

## **Cabinet – 22 October 2008**

### **Darlaston Community Science College: outcome of consultation on proposed Academy**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Zahid Ali, Children's Services

**Service:** Walsall Children's Services – Serco

**Wards:** All Walsall wards but particularly Bentley and Darlaston North and Darlaston South

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Summary of report**

This report provides details of the outcome of consultation on the proposal to close Darlaston Community Science College from 31 August 2009 subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State to approve the opening of the school as an Academy from 1 September 2009. (For clarity this means that the closure would be followed immediately by the opening of the Academy with no disruption to the education of the students at the school. Should the Academy not be established, Darlaston Community Science College would continue as a community school.)

#### **2. Recommendations**

That Cabinet approve the publication of a statutory proposal to close Darlaston Community Science College from 31 August 2009 and enter into a period of formal consultation for six weeks. Closure would be subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State to approve the opening of the school as an Academy from 1 September 2009.

#### **3. Background information**

- 3.1 On 16 July 2008, Cabinet approved consultation on the proposal to close Darlaston Community Science College from 31 August 2009 subject to the agreement of the Secretary of State to approve the opening of the school as an Academy from 1 September 2009.
- 3.2 This decision was subsequently called-in and was considered by the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel on 1 September 2008. After full consideration of the issues, Scrutiny made suggestions about the consultation. 'We approve the decision of the Cabinet to enter into consultation and request Cabinet that consultation is with all relevant groups and as wide as possible.'

## **4. Resource considerations**

### **4.1 Financial:**

#### Revenue

- 4.1.1 Education revenue funds (with the exception of money for statementing) and pupil-related grants for Walsall will be reduced if Darlaston Community Science College becomes an Academy; the new Academy would receive these sums directly. The money removed from Council allocations and grants will be spread across a number of services provided by the Council and Serco. In addition to the traditionally traded services, the Council and Serco could offer to sell more services to the new Academy to reduce the impact of the lost revenue and grant allocation. The existing Walsall Academy does not buy any services from the Council or Serco. Local Authority supported 'community' academies will, however, have Local Authority representation on their governing bodies and this may result in them purchasing services from the Council and/or Serco.
- 4.1.2 Pupil-related grants and parts of grants would be reduced to reflect the change in pre-16 pupil numbers if Darlaston Community Science College is established as an academy.
- 4.1.3 Walsall's total Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) is £172 million. This sum is split into money directed to schools through the Individual Schools Budget (ISB) (£157 million) and a centrally retained sum of £15 million. The centrally retained sum is used by the Council and Serco to provide services to schools.
- 4.1.4 In addition, a sum would be removed from the centrally retained part of the DSG. For the period January to March 2009 this would be approximately £20k and in a full year this would increase to approximately £81k. These figures have been calculated using a central spend calculator provided by the DCSF. This will potentially require a change in current contract commitments.

#### Capital

- 4.1.5 The DCSF will make a fixed sum available for the new Academy and the Council will be required to either manage the capital project within that fixed sum or meet the additional costs from its own resources. As this report is seeking approval for a consultation on the proposed future of Darlaston Community Science College there are no direct financial implications, the consultation costs are included within existing resources. However, should cabinet decide post consultation that a move towards an Academy is appropriate the council will need to provide funding. Currently Partnership for Schools pledges £0.4m for project support, however it is highly unlikely that this will be sufficient to cover the costs. There is currently no provision in the 2008/09 and 2009/10 capital budgets. Cabinet would need to prioritise this in light of other competing priorities.
- 4.1.6 Partnerships for Schools has indicated that it is proposed to take the capital project forward through the national framework. There will be an expectation that the Council will make good any health and safety issues before the Academy opens.
- 4.1.7 After achieving Academy status, Darlaston Community Science College would receive future capital monies directly from the DCSF.

#### Site and Property

- 4.1.8 The DCSF has advised that the following arrangements would need to be put in place:
- upon opening, the existing buildings and site would be leased to the Academy, but remain in the ownership of the Council;
  - when work on the building commences, the site would become the Council's building site and an occupation licence would be put in place; this would last until the end of a 1-year snagging period; and
  - at the end of the snagging period, there would be a lease for 125 years.
- 4.1.9 Partnerships for Schools, the DCSF and the sponsor expect the Local Authority to ensure that the new Academy has access to sufficient and suitable sport facilities.
- 4.1.10 To enable the provision of suitable and sufficient playing fields the Council will need to consider the use of part of the adjacent park for this activity. The park is in the ownership of the Council.

#### **4.2 Legal:**

- 4.2.1 The closure of Darlaston Community Science College in order to enable the school to become an Academy is subject to statutory procedures. Consultation on the proposal has now taken place and it is now for the Cabinet to decide whether it wishes to proceed with the proposal. Details of the consultation process are provided in section 10 of this report. If Cabinet decides to proceed, it is intended to publish a statutory proposal on 7 November 2008, following which there would be a representation period of six weeks during which objections could be made. A further report would be brought to Cabinet so that the final decision could be made in the light of any responses received during the representation period and the proposal be 'determined'. It is expected that the final decision would be taken in early January 2009.
- 4.2.2 The admission arrangements for the 2009/10 school year for community and controlled schools in Walsall were determined by Cabinet on 19 March 2008. The 'Information for Parents' handbook and the 'Walsall Preference Form' for secondary admissions for September 2009 will be issued to parents on 11 July 2008; the closing date for receipt of applications is 10 October 2008. These admission arrangements will apply to Darlaston Community Science College or a successor Academy as the final decision regarding the establishment of the proposed Darlaston Community Science College Academy will not have been taken until after these dates.
- 4.2.5 The sponsor has stated that the admission arrangements for the proposed Academy would be the same as the current arrangements for Darlaston Community Science College.
- 4.2.6 The sponsor has confirmed that all students who have a place at Darlaston Community Science College when the proposed Academy opens would automatically be enrolled at the Academy.

4.2.7 There is currently a potential Judicial Review relating to an academy in London due in mid-November. We will ensure any information relating to this which has implications for this recommendation is shared.

#### **4.3 Staffing:**

4.3.1 The staff employed at Darlaston Community Science College are employees of Walsall Council. In an Academy the staff are employed by the governors (trustees). In circumstances where a school closes and re-opens as an Academy, staff employed are covered by the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) Regulations.

4.3.2 It is understood that the DCSF might make available some funding towards the cost of potential compromise agreements.

#### **5. Citizen impact:**

5.1 The recommendation in this report provides the potential to more rapidly improve secondary education provision in the Darlaston area and there is also the potential for greater levels of community engagement.

5.2 The sponsor for the proposed Academy is the Grace Foundation. In the Expression of Interest, Grace Foundation states that it aims for the proposed Academy are:

- to transform the educational offer for the students and community in Darlaston;
- to enhance and develop the quality and focus of leadership at all levels;
- to raise attainment throughout the Academy and eradicate poor performance at all Key Stages, especially targeting areas of weakness both generally and for individual students;
- to improve the quality of teaching and learning; and
- to raise aspirations and significantly increase participation rates at ages 16 and beyond.

The Expression of Interest also states that community cohesion will be built and strengthened through engagement with parents and by the provision of an Academy built to serve the needs of the local community.

#### **6. Community safety:**

There are no direct implications for community safety.

#### **7. Environmental impact:**

If Darlaston Community Science College is closed and a successor Academy opened, it is envisaged the current building would be demolished and replacement accommodation be provided. Any new building would be built to the latest building and environmental standards and would incorporate the use of sustainable resources wherever possible; designs would incorporate developments to reduce the impact on the environment.

## **8. Performance and risk management issues**

### **8.1 Risk:**

- 8.1.1 There is a loss of direct control by the Council of property in schools that become Academies. This would apply for the life of the proposed Academy and there would be conditions in the agreement to ensure that the property would return to the Council if the Academy closes and can ensure that the property can only be used for specified purposes.
- 8.1.2 The loss of direct control would be mitigated by the transfer of liabilities and by the influence of Local Authority representatives on the board of governors.

