
REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS

EXECUTIVE BOARD: 7 April 2010

SUBJECT: Outcome of consultation on the future of Parklands Girls High Schools

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

This report informs the Executive Board of the outcome of the consultations on the proposal to close Parklands Girls High School on 31st August 2011 and replace it with a co-educational (girls and boys) academy, sponsored by EACT, opening on 1st September 2011, on the same site.

2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In 2008, the Government launched the National Challenge. This means that the minimum standard expected of every secondary school is that 30% of their young people achieve five good GCSEs including English and Maths.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 14th October 2009, Executive Board considered the latest of a series of reports on the local authority's response to the National Challenge. This report emphasised the need to identify deliverable solutions as a matter of urgency if this complex and challenging agenda is to be taken forward successfully. The Board agreed to consult formally on a range of proposals, including the closure of Parklands Girls High School and the establishment of an Academy on the same site in September 2011.
- 2.3 At its meeting in January 2010, the Executive Board approved a public consultation on a proposal to close Parklands Girls High School on 31st August 2011 and replace it with a co-educational academy sponsored by EACT and opening on 1st September 2011 on the same site.
- 2.4 The consultation ran from 7th January to 5th March 2010. A consultation document was published both electronically and on paper. This specified the proposal being consulted upon and outlined the rationale behind the proposal. Meetings were held with local councillors via Inner and Outer East Area Committees, with young people in school, with school staff, with the governing body, and a public meeting was held in school. Following advice from the school, Urdu, Arabic and Polish translators were available to respond to people in their mother tongue at the public meeting.

- 2.5 In total, attendance at the various meetings was approximately 180 people (some of these represent attendance at more than one meeting). Details of the consultees can be found in appendix 1. A total of 21 written responses were received including one petition with 640 signatures. Of the responses none were in support of the proposal and all were against.

3 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 Under current legislation, deficit budget balances at existing schools have to be written off by the Local Authority on closure. Legislation does not provide for a deficit budget balance to carry forward to a successor academy. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there an anticipated budget deficit of £424,186 to write off in order to open the new academy at Parklands. The school has a responsibility to take steps to ensure that the final deficit is minimised. The local authority expects that the school will find further significant savings to ensure this is the case.
- 3.2 Members of Schools Forum have in the past expressed concern about the level of projected deficit budget balances on closure of the schools. They were particularly concerned at the prospect of being asked to agree to a “blank cheque” (particularly as further future academies remain a possibility) without assurance that the budgets were being monitored rigorously in the lead up to closure. It was noted that if the schools were to remain as LA maintained they would be expected to arrive at a balanced budget over time.
- 3.3 In addition, there would be an ongoing impact on the Dedicated Schools Grant which involves the removal of the level of funding that would have been provided to the Academy had it still have been funded through the local formula. In addition to the funding adjustment through replication of the local formula, funding would also be removed based on the level of central expenditure on certain central activity within the schools budget. This funding adjustment will require the Local Authority to cut central expenditure in line with the reduction of funding. Due to the level of fixed costs, economies of scale and varying support provided for individual schools, the budget reduction is unlikely to match the cost reductions through no longer providing services to an Academy.
- 3.4 Part of the funding that would go directly to the academy rather than via the local authority is the allocation for extended services. It is unclear what the potential academy may decide regarding this contribution, and therefore what the impact on the local extended services clusters in South Leeds may be.

4 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Board is asked to;

(i) note the outcome of the consultation on proposals to close Parklands Girls High School, to be replaced on the same site by a co-educational academy sponsored by EACT

(ii) Approve the publication of a statutory notice to close Parklands Girls High School on 31st August 2011 conditional upon DCSF approval to open an academy on that site opening Sept 1st 2011.

