

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 15 PROPOSALS TO DISCONTINUE A SCHOOL

Extract of Schedule 4 to The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended):

Contact details

1. The name of the LA or governing body publishing the proposals, and a contact address, and the name of the school it is proposed that should be discontinued.

The proposal to discontinue Skerton Community High School, Owen Road, Lancaster, LA1 2BL is published by Lancashire County Council, the relevant local authority. The authority can be contacted at the following address: Directorate for Children and Young People, Provision Planning Team, Room B34, PO Box 61, County Hall, Preston, PR1 8RJ, Lancashire.

Implementation

2. The date when it is planned that the proposals will be implemented, or, where the proposals are to be implemented in stages, information about each stage and the date on which each stage is planned to be implemented.

31st August 2014.

Consultation

3. A statement to the effect that all applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to the proposals were complied with.

The statutory consultation requirements, as prescribed by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007, as amended, have been complied with.

4. Evidence of the consultation before the proposals were published including:

- a) a list of persons and/or parties who were consulted;
- b) minutes of all public consultation meetings;
- c) the views of the persons consulted; and
- d) copies of all consultation documents and a statement of how these were made available.

The authority issued a consultation document on 9 September 2013 and the consultation period ran from that date to 25 October 2013.

The main consultees that consultation documents were sent to included governors, staff, pupils and parents/carers at Skerton Community High School; Headteachers and Governing Bodies of other primary, secondary, short stay, special and nursery schools within a three mile radius of Skerton Community High School in the Lancaster area; Wyre Borough Council and Lancaster City Council. A complete list of consultees is included at page 12 of the consultation document, which can be viewed at the link below.

The consultation documents, which form an integral element of the proposals were distributed in hard copy and electronically and were also published on the Internet at

www.lancashire.gov.uk/schoolorganisationreviews

As part of the consultation a separate staff meeting was held prior to the public consultation event which concentrated on the human resources processes, should the school close. An appointment led event, was held between 4.30pm and 8.00pm on Wednesday 9 October 2013 at Skerton Community High School. This format of meeting is preferred as it allows individuals or small groups to discuss matters that may be sensitive or personal with appropriate officers and enables them to gain a better understanding of all of the aspects of the proposals. An appointment led event also allows the local authority to manage the process effectively and minimise waiting times. Whilst appointments were requested, the local authority made every effort to meet with individuals that arrived at the event without making an appointment. Notes of the consultation event are provided at Appendix D of the Cabinet Member report dated 5 December 2013, which form part of this document.

The school devised a questionnaire which they asked pupils to complete. Most of the questions were tick boxes, with additional free text boxes for pupils to complete. 112 responses were received. Notes of the children's consultation are provided at Appendix C of the Cabinet Member report dated 5 December 2013, which form part of this document.

The views from the meetings and the 748 written responses to the consultations including 2 joint responses and 3 petitions are detailed and analysed in the report to the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools that was considered on 5 December 2013 and forms an integral element to these complete proposals.

Two joint responses were received, one from the governing body of Skerton Community High School and one from Lancaster City Council's Business Committee. Both of these responses disagreed with the proposal to close Skerton Community High School. The governing body response covered safeguarding the future needs and well being of pupils; educational standards; the destinations of Skerton Community High School leavers; and proposals for the future of the school. The governing body also considered that the local authority had not worked with the school in identifying

alternative opportunities for improvement and had, instead, moved straight to a closure proposal. The governing body requested a delay of the proposed closure programme in order to make the necessary improvements identified by Ofsted and enable an alternative school to be established to which pupils could transfer. Lancaster City Council wanted Skerton Community High School to be kept open on account of its special education provision, implications of closure on the local community and the significant housing developments taking place in the area.

743 individual responses were received, the vast majority of which either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to close Skerton Community High School as follows:

Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
7	5	9	57	665

Most respondents (676) made use of either the response form contained in the consultation document, completing it either manually or on-line, or used a form that Skerton Community High School had produced. Around 60% (405) provided a reason for their view and 40% (271) gave no reason for their response. In addition, 67 respondents provided an individual letter or email containing reasons for their views. Given the number of pupils on roll at the school, the response rate from staff, governors and parents of pupils was extremely high and there was also a good response rate from other members of the community.

Three petitions were also received: one with 770 signatures; one with 1,016 signatures and one with 1,445 signatures. The petition with 770 signatures gave no statement as to what people were signing for but the other two were against the proposal to close Skerton Community High School and provided full reasons.