### **8.2 Performance management:**

- 8.2.1 Evidence from the DCSF and the Academies and Specialist Schools Trust suggests that there is likely to be a rapid and significant improvement in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 results within three years.

## **9. Equality implications**

### Admissions

- 9.1 The sponsor has confirmed that the proposed Academy would not be selective in any way and that it would apply the Walsall Council standard Admissions Policy. The sponsor has also confirmed that the proposed Academy would act in accordance with all relevant provisions of the Schools Admissions Code and the School Admission Appeals Code published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families ("the Codes") as they apply at any given time to maintained schools. The Academies admissions arrangements and any changes would be subject to formal consultation in line with the requirements of the Codes and relevant admissions legislation, which at the date of this document is section 89 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 as amended, and Regulations under that section. It has also been confirmed that the proposed Academy would have regard to and have an independent appeal panel which acts in accordance with the Secretary of State's guidance on exclusions.
- 9.2 The sponsor has confirmed that all students who have a place at Darlaston Community Science College when the proposed Academy opens would automatically be enrolled at the proposed Academy.
- 9.3 The sponsor has confirmed that the proposed admission arrangements for the proposed Academy would be the same as the current arrangements for Darlaston Community Science College.
- 9.4 Discussions between Serco, Walsall Local Authority, and Grace Academy have led to a clear agreement that the proposed Academy would serve the same community as Darlaston Community Science College.
- 9.5 The sponsor has confirmed in the Expression of Interest that the proposed Academy would meet the requirements of the SEN Code of Practice and that the principles of inclusion will underpin all developments in curriculum, teaching and learning within the new Academy.

## **10. Consultation**

- 10.1 Consultation on the proposal to close Darlaston Community Science College in order to enable it to reopen as an Academy, subject to the signing of a funding agreement by the Secretary of State commenced on 5 September and ended on 10 October 2008.
- 10.2 A consultation document which included information regarding the proposed closure of Darlaston Community Science College and further information from the sponsor which gave information about the proposed Academy was issued to parents, staff, governors and members of the student council. It was also sent to all Walsall schools, other stakeholders and statutory consultees and was made available to the public through local libraries. It was also posted on the Walsall Children's Services website.
- 10.3 Consultation meetings, at which representatives from Serco, Walsall Children's Services and the Grace Foundation were present, were held as detailed in the table below.

<b>School</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Students</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Governors</b>	<b>Parents and the wider community</b>
Darlaston Community Science College	Thursday 25 September 2008	1.35 – 2.40	3.00 – 4.30	6.00 – 7.00	7.00 – 8.30
Salisbury Primary School	Monday 6 October 2008				7.15 – 8.40

- 10.4 Attendance at the various meetings comprised 60 students, 82 parents and those from the wider community at the meeting on 25 September, 79 parents and those from the wider community at the meeting on 6 October, 65 staff, and 12 governors.
- 10.5 The meetings took the form of a presentation by Walsall Children's Services, Serco and an outline of the work of Grace Foundation and details of the proposed Academy were given by the sponsor; this was followed by a question and answer session. Matters raised by attendees included:
- the consultation process
  - staff training
  - timescales
  - TUPE
  - arrangements for students with special educational needs
  - community use of facilities
  - pension arrangements
  - terms and conditions for staff
  - admission policy
  - RE curriculum
  - accountability of the Academy
  - current Grace Academies
  - Serco's role

- Governance arrangements
- the curriculum in the proposed Academy.

Notes taken at these meetings are **appended** to this report.

- 10.6 Approximately 1,600 copies of the consultation document, which included a response form, were issued. 62 completed consultation response forms have been received.
- 10.7 Of these, 41 supported the proposal to open an Academy in Darlaston, 17 were against the proposal, and 4 responded as “don't know”.
- 10.8. Analysis related to the category of respondents is as follows:

<u>Category of respondent</u>	<u>Support for the Academy</u>	<u>Against the Academy</u>	<u>Don't know</u>	<u>Total</u>
Parent of a child at Darlaston Community Science College	21	4	3	28
Parent of a child at Darlaston Community Science College and a local primary school	8	1	0	9
Parent of a child at a local primary school	0	3	1	4
Parent and governor	0	2	0	2
Governor	1	1	0	2
Pupil	2	0	0	2
Staff	4	0	0	4
Others	5	6	0	11
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>62</b>

- 10.9 Written responses were also received from:

- Gemma Sharratt who states that she speaks on behalf of the Darlaston's student council and notes “Following the meeting with the student council and the Grace foundation I strongly agree that the academy is the right way for Darlaston” and “Students of Darlaston agree that the grace academy is possibly the best way of bringing the standards up, and surely that is what really matters.”
- Bob Grainger of the NUT who notes “by their nature they will become divisive and have more interest in cooperating with their two other academies in Coventry and Solihull rather than neighbouring secondary schools.”. I have undertaken a ballot of teaching staff at an open meeting. Twenty four staff returned ballot papers. Three were in favour of becoming an academy. Eighteen were against. Three were don't knows. I am informed that a further seven ballot papers were completed with five against and a further two don't know”.
- Mr M. Sacha from the Muslim Welfare Society (Darlaston and Wednesbury) who states in a letter dated 6 October addressed to Mr. Sheehan Chief Executive of Walsall MBC “I have been asked to write to you on behalf of the mosques and my local community, in order to express a few of our concerns regarding the manner in which this consultation is being conducted. The actual face to face consultation was to be held on 25 September 2008. The whole of the parent and

community consultation being a total of one and a half hours long. Only after our insistence was a second public consultation offered. This second consultation being held at Salisbury Primary School on 6 October.” He then lists his detailed concerns.

- A petition containing approximately 191 signatures against the proposal together with a letter from the Muslim Welfare Society was delivered to the Council on 10 October by the Chair of Governors of Darlaston Community.
- Rev Richard Inglesby, the Vicar of Moxley, Darlaston and Chair of Governors at Moorcroft Wood Primary School. He states: “I share the concerns about 1. The lack of local accountability, and the principles under which Academies operate. 2. The patchy record of Academies i.e. those have been running longer than Grace Foundation have been managing them. 3. The fact that their success – if it is – may be built on the back of other local schools which have to absorb the more difficult students...despite these reservations, I am sympathetic to any plan to give our local youngsters a better education and change in life. If it has to be by an Academy, then so be it”.

There was also received a petition to Walsall Council – Walsall Children’s Services and Serco which has no signatures on it.

10.10 The proposed sponsor also held meetings with the primary school headteachers. At those meetings, the headteachers noted the proposed sponsor’s integrity and honesty. They also noted that the proposed sponsors: had a good understanding of the local issues in Darlaston: will buy into the local admission structures; will have an RE syllabus in line with the rest of Darlaston’s schools; and will link with primary school on teaching and learning matters. Overall, the headteachers supported the opportunities offered by Grace Foundation.

## **Background papers**

Cabinet Report 16 July 2008: Decision regarding consultation.

Minutes of meeting from Children and Young People’s Scrutiny and Performance Panel – 1 September 2009.

