland High School. Unfortunately, the building work was delayed and pupils transferred before the new site was completed. The new building will open in February.

The original plan for St George of England and Hillside High Schools was part of Sefton's Building Schools for the Future (BSF) proposals whereby Hillside High School would be refurbished with some additional accommodation and St George of England High School would close in 2013 when building work was completed. Sefton no longer have the BSF funding but the closure will still go ahead as planned and the timescale would have been shorter if this consultation had not been part of the BSF programme.

It is not unusual for school closure proposals to be completed in less than 12 months. The more protracted the period is the more likely there are to be consequences for the pupils. Parents will look for other schools, staff will move and the existing pupils will lose out. There are sufficient places in neighbouring Catholic schools to accommodate the current pupils at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School who would need to transfer in 2011 if the school were to close.

Q When did the Archdiocese and Local Authority start to talk about this proposal and are there minutes of the meetings?

A The first meeting was during the first week in September followed by a second around 13 September 2010. The meetings were informal and not minuted. Following these meetings the officers from the Archdiocese spoke to their Education Director and the proposal to consult was given support.

Q To move pupils en masse will cause great disruption. You are not thinking about the pupils.

A We would seek to minimise disruption as much as possible by socialising pupils in their new schools and providing a transition programme for all pupils.

Q The guidance on the website (paragraphs 26 and 27) says that the closure process should give 2 years notice.

A That is guidance for Governing bodies of VA schools who can give notice of their intent to close in 2 years time without going through the statutory process. The guidance for local authorities is in a separate section and this will be followed.

### Curriculum and Options for Transfer

Q What will happen to Year 10 pupils who have just started their GCSE courses? Other schools do not do the same subjects and our children will be disadvantaged. Children are devastated and need reassurance.

A We will ensure that the Year 10 pupils can move as a block to Savio Salesian College and therefore there will be continuity for these pupils. If the proposal is approved we will work with pupils and staff to ensure a smooth transition. The individual needs of students will be taken into account. Change creates uncertainty and I recognise the emotions you are expressing.

Q If my son stays, what guarantee can you give me that the teachers will stay and he won't be taught by supply teachers?

A No-one can guarantee that staff will not move on; it is part of career progression. We would not want teachers to be covering subjects that they are not familiar with. We will ensure that appropriate expertise is available which could involve teaching resources from St Wilfrid's Catholic High School.

It would be the wish of Mr Almond and the teachers to make sure that familiar teachers and expertise are provided for the pupils.

Q Is there enough room for all of the children to go elsewhere? Will they be taught in temporary huts?

A Yes, there are sufficient places. Savio Salesian College, as the nearest Catholic High School, has additional accommodation in the City Learning Centre and ex-sixth form block so the majority of pupils could be accommodated. However, children who have already moved have not all opted to go to Savio Salesian College and there are places at other nearby Catholic and community high schools. There should be no need for temporary buildings.

Q Will we be able to choose where our children go?

A If the proposal is approved in April then we will allocate school places based on parental preference wherever possible.

Q What about children with special needs? St Wilfrid's Catholic High School provides excellent support for these children.

A Where pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs then the statement will follow the pupil. Where pupils have graduated needs and additional support is being provided at school level then this will be looked at for each pupil as part of the transition process. All schools cater for pupils with additional needs.

## Standards

Q Children at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School do really well due to the support they get from the teachers.

A The improvements in GCSE results this year are acknowledged. However, the contextual value added outcome has been worse than the national average during the last 4 year period when comparing similar schools and significantly worse in 2 of these years. Even with improvements in 2010 there are still concerns about value added measures and in comparison to other schools it is still the lowest performing secondary school in Sefton based on the 5 A\*-C including English and maths measure.

Q Why didn't the Authority do anything about standards if they are so bad?

A The Local Authority has supported the school in the past and standards are the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governors. St Wilfrid's Catholic High School became a National Challenge school in 2008, along with 4 other Sefton schools. The role of monitoring standards in the school transferred from the Local Authority to a National Challenge Advisor who was appointed by the Government. The Advisor assured the Local Authority that satisfactory

progress was being made by the school and that there was no cause for concern.

Q What support is the Authority giving to the school?

A The Authority has appointed an interim Headteacher, provided 3 days of highly specialised support in September and has advisory staff working closely with staff at the school on a regular basis. A seconded Senior Adviser is working with the school for 4 days per week to support the Senior Leadership Team. We are pleased with the improvements at the school and want to see it come out of special measures which usually takes at least 12 months.

Q Your consultation document states that St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is the only Sefton school to have been judged as 'inadequate'. This is wrong – Savio Salesian College was also judged to be inadequate.

A This was an error that has now been corrected on the website. It should have stated that St Wilfrid's Catholic High School was the first Sefton school to require Special Measures. Savio Salesian College was given Notice to Improve in 2006 which is a less serious judgement than Special Measures.

### Finances & the School Site

Q Is the Authority wanting to close the school just to save money?

A No. If the school closes then any savings would be redistributed to other schools based on the funding formula. There would be no saving to the Authority. Schools are funded depending on the number of children on roll with each secondary age child attracting funding of approximately £4,200. Therefore, the loss of 10 children is equivalent to approximately 1 teacher's or 2 and a half teaching assistants' salary. A secondary school needs at least 600 pupils to remain viable. The Governing Body has not yet presented their proposals on how it will address their financial difficulties over the next 3 years.