Officers have received a film record of a public meeting held at Skerton Community High School on Thursday 3 October 2013. This was organised by the Action Group and school. The Local Authority was not officially invited to the event and did not attend. It includes a film record of interviews made with individuals who wish these interviews to be considered as supporting information.

All of the above views are detailed and analysed in the report to the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools that was considered on 5 December 2013 and forms an integral element to these complete proposals.

All relevant statutory requirements regarding consultation on these proposals were complied with.

Objectives

5. The objectives of the proposal.

The objective of the proposal is to close Skerton Community High School with effect from 31st August 2014.

Standards and Diversity

6. A statement and supporting evidence indicating how the proposals will impact on the standards, diversity and quality of education in the area.

The county council is committed to improving the quality of educational provision to help raise standards for all learners so that every child has the opportunity to receive an excellent education whatever their background and wherever they live. The authority wants to provide excellence for all children in Lancashire.

Over the past four years Skerton Community High School 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.

The standards information set out below needs to be set into context with the school intake and the numbers of pupils identified as having special education needs. This information is provided in section 10 below.

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). In terms of the percentage of pupils that have achieved 5 A* - C grades including English and mathematics, the results for Skerton Community High School have been as follows: 2009 – 17%; 2010 - 29%; 2011 – 30%; 2012 – 20%. Whilst it is accepted that there are low numbers of pupils on roll, and therefore one pupil could account for over 3% of the total, nevertheless the results over the last four years have all been below floor standards and the local authority is concerned that there is insufficient capacity to improve the results in the future;
- 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 those years).

Since 2010/11 value added performance has been measured nationally by the 'Best 8 plus English and mathematics bonus' measure which measures how effective schools have been in helping their pupils' progress from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 across a broad range of subjects. The methodology takes into account the ability of the school intake but is not reflective of issues such as deprivation and special education needs. A score in excess of 1,000 indicates that a school has added value to the pupils' progress and a score of below 1,000 indicates that pupils have not made as much progress as would be expected. Skerton Community High School's value added scores were 957.6 in 2010/11 and 959.2 in 2011/12. Each 6 points below 1,000 is equivalent to one GCSE grade. Therefore, on the basis of this measure, pupils at Skerton are performing below their expected performance, when taking into account individual ability levels, by an average of around 7 GCSE grades. All other Lancaster District secondary schools have better contextual value added performance and all but one have scores in excess of 1,000, indicating that they are adding value to pupil performance at least as well as other schools nationally for pupils of the same ability.

In terms of the progress made by pupils from their starting points at the end of primary school, Skerton Community High School 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 Community High School 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.

The local authority has concerns that the leadership and management of the school have not got the capacity to drive through the required sustained improvements in standards. As a result of the school failing to arrest the decline in examination results since 2011, the school was judged to have 'serious weaknesses in April this year. Taking into account the small and reducing pupil roll, the challenging nature of the intake resulting from parental preferences and the pattern of low attainment and progress, there is concern that the school will not have sufficient capacity to sustain continued improvement over time. It is considered that the school will continue to experience significant challenges in providing a good quality of education as defined by the current inspection framework.

It is considered 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.

The diversity of school provision locally is illustrated in the table showing the availability of places at secondary schools in the Skerton area on pages 6 and 7 of the consultation document.

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 Community High School.

The closure of any school does represent a reduction in choice. However, first preference admissions for Skerton Community High School are extremely low – in the mid to low 20's in three of the last four years. The local authority must allow parents to express a preference for school admission and the local authority duties around school provision are to ensure the sufficiency of high quality provision.

Provision for 16-19 year olds

7. Where the school proposed to be discontinued provides sixth form education, how the proposals will impact on:

- a) the educational or training achievements;
- b) participation in education or training; and
- c) the range of educational or training opportunities,

for 16-19 year olds in the area.

N/A

Need for places

8. A statement and supporting evidence about the need for places in the area including whether there is sufficient capacity to accommodate displaced pupils.

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 Community High School 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 at Skerton Community High School fall to 191 in the summer term 2013.

19 pupils started Year 7 at Skerton Community High School in September 2013 which saw the total number on roll falling to 153 in the autumn 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 stood at 64% in September 2013. The local authority is required to give 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 Community High School and, meanwhile, the significant educational issues outlined above remain to be addressed.

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 Community High School, although it should be noted that Lancaster Royal Grammar School and Lancaster Girls Grammar School admit pupils by reference to academic ability. Subject to parental preferences, there may be pressure at some schools to admit pupils over their admission number. Given that most schools have relatively low Year 7 numbers, the local authority will work in partnership with schools in an effort to secure parental preferences. The local authority is the admitting authority for the community schools – Lancaster Central, Carnforth, Morecambe and Heysham High schools.

