

Cabinet – 22 October 2008

Review of Secondary Schools: The future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College

Portfolio: Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's services

Service: Walsall Children's Services – Serco

Ward: Bloxwich West

Key decision: No

Forward plan: No

1. Summary of report

This report seeks permission to consult on the proposal to close Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College and to seek the views of Cabinet on the phasing of the closure.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet approves:

- consultation on the proposal to close Sneyd on 31st August 2010, with no Year 7 intake in September 2009 and the transfer of the current Year 9 and Year 11 pupils to alternative schools provision in September 2009 (option A); or
- consultation on the proposal to close Sneyd on 31 August 2011 with no Year 7 in September 2009 or 2010 with the current Year 8 to move to their new schools in September 2010 (option B).

3. Background information

3.1 Secondary Schools

Cabinet received reports on 16 January 08, 19 March 08 and 16 July 08 on the Structure of Secondary Schools and granted permission to progress the review of the structures and status of mainstream secondary schools.

One of the drivers for the review is to manage the surplus places in the secondary sector and to ensure that schools remain educationally and financially viable.

Appendix 1 shows the number of pupils currently on roll in the mainstream secondary schools with places available.

The September 2008 Year 7 pupils cohort will be the first to be affected by the Raising of the Participation Age and will be required to remain in education, training or participation until the age of 17. Subsequent year groups will be required to participate until the age of 18. It is not possible at this early stage to estimate the impact this development will have on Year 12, 13, 14 & 15 pupil numbers.

3.2 Sneyd

Sneyd is a community secondary school and is located in the northern part of Walsall close to the border with Wolverhampton and Staffordshire. In recent years the demand for secondary school places in Walsall has fallen and this has had a significant impact on pupil numbers at Sneyd.

Sneyd operates co-operative arrangements for its Key Stage 5 provision with Pool Hayes Community School.

Trend in Pupil Numbers

3.2.1 Pupil numbers at Sneyd were relatively stable between 2001 and 2005 and peaked at 1,395 in 2005. Since then numbers have fallen by 27% over a three year period to 1,016 in January 2008. The table below provides more details of the decline in numbers.

Table 1 Trend in pupil numbers at Sneyd

January Census	Sneyd NOR	Reduction in pupil numbers from previous year	
2001	1,384		
2002	1,368		
2003	1,380		
2004	1,386		
2005	1,395		
2006	1,269	- 126	9%
2007	1,156	- 113	9%
2008	1,015	-141	12%
2009 (Est)	904	- 111	11%
Projections			
2010	780	These projections are based on secondary school offers for September 2008 and will be adjusted following finalisation of the October 2008 PLASC and assume Year 7 intakes.	
2011	694		
2012	644		
2013	598		

The number of pupils admitted to Year 7 has reduced over this period and this is illustrated in Table 2 below which provides details of the number of pupils in each year group in September 2008.

Table 2 Pupil numbers by year group at Sneyd (September 2008)

	Adm no	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Sneyd	250	114	128	151	182	223	76	30	904

(Sept Y7 admissions final offers, Y8–Y11 rolled forward from May 2008 PLASC, Y12 & Y13 actual nos).

The estimate for the 2009 Year 7 intake does not take account of some factors that could influence parental preference.

At the current stage in the 2009 admissions round, it is not possible to estimate the number of places that will be requested for Sneyd. When applying for a place, parents are asked to express a preference for five schools. The 2009 intake will replace a Year 11 cohort of 223 and, if the numbers in the sixth form remain similar, the total number of pupils will fall to approx 780 - 800.

Sneyd does not have feeder schools however, traditionally, a large number of pupils have transferred from Mossley, Beacon, Abbey and Busill Jones Primary Schools. There has been a marked reduction in the number of first preferences from pupils at Busill Jones and Woodlands over the last three years and it is likely that this is in part a reflection of changes in the relative popularity of secondary schools and also the increasing ease of securing a place at other local schools because of the overall reduced demand for places. It is envisaged that this trend will continue.

Using pupil numbers from the final offers for admissions to Year 7 in September 2008, the May 2008 schools census numbers rolled forward for Years 8 to 11, and actual post 16 numbers, the availability of places at other secondary schools in Walsall is detailed in **Appendix 1** of this report. Schools not full in earlier year groups include Alumwell, Blue Coat, Brownhills, Darlaston and Joseph Leckie. Some parents may express an interest for schools in neighbouring boroughs.