Notes taken at the consultation meetings (**Appendix 1**)

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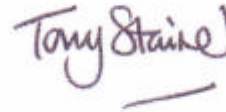


Signed:



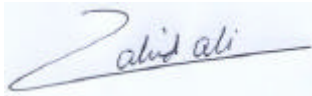
Executive Director: David Brown  
Date: 16 October 2008

Signed:



Managing Director, Walsall Children's  
Services: Tony Stainer  
Date: 16 October 2008

Signed:



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Zahid Ali  
Date: 16 October 2008

# Consultation Meeting Notes

<b>Location:</b>	Darlaston Community Science College
<b>Meeting with:</b>	Student Council
<b>Date:</b>	25 September 2008
<b>Time:</b>	1.35 pm

## PRESENT:

<b>Walsall Children's Services - Serco</b>	<b>Darlaston Community Science College</b>	<b>Others</b>
Avril Walton – AW	Deputy Head Teacher	Bob Edmiston – Grace Academies – BE
Keith Warburton - KW	60 Students	Tracie Edmiston – Grace Academies – TE
Kate Mann – KM	Teacher responsible for student council	David Wooton – Executive Head Teacher Grace Academies – DW
Tom Williams – TW		Steve Chase – Grace Academies - SC
		Tony Gee – Vice Principal Grace Academy Solihull - TG
		Rachael Edwards – Grace Academy – RE
		4 Students from Grace Academy Solihull - ST

KW opened the meeting and outlined the process of consultation. DW from Grace Academy gave a presentation on existing academies and BE outlined the proposal for Grace Academy. The students from Grace Academy Solihull were then asked questions by the Student Council, without the sponsors present before the sponsors returned to answer specific questions. Questions were posed by the school council unless stated otherwise.

## Questions, Comments and Responses

### ➤ How long is the school day?

ST                      We start at 8.30 and end at 3.20 but we're encouraged to stay for an hour once a week as well.

### ➤ How many lessons are there per day?

ST                      6

### ➤ What are extended hours for? Is it optional?

ST                      The extended hours are for homework and clubs. It is optional to attend.

### ➤ How long is break and dinner?

ST Break is 15-20mins and lunch is 30mins

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➤ **How long is each lesson?**

ST 55mins with a 5 min change over time.

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➤ **Can you explain the lockers system?**

ST Everyone has a free locker to put your books in.

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➤ **Have your grades benefited from the new school?**

ST Yes  
TG How do you know?  
ST I was predicted As and Bs and I have achieved As

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➤ **What options do you have for GCSE?**

ST BTECs, Law at GCSE and A level, Spanish, Child Development, Dance. You get 4 options and that must include business or ICT.

➤ **What options do you have in 6<sup>th</sup> form?**

ST Not Sure  
TG There are a large range of AS and A level subjects tailored for what you want to do, if there were enough children who wanted to study a subject then we would arrange a teacher for the course.

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➤ **Is the uniform policy strict?**

ST There are rules such as no trainers, piercings must be studs and your top button must be done up.

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➤ **What sport is on offer?**

ST Everything you want to do and we compete with other schools.  
TG Fitness rooms can be used and the gym is included in the GCSE syllabus.

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➤ **Is there a swimming pool?**

ST No

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➤ **Do you enjoy your new school? Is it stricter?**

ST Yes and you get used to the rules and learn that your attitude matters.

➤ **Do you always have to wear your jacket?**

ST Yes  
TG You have to wear it when moving around the school but you are allowed to take it off in class.

➤ **Do you have detentions?**

ST Yes

➤ **Do you have a studio?**

ST Yes we have a radio station, music practice rooms and media suite.

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➤ **What are the after school activities like?**

ST Lots of sports, the gym, IT, dance and language clubs.

➤ **What sports facilities do you have?**

ST 2 astro turf pitches, a gym, 2 sports halls, and basketball courts.  
TG We have full size floodlit astro turf pitches for use by the community and it is as busy at night as during the day. We also have a media suite and radio station that can now broadcast on licence into the community. Unfortunately this didn't open on the 1<sup>st</sup> day, it took time.

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➤ **Do you have any fights?**

ST Some but they get sorted out pretty quickly.  
TG We do have some fights with 1500 children it's expected, but every time there is a fight we look at how to resolve it. We used to have lots of buildings but now we only have one and there are less places for fights to happen.

➤ **Do you have graffiti or damage?**

ST Not really although some toilet doors did get kicked in then replaced.

➤ **What is the reward system? Do you get to go on trips?**

ST We have a credit system and credits are deducted for bad behaviour. We have been on trips to China, Barcelona and Zambia to set up a Christian radio station.

➤ **Do you have sports teams?**

ST Yes rugby, football, hockey and netball

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➤ **What are the changing rooms like?**

ST 2 lots of changing rooms for boys and girls with showers and lockers.

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➤ **Are there isolation rooms for when you misbehave?**

ST Yes when you get at C4

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➤ **What is the credit punishment system?**

ST C1 is a warning and lose 1 credit, C2 lose 2 credits and a 15 min detention, C3 sent out of class and lose all credits and C4 sent to isolation.  
The credits are used for competitions between colleges and for rewards.

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➤ **How long did it take to get everything built?**

ST About a year  
TG The new school was built on the school field and it took about 2 years in total.

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➤ **Are you allowed phones or MP3 players at school?**

ST You aren't allowed them around school and you'd have to keep them in your locker until the end of the day.

➤ **Are lockers ever broken into?**

ST No

➤ **What is the PE kit?**

ST White t-shirt and black shorts.

➤ **Is the school religious?**

ST There is a religious ethos but it isn't forced on you and you don't have to be a Christian.

BE and DW returned to take questions from the school council.

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➤ **What plan do you have for the school in the short term?**

BE We would have to use the existing buildings in the short term and upgrade before the new building was in place. There are no plans at the moment and it depends on contractors, we would have to keep people safe from the building work possibly using temporary buildings.

DW An academy isn't just a new building though it's also a new curriculum and new way of working.

BE In Solihull we were in the new building on the 1<sup>st</sup> day but at the Coventry academy we had to use the same building. But it is not just the building, previously the school would have 100 applications for places per year and this year they had 180 applications and 15 transfers. There's also a big buzz amongst the children and staff with a new ethos and new uniform. There is a new commitment from parents, staff and students to push aspirations of children and give the children a chance to achieve great things.

➤ **Will we have new teachers? Will our old teachers be re assessed?**

DW Yes and some will want to transfer. In other academies it has been ½ and ½.

➤	<b>Is that our uniform?</b>	
	DW	All Grace Academies have the same uniform that is simple and affordable for your parents with business style jackets rather than blazers.
➤	<b>Would it have Darlaston on it?</b>	
	DW	No just the Grace Academy uniform.
➤	<b>Are the ties clipped on?</b>	
	DW	No they're real ties.
➤	<b>Do you have homework over weekends?</b>	
	ST	Not enough to stop you from socialising although it may take you 1 night if you saved it all up.
➤	<b>Are girls allowed to wear make up?</b>	
	ST	No
➤	<b>Do you have to have the same bags and coats?</b>	
	DW	No you don't have to use the same bags but we use lockers during the day.
	BE	You also don't carry cash it is all on a card for your lunch and vending machines, and if you get free school meals it goes straight on.
	DW	It is also a swipe card to access the building.
➤	<b>Do you have form groups?</b>	
	DW	We have 5 colleges and tutor groups within these made up of pupils from all ages.
➤	<b>Are you allowed to dye your hair?</b>	
	DW	Yes
➤	<b>Are you allowed off site for lunch?</b>	
	DW	No everyone stays on site and we push healthy eating. The menu at school is selected by the student council.
➤	<b>Teacher – the student council seems excited and there have been suggestions of new buildings or new rooms before from Walsall Children's Services and the children have been let down. Have we any assurances that you will deliver this?</b>	
	BE	We have been to see the DCSF about the state of the building and would apply for additional funds due to the poor condition despite improvements over the last 12 months. The DCSF then give the Grace Academy a budget for the transition period to help improvements before using a separate budget for the new building.

➤ **What is the uniform for the 6<sup>th</sup> form?**

DW                      Smart business dress

➤ **Would Y11 see any change in the 6<sup>th</sup> form?**

DW                      Yes

➤ **Is the school definitely going to become an academy?**

DW                      No today is a day for the sponsors and Walsall Children's Services to ask consultees if you want an academy to replace Darlaston CSC. So it is very important that your parents attend the meeting tonight and fill in a consultation response form or attend the meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> October at Salisbury Primary School.

