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## **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF EDUCATION LEEDS**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD: 7 April 2010**

**SUBJECT: Outcome of consultation on the future of City of Leeds High School**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

#### **1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT**

This report informs the Executive Board of the results of the public consultation on the future of City of Leeds High School. It recommends that the Executive Board authorises Education Leeds to proceed with the publication of a statutory notice for the closure of City of Leeds High School on 31st August 2011. The Executive Board will subsequently be invited to consider the outcomes of any representations made during the statutory notice period before making a final decision on the future of the school in July 2010.

#### **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 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 proposed closure of City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011.
- 2.3 The public consultation period ran from 7<sup>th</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Details of the consultees can be found in Appendix 1. Meetings were held with the school council, staff, governing body and general public. Officers also attended the Inner North West Area Committee meeting.

#### **3 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Under current legislation, deficit budget balances at existing schools have to be written off by the Local Authority on closure. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there is an anticipated budget deficit of £648,555 to write off at the time of closure. 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.

#### **4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Board is asked to;

- i. note the outcome of the consultation on proposals to close City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011;
- ii. Approve the publication of a statutory notice to close City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011.
- iii. Require Education Leeds to work with relevant partners during the period of the Statutory Notice to develop an outline proposal for the educational use of the site.
- iv. Request a full report on the future use of the site for educational purposes. to be brought to Executive Board in July 2010

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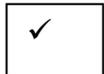
EXECUTIVE BOARD: 7 April 2010

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### Electoral Wards Affected:

All



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

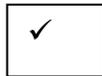
### Specific Implications For:

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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## 1 PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

To inform Executive Board of results of public consultation on the future of City of Leeds High School. It recommends that Executive Board authorises Education Leeds to proceed with publication of a statutory notice for closure of City of Leeds High School on 31st August 2011. Executive Board will subsequently be invited to consider outcomes of any representations made during the statutory notice period before making a final decision on the future of the school in July 2010.

## 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 The Council received an Improvement Notice from the DCSF following meetings with the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families and his ministers. In these meetings the Authority was urged to take radical action, including structural change, in each of the National Challenge schools. The Improvement Notice states that we must demonstrate clear evidence of improvement in outcomes evidenced by a reduction in the number of schools where fewer than 30% of pupils

achieve 5 or more A\*-C grades at GCSE and equivalent including GCSEs in English and Maths. Education Leeds working with DCSF and National Strategies colleagues have produced, as required by the DCSF, a National Challenge Plan to secure the necessary improvements. This plan, which includes the necessary structural changes, is being monitored by a strategic board and the independent Children's Services Improvement Board.

- 2.3 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 proposed closure of City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011.
- 2.4 The public consultation period ran from 7<sup>th</sup> January to 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010. Details of the consultees can be found in Appendix 1. Meetings were held with the school council, staff, governing body and general public. Officers also attended the Inner North West Area Committee meeting.
- 2.45 In total attendance at the various meetings was approximately 450 people (some of these are double counted, as a number attended more than one meeting). A total of 259 written responses were received, (including 2 petitions with 78 and 262 signatures). Of the responses one supported the proposal, one was undecided, and 257 were against (including the petitions).

### 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](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation).
- 3.2 During the consultation the following issues emerged:
- a) National Challenge floor targets are a poor tool to assess the quality of provision on offer at the school – **issue of quality**
  - b) The importance of the school at the heart of the community and the potential impact on the community of closure – **community resource**
  - c) The potential loss of expertise that has been developed in supporting children new to the country and/or with English as an Additional Language (EAL) – **Loss of expertise**
  - d) lack of detailed information on the transition routes for pupils and staff and concerns with the possible receiver schools/academies – **transition arrangements**
  - e) support for the school to remain under the current leadership, with support to maintain progress, including the emergence of alternatives – **alternative proposals**.

#### 3.3 Quality

- 3.3.1 City of Leeds High School faces significant challenges. The standards achieved by students in the school are very low compared with those achieved by students of a similar background in other local schools. This is shown by the value added statistics for the students in the school. It is recognised that there has been some improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people. Not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. Within the context of the National Challenge, the local authority

is obliged to consider structural changes to accelerate improvements for the students at the school. The government has raised its expectations of the minimum standards schools must achieve, and the timescale to achieve them.

3.3.2 The strengths of the school are acknowledged and recognised, as reported in the most recent inspection report. Despite these strengths the school has not been able to ensure that enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time. The school has consistently struggled to support enough young people to achieve good grades and is at high risk of not reaching the floor target of 30% of young people achieving five A\* to C GCSEs including English and Maths by 2011.

3.3.3 The new OfSTED inspection framework has much higher expectations of schools and the school is judged to be at high risk of being placed in special measures at the next inspection.

### 3.4 **Community Resource**

3.4.1 The school struggles to attract children from its local area or community. Not enough parents are choosing City of Leeds for their children. Those choosing the school as their first preference in the admissions process are insufficient in number to sustain a school, although many respondents suggest that protracted uncertainty over the school's future is a major factor in suppressing demand.

3.4.2 The school does have many in-year admissions because of the number of surplus places that exist and its central location making it the nearest school with places for a large part of the central area of the city. These in-year admissions are predominantly children who are placed at the school by the Admissions Team, not because parents have chosen it or because it is necessarily their nearest school.

### 3.5 **Loss of Expertise**

3.5.1 The comparison with other schools is made based on pupils who have valid KS2 data, not on the basis of new arrivals, therefore in year admissions of pupils without valid KS2 data do not disadvantage the school in relation to contextual value added. There are schools in the City that have a similar contextual profile based on pupils who had been in education in England since KS2.

3.5.2 The work of the school in effectively supporting students with EAL is recognised and the local authority would wish to preserve the talent and expertise that exists in the school for supporting students with EAL into the future.

### 3.6 **Transition Arrangements**

3.6.1 The priority for the local authority would be to ensure that any disruption to the education of the students at the school is at an absolute minimum. Should the decision to close the school be taken detailed transition arrangements would be drawn up for each of the students affected by the proposal and such arrangements would be made in close consultation with City of Leeds High School, receiving schools, the students and their parents and carers.

3.6.2 Education Leeds would ensure that there are sufficient places in the secondary schools named in the consultation document and would work closely with parents in relation to their preferences to ensure that as many of those preferences as possible can be met.

3.6.3 The staff currently employed at City of Leeds High School would be potentially redundant. Education Leeds and Leeds City Council would use the existing redeployment arrangements to support staff under the threat of redundancy and

seek to find alternative employment for those staff. Where possible, these arrangements would be linked to the transitional arrangements developed to support the students at the school.

### 3.7 **Alternative Proposals**

- 3.7.1 The Governors of City of Leeds School submitted an alternative proposal to Executive Board and Education Leeds on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010. This proposal can be found in [appendix 4](#). Part 1 of the proposal seeks to explain the governing body's case against closure. Part 2 sets out the governing body's alternative proposal. Education Leeds welcomes the alternative proposal and recognises that the governing body has worked closely with partners in its creation. We also recognise that the discussions between the governing body, Education Leeds and other partners, before and during the consultation, has generated significant common ground in terms of understanding both the challenges and the opportunities.
- 3.7..2 There are merits in the governing body's proposal. The governors have recognised the need for significant change, suggesting a re-branding and renaming of provision on the site. The proposal suggests a radical reshaping of provision, based on a hub model, addressing the needs of young people in the immediate community but, also, across the wedges. The governors believe that the 'existing school arrangement cannot survive the dissolution of the Federation' and that a new trust be established to lead and govern the new provision in partnership.
- 3.7.3 To achieve the sort of radical change proposed by the governing body the school would still need to close to the same timeframe. Education Leeds would work with the governing body, the five feeder primary schools, partner high schools, Leeds City College and Leeds Metropolitan University to develop more detailed alternative proposals for the use of the site and submit these to Executive Board.
- 3.7.4 The Open XS extended service submitted an alternative proposal to the Executive Board and Education Leeds on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2010. This proposal can be found in [appendix 5](#). The primary schools, early years settings and their partners in Burley, Hyde Park, Woodhouse and Little London have a strong shared vision about the need to more successfully deliver Key Stage 3 provision locally.
- 3.7.5 The proposal assumes that through a collaborative trust they could partner with City of Leeds School and use the site to offer a continuity of experience for local children and young people from 3 to 18 and beyond. The proposal is rooted in the concept of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century School operating as a community based facility. It would see Key Stage 3 provision developed to reflect the learning style of primary settings and so ease the discontinuity of transition while concentrating on the community nature of the provision. However, this proposal does conclude that the transformation proposed requires a new name, a new direction, a new curriculum, a new commitment – a new start.
- 3.7.6 As with the proposal from the governing body, the City of Leeds School would still need to close to the same time frame. Education Leeds would work with the governing body, the five feeder primary schools, partner high schools, Leeds City College and Leeds Metropolitan University to develop more detailed alternative proposals for the use of the site and submit these to Executive Board.
- 3.7.7 A further proposal was submitted by Lori Beckett (Leeds Metropolitan University) which supports the alternative proposals of the governing body and which stresses the importance of teacher lead research and development. This proposal can be

found in **appendix 6**.