Falling rolls create a challenging situation for schools to manage and the scale of the reduction at Sneyd is such that the educational and financial viability of the school must be considered. Given the number of pupils in the 2008 Year 7 questions must be asked about the viability of a school where admissions are so low and are expected to fall further.

3.2.2 Standards

Sneyd was in special measures between January 2005 and November 2006. When the school came out of special measures an exit plan was implemented in order to wind-down the Local Authority intervention and allow the school to become fully self governing once again. However, the 2007 results showed a significant decline at both Key Stages 3 and 4. This triggered an intervention by the Local Authority and the Headteacher resigned. Governors were fully supportive throughout this period. An interim Headteacher was secured by the Governors following guidance from the Local Authority. Over this period the LA supported the school with additional School Improvement Partner (SIP) time, additional consultancy, and regular review meetings because it has been in the 'intensive' category which requires greatest intervention and support. Additionally since June 2008, a Black Country Challenge Adviser has been appointed to work

to support the Headteacher to bring about rapid improvement. Additional resources have been secured against improvement priorities. For example an additional £20k from Excellence in Walsall funds and a grant was awarded to provide an additional Advanced Skills Teacher thus retaining an excellent teacher to improve practice across the school. In addition to support to raise standards in core subjects, data training has been carried out with governors to enable them to provide more challenge.

The interim Headteacher has steadied the performance of the school. However, the 2008 Key Stage 4 results remain disappointing and show a downward trend over the last two years. This will make the school highly vulnerable to an Ofsted category once again.

The school, now a National Challenge School, is still required to make rapid improvement in order to secure 30%+ 5+ A* - C (incl En/Ma) GCSEs over the next 2 years. Given the potential budget deficit of £500, 000 the school has to make a substantial reduction in numbers of staff. It is hard to see, therefore, how the school will be able to make and sustain the required improvements.

Trends are positive for 5A* - C including English and mathematics for children with free school meals, according to the data we hold, but in general attainment trajectories based on the data of the last three years are static and in some cases declining so the gap is widening against national levels.

The following table shows the results at the school

KS4	2005			2006			2007			2008		
	School	LA	National	School	LA	National	School	LA	National	School	LA	National
5+ A – C GCSE	29%	56.2%	57.1%	36%	50.0%	59.2%	32.0%	50.5%	62.0%	30.1%	59.6%	
5+ A – C inc. English/ Maths GCSE	15%			20%	34.9%	45.8%	17.2%	35.5%	46.8%	17.1%	41.0%	
CVA KS3-4	939.8	974.5		970.2 Bottom 5%			965.6 Bottom 5%	987.7				
CVA KS3-4	965.1	986.2		N/A			979.6 Bottom 25%	991.4				
KS3	2005			2006			2007			2008		
	School	LA	National	School	LA	National	School	LA	National	School	LA	National
English L5+	71%	69%	74%	70%	69%	73%	56%	69%	74%	57%	70.2%	73%
Maths L5+	56%	67%	74%	60%	73%	77%	56%	71%	76%	58%	71.4%	77%
Science L5+	53%	61%	70%	54%	68%	72%	53%	68%	73%	54%	63.3%	71%
CVA KS2-3	97.5% Bottom 25%	99.2		98.4	99.4		97.8 Bottom 5%	99.8				

(Value added)

(KS4 – CVA, KS3 – Value Added)

CVA (Contextualised Value Added) Key Stage 2 -4 data shows that the progress of students compared with similar students nationally has put the school in the bottom 5% nationally. When analysing subject by subject, mathematics shows a declining trend and has remained in the bottom percentile over the last three years. This is a mathematics and computing specialist college receiving additional funding, so this trend in mathematics is serious as additional funding may be withdrawn if sufficient impact on results is not made.

Students in almost all categories are making well below expected progress between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. The targets that the school has set for 2009 represent considerable challenge but are still below those expected when target-setting within the Borough and nationally.

3.3 Proposals

3.3.1 Proposal A. The first proposal is that Sneyd closes on 31 August 2010 and that no Year 7 (11+ aged pupils) be admitted to the school in September 2009.

Pupils who started their GCSEs (Year 10) in September 2008 would complete their GCSEs at Sneyd.