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Electoral Wards Affected:

All



Ward Members consulted
(referred to in report)

Specific Implications For:

Equality & Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

Eligible for Call-in



Not Eligible for Call-in
(Details contained in the Report)



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3 THE MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 A full summary of the consultation responses is provided in Appendix 2. The notes of meetings are not intended to be a verbatim account, but they do represent the questions and views raised. Copies of all of the consultation responses, can be found at www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation.
- 3.2 During the consultation, the following issues emerged:
- a) Considerable blurring in responses and consultation between the future of girls only education and the future of Parklands – the **issue of choice**;
 - b) Should look to build on significant improvements seen recently and consolidate these before imposing major change – sustaining a **good local school**;
 - c) Education Leeds is directly responsible for this. This was linked with the notice to improve judgement by Ofsted and subsequent identification as a National Challenge school – the issue of **quality**
 - d) Why BSF money allocated nearly five years ago had not yet been spent on the school – the **learning environment**;
 - e) Concerns about the transition arrangements available to those families who deliberately and specifically choose girls only education – **transition arrangements**.
- 3.3 **Choice for Parents**
A number of people expressed concern that the closure of Parklands removed choice from the parents who wished their daughters to attend a girls only school. However, choice will still remain for such parents, albeit outside Leeds. The LA would enable those who wanted to access a girls only secondary school to do so at the nearest qualifying school, through providing a travel pass. This arrangement already exists for those parents wishing to send their sons to a boys only secondary school following the closure of Braimwood School in 2005.
- 3.4 **Good Local Schools for Local Children**
There are 1,395 girls and boys for whom Parklands is the nearest school by walking distance. There are 2,507 girls and boys who live within one mile of the school, and 6,592 living within two miles. Almost 1,600 of these young people

travel by bus to Boston Spa and Wetherby Schools. While secondary school pupil numbers are stable in East Leeds for the next few years, they start to increase significantly from 2015. It is likely that the impact of the EASEL regeneration programme will further increase the pressure on secondary school places in the area and more co-educational places are required in the area.

3.5 Quality

Parklands Girls High School has significantly improved in the last two years and girls achieved the school's best outcomes ever in August 2009. This included exceeding the government's national challenge floor target. However, this has been achieved by providing extra resources to improve leadership and a high level of external support. Pressure on the school budget is threatening the school's ability to retain staff and therefore puts these improvements at risk. The consultation saw an acknowledgement of the increasing success of the school and strong support to consolidate and build upon this success.

3.6 Learning Environment

A number of responses, particularly at the staff and public meetings, suggested that the failure to invest capital from the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programmes was a contributory factor in the school's failure to attract more girls. However, this investment was planned as part of BSF Wave 1, Phase 3, alongside investment in two other schools in East Leeds. Capital works are beginning in these schools later in 2010. The delay for Parklands site happened initially because of an unsuccessful inspection and subsequently because of the impact of the National challenge which has seen a further £10 allocated but the DCSF linked to the development of an academy.

3.7 Transition Arrangements

Existing pupils on the roll who wish to transfer into a co-educational academy are able to do so. A number of girls and their parents will be concerned about the changes and may wish to consider alternative schools. While this might be possible, the school staff will need to discuss with individuals the implications of successfully changing school and establishing new relationships with unfamiliar staff and students. For some girls and their parents it is important (often for faith reasons) that they continue to attend a girls only school. The local authority will have to make this provision accessible and support the young people through the transition process.

4. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE

4.1 Proposals identified in this report would impact on the "Narrowing the Gap" and "Going up a League" agendas. Academies in Leeds have the potential to contribute to the ambitious targets to meet key priorities within the Children and Young People's Plan and the work on the Local Area Agreement.

4.2 This proposal would address the requirements of the Council to respond to the National Challenge in respect of this school.

5 LEGAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Statutory Implications

5.1.1 This consultation is the responsibility of the Local Authority, and they are the decision maker on any proposal to close Parklands Girls High School.

5.1.2 The Leeds Admissions Policy is based on a "nearest" criteria that applies to all

mixed sex, non faith schools and academies. A proposal to cease to provide single-sex education on the Parklands site and replace it with a co-educational academy would change the priority areas for all of the neighbouring secondary schools. Such a change would need to be reflected in the published admission arrangements. The outcome of these consultations would need to be considered as part of the annual consultation on admission arrangements for Leeds and form part of the published admission arrangements for 2011.