Pupil numbers and admission numbers at other local authority maintained Lancaster District secondary schools in the Autumn term 2013 census were as follows:

School	Adm No	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Lancaster Central	150	85	125	151	151	140	652
Our Lady's Cath.	200	80	110	99	136	147	572
Carnforth	132	119	118	128	132	104	601
Heysham	220	151	171	178	196	170	866
Morecambe	260	206	231	223	236	260	1,156
Total	962	641	755	779	851	821	3,847

Autumn term 2013 census figures for Skerton were as follows:

School	Adm No	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Skerton	90	19	25	41	37	31	153

270 pupils started Year 7 at Ripley St Thomas CE High School in September 2013 with 1,320 pupils on roll in the autumn term. 140 pupils started Year 7 at Lancaster Royal Grammar School in September 2013 with 716 pupils on roll in the autumn term, and 114 pupils started Year 7 at Lancaster Girls Grammar School in September 2013 with 570 pupils on roll in the autumn term.

9. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice.

N/A

Current School Information

10. Information as to the numbers, age range, sex and special educational needs of pupils (distinguishing between boarding and day pupils) for whom provision is made at the school.

Skerton Community High School is a co-educational day secondary school providing for pupils of all abilities. At the autumn 2013 termly school census there were 98 male and 55 female pupils aged between 11 and 16 on roll.

Skerton Community High School does not have a designated special education facility or reserved places for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). In 2013, the national figures for SEN were: 2.8% of children had statements of SEN and 16% had identified SEN without statements. The statistics at Skerton Community High School are as follows:

Year (summer term)	SEN Statemented	SEN not statemented
2010	11.59%	24.03%
2011	8.96%	19.4%
2012	14.87%	27.18%
2013	12.67%	37.33%

Displaced Pupils

11. Details of the schools or FE colleges which pupils at the school for whom provision is to be discontinued will be offered places, including:

- a) any interim arrangements;
- b) where the school included provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for children with special educational needs, the alternative provision to be made for pupils in the school's reserved provision; and
- c) in the case of special schools, alternative provision made by LAs other than the authority which maintains the school.

No interim arrangements are proposed.

If Skerton Community High School 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 Community High School are: Our Lady's Catholic College (0.26 miles), Lancaster Girls' Grammar School (1.07 Miles), Lancaster Royal Grammar School (1.16 miles), Central Lancaster High School (1.18 miles), Ripley St Thomas CE High School (1.48 miles), Morecambe High School (2.84 miles).

Pupil numbers and admission numbers at other local authority maintained Lancaster District secondary schools in the Autumn term 2013 census were as follows:

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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 Community High School.

It is intended to allow all parents with children at Skerton Community High School whom will require alternative school or academy places the opportunity to express up to three preferences. This process will begin in January 2014 so that pupils in Year 9 will be able to access the same Key Stage 4 course options as those at receiving schools. The Local Authority will then consider all preferences in liaison with other admission authorities and ensure that the respective published admission policies are applied fairly. A single offer will be issued for each child only after any decision to close Skerton Community High School has been taken. The local authority will work with families and schools on the provision of smooth transition arrangements for the affected pupils.

It is important that pupils in Year 10 are able to continue with their chosen courses of study through to completion. Skerton Community High School

will be requested to share information on the Year 10 pupils' courses so that they may be compared to those at other Lancaster District schools. Discussions will take place with the receiving schools with the aim of ensuring the continuity of studies for the Year 10 pupils and other options will be considered, if necessary, to ensure that the Year 10 pupils are able to continue with their chosen studies. This issue will be addressed again in the report requesting determination of the proposal and the details of how continuity of study will be secured will be provided.

The local authority does not have provision that is reserved for pupils with special educational needs at Skerton Community High School. The Inclusion and Disability Support Service is working with Skerton Community High School to assess the needs of the pupils with special needs, including those without statements. If the school closes, this will be an important part of the allocation and transition process to other schools. This work will include identifying any additional children that may need statements or any children that may go on to special school provision, subject to parental preferences. Future special educational needs provision will be reviewed in consultation with pupils, parents and possible alternative schools.

An analysis of the pupil roll at Skerton (Years 7 to 10) indicates that:

- 13 pupils have statements;
- 25 of the 121 pupils have moved to Skerton from other secondary schools;
- no pupils had been permanently excluded from other schools; and
- 12 had received fixed term exclusions (the majority whilst they were at Skerton).

It is considered that most pupils will be able to transfer to other mainstream schools and only a very small number may need alternative provision.