The Deputy Head thanked the students from both schools for attending before KW closed the meeting.

# Consultation Meeting Notes

<b>Location:</b>	Darlaston Community Science College
<b>Meeting with:</b>	Staff
<b>Date:</b>	25 September 2008
<b>Time:</b>	3 pm

## PRESENT:

<b>Walsall Children's Services - Serco</b>	<b>Darlaston Community Science College</b>	<b>Others</b>
Avril Walton – AW	65 Staff of Darlaston Community Science College	Bob Edmiston – Grace Academies – BE
Keith Warburton - KW	Union representatives	Tracie Edmiston – Grace Academies – TE
Kate Mann – KM		David Wooton – Executive Head Teacher Grace Academies – DW
Sophia Modiat - SM		Steve Chase – Grace Academies - SC
Tom Williams – TW		Rachael Edwards – Grace Academy – RE

KW opened the meeting and outlined the process of consultation; AW then outlined the closure process and announced the further meeting at Salisbury Primary School on 6<sup>th</sup> October. BE introduced the Grace Academy Proposal and DW gave a presentation on the Grace Academy. Questions were posed by the staff unless stated otherwise.

## Questions, Comments and Responses

- **We're in special measures at the moment what happens if we close on the 31<sup>st</sup> August and re open on the 1 September?**

AW                      The new school would not be in special measures.

- **Why? How would anything be any different?**

DW                      The new school would be a new legal entity with new practices and also some staff may not stay.

BE                      We would also be appointing a new head and during the transitional period we would work with the new head to develop a new curriculum for the new school. DW was appointed 5 terms before the Solihull Academy opened, so once there is a funding agreement we can start recruiting.

- **If a decision isn't made until January then that is not 5 terms.**

BE                      Yes but the Solihull Academy was our 1<sup>st</sup> one and we now have the staff on board that can help with the process and there will be training laid on for existing staff.

- **Still if the decision isn't made until January and staff start on the 1<sup>st</sup> September when will training start?**



DW                      We will look to appoint staff as soon as we can and we will work with the school and the council to get that done. The speed of the developments is an issue but we would start training ASAP.

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➤ **Would we have some level of input?**

DW                      Yes and there would be some similarities but with shared practices of other Grace Academies

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➤ **This is a very short timescale**

BE                      There are some cross academy roles, and therefore 2 sites for 1 teacher to work at. We agree it would be difficult due to the timescale but we would try to get it done before September and we do have more experience on this one compared to our previous academies.

➤ **Can we have clarification on the TUPE process due to the possibility of appointing a new head?**

AW                      TUPE transfer applies to all staff but there is a legal requirement that the Head and Deputy Head Teacher have to be nationally advertised.

BE                      At the other Academies not all staff transferred as some chose not to and some left due to previous plans.

➤ **Will this operate on a like for like basis?**

DW                      A process will be agreed with the unions on transplanting staff to the new academy, as the new academy would have a new structure and therefore new opportunities.

BE                      Salaries will be protected but the existing structure may be difficult to carry over.

➤ **How long does salary protection last for?**

DW                      3 years which is a statutory requirement but it hasn't been an issue in the other academies due to new practices of development to best use experience.

➤ **What about staff with poor attendance or long term sick leave?**

DW                      TUPE still applies

➤ **In terms of quality of staff, would all staff be transferred?**

DW                      We will be looking at quality but competency applies as in any other school.

➤ **Learning Mentor - Will the emotional support for SEN pupils continue?**

DW                      We like to concentrate on the whole person and to have happy, fulfilled, engaged and challenged pupils.

BE                      We have a pastoral manager per year group and some private youth workers to assist staff. In Solihull the work of the academy has helped reduce police incidents with school children by 30%

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➤ **Learning Mentor - Would we be able to develop our work?**

DW We have all sorts of mentors and HLTAs to allow staff development.

➤ **Learning Mentor - Will there be an increase in wages for LSAs?**

DW Funding is always tight and we aim to pay on the national pay structure

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➤ **I only started 11 months ago and used to work for local government, what if I transfer across but am unhappy and go back to the LA?**

SM Your continuity of service should be protected.

AW We will take legal advice and get back to the Head.

➤ **Facilities Manager - Most Schools allow the community to use their facilities, how will that work with staffing to allow access?**

DW We may have to work out a roster

➤ **Facilities Manager - Would there be a change of hours for shift work?**

DW I don't know how it is managed at the other academies I would have to find out.

BE There must be some kind of shift work to allow weekend access. It would probable be a 2 stage process with new arrangements required for the new building as the current building may not be suitable for use by the community.

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➤ **We pay into LGPS would it be the same?**

DW Pensions would be the same as we would act as an admitted body into the scheme.

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➤ **What happened to the previous head of business studies at the other Academies?**

DW At the other schools there was no head of faculty and we had to appoint a new one.

➤ **I consider the video to be propaganda and would want to see a structure of the curriculum and pastoral structure of the existing academies?**

DW We take issue with the suggestion that the video is propaganda. We will allow visits to the other academies and provide information an their organisation.

➤ **What would the working hours be?**

DW There would be the same working conditions of 12-65hrs, although at the existing academies we tend to start earlier with 6 hr teaching days and we have an early finish on Fridays.

➤ **NUT – We would like to thank you for entering into this consultation process although at the last scrutiny meeting councillors were told that this academy was the only option as the DCSF would step in if an academy wasn't considered. We also consider the academy ethos to be the same as any other community school. Clearly the Grace Academy is good at recruiting but what about the children who do not get a place as the catchment area**

**shrinks? Grace Academy also spent £32 million on the Solihull building would it be the same amount of investment here?**

- BE The local authority are responsible for our admissions so if the catchment area decreases it is only due to an increase in demand, not any changes to the admissions policy. The budget for the buildings is set pro rata by the size of the school. The budget at Solihull was increased for the abnormalities in the building as it is under the flight route of the local airport, and in this case there may be other abnormalities and an offset for inflation.
- DW There are some good community schools in Walsall but academies have more flexibility and can initiate changes quicker.

➤ **GMB – Have you got figures for your staff turnover rates? Will the facilities staff still remain in house?**

- DW The staff turnover at Solihull was low in the 1<sup>st</sup> year and some staff moved on in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year but we don't have exact figures. We have a contractor to run facilities in Solihull and Coventry, so there could be a later TUPE transfer for facilities staff.

➤ **Facilities Manager - Why were the facilities contractors not mentioned earlier and staff not told facilities staff may be working for a contractor?**

- BE There wasn't the immediate change but with the new site we had new requirements and required a new facilities contract. You would then have the same TUPE rights into the new job.

**Facilities Manager - If the new building takes 3 years to build and then I had to be transferred onto a new contract then I may as well look for a new job now.**

➤ **NASUWT – We have reservations about academies but we are happy to hear that you are allowing TUPE but what about the new governance arrangements for the academy? Will the staff be on the same blue book conditions?**

- DW We don't want to have a 2 tier system within the staff, with some people on different terms of service to others. We also want a local governing body although it may have a different structure including: sponsor governors, parent governors, local business governors and co opted governors. Staff would be involved in the governing body.

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➤ **NASUWT – In Walsall we have both national and local arrangements**

- SC If these conditions were contractual then this would transfer under TUPE but if it were a custom then we would negotiate with the unions.

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➤ **NASUWT – At your Coventry Academy part of the discussion was to have unified conditions across all academies?**

- DW If it were possible and practicable we think this would work well.