- 3.7.8 An anonymous from 'the school community' argues in favour of a collaborative trust in line with proposals made by the governing body.

#### **4. IMPLICATIONS FOR COUNCIL POLICY AND GOVERNANCE**

- 4.1 The proposal identified in this report would impact on the "Narrowing the Gap" and "Going up a League" agendas.
- 4.2 This proposal addresses the requirements on 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, which is the decision maker on any proposal to close City of Leeds High School.
- 5.1.2 Since 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 places at City of Leeds High School would change the priority areas for all of the neighbouring secondary schools. Such changes 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 notice period the proposal would be referred to the School Organisation Advisory Board (SOAB), to make a recommendation to the Executive Board. A final decision must be made by the Executive Board within 2 months of the expiry of the 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. Based on the latest school staffing budgets there an anticipated budget deficit of £648,555 to write off at the time of closure. 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.

#### **6 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Executive Board is asked to;

- i. note the outcome of the consultation on proposals to close City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011;
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to be brought to Executive Board in July 2010

## **7 BACKGROUND REPORTS**

Executive Board, 5 December 2008 – Building School for the Future: Expression of interest for follow-on projects

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 List of Consultees

<b>Schools</b>	
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 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> 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
<b>Wider community</b>	
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
<b>Elected representatives</b>	
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
<b>Leeds City Council colleagues</b>	
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
<b>Education Leeds</b>	
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
<b>Other statutory consultees</b>	
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 Summary of respondents

City of Leeds - Summary of respondents (letters and e-mails)	Total
Pupil	75
Staff	44
Parent	15
Resident	27
Ex-Pupil	10
Governor/Governing Body	7
Primary HT	5
After School Lesson User	3
Union	2
Councillor	3
Other	68
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>

## Appendix 3 Summary of consultation responses

### 1. City of Leeds

Around 400 people attended the public meeting. There were 259 written responses, with 1 in favour, 1 undecided and 257 against the proposal. Two petitions with 78 signatures and 262 signatures were received.

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 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](http://www.educationleeds.co.uk/schoolorganisation). They are grouped into 6 main themes.

### 3 Theme 1 Issues with the consultation

- 3.1 **The consultation document was biased, documents arrived 10 days after the start of the consultation, and it makes no mention of any of the good features of the school**

The consultation has been conducted and advertised in a manner consistent with previous school organisation changes made by Education Leeds, and with DCSF guidance. The full list of consultees is in Appendix 1. Letters have been sent to current pupils, to local primary pupils and other local secondary schools and other local stakeholders. Posters and documents have also been placed in libraries and

post offices. As soon as it became apparent that the governing body had not received copies of the documents through the above channels individual copies were despatched for governors' use.

It is recognised that the school has a number of strengths and there has been improvement, but we need to see this impact faster on the achievements of young people. Not enough young people are succeeding and reaching their potential at the present time.

**3.2 The period between consultation, a decision and implementation is too rushed**

The consultation has been conducted and advertised in a manner consistent with previous school organisation changes made by Education Leeds, and following DCSF guidance. The whole proposal process is being conducted in accordance with statutory requirements which govern school closure proposals.

**3.3 The statement on other languages was at the back of the booklet, hard for EAL parents to find.**

The document carried an entry in a number of languages which indicated that where a consultee did not speak English and needed help in understanding the document the service of an interpreter would be available free of charge.

**3.4 There was overwhelming opposition to the South Leeds Academy proposal but it went ahead. Will the huge opposition at City of Leeds be listened to?**

No decision has yet been made, and all reasonable effort has been made to ensure this is clear in all responses. The outcome of the consultation and the clear views expressed are reported to the Council's Executive Board, which will be given full consideration before a decision is made.

**3.5 Scrutiny Board have been asked to examine Education Leeds methods of consultation**

A 'school organisation consultations working group' has been established by the Scrutiny Board (children's Services). It has yet to report back to scrutiny board, but Education Leeds has taken several interim measures to strengthen the consultation in response to the concerns which prompted the working group.

These include:

1. Creating more engaging consultation booklets using plain English and offering simple definitions of any legal or technical terms. These explain exactly what the proposal is, why it is being proposed, each stage of the decision-making process, how to respond and how those responses will be used.
2. Producing an easy to understand, simple leaflet outlining the decision-making and consultation process. This was available at all the National Challenge consultation public meetings.
3. Making sure that the role of the public consultation and the consultation meeting, together with how to respond, is clearly outlined in every communication about the proposal. This includes media releases, the introduction to the public meetings, the information on Education Leeds and Leeds City Council's website and the consultation booklet.

**3.6 Is the formation of an Academy at Primrose a foregone conclusion?**

No decision has yet been made, and all reasonable effort has been made to

ensure this is clear in all responses.

**3.7 There was no information on possible future uses of the site, despite previous dialogue about a possible 14-19 Hub.**

The proposal that is the subject of the consultation is to close the City of Leeds High School on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2011. If a decision is taken to close the school further proposals may be submitted on possible future use of the site. Consultees were invited to comment on the use of the site for educational provision, where they felt that they wished to do so.

**4 Theme 2 Quality of existing provision and educational standards**

**4.1 GCSE results are an inappropriate measures for the quality of a school with so many pupils with EAL**

Education Leeds and the local authority acknowledge the talent and expertise in the school for supporting pupils who have complex needs. However, local authorities are expected to use the powers that they have been granted to secure improvement, and the proposal was being made because of the lack of progress being made by all pupils in the school. It is not unreasonable to expect schools to have 30% of their pupils achieving five A\*-C GCSEs including English and maths, because these are the qualifications that give young people good chances in life. All pupils, including those with English as an additional language, rely on GCSE results at Key Stage to gain access to further education, training and jobs. When calculating a value added score only pupils with a Key Stage two result from primary school are included and recent arrivals are not included. This means that the very low value added figure at the school can be compared with the better rates of progress at most other schools.

**4.2 The school has a good Ofsted report, unlike Lawnswood and Carr Manor two likely receiving schools**

Although the school's latest inspection report cited the school's strengths, the new inspection framework contained much higher expectations of schools, and the school is judged to be at risk of going into an OfSTED category requiring significant improvement or special measures. The school is also at high risk of not reaching the floor target of 30% of young people achieving five A\* to C GCSEs including English and maths.

**4.3 The school has skilled, dedicated staff, offering particular expertise in supporting pupils with EAL, often with traumatic backgrounds**

Education Leeds and the local authority acknowledge the talent and expertise in the school for supporting pupils who have complex needs. There is expertise within the school which the local authority would want to preserve and extend more widely.

**4.4 71 languages are spoken in the school which presents additional challenges.**

The diversity of language also presents an asset. National data shows us that young people with minority ethnic backgrounds and first languages that are not English often make more rapid progress than their British counterparts.

**4.5 Disruption would be particularly difficult for some groups such as Gypsy Roma Traveller pupils**

The diversity of culture also presents an asset and Education Leeds will do all that it can to ensure that the transition arrangements are designed to meet the needs of each individual student and take place as smoothly, and with as little disruption as possible.

**4.6 The school has the most improved attendance record in Leeds**

It is recognised that City of Leeds has been making steady positive progress in attendance levels from 84.9% in 2006 to 87.33% in 2009 and in reducing the levels of persistent absence. The school should be commended for its work in this area.