- 5.1.3 In the event of any objections being received during the statutory notices the proposal would be referred to the School Organisation Advisory Board (SOAB), to make a recommendation to LCC Executive Board. A final decision must be made by the Executive Board within 2 months of the expiry of the statutory notices.
- 5.1.4 There is a separate parallel process of consultation regarding the opening of a new academy. The final decision maker with responsibility for approving the opening of the specific new academy is the DCSF. In making this final decision they will consider the feasibility plan drawn up using input from informal consultation between the sponsor, and all key stakeholders, including the Principal designate, the staff, pupils, local residents and Education Leeds. The outcome of this process should be available for consideration by Executive Board when making their final decision following statutory notices.
- 5.2 **Resource Implications**
- 5.2.1 Under current legislation, deficit budget balances at existing schools have to be written off by the Local Authority on closure. Legislation does not provide for a deficit budget balance to carry forward to a successor academy. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there an anticipated budget deficit of £424,186 to write off in order to open the new academy at Parklands. The school has a responsibility to take steps to ensure that the final deficit is minimised. The local authority expects that the school will find further significant savings to ensure this is the case.
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on the local extended services clusters in South Leeds may be.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

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7 BACKGROUND REPORTS

Executive Board January 2009 – The National Challenge and structural change to secondary provision in Leeds Progress Report

Executive Board March 2009 – The National Challenge and Structural Change to Secondary Provision in Leeds

Executive Board October 2009 - The National Challenge and Structural Change to Secondary Provision in Leeds

Executive Board January 2010 - The future of Primrose, City of Leeds, Parklands Girls' High Schools, and of girls only secondary education in Leeds

Appendix 1

Schools	
Parents and carers	Letter home, posters advertising meetings, copy of booklet for every family Personal copy for every governor, member of staff and family
Governing body	Personal copy of booklet, consultation meeting
Staff	Personal copy consultation booklet Consultation meeting
Families expressing preference for September 2010	Individual copy to each 1 st , 2 nd and 3 rd preferences
Family of schools	Copies of posters, response forms and consultation booklets plus letter to send home for each school
14-19 providers	Link to electronic copy of booklet
Wider community	
Libraries within 2 miles	Booklets and posters
Community Centres within 2 miles	Booklets and posters
Local media/public	Media releases marking beginning of consultation period and on week of public meeting
Education Leeds website and infobase	Details and consultation document uploaded on school organisation team's page News item – refreshed in week of public meeting and regularly throughout process
Leeds City Council website	News item at beginning of consultation period and during week of consultation meeting
Leeds City Council talking point	Details of consultation
Elected representatives	
Ward members – directly affected wards	Verbal briefing Invite to public meeting Copy of consultation booklet and covering letter
Ward members – city wide	Copy of consultation booklet and covering letter
Local MP	Copy of consultation booklet Electronic copy to all MPs
Area committee	Briefing paper describing long-term picture, referencing individual copies of consultation document Attended relevant meeting
Leeds City Council colleagues	
Corporate leadership team	Email and link to consultation document
Children's services leadership team	Email and link to consultation document
Children's services comms network	Email and link to consultation document, request to promote through organisations
Locality enablers	Link to consultation document and response forms
Area management team	Link to consultation document and response forms
Education Leeds	
All colleagues	Link to consultation document and response forms Email to all heads of service to disseminate
Board	Consultation booklet and covering letter
Leadership teams	Consultation booklet and covering letter
Other statutory consultees	
Neighbouring LEAs	Email and link to consultation document
Learning and Skills Council	Send link to details of consultation
Catholic Diocese	Hard copy of consultation document and covering letter Electronic link
Church of England Diocese	Hard copy of consultation document and covering letter Email and link to consultation booklet
Unions	Able to attend staff meeting Email and link to consultation booklet
Learning community	

Headteachers	Email and link to consultation booklet Article Headteacher's Update
Governors	Email and link to consultation booklet Article Governor's update
Leeds race equality council	Email and link to consultation booklet
Chamber of commerce	Email and link to consultation document to president
Parents groups	Email and link to consultation document

Appendix 2

Parklands - Summary of respondents (letters and e-mails)	Total
Parent	6
Councillor	2
Staff	2
Chair of Governors	1
pupil	1
Staff/Governor/Other	1
Union	1
Other	9
Grand Total	23

Appendix 3

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

1. Parklands

About 80 attended the public meeting and there were 21 written responses all of which were against the proposal. In addition there was a petition with approx 640 signatures.