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➤ **We are wondering that if Darlaston CSC were operating under the same flexibility what we could achieve? We are also worried about being under special measures and there is a lot of uncertainty in the school. We are worried about the rushed timescale and we don't want to rush something that may impact on staff morale. With this short timescale by the time a decision is made it may be too late to find another job.**

DW We want to engage with colleagues and unions as soon as possible.  
BE we came to the school a year ago to express our interest at becoming an academy so this isn't our timescale. We would also ask staff to give it a try as you have nothing to lose.

- **You're in the driving seat and if the timescale were made a bit longer then it would allow people time to move if they wish to. At the moment we only have 2 terms before we become an academy.**

BE We are not totally in the driving seat as we are operating on a government timescale. We would hate to lose out on funding due to a change in politics or economic downturn. We know that this isn't a perfect situation with the building and timescale but we want to make sure that we are one of the few academies granted per year.

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- **This will have a negative impact on morale of the staff and the results at the end of the year.**

DW We need to start working with people and engage with the staff if the process goes ahead

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- **Have any other sponsors come forward?**

AW There was another sponsor who came forward but the school felt it wasn't the right sponsor and they withdrew due to the negative response.

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- **With our local government we can vote them out but what happens if we are not happy with the sponsors?**

BE If we were failing to do our jobs then the government would step in and make changes, but up until now we have not been failing. We have already said that we want to sponsor the academy and have proven we have the capability to do so.

- **What will happen to students who don't get in?**

BE In our other academies our success has lead to local schools raising their standards and we would not be willing to be less successful in order to be less popular.

DW In Solihull unfortunately the local authority has created a catchment that is now too large for the number of places available as we had 500 applicants for 210 places.

- **We work as contract catering within the existing school, what would happen with the new academy?**

AW You are employed under a council contract and the sponsors would need to consider whether to continue with the council contract. If Grace Academy decided not to continue with the contract either TUPE or the Council would consider alternative employment

BE At our other academies we received presentations from 4 companies and chose the best contract for healthy food and later won an award for healthy eating in the area.

- **As the site manager I live in the school house but have private access would I get the house on TUPE?**

DW I don't know.

AW The schools house is from the council so we would have to confirm the details with them.

BE In Solihull we had 3 houses on site and we leased 1 house and the council rehoused people in like for like houses.

**I am worried that it would not be a like for like change**

- **We are currently advertising for a new caretaker what do we tell them about the possible change in working conditions to shift work and to be taken on by a contractor at a later date?**

AW Anyone in the market for a job at the moment will be facing a similar issue. BSF schools will be undertaking a PFI that will involve contractors taking on the role of site and facilities management and all jobs in this field are changing.

**I don't think it's very fair to TUPE twice to a contractor and basically lose your job.**

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KW closed the meeting and thanked people for attending.

# Consultation Meeting Notes

<b>Location:</b>	Darlaston Community Science College
<b>Meeting with:</b>	Governors
<b>Date:</b>	25 September 2008
<b>Time:</b>	6 pm

## PRESENT:

<b>Walsall Children's Services - Serco</b>	<b>Darlaston Community Science College</b>	<b>Others</b>
Avril Walton – AW	1 Staff Governor	Bob Edmiston – Grace Academies – BE
Keith Warburton - KW	6 Parent Governors	Tracie Edmiston – Grace Academies – TE
Kate Mann – KM	1 Non Teaching Staff Governor	David Wooton – Executive Head Teacher Grace Academies – DW
Tom Williams – TW	2 Community Governors	Steve Chase – Grace Academies - SC
	2 LA Governors	Rachael Edwards – Grace Academy – RE

KW opened the meeting and introduced the proposal. AW then outlined the proposal for Walsall Children's Services - Serco and the consultation process. BE outlined the proposal for Grace Academies and DW gave the Grace academies presentation.

## Questions, Comments and Responses

### ➤ **You met earlier today with the student council, why not the whole student body?**

KW                      It was a more manageable group of students and we think that we got a good cross section of views

### ➤ **If the student council represents the student body is the governing body not a representation of the parents when we say that we are not in favour of the academy?**

BE                      We couldn't fit all the students in one place for the consultation and therefore the student council is a representation of those students. We also brought students from our existing academy in Solihull to speak with them about their experience. There is a separate meeting arranged for parents later tonight.

### ➤ **Who from the community was consulted? Not all community leaders were aware of the meeting**

AW                      We have to consult meaningfully and Walsall goes further than many other authorities consulting with parents, staff, governors and prospective parents we also post documents in the local area and public places. If you know of community leaders who have not been consulted and would like to meet with Walsall Children's Services and the sponsors then we can arrange this. We have already arranged another meeting for people to attend after Ramadan.

KW If you could give us a list of the community groups not consulted then we will contact them

AW if any groups want an additional consultation meeting they should contact em and I will arrange it.

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- **The governors were not consulted on the possibility of an academy until half way through the process. Walsall Council's consultation is not good enough and Walsall Council makes selective consultation. The governors have had no say on any other possible sponsors and this has been forced on us. It is also inappropriate to use exam results as a yard stick to compare schools, saying this is a failing school therefore the route is an academy.**
- What would your admissions arrangements be?**

DW We would admit pupils as part of the local authority admissions policy.

BE There will be no differences between current admissions arrangements we would not be selective.

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- **The consultation process is offensive that all the meetings have been crammed into 1 day. 25% of the school's population is Muslim and the meetings have been arranged in the middle of Ramadan.**
- I have read the consultation document and what is in it for Grace Academy?**

BE Regarding the consultation it is a council issue and to fit in with Ramadan we have arranged an additional meeting on 6 October.

As for what is in it for us, we will make no money out of the academies. I have personally invested £4 million into Grace Academies as part of a total £170 million donated to charity and got nothing back. I want to give something back and do something good for the community. In Solihull we have had reports from the police that the incidence of crime involving students of the school has reduced 30%. We are interested in every part of a child's development not just their education.

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- **We have seen your literature and it does not mention the governing body. As an existing governing body we have sent letters but not been allowed to attend cabinet to object. We seem to be the forgotten bit at the back end of Walsall.**
- If the academy does go ahead will staff transfer to the new school?**

SC Staff would transfer under TUPE to the new school.

BE The academy would have a new governing body and under TUPE rights staff would be able to transfer under current pay and conditions, although if a teacher was not performing then we would follow the national guidelines.

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- **How long does TUPE last?**

SC After TUPE staff are entitled to all the protection they get under national employment law.

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- **In most academies the head has been replaced.**

DW At the Solihull academy the head teacher was due to retire and in Coventry the existing head teacher was appointed. Under regulations the head and deputy head teacher have to be advertised to follow national procedure.

BE We held a meeting earlier with the union representatives and so far there have been no issues with the other academies.

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- **Part of the reason that the school is in such a poor state is because it has been ignored by Walsall Council. If the school is to close on 31 August and open on 1 September what can be achieved in one day to improve the mess of a building?**

BE We will receive a budget to transform and re brand the school and it won't be done in one day, lots of work will be carried out over the summer holidays. We also have full time staff to start working now in preparation for a positive outcome.

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- **What about resources and staff?**

DW Our final goal would be to have a brand new building but work will be carried out to improve the school in the meantime. We will also work with the staff and the head teacher to get ready for the new academy.

BE We would recruit a new head who would come on board during the transition period working on the curriculum and other education issues.

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- **How would the new build take place?**

BE We could build on the same site but to one side with a mobile structure to allow lessons to continue as with our academy in Coventry. During this the health and safety of the students would be most important.

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- **What is the timescale for this?**

BE 2 to 3 years

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- **We have read in the press that the scrutiny panel said that we have to accept a new academy or close the school.**

AW When a school goes into special measures the DCSF expect the Council to consider closing the school. In this case there aren't the places available to close the school and transfer the existing pupils. Therefore closing the school is not an option. In cases where closure is not an option there is an expectation that academy status is considered.