**4.7 Issues such as poor leadership, poor attendance and the reported failing of the Federation should have been reported to the governing body earlier. The governing body expressed support for the current leadership team.**

Concerns were discussed with the executive headteacher, and included in the report of the school improvement partner which is taken to the governing body.

**4.8 Pupils achieve better in smaller schools**

The most successful schools in Leeds are larger than average. None of the smallest six schools in Leeds achieve above 35% 5A\*-C including English and maths.

**4.9 If the school closed would the same breadth of courses available to pupils through the Federation continue?**

All schools are obliged to offer a full curriculum at Key Stage 4 including all the new vocational options by working in partnership with neighbouring schools.

**5 Theme 3 Transition for pupils and staff**

**5.1 Closure will disrupt pupils, particular Year 10 and it is not clear where any pupils would transfer.**

There will be special provision for students mid way through examination courses so that their education is not disrupted. Students will be offered the opportunity to remain as a group and to continue with the same course. Education Leeds will offer places in nearby schools in conjunction, as far as practicable, with parental preferences, with every effort to keep disruption to a minimum.

**5.2 Will pupils be moved to the school of their choice?**

Education Leeds will offer transfer to nearby schools in conjunction with parental preferences, which will be met as far as possible.

**5.3 Friends could be split up, there is likely to be an increase in truancy, and the risk of bullying in new schools because of City of Leeds reputation**

This matter was noted and would be included in any transition plan

**5.4 Closure means new uniforms and more expense**

This view is noted

**5.5 What will happen to teachers, all of whom are facing redundancy?**

The staff currently employed at the school would be potentially redundant. The local authority would use its existing, and largely successful, arrangements to attempt to find alternative employment for the staff.

**5.6 What about equality of treatment with Primrose colleagues within the federation, who will TUPE across to an academy?**

Education Leeds is working to ensure that there is no inequality in how Federation employees are treated. Legal advice is being sought on how staff are affected who work at both schools.

**5.7 How will staff be supported, particularly as there are so few posts being advertised?**

There is a redeployment process to support staff at threat of redundancy. Staff will be supported through the period of contractual notice and there is a process to extend this by up to a term, for both teaching and non-teaching staff, to help them find jobs elsewhere in the city.

**5.8 Dispersal of the specialist EAL staff would be a retrograde step**

This view is noted

**5.9 How will pupils obtain references if the school has closed and teachers left?**

Systems will be in place, whichever school the students transfer to, and information shared and understood to ensure that transfer arrangements are effective and that references can be supplied.

**5.10 Some pupils have already been disrupted by the closures at Royal Park and Headingley Primary**

There will be special provision for students mid way through examination courses so that their education is not disrupted. Students will be offered the opportunity to remain as a group and to continue with the same course. Education Leeds will offer transfer to nearby schools in conjunction with parental preferences, which will be met as far as possible and disruption kept to a minimum.

**5.11 Why not stop admitting pupils in Y7 and gradually close the school?**

This could technically be done, but it still requires a decision to close the school. The three or four years it would take to “wind down” the school would present major challenges for the effective operation of a school, particularly one which already has comparatively low numbers.

**5.12 Will the progress of individual pupils be tracked following closure?**

All pupils in Leeds are listed on records held by the school which must legally be transferred to any new school. Records are also held centrally so that progress can be monitored.

**5.13 Three of the five schools identified as possible receiving schools are Academies who control their own admissions.**

Academies are required to abide by the National Code on Admissions when establishing their admissions policies. They are or will be attended by local pupils, a principle they have all signed up to and which is given effect by their admission policies which all have distance criteria.

**6 Theme 4 Community cohesion and local school**

**6.1 The school has strong community links and community spirit**

The consultation has demonstrated passionate support for the school from almost everyone associated with it. However, this has not translated into demand for places at the school which attracts just 13% of the secondary age pupils for whom it is their nearest school.

**6.2 It is the local school for many pupils. Closure will mean longer journeys and higher bus fares**

Education Leeds will work with parents in relation to preferences for other schools and every effort will be made to place children in the nearest available school (where this is the preference) to minimise the impact of having to travel further. As identified above, the vast majority of the local secondary population are already exercising choices for more distant schools.

**6.3 Community cohesion would suffer if the school closes. The multicultural ethos of the school reduces racial tension**

This view is noted

**6.4 The school works closely with refugees and asylum seekers. Closure would have a detrimental impact**

This view is noted

**6.5 Royal Park has been left semi-derelict for 5 years. How can we trust the Council to establish a 14-19 hub or other educational facility?**

If a decision is taken to close the school further proposals may be submitted on the future educational use of the site.

**6.6 The governing body felt the secretary of state did not understand the complexities of inner city schools**

This view is noted

**6.7 Families are returning to Headingley and Woodhouse and need a local high school**

The majority of families in Headingley and Woodhouse already choose to send their children to Lawnswood or to Carr Manor High Schools in preference to City of Leeds.

**7 Theme 5 Pupil numbers and demand**

**7.1 There might not be enough places at other schools to receive all of the pupils at City of Leeds, let alone respond to parental choice**

The size of the school age population changes regularly and the school estate always has to adapt to this. Even if the places were not available currently, Education Leeds would negotiate with other schools according to need to ensure that there were sufficient places.

**7.2 Longstanding uncertainty over the future of the school and adverse media coverage directly led to the fall in numbers**

The school struggles to draw in children from its local community. Only around 40 to 50 parents name City of Leeds as their first preference in the admissions process and this is insufficient to sustain a school. The remainder of the places are filled by parents who unsuccessful in securing a place at their first preference school and either put City of Leeds as a second or third preference, or are placed at City of Leeds as the nearest school that has surplus places.

**7.3 With Education Leeds currently having to expand local primary schools in response to a growing population will there be enough secondary places in the future?**

The size of the school age population changes regularly and the school estate always has to adapt to this. With the changes to 14+ provision, there is a greater likelihood that pupils will not receive all their learning on one site in the future.

**8 Theme 6 Alternative proposals**

**8.1 During the consultation alternative proposals have been received, from the governing body, from the local primary schools and from the University which should be supported by Education Leeds**

The Governors of City of Leeds School submitted an alternative proposal to Executive Board and Education Leeds on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

Education Leeds welcomes the alternative proposal and recognises that the governing body has worked closely with partners in its creation. We also recognise that the discussions between the governing body, Education Leeds and other partners, before and during the consultation, has generated significant common ground in terms of understanding both the challenges and the opportunities.

There are merits in the governing body's proposal. The governors have recognised the need for significant change, suggesting a re-branding and renaming of provision on the site. The proposal suggests a radical reshaping of provision, based on a hub model, addressing the needs of young people in the immediate community but, also, across the wedges. The governors believe that the 'existing school arrangement cannot survive the dissolution of the Federation' and that a new trust be established to lead and govern the new provision in partnership.

To achieve the sort of radical change proposed by the governing body the school would still need to close to the same timeframe. Education Leeds would work with the governing body, the five feeder primary schools, partner high schools, Leeds City College and Leeds Metropolitan University to develop more detailed alternative proposals for the use of the site and submit these to Executive Board.

## **Appendix 4 Copy of Alternative Proposal from Governing Body**

### **RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION OVER THE FUTURE OF CITY OF LEEDS HIGH SCHOOL ACTION PLAN FOR CITY OF LEEDS**

#### **Preamble**

This document is prepared on behalf of the Governors of City of Leeds School (COLS) (currently part of the Central Leeds Learning Federation).

This document is submitted to Education Leeds (EL) and directly to the Executive Board of the Leeds City Council

#### **Summary**

The Governors are unanimously opposed to the closure of COLS. We believe it will be detrimental for the current students and the local community. We believe closure will NOT assist the students at COLS get better grades or better outcomes (which seems to be the driving force behind the closure plan) and in fact will DAMAGE the immediate futures of that cohort and will cause significant and lasting damage in the local community.

However we recognise that COLS is a school which faces challenges and we believe there are structural solutions that can accelerate improvements at the school and grow its role in its local community in a positive way.

- Part 1 explains the case against closure
- Part 2 sets out our alternative plan to closure

#### **PART 1**

##### **Background - the case against closure**

City of Leeds School serves an area that is culturally diverse but also one which is vulnerable and economically deprived. The community came out in force at the consultation meeting at COLS on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February 2010 to express deep concern that an area that needs support might in fact be losing its only High School. The community was deeply alarmed by this prospect. The School offers services not just to its students but a variety of organisations in the local community.

