

Consultation on the possible closure of Skerton Community High School, Owen Road, Lancaster, LA1 2BL



September / October 2013

A consultation event in connection with this proposal will be held on 9th October 2013 at the school. Further information is provided inside.

Produced by the Provision Planning Team, Directorate for Children and Young People, Lancashire County Council

Consultation Document

What are we proposing to do?

This consultation document is about the possible closure of Skerton Community High School, Owen Road, Lancaster, LA1 2BL, with effect from 31st August 2014.

This document outlines the main reasons for proposing the closure. This is due to concerns over educational standards, very low pupil numbers on roll and financial viability. This document also identifies the opportunities available in the area for children currently attending Skerton Community High School (Skerton CHS) to continue their education.

The county council wants to hear your views on these important proposals. If you have difficulty in accessing this information, please contact the Provision Planning Team:

Telephone **01772 535103**

Email cyp.schoolreviews@lancashire.gov.uk

Our vision and what we would like to achieve

Education is a powerful means of transforming and enriching lives and communities. Future success and well-being depends on strong creative partnerships, new ways of working, high expectations and a belief that we all have a part to play and can make a difference together.

Lancashire County Council is committed to improving the quality of educational provision to help raise standards for all learners.

We know that schools can face challenges in meeting pupils' needs, particularly where pupil numbers are falling and that, in some cases, changes to the pattern of school organisation in an area can help secure the viability of schools, improve opportunities and raise standards.

On the 5th August 2013 the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools approved the formal consultation on a proposal to close Skerton CHS with effect from 31st August 2014.

If the proposal is approved existing pupils will be assisted to find places at alternative schools.



Foreword

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to provide primary and secondary school places to every child of school age living in Lancashire who request one. In achieving this, Lancashire, like many other authorities, faces challenges.

Changing demographic factors mean that we must constantly review the number and location of the school places we provide and ensure that schools remain educationally and financially viable. We must also respond to national policy change and to the voices of our communities.

Lancashire is a large, diverse authority served by some superb schools and we are committed to improving this excellence by continuing to raise standards and opportunities

The county council, dioceses and schools work together with parents and other service providers to help our children to be safe, to enjoy and achieve, to be listened to, to belong to the community, and to achieve economic well-being. We want all children and their parents to have pride in their local school and cultivate an appetite for lifelong learning.

Whilst Lancashire County Council aims to provide schools that meet the needs of our communities wherever possible, on occasion this must be balanced with the educational and financial viability of maintaining a very small school. Unfortunately, this sometimes means we must propose a school closure.

We hope that you will take a little time during this consultation period to let us know your views on what Lancashire County Council are proposing to do. I, as the Cabinet Member, will not make a decision until I have carefully considered all responses to this consultation.

Please help us to improve educational provision for Lancashire children.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Tomlinson', with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

County Councillor Matthew Tomlinson

Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools

Proposal

The proposal is to close Skerton CHS in Lancaster, with effect from 31st August 2014.

Educational Standards

Over the past four years Skerton CHS has received large scale and intensive support from the local authority in order to improve educational performance across the school. Despite this support, the school has not been able to make a sustained improvement in educational outcomes for its pupils.

In April 2013, the school was inspected by Ofsted and was judged to be 'inadequate'. The school was judged to have 'serious weaknesses', being inadequate in the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils, and requiring improvement in leadership and management and the behaviour and safety of pupils.

The school has performed below the national floor standards which set out minimum standards for the attainment and progress of pupils in each of the last four years. This means that:

- The proportion of children gaining five good GCSE passes including English and mathematics has not exceeded 30% at any point in the last four years and was 20% in 2012 (the current national floor standard is 40% rising to 50% in 2015);
- The proportion of pupils making 'expected progress' in English has been below the current national floor standard of 70% in the last four years (it has not exceeded 45% in three of the last four years);
- The proportion of pupils making 'expected progress' in mathematics has been below the current national floor standard of 70% in the last four years (it has not exceeded 50% in any of them).

In terms of the progress made by pupils from their starting points at the end of primary school, Skerton CHS is in the bottom 2% of schools nationally for the second consecutive year.