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- **Can you give me your word that the school will not close if the academy does not proceed?**

AW No. but we don't have sufficient places in the area to accommodate pupils if Darlaston closed. The other option is to fresh start and re open the school in the same building.

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- **Members of staff are in a number of unions, would these be honoured within the new academy?**



BE Yes there is a national right to belong to a union.

**We are appalled that Walsall Council has failed this school and placed the burden on the Grace Academy**

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➤ **Can you guarantee that you will not change the admissions policy?**

BE We will stay as part of the local authority's admissions arrangements. We can select 10% towards our specialist places but we would only do that if all the other schools in the area did the same.

SC Academies fall under the same rules as other state schools and if we wanted to change the admissions policy we would have to undergo a consultation process.

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➤ **The DVD said that facilities would be made available for the community**

BE The current facilities are pretty poor and we would petition for extra space to allow more room for additional facilities

SC We are talking to the council to discuss the playing fields and the security issues.

BE We will put the new building to one side and to accommodate the facilities we may have to build upwards.

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➤ **How can the new academy be a focal point for the community and regeneration?**

BE In Solihull people have started moving into the area to get near to the school, and we cannot speak for regeneration as that is a council issue.

KW Do you want an additional meeting?

**Yes**

KW We will organise one tomorrow.

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➤ **If the proposed academy went ahead, what would it be called?**

DW If the proposed academy went ahead it would be Grace Academy Darlaston

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➤ **Are you involved with 2 academies up north in association with Reg Vardy?**

BE No

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KW closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

# Consultation Meeting Notes

<b>Location:</b>	Darlaston Community Science College
<b>Meeting with:</b>	Parents and Community
<b>Date:</b>	25 September 2008
<b>Time:</b>	7 pm

## PRESENT:

<b>Walsall Children's Services - Serco</b>	<b>Darlaston Community Science College</b>	<b>Others</b>
Avril Walton – AW	82 Parents	Bob Edmiston – Grace Academies – BE
Susan Lupton – SL	Bruce George - MP	Tracie Edmiston – Grace Academies – TE
Kate Mann – KM		David Wooton – Executive Head Teacher Grace Academies – DW
Tom Williams – TW		Steve Chase – Grace Academies - SC
		Rachael Edwards – Grace Academy – RE

KW opened the meeting and introduced the proposal; AW outlined the Walsall Children's Services – Serco proposal to close the school and the consultation process. BE gave an outline of the Grace Academy proposal and DW gave the Grace Academies presentation.

## Questions, Comments and Responses

- **I have had 4 children attend Darlaston over the last 18 years and they have all achieved 5 GCSEs A\*-C. I would like to thank the staff and think the school deserves a new building. We have been asking Walsall Council to fund this for 18 years and we feel sad that this can't be done without the private sector. Will all current pupils including those with behaviour problems be allowed a place? Would children with behaviour problems be allowed a place?**

BE All children currently at Darlaston would be allowed to attend the new Grace Academy.

DW Grace Academy would allow all students to transfer across and we would not send children with behaviour problems elsewhere. We have lots of ways to assist and support students with behaviour issues.

- **How much support would be given to pupils with behaviour problems?**

DW At Solihull we provide tremendous support made up of all sorts of help.

- **Bruce George MP - Walsall has been in a transition phase and has seen the issue of good and poor results. Serco was bought in to manage the education provision in the borough and has shown steady improvement. I believe Serco can improve standards in this school. The slick presentation tonight is reminiscent of a timeshare scheme with a religious twist.**

**I don't believe that a multi cultural society will gain anything from a school with strong Christian values.**

**Help is also at hand for this school like BSF which will provide the money to build 5 new schools. For me the 1<sup>st</sup> two in line are Joseph Leckie and Darlaston. A new building would be useful and you have a good head although some staff may need retraining. Why doesn't Serco do more and provide more resources for Darlaston? Surely this school could acheive great improvements in standards without going down the academy route? Results in the school aren't good but it does not mean that the students are bad. So I urge you to give this consultation a great deal of thought before you make your decision.**

BE	This school is currently in special measures and the results went down after a year of being in special measures. The choice today is for a Grace Academy or not. The Academy program is a government initiative and national results show improvement in those schools. Can this school wait for a possible alternative that is not on the table yet? We have waited a year and don't want to allow another class to go through this school. We want to do this for the local community and have no wish to be involved in a political debate. We will accept the outcome of the consultation as we are making an offer not forcing ourselves on the community.
AW	Walsall has been accepted onto wave 6a of BSF. This will provide the funding for 5 projects. Of these 5 projects, 2 may be rebuilds, and 3 may be refurbishments. The money to rebuild this school as an academy would be in addition to the money for BSF.

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➤ **How long have we got to wait for Serco to act?**

AW	No one is happy with the standards in this school. We have put in lots of support to the school; the government has put in support as have Black Country Challenge but the necessary improvement is not taking place. The academy option represents a new approach.
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➤ **I have 1 child currently attending Darlaston and 1 who may attend. What does a business and enterprise specialism bring to the school that other schools don't? If we are part of the Grace Academies is it not part of a religious practice?**

BE	Christian values are different to a faith school and we will teach to the national curriculum. The business and enterprise specialism will help students get used to the world of work and will allow the other academies to help each other with shared practices. The Head at our Solihull school is a Sikh and the Head in Coventry has no faith. We aim to teach the national curriculum in school including the theory of evolution. We invite the parents here to visit our other academies where the students receive an education not indoctrination.
DW	All Grace Academies currently have business and enterprise specialisations and as Darlaston is currently a science college we were looking at having dual status to make Darlaston unique.
BE	If this went ahead we would have 3 academies linked by the M6. The close proximity allows expert practitioners to be used in all 3 schools. This could allow transference of best practice and in the future it may even be possible to have televised lectures in all three locations.

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➤ **Local Head Teacher – What about the governing body of the academy? If there was 1 staff governor and 1 parent governor would the rest be made up of members of the Grace foundation.**

**You also claim that you want to get local industry involved with the school but how can you achieve this when there is no industry list?**

**How do you plan to interact with the local primary schools?**

BE	We plan to have a consulting body in addition to a small governing body. As a business man I have lots of contacts in the local area. In Coventry we have links with Tesco and in Solihull links with Jaguar and the airport. We also sent a senior teacher to visit HBOS to learn about working practices. We also have links with BA who provided help for our trip to Africa and provided a course teaching the students what it is like to be a member of the flight crew. We would also have one governor whose role is specifically to establish links with local industry.
DW	If we are to be successful in secondary education we need to become involved with primary schools. The primary to secondary transition is very important and we know of the dip in achievement that can occur during that change. We aim to deliver the year 7 curriculum in a similar way to in primary curriculum. We also have lots of other ideas such as Y6 transferring to the academy once they have completed their SATs.

➤ **My child is in year 10 will their options be affected by the change?**

DW	We would guarantee continuity of studies but push their curriculum as far as possible.
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➤ **Where would the children go during the building project?**

DW	We hope to build on the current site and would discuss with the architect how to make sure the site was safe and reduce disruption to teaching and learning. We may have to use mobile classrooms during the building. We plan to build the new building then demolish the old building and turn the land into playing fields
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➤ **You said that you need 27 acres for a new school would that mean we lose our park?**

DW	No the school can exist on a smaller plot.
BE	The decision would be up to the council as we may have to locate sports facilities on another site but we want to make sure we get the best site with the most space.

➤ **What are the other options instead of a Grace Academy? What will the curriculum be in addition to the national curriculum? If the school proves to be very popular how will you select you pupils?**

DW	We will not be changing the admissions arrangements and we can't offer much more of a curriculum now but in the new building we will be able to offer more with our new facilities and we plan to be more involved with the community.
BE	In Solihull part of the community courses we provide are marriage counselling, debt management, and drugs counselling we also make the sports facilities available to the community. The students also proposed the idea to open u at Christmas to provide a lunch for the elderly with the children waiting tables. There are lots of extra curricular activities that can be set up in conjunction with the community.
AW	The option we are discussing now is the possibility of a Grace Academy but if it doesn't go ahead then there will be other options.