The School also has strong partnerships with other local schools and colleges which have been built up over a long period of time that now risk being lost. The school was passionately and, it seemed, unanimously supported by parents and students (past and present) and community leaders and described as 'magical'.

Hilary Benn MP (letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> February 2010) supports the school and recognises that uncertainty hanging over the school (for many years now) has been very

difficult. He is concerned that closure of the school would have a big (negative) impact on the local community. He recognises that City of Leeds supports a very wide range of pupils, including many children from other parts of the world who arrive with or without their families and most with little or no English – and the skill in EAL which staff have acquired is a strong feature of the school recognised by OFSTED. Indeed the school has considerable strengths and expertise with students from diverse backgrounds and for whom English is an additional language that it would be a terrible shame to lose – as once that ‘magic’ is lost it will never be recovered. Hilary Been MP lends support to an action plan for improvement rather than closure.

Greg Mulholland MP from the neighbouring Leeds North west constituency has also raised concerns and written in support of the school (letter 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010) that the closure of City of Leeds School will *“irreversibly damage the local community and have a detrimental effect on schooling provision in the area”* and he is *“concerned about the impact the potential closure will have on the family of schools in the local area”*.

The result on February 18<sup>th</sup> of the local by-election in Hyde Park & Woodhouse showed that each of the five candidates actively campaigned to save COLS: with some 2000 odd residents voting amongst such candidates. Where is there any evidence of any one in the community who advocates closure? We do not believe there is any. The executive board of the Council could not dare speak of closing COLS as benefiting students or the community when it is clear that the overwhelming majority view is in favour of the school remaining.

City of Leeds has always had positive OFSTED reports<sup>1</sup>. It has never been placed in any category of special measures or alike. Its National Challenge rating last year was changed from red to amber – meaning the school could meet its targets for 2011 with support.

COLS when it formed a Federation with Primrose (with support from the DCSF) was in rude health financially. Primrose High School had a legacy deficit from problems with its new PFI build (e.g. ICT was not included when it needed to be and there were significant problems with the roof and open staircases between sections of the building) and in effect funds from COLS were able to shore up Primrose to some extent (e.g. with ICT provision!). However for the last decade the school has faced threats of closure and has had three formal sets of consultations. In the last couple of years in particular there have been regular stories in the local papers focusing on COLS closing and the children moving perhaps to a site in East Leeds (Parklands). That has had a devastating impact on the roll. It came at just the wrong time for the school because COLS staff had been working for the last 2 years on building relationships with feeder schools. However strong anecdotal evidence spoke of parents saying they wanted to send their children to COLS - but they simply could not consider doing that if their child's education would be disrupted part way through. The local cluster of schools send an agreed letter to EL setting out their evidence that this was so. This was such an understandable response we had no counter argument against it and the roll for year 7 last year was significantly depressed: along with changes to post 16 funding this has created a sudden and significant budget deficit. The school is currently taking

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<sup>1</sup> OFSTED say of COLS it is “a truly inclusive school where the needs of all students are catered for well. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning”

steps to manage and reduce that deficit. However as was very clear from the meeting on 10.02.2010 and the evidence now provided by the local returns collected by Jill Wood – there are lots of children who will return to preferencing COLS once the threat of closure is lifted - and whose parents want them to be able to walk to a local school. We are in a classic 'chicken and egg' situation here – but the proposal we set out below explains how to fix this dilemma and retain continuity for years 7, 8 and 9 who will be the most severely disrupted by the closure of COLS.

It must also be noted that demographically there are some 1500 children in the area who could come to COLS of which 13% currently do. Given the number of stories about COLS closing it is remarkable it is that many. There is a baby boom and growing population in the inner city and signs of regeneration with old flats being knocked down and revitalised in the local community and families moving back into the area. If COLS close there will simply not be enough places in the centre/ centre east areas of Leeds and in the very near future the city will have a significant lack of provision. Given that COLS is so well located (at Hyde Park) and has a campus that is subject to covenants requiring use of the land for educational purposes – it is madness to close this site at this time.

City of Leeds remains a good school and as a general rule councils should not close good schools. There was, at the public consultation, no one advocating closure. Although our number of first preferences fell and we had a low year 7 intake last year the reasons for this have been discussed above. Those parents who did not preference the school have none the less come out in support of COLS having experienced how the school nurtures its children<sup>2</sup>. The league table figures do mask many of our achievements.<sup>3</sup> (Although that is not to shy away from the need to make radical and rigorous improvements to teaching and learning and attainment which we believe the proposal below addresses).

Further it is government and local council policy to encourage students to walk to school where possible and to cut down on excessive journeys to school. The closure of COLS will significantly add to traffic congestion in Leeds and cause many students to have to move long distances: for many it will mean using two buses and for a deprived area that will be a significant barrier to good future attendance. Two wards (Headingley and Hyde Park & Woodhouse – would lose a secondary school within walking distance). Realistically many challenged children will not get up maybe an extra hour earlier to travel nor pay for such travel and attendance and attainment will suffer – with additional concerns for the health wellbeing and safety of those children. Similarly there will be a negative impact on the number of students accessing extended services if they have longer journeys to get home, and distance from school will discourage parents from attending school functions, parents' evenings, and alike.

DCSF has a guide (last updated 28/7/09) on "*closing a maintained mainstream school – a guide for local authorities and governing bodies*". It includes considering standards of education, diversity of education, every child matters, provision for displaced students, impact on community, community cohesion and

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<sup>2</sup> One parent whose first choice was Lawnswood was so pleased with her child's progress at COLS she then sent the three younger siblings to the school!

<sup>3</sup> For example 4 of our children were admitted to Notre Dame last year to study 4 science A levels – selected from over 700 applicants.

race equality and travel, 14-19 curriculum education and special education needs (EALS) and children with disabilities.

It is contended that applying these considerations the closure of COLS could not reasonably be supported by the local authority. There is no evidence that the students of COLS (individually or collectively) would do better if they are displaced. Some of the schools it is proposed they be displaced to face equal challenges to COLS and/or have themselves struggled with National Challenge targets or recent OFSTED inspections.

If COLS closes there will not be a small secondary school in Leeds or the inner city. Diversity of education will be impaired. In East Leeds the only choice available to parents will be Academies. How does that improve diversity? What about parents who want to send their child to a smaller sized school or one that is maintained and governed by local people? Both of those are perfectly reasonable choices parents might want to make and yet such parents will no longer be able to exercise such choice. In particular many parents of children with SEN choose COLS for its expertise with SEN children and because it is believed, probably correctly, that such provision is improved by being delivered in a smaller school.

We believe a school like COLS should be treasured as a school that is involving inclusive and a good community school. The Warnock report stated the aims of education are *“first to enlarge a child’s knowledge, experienced and imaginative understanding and thus his awareness of moral values and capacity for enjoyment, and secondly to enable him to enter the world after formal education is over an active participant in society and a responsible contributor to it, capable of achieving as much independence as possible.”* These aims are the same for all children and not just those who are the most academically gifted. The current focus on targets for a minority of the cohort, risks ignoring all the good that is done for the COLS student population as a whole.

The impact on the local community would be so great and so negative that it is the community itself that has come out in force to support a rescue plan for COLS. We are particularly pleased that we are supported in this proposal by JILL WOOD (Head of Little London Primary) and on behalf of Inner West family of schools comprising Little London, Rose Bank, Blenheim, Quarry Mount and Brudenell.

The school and community are unanimous in their opposition to closure of the school and wish to support and advocate the following alternative proposal – with a request that when considering this proposal the Executive Board permit the governors to advocate the alternatives discussed in this document directly (and not via an agent or representative of EL<sup>4</sup>).

The stakeholders and community representatives are submitting their own documents in support of these proposals and adding further detail on the plans for

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<sup>4</sup> We are concerned that Education Leeds are not merely consulting on closure but are actively advocating the closure of City of Leeds School and this is the impression of the community following the interview given by Chris Edwards on Radio Leeds on Wednesday 10 February 2010 where he unhelpfully derided value-added at the school as “dreadful, it’s dreadful” and later asked ‘Would you send your kids there?’

changing the governance and leadership of the school and for driving forward improvements to teaching and learning.