As a result of falling pupil numbers and changes to school funding, Skerton CHS now experiences significant budgetary difficulties. There are real concerns that the school will be unable to deliver an appropriate secondary curriculum, of sufficient range and breadth of subjects and with appropriate specialist teachers, to all levels of pupils at all key stages.

Pupil numbers and forecasts

It is desirable for secondary schools to have 600 pupils or more on roll. National research indicates that the unit costs of provision rise steeply when pupil numbers are below 600 pupils. There is evidence that small schools may experience challenges in providing diversity within the curriculum.

Pupil numbers entering secondary schools in the Lancaster District have been falling, with the current pupil intake almost 100 pupils fewer compared with the intake five years ago. Skerton CHS was already a very small school. The decline in secondary pupil numbers across the district, in addition to low numbers of applications for places at the school, saw pupil numbers fall to 191 in the summer term 2013.

As at May 2013, pupil numbers on roll were as follows:

| Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 10 | Year 11 | Total |
|--------|--------|--------|---------|---------|-------|
| 28 | 44 | 38 | 34 | 47 | 191 |

18 pupils have been offered places in Year 7 at Skerton CHS for September 2013 which will see the total number on roll falling to around 162 as 47 pupils left Year 11 at the end of the summer term.

The school building can accommodate 447 pupils and the school's published admission number is 90 (meaning that up to 90 pupils can be admitted into each year group). Surplus places at the school will stand at 64% in September 2013. The local authority is required to explain reasons for significant surplus places at Lancashire schools and explain the action it intends to take to the Department for Education on an annual basis.

In the longer term it is expected that pupil intakes into secondary schools in Lancaster will begin to rise, in line with the current rise in intakes being experienced in primary schools in the area. However, the increase in pupil numbers will not happen soon enough to sustain Skerton CHS and, meanwhile, the significant educational issues outlined above remain to be addressed.

Alternative Provision

If Skerton CHS is closed at the end of the 2013/14 academic year, the pupils

affected will be offered places at other secondary schools. Parents will be able to express preferences for alternative schools for their children and the local authority will work with parents to secure places at other schools that match their preferences as closely as possible. The closest alternative schools measured by walking distance from Skerton CHS are: Our Lady's Catholic College (0.26 miles), Lancaster Girls' Grammar School (1.07 Miles), Lancaster Royal Grammar School (1.16 miles), Lancaster Central (1.18 miles), Ripley St Thomas CE High School (1.48 miles), Morecambe High School (2.84 miles).

Admission numbers and number on roll in each year group in other secondary schools in Lancaster as at May 2013 were as follows:

| School | Admission No | Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 10 | Year 11 | No of Pupils excluding 6 th form | Year 7 offers for Sept 2013 |
|--|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|-----------------------------|
| Our Lady's Catholic College | 200 | 100 | 87 | 130 | 146 | 174 | 637 | 81 |
| Central Lancaster High School | 150 | 122 | 144 | 152 | 144 | 145 | 707 | 89 |
| Lancaster Girls' Grammar School* | 112 | 114 | 112 | 114 | 116 | 108 | 564 | 114 |
| Lancaster Royal Grammar School** | 142 | 140 | 142 | 142 | 144 | 141 | 709 | 135 |
| Ripley St Thomas - A Church of England Academy | 270 | 271 | 263 | 266 | 254 | 256 | 1310 | 270 |
| Totals | 874 | 747 | 748 | 804 | 804 | 824 | 3927 | 689 |
| Available places | | 127 | 126 | 70 | 70 | 50 | | 185 |

* Lancaster Girls' Grammar School admits pupils by reference to academic ability.

** Lancaster Royal Grammar School admits pupils by reference to academic ability. The school is full to capacity with day pupils for September 2013 and the additional numbers are held for boarders.