Arrangements for pupils entering Year 10 in September 2009 would have to be examined on a pupil by pupil case to ensure that they were not disadvantaged at this critical stage of their education by the closure of the school. The most likely outcome for these pupils would be that they transfer to a neighbouring school in September 2009 to allow them to complete the whole of their GCSE course in a single school.

Likewise, arrangements for pupils entering Year 12 in September 2009 would have to ensure continuity for their KS5 education, most probably at a neighbouring school.

The 114 pupils in the current Year 7 will, in 2010, have one year of their key stage 3 education to complete. Work will need to take place to ensure that this cohort of pupils has the opportunity to complete this key stage without undue disruption.

The possible management of the year groups under of this proposal are shown below. The numbers in the boxes below the year group are the numbers on roll in that year.

	Sept 2008		Sept 2009	
Sept 09 intake				
Sept 08 intake	Y7 114		Y8 114	Move to new school – Sept 2010
Sept 07 intake	Y8 128		Y9 128	Move to new school – Sept 2010

Sept 06 intake	Y9 151	Move to new school – Sept 2009 to complete KS4 in single school		
Sept 05 intake	Y10 182		Y11 182	Move to new school – Sept 2010
Sept 04 intake	Y11 223	Move to new school – Sept 2009 to complete KS5 in single school		
Sept 03 intake	Y12 76		Y13 76	Leave school – July 2010
Sept 02 intake	Y13 30	Leave school – July 2009		

The table on advantages and disadvantages are shown below

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would provide a realistic timeline • Enable pupils to access places at higher performing schools • Enough places available to accommodate pupils at other schools in Walsall to enable large numbers of pupils to transfer as a group • Minimises disruption for Year 10 pupils • Receiving schools have more time to plan for additional pupils in 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large number of pupils to disperse • Arrangements will have to be made to move the current Year 9s and Year 11s to new schools very quickly • Some additional accommodation maybe needed at receiving schools • Other schools have a large influx of additional pupils – lead-in-time for this would be less than 6 months for September 2009 moves • Sneyd's budget will be problematic for the 2009/10 financial year • Current Year 7 pupils would do their Key Stage 3 education at 2 schools.

3.3.2 Proposal B. The second proposal is that Sneyd closes on 31 August 2011 and that no Year 7 (11+ aged pupils) be admitted to the school in September 2009 and September 2010.

Pupils completing their Key Stage 3 in July 2010 will move from Sneyd to their new school in July 2010 to allow them to complete their Key Stage 4 in a single school.

Support would be provided to the current Year 10 pupils wanting to progress to Key Stage 5 to identify suitable provision.

The possible management of the year groups under this proposal are shown below. The numbers in the boxes below the year group give the numbers on roll in that year.

	School Year 08/09		School Year 09/10		School Year 10/11	
Sept 10 intake					No intake	
Sept 09 intake			No intake			
Sept 08 intake	Y7 115		Y8 115		Y9 115	Move to new school Sept 11
Sept 07 intake	Y8 122		Y9 122	Move to new school Sept 10		
Sept 06 intake	Y9 153		Y10 153		Y11 153	Move to new school Sept 11 or leave school
Sept 05 intake	Y10 183		Y11 183	Leave school July 10 or move to new school		
Sept 04 intake	Y11 225		Y12 70 (estimated)		Y13 30 (estimated)	Leave school July 11
Sept 03 intake	Y12 76		Y13 40 (estimated)	Leave school July 10		
Sept 02 intake	Y13 30	Leave school July 09				

The table on advantages and disadvantages of this option are shown below

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would provide a longer lead in time for pupil movement • Minimise disruption for pupils to complete key stages in single school • Current Year 7 would complete KS3 at the school • Receiving schools would have more time to plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sneyd's budget would be problematic. • In the academic year 2010/11 very few pupils would be in school

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

The closure of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College would increase the effective use of the Dedicated Schools Grant to provide cost effective high quality education for the children of the area. During the closure process because of falling numbers, the school's budget could be problematic.

During the closure process, because of falling rolls and number intakes the school's budget could be problematic.

4.2 Legal:

The closure of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College would follow statutory procedures. These specify that there must be a period of consultation before the proposing authority decides whether it wishes to proceed with the proposal.

The table below shows the dates for initial consultation and the second period of consultation that leads to a final decision.