## **PART 2**

### **A compelling proposal for an alternative structural solution to the future of City of Leeds school**

#### **ACTION PLAN – our proposals for change a “Collaborative Trust”**

This will involve the dissolution of the Federation and a new structure of governance for COLS.

The school will be supported by its 5 local feeder primaries and the Open XS local learning community and would seek to work with existing partners and develop new partners who will support improvements in teaching and learning at the school and the development of the school as a centre for excellence: in particular we envisage the school site as an extended community school and EAL centre for Leeds whilst also building upon its acknowledged strengths in vocational provision on site – whilst keeping parity of esteem of such provision with academic courses. A collaborative approach would see a vision of ‘through schooling’ within the local community and a change to the way Key Stage 3 is taught.<sup>5</sup>

We propose to bring on board education partners, professional improvement and social and business partners<sup>6</sup> to support the Trust – with each partner given a role in governance of the Trust.

This is a ‘ground up’ proposal radically different from what the community had perceived as a ‘top down’ approach when the Federation was formed. We can say this with confidence because this action plan is rooted in proposals that have been drawn up within the community itself and the evidence from the meeting Wed 10/02/2010 shows that the community (being the students, the parents, residents associations, local schools, councillors and the two local MPs) are all firmly behind this proposal.

Further the governance of COLS was perceived to have had weaknesses – due in part perhaps to the governing body having to govern two schools instead of one, and in the past there was a lack of direct community involvement at governance level. The community did not feel any ownership of the ‘Federation’ that formed, albeit it is recognised that for many students and staff cross site and curriculum support developed during the Federation was in fact positive in improving teachers’ learning best practice and widening curriculum choices.<sup>7</sup> There was

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<sup>5</sup> Please see separate submissions from the stakeholders/OPEN XS group for their approach to KS3.

<sup>6</sup> All significant partners who work with the school on developing improved access for lifelong learning, improved curriculum and support for teaching and learning - whether Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Leeds College, Notre Dame, The Universities, local businesses (the school already works with HEAT and KIER) Leeds College of Building, College of Art, College of Music or alike will be represented in the trust model of governance to embed accountability and responsibility by the school in making improvements and ensure that significant stakeholders remain committed to the school in the long term.

<sup>7</sup> Education Leeds have accepted that the Federation model had flaws in that COLS would have been better partnered with a school that was in significantly different circumstances from COLS.

also a perception and recurring complaint by the Executive Head of the Federation that the Federation never enjoyed the support of Education Leeds.

It is envisaged that despite the dissolution of the Federation much of the progress made by working with Primrose High School will still be retained through collaboration on curriculum provision and colleagues working together to improve teaching and learning. Further in the last 6 months COLS has made an appointment of a head teacher who with support from Simon Flowers of Carr Manor is now driving forward staffing changes and improvements in core teaching and learning. Such work is bearing fruit and attendance levels at COLS have improved dramatically. This work needs to be built on and not reversed.

The proposed Trust would use innovative strategies for leadership whilst rooting ownership of the collaborative trust in the community.

We believe this plan would work by bringing stakeholders directly into the running and governance of the school and it can drive forward school improvement through a radically different approach to governance and leadership.

Another innovative way of working is to build up the school-university partnership already established with Leeds Met, which began in 2008 under the auspices of the TDA-funded project, 'CPD in schools in challenging circumstances', and which was developed in COLS and five schools in the Inner North West family of schools. This enabled academic partners to provide teachers with professional learning and development and support teacher-led action inquiries. This work was showcased in an end-of-project teacher conference in Leeds and again in Sydney, Australia, at a national conference devoted to partnership work in disadvantaged schools. Leeds Met is open to continuing this work on a formal basis, subject to negotiation.<sup>8</sup>

That work and indeed the partnerships COLS made during the time of the Federation were recognised by the Australian government as being of interest – and a template for how to support inner city schools in Australia.

**We commend the above proposal and believe there are compelling reasons to change COLS to a collaborative trust model and to reinvigorate it as an extended community school and centre for life long learning.**

We recognise that the proposal needs to address a number of significant matters and set out below

## **1. Falling Numbers**

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Structural changes involved in building the Federation and time and resources dedicated to the three recent consultations on the closure of COLS must be recognised as drains on resources that have impacted on the progress of the school in the past.

<sup>8</sup> A further submission on behalf of stakeholders including the LMU has been forwarded under separate cover. Most of the current COLS 6th form go onto local universities especially LMU. The current 6th form do the LMU 'progression module' which gives them 30 UCAS points if they go to LMU or other similar universities participating in the scheme. This has been invaluable in ensuring a university place for students who have needed to overcome significant barriers to success. The proposed trust could build on this with LMU having a more significant presence earlier in a pupil's school life and helping to make progression to university seem not only possible but also something worthwhile and welcoming.

We propose to form a formal partnership with the 5 primary feeder schools – wrapped in a trust umbrella. The feeder schools would nominate governors to the board of the Trust (along with other business and education partners who would do the same) that would govern the new school on the COLS site: and pre-school transition classes would be run on site. The school would intensify its 'road shows' to the primaries and entry criteria would favour the linked primaries.

The school/trust should work with LCC/EL and its students on a favoured name re-branding exercise for the school: and adopt a new name and logo from August 2011 to signify the radical change.<sup>9</sup>

Once the threat of closure is over – it is clear from evidence now presented that numbers will recover.<sup>10</sup> As birth rates increase this area needs high school provision and the community needs a secondary school.

## 2. Achievement

It is contended that splitting the local community and sending children to a variety of different local schools – dependent upon entry criteria and different curriculum provision – and with attendant transport problems is likely to cause a FALL in attendance among students and to reduce their motivation and attainment levels. If the school is being closed for failing to meet national challenge targets it is not thought likely that challenged pupils perhaps from poor backgrounds will see any improvement to their learning if forced against their will to get up every day perhaps an hour or so earlier to travel by one or two buses to other schools – some of which also meet challenges with their national challenge targets or OFSTED inspections.<sup>11</sup>

Rather continued and rapid improvement is likely to be achieved by the current levels of intense intervention (national challenge funding, school improvement partner and adviser scrutiny, national leaders in education, and direct leadership and HR support currently being offered: all of which are showing highly positive results but need more time to work through). We propose to continue and build upon partnerships with other leaders (inc Simon Flowers of Carr Manor) and senior leadership of Primrose High Academy to learn best practice for leadership and governance.

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<sup>9</sup> This has been a controversial proposal and not one wholly supported within school. However it is submitted that it is vital if we are to build pride in the new institution it must have some visible radical break from the past and adopt a new name, logo, new uniform and a change to decor and colour scheme in school. The school needs a new sign with a picture of the frankly impressive building and facilities right on the main road to draw the community closer to the school and vice versa as the campus is currently a little too hidden from the road.

<sup>10</sup> The result of the Open consultation showed that 75% of Respondents wanted their children to walk to the a local school. 2 of the four local primaries are moving to two form entry and a third to one and half as demand increases locally.

<sup>11</sup> OFSTED say of COLS it is "a truly inclusive school where the needs of all students are catered for well. Students make satisfactory progress in their learning" & "This is a vibrant and caring school. The school is highly committed to the care and welfare of its student and has worked hard to enable students to succeed."

Additional support is proposed through establishing professional learning community partnerships with Leeds College and the two Universities in the first instance that will assist core teaching and learning and lead to authentic changes in teaching practice and improved student learning outcomes.

The school-university partnership model in challenging schools has already delivered when trialed in Little London Community Primary School in 2006 and was shown to be effective with inter-school Learning Support Unit, behaviour management, creative curriculum with particular reference to ethnic minorities, and white working-class underachievement.

We propose to build upon this work under the Trust umbrella and extend ongoing trials where two groups of teacher partners are already working to address underachievement and alienation, with academic partners' support, and continuation of the 'Leading Learning project'. It is proposed that University and College partners would be able to appoint governors to the board of the new trust that would govern the school.

It is to be noted that our feeder primary school partners (Open XS) have seen rapid improvements in their results. The model of more rigorous leadership and cultural changes that have been successful there would be disseminated through the Trust - embedded through its new governance.

### **3. Leadership / Governance**

We acknowledge that there have been significant weaknesses in Leadership and Governance in the past – hence the desire of this proposal to address those issues. We believe the support now in place and changes to the senior management team at COLS are a good grounding for the future and that the radical change to governance proposed by this plan would consolidate that improvement and drive forward change more rapidly.