➤ **Parent of Y11 student- What assurances do we have that there will be no disruption to teaching?**

AW                      There will be no disruption as the staff who are present now will continue until the end of the year before being offered TUPE transfer. There are always changes in schools and the staff and Serco are committed to helping the students

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- **I feel that this is a one day auction as Serco haven't helped the school one bit since the school went into special measures.**

AW                      The children of this school have been failed by the school, by Serco, the council, governors and staff and we need to ensure this stops now.

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- **The governing body will not be accused of failing the school.**

One governor resigned and left the meeting

**How is it that the money is available for the school once the possibility of an academy is on the table?**

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- **I object to the date and time of the consultation meetings during Ramadan as many Muslims cannot attend as they are ending their fast.**

KW                      We accept that and we have arranged an additional meeting on 6 October.

**Serco could have started work before now and not waited for Grace Academy.**

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- **My daughter started school three weeks ago what assurances do you have that this will go forward?**

DW                      Hopefully the process will go forward and when we get the new building we will be able to bring more to the table and provide more educational opportunities.

BE                      The school is not working at the moment and something has to be done to ensure a better outcome for the young people of Darlaston.

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- **I have been disgusted with this school in the past, as when my son came to the school there were behaviour issues but now it is better. I object to Serco telling us that the governors are failing the school and I object that Serco is a business that provides us with 1 option that brings them more money.**
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- **What will happen to the existing staff?**

BE                      They have TUPE rights of transfer. Past experience shows that most chose to transfer.

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- **What caused the difference in the increase in exam results at the other schools?**

BE                      Hard work within the schools and a committed motivated and well trained staff. We have established a link with Warwick University to bring in motivated newly qualified teachers and specialist graduates to teach for a year and using staff across academies to share expertise.

DW                      There was also a different structure, different approaches to work, lots of training, and new leadership structures to unlock the potential of both staff and students.

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➤                      **Does the Head Teacher transfer as well?**

DW                      In the transfer to an academy we would have to advertise the post as a legal requirement. In Coventry we appointed the old Head.

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➤                      **What happens if you fail?**

DW                      In the same way that any other school is accountable for their performance the same rules would apply.

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➤                      **If you fail will you back out?**

DW                      If we are committed then we aim to see it out and we realise that it will not be easy. If we fail then the government will step in.  
BE                      Would you want us to keep a teacher who is failing the students? The children are the priority and the school should be a benefit to the children and the community.

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➤                      **In the DVD a parent of a child at the Solihull school said her son was struggling but they are now doing well but you also kept staff from the old school.**

DW                      Yes we gave them lots of intense training that was tailored to the individual.

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➤                      **If you have lots of newly qualified teachers they won't have much experience.**

DW                      We will give them lots of intense training and we still want experienced staff who know the community.

**How can you do that but not Serco?**

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➤                      **I think this school is a sinking ship, although the head has done a good job and the school is making improvements slowly. It is so late in the day for consultation. Why is the end of the consultation period set as the same time as the deadline for preference forms?**

EB                      Grace Academy is following the timeline set by the council.

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➤                      **Student - I am in Y10 at the moment and have a supply teacher for one of my lessons. If we had a new school would I have to stay with the current supply teacher?**

DW                      I can't speak for the head teacher but we would want the best resources for the students

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KW closed the meeting and urged attendees to make a consultation response and to attend the meeting on 6 October.

# Consultation Meeting Notes

<b>Location:</b>	Darlaston Community Science College
<b>Meeting with:</b>	Community
<b>Date:</b>	6 October 2008
<b>Time:</b>	7.15 pm

## PRESENT:

<b>Walsall Children's Services - Serco</b>	<b>Darlaston Community Science College</b>	<b>Others</b>
Avril Walton – AW	79 Members of the community	David Wooton – Executive Head Teacher Grace Academies – DW
Keith Warburton - KW	Head Teacher – Darlaston Community Science College	Steve Chase – Grace Academies - SC
Kate Mann – KM	Head Teacher – Salisbury Primary	Rachael Edwards – Grace Academy – RE
Tom Williams – TW	Head Teacher – King's Hill Primary	Members of the local press

KW opened the meeting and introduced the proposal; AW outlined the Walsall Children's Services – Serco proposal to close the school and the consultation process. SC gave an outline of the Grace Academy proposal and DW gave the Grace Academies presentation.

## Questions, Comments and Responses

- **Express and Star – Mr Edmiston is known for his belief in creationism and creative design will this be included in the curriculum?**

DW                      It would feature in the curriculum as in every school. Creationism would be taught as part of the RE syllabus and the theory of evolution or Darwinism would be taught in science lessons.

- **It seems as though Darlaston Community Science College has failed the children. We want to know why is Darlaston failing and how will Grace Academy turn things around?**

DW                      Unfortunately I cannot comment on why the existing school is failing. To turn things around we would look to change the way the school is organised, the methods of teaching and the construct of the curriculum. There is a also a difference in the way that we are funded allowing us to put more resources into the development of staff and we try to engender a culture of self belief and aspiration amongst the students.

AW                      It is hard to answer why the school is failing. Ofsted inspected the school in the autumn term last year and found some aspects of the school wanting and others to be quite good. If you want to know how the school is failing the report is available online.

- **Parent Governor - I'm concerned about the way this proposal is put forward as if it has already been decided and this consultation is just a formality. I also have concerns about your admissions policy, how do you expect to raise standards from children with very low achievement already?**

**You say you're being funded by central government, you're taking our park and with new buildings it feels like a private enterprise rather than something for the community, who are you accountable to?**

DW                      The funding does come from central government and as a result we are accountable to central government. BSF funding is also available in the Walsall area and that will be shared out amongst secondary schools in Walsall. Presently Darlaston has no playing fields and they currently have to use part of the park but it is not safe and we want the school and the community to have the best facilities.

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➤ **If you're only responsible to central government, what about the local community?**

DW                      We hope to be a part of the community and will attend local head teacher's meetings. We are also accountable in the same way as any other school though league tables and Ofsted but directly to central government.

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**I object to you stopping discussion by not allowing follow up questions and blocking debate.**

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➤ **What if you fail?**

DW                      The DCSF would then step in as in any other school.

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➤ **What happens to Grace Academy and your organisation if you fail? You have produced some impressive figures tonight but it is only for 2 years worth of results, education runs in a 5 year cycle and anyone can make up something to look good over 2 years.**

SC                      We can't give you 5 years of results as our academies have only been open for 2 years.

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➤ **Is your other academy in a deprived area?**

SC                      It is in a very deprived area, but the school has shown steady improvement from 22% to 34% then 47% last year, and next year we're hoping that 50-60% of the children will achieve 5A\* to C.

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➤ **Another private school in the area guarantees 70%?**

DW                      That school would not admit children in the same way as an academy that is open to the community.

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➤ **What if I am an atheist? What if I object to your values and standards?**

SC                      We take people of any faith or no faith into the school or on the staff. We have Christian values such as respect, honesty and forgiveness as in any other school.  
The school will also allow you to object to the values and standards.



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- **If you are not accountable to the Local Authority what guarantees do we have that you will not change the admissions criteria?**

SC                      We are committed to the same admissions criteria as Walsall Council. To change the admissions criteria we would have to go through a consultation process and it would finally require the signature of the secretary of state, so we can't change things over night. We will not select or become a faith school but and we will apply the common application form for Walsall.

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- **There is a good majority of people who do not want this academy, but it feels like it is being forced upon us.**

SC                      Then please make your views known by filling in the consultation responses and there are people here taking notes of your comments. It will then be up to the council to make the decision.