A number of Skerton CHS's pupils live in Morecambe and other parts of Lancaster district. As at May 2013, the numbers of pupils on roll in these schools were as follows:

| School | Admission No | Year 7 | Year 8 | Year 9 | Year 10 | Year 11 | No of Pupils excluding 6 th form | Year 7 offers for Sept 2013 |
|-------------------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|-----------------------------|
| Heysham High | 220 | 178 | 186 | 193 | 172 | 186 | 915 | 148 |
| Morecambe High | 260 | 237 | 215 | 241 | 264 | 238 | 1195 | 210 |
| Carnforth High | 132 | 118 | 131 | 128 | 105 | 112 | 594 | 118 |
| Totals | 612 | 533 | 532 | 562 | 541 | 536 | 2704 | 476 |
| Available places | | 79 | 80 | 50 | 71 | 76 | 356 | 136 |

There are clearly sufficient places in all the year groups in the city of Lancaster schools and Lancaster district schools for any pupils affected by the proposed closure of Skerton CHS, although it should be noted that Lancaster Royal Grammar School and Lancaster Girls Grammar School admit pupils by reference to academic ability. Should Skerton CHS close, Our Lady's Catholic College and Central Lancaster High School have capacity to accommodate all of the Year 10 pupils at the time of closure and ensure that those pupils are able to continue with their chosen studies. Ofsted has judged the standards of education offered by the neighbouring schools, as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' in all but one case. In all of the schools, the standards of education are higher than those at Skerton CHS.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

Skerton CHS does not have a designated special education facility or reserved places for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). However, pupils with SEND represent a relatively high proportion of the school roll at Skerton CHS. Lancashire County Council (LCC) is committed to ensuring that the needs of all children and young people with SEND will be met and will make available a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Officer (SENDO) from LCC's Inclusion and Disability Support Service to attend all Annual Reviews held at Skerton CHS during the academic year 2013 - 2014. If the closure of Skerton CHS is approved it will be essential to review the provision required for those pupils at Skerton CHS with a Statement of special educational needs (SEN) and, following consultation with individual parents, they will name the alternative school where provision would be made available for their child from September 2014.

Map to go here

Closure of Schools and the School Organisation and Governance Regulations

The provisions of the School Organisation and Governance Regulations, last updated in 2009, refers to the responsibility of local authorities to publish proposals to close a maintained school.

There are 5 stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

Consultation

The issue of this document marks a period of consultation during which the views of any interested parties are sought and which will be considered before any move to the more formal stages of the process.

Publication

Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, a decision to proceed to issue a statutory notice must be made by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools.

Representation

Statutory notices for school closure define a 6 week period for anyone to submit their written comments on the proposals. This enables people to express their views in the form of supporting or objecting to the proposals.

Decision

Within 2 months after the statutory notice period ends, the authority must make a decision on the proposal.

Implementation

If the proposal is approved Skerton Community High School will close with effect from 31st August 2014.

The consultation and decision making process

Timescales

| | |
|--|---|
| 9 th September 2013 to 25 th October 2013 | Stage 1 Consultation |
| December 2013 | Cabinet Member decision making session to consider the results of the consultation and decide whether to publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal |
| January 2014 | Publication of Statutory Notice |
| January / February 2014 | Representation |
| April 2014 | Final decision by Cabinet Member |
| 31 st August 2014 | Implementation (if approved) |

Consultation Event

You are invited to express your views on the proposal at an event organised at the school on **Wednesday 9th October 2013 from 4.30pm to 8.00pm.**

Please note that this will be an appointment led event, requiring interested parties to make a booking prior to the event. This will allow us to manage the process effectively, minimise waiting times and ensure that appropriate officers are available to offer advice and guidance relating to specific matters of interest.

Appointments can be made by visiting the link below and following the on-screen instructions:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/questionnaires/runQuestionnaire.asp?qid=551612

Alternatively, booking can be made by telephone or email by contacting the Provision Planning Team on 01772 535103 or Email cyp.schoolreviews@lancashire.gov.uk.

The closing date for booking an appointment is 4th October at 5pm. If there are only a few appointments made then the event will be shortened.