### **4. Attendance**

Attendance figures are already showing an upward trend. The school is already on course to make significant and continuing progress in this regard. The school has recently been rewarded for its progress in this regard.<sup>12</sup>

### **5. Budget/Structural change**

The existing school arrangement cannot survive the dissolution of the Federation. It is proposed that there be a new 11-19 Trust schools – in which the majority of the existing staff are retained and put to use in the Trust school – building on their core expertise in vocational courses and acknowledged expertise with pastoral work with students and the community.

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<sup>12</sup> OFSTED say "Attendance has improved and meets the targets set by the DCSF".

The new school would take a new name and be an extended school. It should be a site for three new hubs that are run by the trust and EL across the wedges.

- (1) A 'centre of excellence' for EAL including new on site provision for an all year intensive English school to bring students who drop into the roll mid year up to speed in English as quickly as possible – which is currently a major barrier to learning and national challenge and attainment. To that end EAL provision on site be extended to operate outside term time, offering EAL pupils across the city the opportunity to be brought up to speed in English as quickly as possible. As part of an extended school the same service should be offered with learning skills/external funding to adults – especially parents of school children. This will see dramatic improvements in attainment. During term time the dedicated EAL staff can continue to offer both individualized and group learning packages for New To English students both within and alongside the mainstream curriculum in an inclusive and integrated fashion
- (2) Enhanced vocational/diploma provision on site. COLS is a recognised as a pioneer in this field.<sup>13</sup> 14-19 curriculum can be improved city wide by the new trust working in partnership with nearby schools and colleges to offer provision to children on roll elsewhere. A charge can be made for accessing these services. There is room on campus to build additional provision for this and being in the centre of Leeds we are well placed to take such students.

It is believed that this organic and evolutionary approach to 14-19 provision – starting with a centre of excellence at the COLS campus could grow into a virtual hub in the inner city for the provision of 14-19 options across the city and offers young people much greater choice and thus improved engagement. The COLS campus is very central and readily accessible to many other local schools. The staff are also already strongly experienced in providing an inclusive environment and in developing individual learning – skills that will be essential to retain if a 14-19 centre is to be a centre of excellence. At present there is a lot of alternative provision scattered around the city and it would make sense to pool some of that alternative provision on the COLS campus. Making a charge for provision provided to students on roll elsewhere would assist the new trust school whilst intake numbers return to viable levels.

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<sup>13</sup> We have, for example, two professional standard workrooms (Building Trades/Construction and Health & Beauty) and a Diploma Suite already being made available to students from elsewhere. The school has great sports and music facilities and science facilities and the City Learning Centre attached to it on campus. The school was originally built for 900 children including those with disabilities (we have lifts). It would be a great shame to waste such a good site and facilities. The City Learning Centre has direct indoor communication with the school. In the event that the DFC funding - which ends next year, is not renewed, it would be an ideal base for our vision of life long learning, extended services, EAL and further 14-19 provision. Already 54 young people from three schools (COLS, Primrose and Carr Manor) are working towards diplomas and apprenticeships with us. The professional standard salon and building trades room have spare capacity that could be hired out to other organisations or used as part of expanded 14-19 provision. There is an overall shortage of building trades workers across the city and experienced planners and it is understood business partners would be keen to work with the school, EL and LCC to enhance vocational provision on site. Such impetus will be lost if the school is closed instead.

(3) A focus on lifelong learning and enterprise for the community and our students. The DFCC is already on site and with enhanced vocational provision as well it is hoped the new Trust will encourage businesses to fund provision for post 14-19 for children and adults to be delivered on site. It is particularly important to note that for EAL children one or both parents may also need support with English (spoken and written) and offering life long learning for adults in the community will assist parents in mentoring their own children and will boost attainment.

## **6. Staffing**

It must be recognised that the staff at COLS are committed and long serving and have a great deal of expertise in dealing with a culturally diverse mix of children (over 70 different languages are spoken at COLS). It must be noted that given its inner city location and cohort behaviour at COLS is exceptionally good and this is held together by the long serving experienced staff at the schools. Such long servicing staff must be maintained if the 'magic' of the school in that regard is not to be lost.<sup>14</sup> Enhanced EAL and Diploma provision on site will need to retain such staff if Leeds is to offer its children quality provision.

## **7. Parental Participation**

It is contended that this has been an area of significant weakness in the past – but that this proposal seeks to address this with new levels of parent participation through support and governance.

## **8. Transition**

For years 5,6, 7 and 8 it is envisaged that once the threat of closure is lifted the school role will recover dramatically. A local focus on transition in partnership with the feeder primaries will better prepare children for the move to High School and in turn improve levels of attainment and value added at Key Stages 2 and 3 – which will then feed through to accelerated learning in later Key Stages. However it must also be recognised that as every child matters it is essential that the site also offers enhanced EAL provision for students who join role mid year and do not speak English so they can access learning faster and that we enhance vocational provision for students who would not otherwise engage with a wholly academic programme.

## **9. Widening participation**

We envisage that other partners could and should work with the Trust. These can include the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, existing secondary schools in the wedge, the Leeds College, the Universities and business partners. (see footnotes 6 and 13).

This plan is commended to Education Leeds and the Executive Board of the Leeds City Council. We too want better outcomes for young people and our community – but with your support this plan is the best way to achieve that. We can save the

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<sup>14</sup> Though it is to be noted that despite the threat of closure COLS has also been successful in recruiting a recent influx of new talented young staff who have begun to make their own impact on the school and whose enthusiasm and skill is also valued. Many have expressed their support for these proposals and stated that they consider themselves lucky to work in the school.

city a lot of money and its children a lot of disruption by building on what we already have whilst adopting the structural leadership and governance changes proposed above: which we believe are both radical, sensible, proportionate and likely to embed improvements to teaching and learning and attainment whilst commanding the support of the community.

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To:  
The Chief Executive,  
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110 Merrion Centre  
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Any questions about this proposal should be addressed to the Chair of Governors  
c/o City of Leeds High School

## **Appendix 5 Copy of alternative proposal from OpenXS**

### **RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSED CLOSURE OF SECONDARY PROVISION WITHIN THE WOODHOUSE, LITTLE LONDON AREA OF THE CITY.**

#### **PROPOSAL**

Whilst we recognise that the current secondary provision for this community has not always delivered the expected outcomes we are steadfast in our commitment to a secondary provision remaining to serve this area.

#### **CONTEXT**

Our cluster is made up from three Children's centres, two school based Nurseries, five primary schools and one secondary school. Our catchment areas are of high mobility, poverty, disadvantage, cultural diversity and too often despair.

Three of the primary schools have been asked to increase in size to accommodate the increasing numbers coming into the city – these children will need secondary provision in the future. It will not be feasible or environmentally sound to expect these children to travel by bus to other secondary schools across the city – indeed within a year the nearest of these will be full to capacity.

Our families are often hard to reach, fragile and vulnerable for a range of reasons including drug and alcohol abuse, lack of work or aspiration, poor health, inadequate housing and lack of education of adult members. Outcomes for our children are not as positive as they could be and for this reason we feel that a community based seamless learning experience from three to eighteen and beyond would be a long term effective investment for the city and the country as a whole.

#### **THE VISION**

Education would be directed by an amalgamation of the educational settings under the umbrella of a collaborative trust. A strategic steering group, acting on behalf of the JCC (Joint Consultative Committee), would lock in the shared values of local schools for local children and offer a continuity of experience from three to eighteen and beyond.

The trust and relationships built by the primary and early years settings would feed into the secondary provision which would then mirror the rigor and robust accountability, high aspirations and enhanced experiences, opportunities and skills which now exist within our community.

In line with 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools this community based learning community would develop into a model of shared staffing which would allow flexible response to need and concentration of expertise.

We know that many of our children are not emotionally mature enough to face the challenges of secondary education in its current form. Under the new learning community, Key Stage 3 would reflect the learning style of a primary setting with children taught in class cohorts rather than subject cohorts with minimum movement around the school until Year 9.