2. This summary is not intended to be a verbatim account, but does represent the questions and views raised throughout the process, either in writing, or during the formal consultation meetings. They have been summarised and grouped, as a number of respondents, in several different meetings, asked very similar questions using slightly different words. In summarising the representations made, every effort has been made to reduce repetition without losing any of the points raised. Copies of the original responses and meeting minutes are available at www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation. They are grouped into 6 main themes.

3 Theme 1 Consultation issues

3.1 Lack of adequate notice of the consultation

A decision to consult was taken by Executive Board on 6 January 2010. A consultation document was distributed to school on 11 January 2010 with sufficient copies for every student and staff member. A public meeting was scheduled for 23 February 2010. Consultation ended on 5 March 2010. Education Leeds considers this notice and timeframe to be reasonable.

3.2 Consultation documents were distributed at short notice

See response to 3.1.

3.3 The consultation document was felt to contain insufficient information

The document was developed in plain English to aid basic understanding. This was supplemented by a series of meetings with local councillors, young people, staff, governors and the public. Further information was available in Executive Board reports on the LCC website.

3.4 There were too many different issues in the consultation

The consultation focussed on a single proposal to close Parklands Girls High School in August 2011 and replace it with a co-educational academy sponsored by EACT, opening in September 2011 on the same site.

3.5 The governing body want another opportunity to talk to the sponsors

This will be arranged as soon as they have been formally accepted by the DCSF as the nominated sponsor for this academy.

3.6 One governor received an invitation to a meeting two weeks late

We are unable to account for this experience.

3.7 It was felt that the consultation was pointless as the decision had already been taken

This is not the case. Executive Board will consider the merits of the proposal, informed by having access to the issues raised during the consultation.

4 Theme 2 Parental choice of single-sex school

4.1 Almost all respondents stated that they did not wish to see girls-only education removed

This issue was the subject of a separate consultation process and is being considered separately by the Executive Board.

4.2 Where will the girls whose parents have specifically requested girls-only education go?

Until a decision is taken on the future of girls only education, it is not possible to answer this question.

4.3 Why not build a girls only school/Academy?

This is a potential outcome of the separate consultation on the future of girls only education in Leeds.

4.4 Research shows girls do much better at single sex schools

The findings of research is mixed. There are studies which show that girls make better progress at girls-only schools, particularly girls with low results at Key Stage 2. However, it is difficult to isolate the fact that these are a self selected group who have deliberately chosen single sex education and have higher than average parental support. Many girls do equally well and better in co-educational schools.

Other studies and opinions consider a wider view of education and suggest that girls from co-educational schools are better prepared to live and work in society, and cope with the pressures of life after school and in higher education. The number of state schools where girls or boys are educated separately has fallen from over 2500 in the 1960's to about 400 today.

4.5 A Year 11 pupil indicated that she felt uncomfortable with the idea of mixed schooling.

The prospect of change can make people anxious about the future. Pupils will need the opportunity to talk about changes so that their fears can be reduced. The vast majority of girls in Leeds are already educated in mixed schools and have chosen this form of education. There will be opportunities for any girl currently educated in a single sex school who wants to continue in a girls-only environment.

5 Theme 3 Demand for places

5.1 Where will the extra children come from to fill an 8 form entry Academy on the Parklands site?

The academy would fill from children in the immediate locality, over time.

5.2 What happens if the academy does not achieve the required numbers?

The academy will be built to accommodate 8 forms of entry. Unused classroom space could be put to various usages. Pupil numbers will also generate the funding to enable the academy to grow, remain stable or shrink staffing.

5.3 Uncertainty over the future of Parklands has caused the current loss of demand for places

This may be a contributory factor. However the perception of the quality of education being delivered may also have been a factor.

6 Theme 4 Building and investment

6.1 Why has the BSF money allocated to Parklands not already been spent?

The school is in Wave 1 phase 3 of Leeds BSF Programme alongside Mount St Mary's and Corpus Christi catholic high schools. The work on these schools begins this summer. It has not been possible to develop the building plan for the school because a poor Ofsted outcome (notice to improve) and then National Challenge delayed the planning process.