Date	Details
3 November 2008	Consultation starts – 5 weeks
5 December 2008	Consultation ends
17 December 2008	Cabinet considers whether to proceed with the proposal
9 January 2009	Statutory notice published – 6 week representation
19 February 2009	End of statutory representation period
18 March 2009	Consideration of the proposal by Cabinet and notification of decision to parents, staff and governors at the school

This timetable does not reflect delays that could be caused by calling of the reports

Consultation would include the publication of a consultation document which would provide information regarding the proposed closure of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College. This document would be issued to stakeholders and would be made available to the public. Meetings would be held with stakeholders including parents, staff and governors and there would also be a consultation with pupils on roll at the school.

The admission arrangements for the 2009/10 school year for community and controlled schools in Walsall were determined by Cabinet on 19 March 2008.

Parents of Year 6 pupils who have been asked to express preferences for Year 7 places for their children will be informed that it is possible that there will be no Year 7 intake into Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College in September 2009 should Cabinet decide to approve consultation on the proposal to close. Parents who have expressed a preference for a Year 7 place at the school in September 2009 will be advised of alternative options.

4.3 Staffing:

The staff employed at Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College are employees of Walsall Council. If the decision is made to close the school, support will be provided to staff to find alternative employment in a Walsall School. In the event that these efforts are unsuccessful and staff remained without alternative employment when the school closed, they would be entitled to redundancy payment and in some cases access to their pensions.

5. Citizen impact:

The proposal to close Sneyd will provide opportunities for current and future pupils of the area to access places at educationally and financially viable schools.

6. Community safety:

There are no community safety issues arising from this report.

7. Environmental impact

There are no environmental issues arising from this report.

8. Performance and risk management issues:

8.1 Risk: The option to close Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College will protect the Council from the danger of Sneyd becoming financially unviable.

8.2 Performance management: The option to close Sneyd Community will remove the danger of the school's academic results declining further.

9. Equality implications:

Existing and potential future pupils at the school will be supported to find alternative school places as needed.

Pupils moving to higher performing schools will receive enhanced opportunities to maximise their educational potential.

10. Consultation:

Local elected members, Council officers, the school and neighbouring schools have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

Background papers

- Cabinet Report (16 January 2008)
- Cabinet Report (16 April 2008)
- Cabinet Report (16 July 2008)

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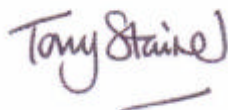
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David Brown
Executive Director
13 October 2008



Councillor Zahid Ali
Portfolio holder
13 October 2008



Tony Stainer
Managing Director
13 October 2008

APPENDIX 1

Availability of Places at Secondary Schools in Walsall (Oct 2008)

	Adm no	Pupil numbers Oct 2008					Available places Oct 2008					
		Y7**	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Aldridge	259	259	261	251	255	260	0	0	8	4	0	12
Alumwell	195	186	150	164	149	146	9	45	31	46	49	180
Barr Beacon	245	249	234	242	240	244	0	11	3	5	1	20
Blue Coat CE	180	149	130	158	148	176	31	50	22	32	4	139
Brownhills	182*	82	116	133	151	165	100	66	49	31	17	263
Darlaston	245	140	163	181	174	186	105	82	64	71	59	381
Frank F Harrison	180	180	169	163	158	149	0	11	17	22	31	81
Joseph Leckie	240	156	152	143	183	200	84	88	97	57	40	366
Pool Hayes	213	215	210	211	209	212	0	3	2	4	1	10
Queen Mary's G	96	96	96	96	96	96	0	0	0	0	0	0
Queen Mary's H	96	97	96	95	96	94	0	0	1	0	2	3
Shelfield***	242	256	241	186	212	229	0	1	56	30	13	100
Shire Oak	238	250	246	234	229	232	0	0	4	9	6	19
St Francis of Assisi	180	183	183	177	181	177	0	0	3	0	3	6
St Thomas More	210	251	237	231	239	239	0	0	0	0	0	0
Streetly	243	243	233	209	236	246	0	10	34	7	0	51
Willenhall	270	274	257	272	267	268	0	13	0	3	2	18
Total							329	380	391	321	228	1,649
Sneyd Pupils	250	114	128	151	182	223	114	128	151	182	223	

* 168 from Sept 2009

**Offers as at 23 July for September 2008 admission; includes appeals

*** The admission number for the proposed Shelfield Academy is 240 and it is anticipated that this would apply to all year groups.