#### **PRACTICALITIES**

1. Primary Heads would be highly visible in the new secondary provision – contributing to curriculum design and delivery and being part of the accountable body at strategic level.
2. The secondary provision would offer high quality provision for children and young people who have English as an additional language. This provision would run through the statutory holiday periods in order to narrow the gap in attainment levels.
3. Once at the end of Key Stage 3 young people would have the option of taking up an academic pathway or vocational pathway depending on their individual strengths.
4. Although settings would maintain their individuality – important in meeting the immediate needs of their area – ultimately the community would see the benefits of a seamless transition into secondary learning and beyond as something that was delivered by their community for their community. In this way at least 100 students would feed into the secondary provision on an annual basis (based on responses from a questionnaire sent to all families within the cluster where 73% wanted their child to be able to walk to their secondary provision.). This would reduce the number of additional students taken from other areas of the city and help to promote community cohesion within our area. (This figure would rise as the three primaries within the cluster expand)
5. Parents of more vulnerable or fragile children would have the option of choosing a primary based Key Stage 3 provision.
6. All primary settings would visibly show their support for the secondary provision by installing appropriate signage reminding parents of the strong, automatic link. The secondary site would carry signage linking that setting to the five primary feeders.
7. A strong programme of exchanges and visits between sites would be in place and opportunities sought for team teaching and greater collaboration between all settings – both between staff, leaders and students.

## **CONCLUSION**

The time is right for a change in our community but that change has to reflect the responsibilities that we face in the future. Closing our only secondary provision may offer a short term win but will contribute long term to major problems, inequalities, lack of social equity and disruption of the fragile cohesion that holds our area together. Regeneration is already starting in the area; aspirations for the future are becoming raised, to show commitment to 'local schools for local children' it is imperative that the opportunity for quality, effective, supportive secondary provision is maintained within these communities.

A new name, a new direction, a new curriculum, a new commitment - a new start.

We ask on behalf of the members of the OpenXS Extended services Cluster that the above proposal receives careful consideration to allow secondary provision to remain within our community.

Kindest regards

J Wood

Mrs Jill Wood

Chair OpenXS Cluster

Headteacher: Little London Community Primary School

## **Appendix 6 Copy of Professor Lori Beckett's proposal**

### **CITY OF LEEDS HIGH SCHOOL**

Professor Lori Beckett,  
Leeds Metropolitan University  
5 March, 2010

#### **Introduction**

The proposed closure of City of Leeds High School, deemed a challenging school, requires a considered response because of the complexities of its work serving inner city communities with deep needs: multi-ethnic and multi-lingual families as immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers who have experienced trauma and dislocation, and white working class families, many with experiences of intergenerational unemployment. There are 'demographic pressures' given social and cultural diversity but also marked disadvantage, poverty, deprivation, social inequities and social problems.

Disadvantaged schools are well recognised in the international research literature, which documents the complexities of urban education: the learning needs of disadvantaged students and the impact of poverty on the schools' work, for example, additional learning needs, material poverty, the emotional climate and disturbed behaviour, and reluctant participation.

Leeds City Council has an opportunity to determine the fate of this school, and the fate of Primrose High School, but it needs to do so with integrity, taking into account the empirical evidence, including longitudinal evidence, and arguments put by stakeholders and the educational community writ large across the city. When coupled with Ofsted reports, the schools' self evaluations and school improvement plans, this all paints a comprehensive picture of the schools' work, including the complexities and contextual considerations.

These considerations are not evident in the consultation papers and in previous reports published by Education Leeds. Indeed, given the evidence and arguments posited, they do not stand up to scrutiny. They draw on selective data, contravene Ofsted's inspection reports, and ignore the schools' aims and purposes, values and philosophy, intentions and actual achievements. Finally, the consultation papers and previous reports suggest bias in favour of closure, as if it is a fait accompli, which in turn raises questions about fair process in regards this consultation.

City of Leeds High School has a history of proposals for closure, and the recent negative media campaign conducted by Education Leeds has added pressure on the school's work. But to its credit, the school has maintained its focus on its main business, the provision of education, irrespective of the distractions that come with this proposal for closure and dispersal of its staff and pupils, the consultation and 'Stand up for City' campaign, public meetings, and the like. Clearly the school community wants to retain City of Leeds High School as its local community high school, albeit transformed into a C21st school outside the constraining forces of the federation. This in itself is a structural solution, which has compelling reasons.

Leeds City Council needs to make its decision based on consideration of the full gamut of evidence and arguments, which ideally requires a fully informed case study of the City of Leeds High School, done not by appointed officers or inspectors with a narrow brief tied to pre-ordained political agendas, but by commissioned researchers.

#### **This submission**

I write this submission as an academic partner to both schools. My initial contact came in 2008 when the TDA-funded initiative 'CPD in schools in challenging circumstances'

enabled academics to initiate the 'Side-by-side learning' project and establish a school university partnership.

This project with four teachers and four academic partners went over ten months and witnessed a mentoring program for teachers' action inquiries, high quality teacher research, and a showcase of evidence. This showcase happened locally at the end-of-project teachers' conference, nationally at the British Educational Research Association annual conferences, and internationally at the recent 'Social Inclusion in Education' conference, Sydney, 2009.

Leeds Met's Carnegie Faculty continues to support this school-university partnership work informally as an expression of good will to the two schools, to indicate support for 'challenging schools'. Work is underway in both schools to support teachers' professional learning and development and action-inquiries into issues of concern with academic partners from Leeds Met, which also currently provides a series of 'widening participation' workshops for senior pupils.

I am engaged in on-going discussions with Education Leeds and Leeds City Council to secure funding to continue the school-university partnership work as the 'Leading Learning' project. This is designed to support sustained professional learning and development tied to school development, where academic partners work with schools to forge professional learning communities and develop contextualized school improvement plans, tailored by school Heads and teachers engaged in teacher-led action inquiries with academic support.

As it was put to former Director of Children's Services Rosemary Archer in June, 2009: *The synergy between Leeds city schools and Leeds Met in terms of common aspirations means we can secure quality work in both establishments, which will guarantee a professional workforce at the cutting edge of research and practice improving the learning experience of staff and students in schools and the university, including initial teacher education.*

Consequently, funding was earmarked in the workplace reform budget, but we were overtaken by events although these have not prevented on-going negotiations about the logistics of scaling up the school-university partnership across a number of schools. If plans come to fruition, it will demonstrate that Leeds City Council is prepared to bring the resources of the city to bear on meeting the needs of its local schools, especially the complex needs of these two challenging inner-city schools.

### **Observations**

The observations recorded in this submission, intended to be supplementary to the stakeholders' submissions, can also be described as the observations of an expert witness although I acknowledge the schools' deep knowledge of the challenges they confront.

The schools must be recognised for their location in Leeds, a de-industrialised city colloquially known as the 'immigration capital of the north'. This means the schools are dealing with the impact of globalisation played out locally, a responsibility not to be taken lightly. In fact, these disadvantaged schools have a mandate to educate 'all comers', something not readily done by other schools.

The school Heads, leadership teams and staff are working extraordinarily hard to meet target requirements, but there is an immediacy in the demands that are made on them by disadvantaged pupils and local communities. This means huge 'time pressures' operating on very difficult work, which often involves crisis management.

An irony that I have observed is that the schools have little time to pause and write submissions in reply to these consultations. Yet the staff are more than capable of answering questions about the provision of education, and do not waiver in their commitment to the pupils and local communities.

### **A C21st school**

In what follows, I too confront some of the concerns about the City of Leeds High School, but from the perspective of an academic partner, defining what needs to be done in disadvantaged schools as this is reflected in the international research literature, and addressing the ways things are.

The thrust of my argument is that the school's proposal to be a C21st school should actively involve its partners in a professional learning community to improve the quality of schooling and educational provision, that is, inclusive through-schooling from 0-19 years and beyond, given the university's 'widening participation' initiative.

In doing so, this submission:

- Represents thoughtful and considered analyses of the complexities of urban education including working with adolescents in this specific local setting with attendant high demands on teachers, teacher educators, local authority and civil servants and the wider school-community;
- Draws together our best knowledge about professional learning communities, school development and educational change;
- Promises the commitment of academic partners to provide long-term solutions that are locally owned and professionally led;
- Respects teachers' professional knowledge and the centrality of long-term sustained professional learning and development as we secure improved practice;
- Contests the idea of quick-fix solutions to underachievement in the interests of short-term political gain; and
- Requires considered investment of city-wide resources in the schools to realise their capacity for not only for school renewal but a C21st school.