6.2 The current buildings and the deprived location contribute to the falling demand for places at the school

It is possible that the building has put some parents/girls off. However given the numbers of girls living in the locality of the school, it is difficult to accept that its location has contributed to the fall in demand.

6.3 What will happen to the budget deficit if the school closes?

The budget deficit is absorbed by all the secondary schools in Leeds and the new academy will start with a clean sheet (i.e. zero deficit).

7 Theme 5 Academies and the sponsors

7.1 Why would an Academy be better?

With input from the sponsor we are confident that continuous improvement will be secured by:

- the consolidation of an ethos which is focused on learning and achievement, which fosters unity and citizenship, and which is based on respect for people from diverse backgrounds.
- providing an educational experience of the highest quality and the widest opportunities for all, irrespective of ability, gender, faith or race.
- establishing partnerships with local employers and businesses, colleges of further education and universities to make sure the effective progression of students, to maximise opportunities, and to provide a rich and rewarding learning experience for students at the academy.
- welcoming the new academy into the EACT family of academies across the country, to provide further support and to make sure the identification, celebration and exchange of best practice.
- the work of the EACT education team, which will provide regular, experienced and high quality support and challenge, fulfilling an essential quality assurance function.
- establishing the new academy at the heart of its community and making sure that it is an asset to the community. The facilities and resources will be available for use by the community after school hours and throughout weekends and school holidays.

7.2 What is special or unique about EACT as sponsors and why them?

The proposed academy will be sponsored by the EACT who already sponsor the Leeds West Academy and six other open academies across the country. The EACT will make sure that:

- current progress is consolidated and accelerated, to make sure that all students achieve their personal and academic potential;
- extra capacity is made available in the academy in the form of resources and professional expertise so that continuing improvement is sustained;
- the academy is challenged and supported to become a centre of excellence and a beacon for learning throughout the community; and
- the life-chances of every single student are enhanced, and that they are equipped to become successful citizens, who contribute fully to the academy and to the social and economic wellbeing of the wider community.

7.3 How would the sponsors ensure the academy maintains the special, multi-cultural nature of the current school?

EACT have a very powerful inclusive ethos and experience working in a diverse dynamic communities. This ethos and successful track record will enable the sponsor maintain a multi-cultural school.

7.4 What will the sponsors bring and will there be any checks to ensure any financial contributions are made?

What the sponsors bring is addressed in detail on pages 3 & 4. The financial circumstances of any academy and its sponsors is subject to the internal rigorous accounting and auditing requirements of any public body.

7.5 Academies don't have to sign up to the Leeds Protocol and will exclude pupils

EACT have signed up to the Leeds Protocol and has a local track record in the west of Leeds where the new Leeds West academy they sponsor have excluded fewer young people than its predecessor school – Intake High.

8. Theme 6 Transition for pupils and staff

8.1 Are all pupils and staff guaranteed places at the academy?

All pupils are guaranteed a place at the Academy. The TUPE Regulations 2006 generally apply to staff. This means that staff would transfer on existing terms and conditions of service. Support staff are employed on local authority terms and conditions, which vary across the country. The terms and conditions which staff currently enjoy would be protected under TUPE.

8.2 Year 10 and Year 11 pupils will be particularly disrupted. What plans have you to minimise this disruption

Transition plan have been developed in outline by Education Leeds and shared with the leadership team of the school. It would not be appropriate to develop detailed plans until a clear decision is made by Exec Board.

8.3 What support will there be for the school up to the establishment of the Academy?

The school will continue to be able to access all the local authority support services and these will increasingly be supplemented by the support available via EACT.

8.4 How will managing staff reduction processes proceed in the run up to an Academy?

The governors, supported by Education Leeds and the local authority, will apply and implement the agreed policies and procedures for managing staffing reductions in schools.

8.5 Will the current headteacher be in charge at the new Academy?

It is not possible to answer this question. This will be a decision for the sponsors.

8.6 How will the redeployment process work for staff who do not wish to work for an Academy?

As it has done locally when other Leeds schools transferred into academies.

8.7 A view that good staff were likely to leave

It will be very important for Education Leeds, the local authority, the schools leadership and governors to all work together to maximise the confidence that staff have in their professional future as employees of an academy.