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- **Why is Darlaston Community Science College failing? Serco has a contract for hundreds of millions of pounds to improve education, what is Serco doing for Darlaston? If academies are the way forward then why aren't all Walsall schools academies? We are not being given any alternatives what is the choice?**

AW                      The Serco contract in Walsall is a matter of public knowledge and it is not hundreds of millions of pounds. We have been providing education in Walsall for 7 years and results have gone up dramatically. This is in part due to Serco but it is also due to the work in schools with the support of Serco. This has not worked in Darlaston and the school is now in special measures. As a result of being in special measures the DCSF require the Council to consider the 2 options to shut the school or become an academy.  
For the capital investment this has improved over the last 10 years but there has never been the money to rebuild a secondary school. To rebuild a secondary school costs approximately £30 million and authorities such as Walsall have never had the money.

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- **What about St Thomas More, that was rebuilt?**

AW                      That was a school that used a PFI and as a Roman Catholic school had money from other sources. As part of BSF there will be 5 major projects within Walsall including 2 rebuilds and 3 refurbishments. The money for the Darlaston Academy would be in addition to this money

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- **At the last meeting with the governors we asked for another meeting. When could that be if the deadline is Friday?**

AW                      The meetings were booked in advance to be included in the consultation document. If you require an additional meeting please contact me and we will try to arrange it, although it needs to happen before Friday 10 October.

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- **Governor at Darlaston - There are concerns in the community about the timescale of the consultation. Governors received a letter last Wednesday asking who else should be consulted. At scrutiny the cabinet were allegedly told that the choice was an academy or closure. We want a choice of sponsor and to know how governors will be selected. In the**

**DVD it said that parents voted with their feet but will parents have their say about the academy? Where are the Cabinet members tonight?**

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- **Vice Chair of Union of Muslims – The Muslim community are against the idea of an academy with an evangelical sponsor. Would our children be able to opt out of RE? If the majority of parents don't like the proposal will it still go ahead?**

DW                      At Grace Academy we teach the same RE syllabus as at any other Walsall school. We have almost the same level of diversity at our Coventry Academy where the Head Teacher is a practising Sikh.

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- **You say that the current school doesn't have your values and standards, can this not be achieved by the school at the moment?**

DW                      I can't comment on the school at the moment, but can only say what we can do.

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- **Why are the press being stopped from taking photos?**

AW                      There are policies within schools that do not allow photos to be taken of children at school and there are children present here tonight.

**Parents commented that they gave their permission.**

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- **The points being made by the Grace Academy is that they have money and the current school does not have money. Is that an implication of why the school is failing?**

DW                      That is not the only issue as the current school has had difficulties for some time.

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- **Teacher at St Thomas More – I came here tonight to find out about the new school and whether I can put Darlaston as a preference or not. I am a Northern Irish Protestant and teach at a Catholic School and nothing I have heard tonight has convinced me to put Darlaston down on the preference form. It is not about the building. The staff and Governors there have done a good job and need help and support. Some children at the current school have not had a specialist teacher in over 4 weeks. What s Grace Academy going to do for the children at that School?**

DW                      As we said in the presentation we will provide a fresh start, new ways of learning and a new curriculum. We don't want to criticise the current school.

**I think the Grace Academy is a good idea but feel like we've been railroaded.**

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- **Parent and Representative of local Mosques – I have sent an email to 10 people at the council and have a petition against the academy. Year 5 parents have not been consulted. Where are the members of the Cabinet? Only Serco are here tonight on their behalf as partner for education. Our questions have not been answered clearly and the consultation has not been done widely. This is a failure of Walsall Council and Serco they have failed the community. We want another meeting here with the cabinet before they make their decision behind closed doors.**
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- **Parent and Governor – We have seen the Ofsted report but since then we have a new Head Teacher and a change in teaching and new staff. The school is improving and we are trying to make things happen. The governors are making things happen by giving up their own time. We feel like the council has already made its decision to spend BSF money on other schools now that the academy offer is on the table. We have been forgotten and now we have the money from the Government we should be 1<sup>st</sup> on the list for a new school.**

SC                      With regards to the funding issue, the funding for BSF will have to go through a PFI in conjunction with the LA. We will get the school build sooner.

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- **Why don't we just wait for a new school?**

SC                      It is only just deferring hope for future funding.

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- **Exactly, my child is in school at the moment and I don't want them to have to wait for a new school**
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- **Head at Salisbury Primary – I was concerned that as a primary head we had received no contact so I made contact, with concerns for the children's view of the academy. Today I visited the Grace Academy in Chelmsley Wood and spoke to the head for 10 mins then to the children for 2hrs about their experiences. Everything I heard was very positive. I asked about their Christian values and they are no different to those of any school in Darlaston with values of honesty, respect, tolerance and forgiveness. Having spoken to the children it appears that the sponsor's approach is similar to that of Zakat and he does not have a "hands on" roll. The children of Chelmsley Wood live in an area that used to have the highest incidence of crime in the West Midlands and they now speak with pride in their school and their community. Serco and Walsall Council's part in this has not been a positive one but we now have an opportunity for our children. Other primary Head Teachers in the area are satisfied that this is good for the children, maybe although not for the staff or the governors. I don't agree with the haste of this consultation but if it is the only offer on the table.**
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- **Can Grace clarify details about the new building? Will it be refurbished by September 2009?**

SC                      If the proposal goes ahead we will open in September 2009 with new branding and some cosmetic changes but we plan to have a new building by 2011.

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- **Walsall Council have let the school down and want to wash their hands of it. How will you improve standards in a failing school?**

DW                      We would restructure, introduce new practices, we would build on the head's work introduce more training and recruit new staff if old staff leave.

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- **Would you make people redundant?**

DW                      They would have the right to TUPE transfer.

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➤ **Would you replace the Head? Who would appoint them?**

DW                      We would have to advertise the Head's post and the governing body would appoint.

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➤ **Is it true that you will have only 1 parent governor?**

DW                      We have a small governing body that can act quickly that will hold up to 17 members including members of the local community and commerce. But in addition to that we have a parents' forum that advise the governing body.

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- **We have been told by Grace Academy that all staff will be made redundant including the Head Teacher and all staff have to reapply. And now you have only just mentioned a parent's forum with a panel of 17 governors with only 1 parent. The school won't be ready until 2011 and how much disruption will this cause to the curriculum?**

Another Parent – it's the teaching that matters not the building

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➤ **You have said there will be a curriculum change, what will the new curriculum include?**

DW                      It says in the consultation document we will change the curriculum to personalise it to the children's needs. We intend to add new study skills, accelerated curriculum for some children and extra languages. There will also be new subjects such as business and enterprise, values and standards and citizenship.

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- **Lots of figures have been given out that suggest that improvement only comes with money. The personalised curriculum is not useful for children who intend to go in to university where there will be no individual learning pathways.**

DW                      We'd have to disagree over the different curriculum at university.  
SC                      We are funded differently to other schools and this allows us to choose where to focus the budget and tailor spending to where it is needed most.

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➤ **There had been insufficient time to consult, this is appalling**

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➤ **When will the next meetings be and where?**

AW                      Let us know and we can arrange to be there.

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➤ **The consultation ends Friday and there are additional meetings required.**

SC                      Speak with AW to arrange a meeting  
KW                      We can't arrange dates now as we don't have everyone's diary.

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➤ **Can't you push the Cabinet meeting back?**

KW                      We will take that request back to the Cabinet.

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- **Can you not extend the consultation to get the Cabinet here?**

KW                      We will take that request back to the Cabinet.

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- **Public consultation is not consultation in this case.**
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- **2hrs in 5 weeks is not good enough. What about letting us express our views? What have you been doing for 5 weeks?**
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- **Ask Cllr Zahid Ali and the cabinet to be present at the next meeting**
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KW thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.