12. Details of any other measures proposed to be taken to increase the number of school or FE college places available in consequence of the proposed discontinuance.

The Need for Places section above confirms that there are sufficient places at neighbouring schools to admit pupils from Skerton Community High School. The local authority will endeavour to secure places in accordance with parental preferences wherever possible. If necessary, the local authority will negotiate with schools to admit above their published admission number in order to satisfy parental preference. The local authority is the admitting authority for the community schools in the area.

Impact on the Community

13. A statement and supporting evidence about the impact on the community and any measures proposed to mitigate any adverse impact.

The local authority recognises that the closure of a school can impact on the wider community. However, the local authority is required to focus its consideration on its statutory responsibilities of securing high quality education provision.

The vast majority of, if not all, schools provide community activities and, if a school is closed, these activities are normally provided for by other schools or are picked up by other organisations in the area.

14. Details of extended services the school offered and what it is proposed for these services once the school has discontinued.

Extended services offered by Skerton Community High School are as follows:

Lettings

- Boys Brigade - Monday 19.00-20.00 (Hirer for approx. 10 years)
- Hest Bank Junior Badminton Club - Thursday 18.00-21.00 (Hirer for approx. 20 years)
- Lancashire YPS - Tuesday 19.00-20.30
- RSPB Lancaster Group 19.00-21.00 Annual meeting (Hirer for approx. 15 years)
- York Tutors Foreign Students Scheme (4 weeks in summer holiday)

Weekends

- Our Father's House (neighbouring church) - Sunday (car park only)

Others

- Skerton St Luke's Primary School (3.30-4.30 6 times per year)
- After school meetings - Social Services /YOT/Annual Review meetings/ 6 Day Provision Team
- Children's Trust Conference/Workshop
- Police Road Safety Training (Bike Awareness) – summer holiday

These services will need to make alternative arrangements should Skerton Community High School close. However, education provision will remain on site, in the form of the Chadwick Centre (Alternative Provision), and interested groups may be able to negotiate use of the premises with the Centre.

Travel

15. Details of the length and journeys to alternative provision.

It is anticipated that most displaced pupils will live within walking distances of alternative Lancaster secondary schools. For those who are eligible for transport assistance, arrangements will be made in accordance with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy. Proposed changes to the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport policy have been the subject of public consultation up to 29th November 2013. A final decision is scheduled for January 2014. Any child who goes on to attend a special school or alternative provision will have their particular transport needs assessed individually.

The closest alternative schools measured by walking distance from Skerton Community High School 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). Given the pattern of alternative school places, and dependent on choices made by parents, it is possible for pupils to attend schools close to their existing communities.

16. The proposed arrangements for travel of displaced pupils to other schools including how they will help to work against increased car use.

Lancaster City and surrounding areas are densely populated urban areas and the vast majority of secondary schools in the area are either within walking distance of the pupils on roll at Skerton Community High School or can be accessed via public transport routes. It is not possible to estimate whether this proposal will lead to an increased use of transport as it depends on the alternative schools chosen by parents.

It is anticipated that most displaced pupils will live within walking distances of alternative Lancaster city secondary schools. For those who are eligible for transport assistance, arrangements will be made in accordance with the County Council's Home to School Transport policy. Proposed changes to the discretionary elements of the Home to School Transport policy have been the subject of public consultation up to 29th November 2013. A final decision is scheduled for January 2014. Any child who goes on to attend a special school or alternative provision will have their particular transport needs assessed individually.

Related Proposals

17. A statement as to whether in the opinion of the LA or governing body, the proposals are related to any other proposals which may have been, are, or are about to be published.

In the opinion of the local authority, the proposal is not related to other proposals which have been, are, or are about to be, published.

Rural Primary Schools

18. Where proposals relate to a rural primary school designated as such by an order made for the purposes of section 15, a statement that the LA or the governing body (as the case may be) considered:

- a) the likely effect of discontinuance of the school on the local community;
- b) the availability, and likely cost to the LA, of transport to other schools;
- c) any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase; and
- d) any alternatives to the discontinuance of the school,

as required by section 15(4)

N/A

Maintained nursery schools

19. Where proposals relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school, a statement setting out:

- a) the consideration that has been given to developing the school into a children's centre and the grounds for not doing so;
- b) the LA's assessment of the quality and quantity of alternative provision compared to the school proposed to be discontinued and the proposed arrangements to ensure the expertise and specialism continues to be available; and
- c) the accessibility and convenience of replacement provision for local parents.

N/A

Special educational provision

20. Where existing provision that is recognised by the LA as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the LA or the governing body believes the proposal is likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children.

N/A