Q A list of potential financial savings has been put forward by the current interim Headteacher. Have these been taken into account?

A A draft has been shown but these savings cannot be made in one financial year. They need to be reviewed and approved by the LEA.

Q Why don't the Authority or the Archdiocese give the school enough money to stay open?

A Schools are funded by a grant from central government which is distributed to schools via a formula which is principally based on pupil numbers. Neither the Authority nor the Archdiocese support schools financially.



Q If the school closes, what will happen to the site? Isn't this just a plan to sell the site and build houses? There seems to be a hidden agenda.

A The footprint of the building is owned by the Archdiocese and any capital receipt would have to be ploughed back into school provision into the Archdiocese with successor schools getting priority. The playing fields are owned by the Local Authority but these are protected by legislation for 10 years after any closure. The original BSF proposal was to amalgamate Savio Salesian College and St Wilfrid's Catholic High School in a new building with St Wilfrid's Catholic High School the preferred site. There are currently no plans to build houses on the site and there is no hidden agenda.

Q Is there a proper strategic plan for South Sefton or is this just a gut reaction?

A As part of the BSF proposals there was a major consultation with schools. The proposals, which would address falling pupil numbers and surplus capacity, were to develop the One School Pathfinder project at Litherland High School, to further develop the Hillside site and to create an Academy from the merger of Savio Salesian College and St Wilfrid's Catholic High School. The rebuild at Litherland High School is nearing completion and Hillside High School and a single Catholic school are still on the agenda. These plans have been in the public domain for some time.

Q There were plans to re-open the railway line next to the school. We have been told that there might be plans to locate a new station on the site.

A The Local Authority is not aware of this but will pursue it at the highest level if the source of this information is shared.

Q In the presentation you quote the average teacher costs as £50,400. This sounds very high – please explain this.

A This includes on-costs such as national insurance and pension contributions. We cannot go into individual salaries but most teachers in the school are experienced and receive responsibility points on top of their basic salary. The average salary cost excluding senior leadership costs quoted at the meetings was accurate.

### **Pupil Numbers / Surplus Places**

Q Pupil numbers have fallen because of houses being knocked down in Hawthorne Road and they will increase again when families move back in – the school will be needed then.

A The overall change in house numbers in the area will be only approximately a gain of 100 houses by 2016. The main reasons for the fall in pupil numbers are the overall decline in birth rate and the increase in the number of parents who are choosing to send their children to alternative schools. The national admission arrangements encourage families to express a preference for their

choice of school and not just the one which is nearest or is a feeder primary school.

The Archdiocese is responsible for ensuring sufficient places for Baptised Catholic children whose parents want them to have a Catholic education. There are not enough pupils to keep both Savio Salesian College and St Wilfrid's Catholic High School and this was the basis of the BSF proposal to merge the two schools.

Q There are not any feeder primary schools are there?

A In the Catholic sector parishes are linked to schools. St Wilfrid's Catholic High School is linked to four parishes and baptised Catholic children living there are given priority over other children. The four parishes linked to St Wilfrid's Catholic High School are English Martyrs, St Elizabeth's, Our Lady Queen of Peace and Our Lady Star of the Sea Catholic Primary Schools. 93% of baptised Catholic children living in the four parishes transfer from a Catholic primary school to a Catholic secondary school. However, in September 2010 there were 74 families from the contributory primary schools who opted for a different secondary school.

Q Surely there are a lot of empty places in other schools, why not close them instead?

A The proposal is about pupil numbers, surplus places, financial difficulties and standards. There are surplus places in other schools but not to the same extent and not with the other issues as well. In May 2010 there were 427 (43.53%) surplus places at St Wilfrid's Catholic High School with 172 (20.53%) at Savio Salesian College, 158 (26.33%) at St Ambrose Barlow Catholic College, 108 (11.32%) at Hillside High School and 121 (11.29%) at Litherland High School.

### Alternative Proposal

Q There is an alternative proposal to join with St George of England High School. Lots of people support this idea so will it be considered?

A This will be treated as a serious proposal once we have the information that we have asked for from the Governing Bodies. We need to know what type of school is being proposed (a new school requiring a competition, ecumenical, federation?). How will it address surplus capacity and demographic changes, standards and financial provision? The proposal will have to demonstrate a sustainable business plan. The Local Authority is awaiting this level of detail and when we receive this then the proposal will be followed up as part of the consultation process.

Children, Schools and Families

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The Archdiocese will look seriously at any alternative suggestion. However, they would want any replacement school to be Catholic in nature although the Archdiocese has got 6 joint faith schools (Catholic and Church of England) and has developed a Catholic school for the community in order to assist a struggling community school in another authority.

**Travel**

- Q I am concerned about children having to travel further to get to other schools. The first obstacle is crossing Church Road.
- A Some children already cross Church Road to travel to school. Children, particularly at secondary level, travel safely to many different sites, often at some distance from home. The Authority has to provide travel costs for families living more than 3 miles from the appropriate school or in the case of families on low income the distance is 2 miles from the 3 nearest schools. We will discuss travel routes with Merseytravel as appropriate.