Who we will consult

This consultation document will be provided to people and organisations that may have an interest in these proposals. These include the following:

- Staff, parents/guardians, governors and pupils of Skerton Community High School (The views of the children and young people within the school will be sought through the school)
- Headteachers and chairs of governors of primary, secondary, short stay, special and nursery schools in Lancaster.
- Lancashire Parent Carer Forum
- Chief Executives and members of Lancaster Borough Council
- Other local authorities bordering Lancashire
- Local church authorities and faith groups
- Members of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- District Children's Trust – Lancaster
- Lancashire County Councillors – Lancaster
- Lancaster Parish Council
- Local Member of Parliament – Lancaster
- Education Funding Agency
- Trade Unions and Associations
- Lancashire Association of School Governing Bodies
- Ofsted: Her Majesty's Inspector for the area
- The wider community – through Lancaster libraries, town halls and county hall. (This document is available on the county website at www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews but we can also provide copies of the consultation document to members of the local community on request.)

Your Response

We welcome your views on this proposal and all observations and objections will be considered very carefully before any decision is made to progress any further with this proposal. It is important that you make any written responses within the consultation timescales published in this document and that they are sent to the Children and Young People Directorate using the methods outlined below. Any responses received outside of the consultation period will not be able to be included for consideration when a decision is being made as to whether to proceed with the proposal.

Please note that in accordance with the Department for Communities and Local Government Regulations, all written responses may be a matter for public disclosure and may be published on the web site of Lancashire County Council as background papers to the report to the Cabinet Member.

The consultation runs until **25th October 2013** and you can respond by completing the questionnaire in this document or writing separately:

Post to (no stamp required):

Provision Planning Team
Directorate for Children and Young People
FREEPOST PR503
Preston,
PR1 8RJ

Email to: cyp.schoolreviews@lancashire.gov.uk

On-Line at: (Use the link below to complete the questionnaire contained in this document on-line)

www.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/questionnaires/runQuestionnaire.asp?qid=551968

This document can also be accessed through:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews

Please submit one response per person to this consultation

Thank you

This consultation is stage 1 of the process required in order to close a school. The information provided in this booklet and at the consultation sessions is intended to be sufficient in order for people to form a view on the proposal. The council will consider views and concerns arising from the consultation process to contribute to the detailed proposal supplied later in the process.

We are sorry that, due to the volume of responses we receive when consulting on proposals for schools, we will not be able to acknowledge written responses nor enter into correspondence with interested parties during or after the consultation period. It is important to attend the relevant consultation event if you require clarification or more information on the proposal. We will post any relevant frequently asked questions (FAQs) with answers on the council website at:

www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews

Thank you

Parental representations about school provision

Lancashire County Council is committed to working with the people of Lancashire to plan and ensure the delivery of local services.

The council is responsible for ensuring the supply of sufficient and suitable school places and promoting high standards. The council aims to educate pupils in accordance with their parents' wishes, subject to providing an appropriate education and avoiding unreasonable expenditure.

The county council has a duty to seek and consider the views of parents and guardians about the pattern of school provision. If you would like to give your views about future school provision in Lancashire, you can get information on how to do this from the Provision Planning Team, Directorate for Children and Young People, PO Box 61, County Hall, Preston PR1 8RJ.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Who should complete this questionnaire?

- Staff, governors, current or prospective parents/guardians of pupils at Skerton Community High School
- Any other interested member of the community

NB: Please complete just one form per person

I support the closure of Skerton Community High School with effect from 31st August 2014.

I strongly agree I neither agree nor disagree I strongly disagree
 I agree I disagree

You may wish to give reasons overleaf

Please state your interest in the review below (as appropriate):

Please state the area where you live:

.....

Please state your interest in the proposal:

As:

A parent/guardian of a pupil currently at school

A parent/guardian of a future pupil of school

A member of staff at school

A school governor at school

Other

An interested member of the local community (tick if appropriate)

Signed..... Date.....

Comments and views can also be expressed overleaf or by separate letter.

You can complete and submit your questionnaire online by following the link provided on page 13.

Alternatively send written responses (no stamp required) to:
 Provision Planning Team, Directorate for Children and Young People,
 FREEPOST PR503, Preston PR1 8RJ

To arrive no later than Friday 25th October 2013.

Additional Comments to be Considered as part of the Consultation

Important Information

The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) has issued new regulations with effect from 10th September 2012 relating to how notifications of forthcoming decisions are made and how decisions are subsequently recorded.

As a result of this, Lancashire County Council may be required to publish consultation responses as part of the background papers to future Cabinet Member decision reports. Please be aware that your response to this consultation may be made available as part of this process.