### **Progress**

Progress as defined by targets and performance criteria is not straightforward in disadvantaged schools, and consideration needs to be given to the school's context, including 'demographic pressures' and 'time pressures'.

The proposal to forge a new professional learning community is an effort to support productive new ways of thinking and learning about progress, tied to authentic changes in teaching practices and pupil learning outcomes.

To be fair, teacher partners in these schools have consistently indicated a willingness to learn not only from similar schools across the country but also internationally, which includes reading the international research literature.

More opportunities will be provided in the 'Leading Learning' project as it foregrounds teachers' action inquiries on concerns like meaningful curriculum and engaging pedagogies, and develops the school's research perspective on working with disadvantaged pupils and communities with deep needs.

### **Performance**

Performance is a similarly problematic benchmark for disadvantaged schools, and it needs a considered approach. For instance, in 2008 in the TDA-funded 'Side-by-side learning' project, a teacher working with pupils at the bottom end of abilities engaged in an action inquiry on a set-four English class. It was outstanding teacher research on 'pedagogies for the dispossessed' and the consequences of streaming and setting.

This work fed into the English department's decision to institute mixed ability teaching. In part this was based on research evidence but also teachers' commitments to directing energies towards improving teaching and learning.

This requires time for knowledge-building through professional conversations, professional reading, planning and preparation, and a practitioner research base validated in collaboration with other teachers and academic partners.

Learning for all concerned is at the heart of the work to be done in the 'Leading Learning' project. There will be a special focus on pupil learning and improving performance, beginning with ensuring the good work of feeder primary schools is not lost in transition to high school. Building on the work already done, transition and organisational change in years 5, 6, 7, and 8, will be one area for action-inquiry.

### **Good leadership**

Top-down leadership is not what is required in disadvantaged schools because it needs to be shared, to ensure teachers and their partners have insightful understanding of the relationships between the school, its communities and global society, and to make hope practical.

The 'Leading Learning' project promotes leadership in terms of providing opportunities for everyone in the school to exercise leadership, especially Headteachers and the senior leadership team, subject department/faculty leaders, advanced skills teachers, teachers, pupils and others concerned about learning in the school.

The 'Leading Learning' project promotes dispersed leadership and teacher leadership to promote learning within classrooms but also beyond the individual classroom to subject departments/faculties across the school, with reach into primary schools, further and higher education.

It means creating the learning and work conditions that are conducive to academic learning and social learning for pupils as well as improving practices in all these sites.

It means creating a school culture that values the professional standing of its teachers and staff, encourages knowledge-building, engages professional learning and development, professional reading and professional conversations that have some influence.

School change will only come by giving the professional learning community these opportunities for leadership and knowledge-building, then acting on this work in systematic and coordinated ways.

### **Standards**

Standards are an issue in disadvantaged schools, and it is important to make no excuses for the absence of high quality teaching and learning. Pupils from communities with deep needs need access to powerful knowledge and opportunities to engage in meaningful work.

The 'Leading Learning' project will encourage a developmental approach to standards, which is aimed at giving teachers the opportunity to build standards and improve their teaching as they move through their careers.

The professional learning and development sessions with academic partners will be focussed on meaningful curriculum and engaging pedagogies, especially pedagogies that emphasise intellectual quality, supportive classroom environment, connectedness, and

respect and valuing of difference, which is crucial given multi-ethnic and multi-lingual pupils.

In the long term, it is hoped high quality teaching and learning will be reflected in improved classroom practices and assessment so that pupils are party to high standards of academic achievement in the C21<sup>st</sup> school but also in further and higher education.

There needs to be continuity of expectations and practices across these different sites of provision. The long term vision for the city of Leeds is that pupils who come into initial teacher education will have a good sense of meaningful curriculum and engaging pedagogies, so they can learn about the theoretical bases of teaching and learning with some practice in action inquiries, before returning as newly qualified teachers hopefully into these local challenging schools.

### **Achievement**

The focus has got to be on the need for rigorous classroom work to confront the challenges and tensions of teaching in disadvantaged schools.

It is well documented teachers need support to develop teaching competence, particularly in disadvantaged schools. It has been noted that low achievement is not an inevitable consequence in challenging schools, but it is more likely, even with good leadership.

The task is to come together in a learning community to nurture competence and develop new ideas and new strategies to address underachievement. The intention is to learn from one another, so that teachers learn from other teachers in primary and high schools, civil servants and academic partners, who in turn learn from teachers in these disadvantaged schools.

In the long term, the improvements in academic achievements will be embedded and these will show in performance-based assessments. This is particularly important for pupils from traditionally underachieving backgrounds, but the intention is to build towards providing *all* pupils, not only those from aspirational families, with the opportunities to engage in intellectually demanding work so that the school-community can achieve equitable outcomes from schooling.

### **Budget**

Funding needs to be put aside for staff learning and development, and funding released from the workplace reform budget.

As critical friends, academic partners will focus on the work to be done by teachers as professionals, and encourage joint work and problem solving but in a sustained way that encourages professional learning and development.

It is expected teachers will engage in action-inquiries and build a knowledge base twinned with an evidence base of what can be done to improve achievement. This means teachers put together a learning portfolio, with samples of pupils' work, professional readings, and records of what they are learning through their action-inquiries.

In the long term, it is hoped the school will put together a learning portfolio, storing information and professional readings, recording learning, and documenting the authentic changes being made in teaching practice and improved student learning outcomes.

### **Sustained improvement**

Bringing in the National Challenge Advisor and school improvement partner/s are recognised interventions tied to school improvement, but it does not exhaust the possibilities for a range of interventions that could have included academic partners.

I have lobbied for four years for immediate funding support for the school-university partnership. We were lucky to secure TDA funding to launch the 'Side-by-Side learning' project, and we want to continue as the 'Leading Learning' project. Witness the delegations to, and briefing papers written for, Education Leeds.

Its final intervention – the proposal for closure - is the last of numerous replies in as many years, and suggests the local authority has given up on the school.

I have clearly not given up on the school because I believe teachers and pupils need to be given the opportunity, without the constraints of federation, threats of closure and on-going negative media campaigns, to get on and do the job that is required: to build a C21st school that actively involves its academic partners in a professional learning community to improve the quality of schooling and educational provision.

I certainly pledge my support, but the proposed work requires much of the local education community:

- A new Board of Governors prepared to support the endeavours of the school and its academic partners with energy, enthusiasm and active support for children's and young people's through-schooling, vocational, further and higher education;
- Primary school Headteachers prepared to help build collective capacity in the schools as learning organisations, especially when it comes to the transition years 5, 6, 7 and 8, some organisation restructuring, and teacher-led action-inquiries to contribute to knowledge-building and informed evidence-based practices;
- Headteacher Gary Lovelace and the senior leadership team determined to see the C21st school into being with the capability to steer the complicated task of building a productive professional learning culture;
- Teachers and allied staff including union representatives with the required knowledge and skill, time and commitment, intellectual and emotional energy to provide meaningful curriculum and engaging pedagogies, and meet the challenge of high quality teaching;
- Pupils and their 'City Squad' school council with a determination to help make the school succeed through their own efforts, aspirations and wherewithal to engage active learning and achieve to the best of their abilities;
- Parents and carers willing to support the school and become partners in learning and education, agree to home-school contracts on learning and behaviour, communicate with teachers, support staff and extended service partners;

The work of the C21st school also requires much in terms of political will from the city and wider national education community:

- Leeds City Council willing to support and fund local city-wide efforts in school renewal to build a C21st school with improved learning, ring-fencing and distributing its workforce reform budget and the like;
- Education Leeds prepared to acknowledge the complexities of challenging schools' development and invest in the collaborative Trust so that it can embark on purposeful and sustained efforts to build a knowledge base about urban education;
- The DCSF and policy makers prepared to support and fund local initiatives on 'narrowing the gap' for vulnerable groups, especially where this work is on the cutting edge of quality educational research, contributing to the international literature on urban education, school development and policy developments;
- The Secretary of State and a government prepared to acknowledge there have been some erroneous system-wide reforms that ignore local context, which complicates matters still further.

I commend this supplementary submission to you, and trust you will give favourable consideration to City of Leeds High School as a C21st school with support from academic partners and the 'Leading Learning' project.