

**CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE  
SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

**Agenda Item  
No.**

**DATE: 18 DECEMBER 2008**

**OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE: SNEYD COMMUNITY – A Specialist Maths and  
Computing College**

**Ward(s)** Bloxwich West, All

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

**Summary of report:**

When the Panel met on 20 November 2008 to consider this matter, Members requested a further report on possible trust arrangements and other alternatives to the proposed closure of Sneyd, information about examination results for 2009, and feedback on the recent Ofsted inspection.

The Panel is asked to decide what Members wish to report back to Cabinet.

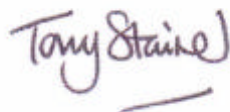
**Background papers:**

Scrutiny report, 20 November 2008: Cabinet report dated 22 October 2008: Review of Secondary Schools: The future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College  
Ofsted: inspection report, published December 2008

**Reason for scrutiny:**

On 20 October 2008, Cabinet referred consideration of the future of Sneyd for consideration by the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel. The report considered by Cabinet had included a recommendation that Sneyd be closed from 31 August 2010 or from 31 August 2011. Cabinet requested that the matter be referred to an early meeting of the Children and young people Scrutiny and performance panel for full consideration of all options available to the school and that the full implications of the community uses be considered in conjunction with any proposal coming forward in relation to the school.

**Signed:**



**Executive Director: Tony Stainer**

**Date: 11 December 2008**

**Resource and legal considerations:**

Any proposal to close Sneyd or to make other prescribed 'significant changes' would be subject to statutory processes. Should any proposals be linked to other proposals which would also be the subject of a statutory proposal, these must be taken forward at the same

time so as to ensure that all decisions are taken at the same time.

Sneyd has a major budget issue and faces a potential deficit in the region of £500,000 as a result of falling rolls. The school will have to make a substantial reduction in the number of staff and this will make it increasingly difficult for the school to deliver a broad, balanced curriculum for pupils and raise standards.

The school has been identified as a National Challenge School and is required to make rapid improvement in order to secure 30%+ 5+ A\* - C (including English & Maths) GCSEs over the next 2 years.

#### **Citizen impact:**

Standards of achievement at Sneyd are well below the national and LA average and are judged by Ofsted as exceptionally low. The options outlined in this report would provide opportunities for current and future pupils of the area to access places at educationally and financially viable schools where they would be better able to develop to their full potential.

#### **Environmental impact:**

None arising from this report.

#### **Performance management:**

Sneyd is an underperforming school and this has a negative impact on the life-chances of the pupils attending the school and on the economic well-being of the locality and the Borough. As this has been the case for a number of years, it is difficult to envisage how this situation will be addressed without governance changes to the provision of education in this school. The school was in special measures from January 2005 to November 2006; progress has been inadequate and in the November 2008 Ofsted inspection the school was given a Notice to Improve in relation to the poor level of students' achievement throughout the school and the inadequate quality of teaching and learning, and significant improvements required of the sixth form.

#### **Equality Implications:**

A very high proportion of students at Sneyd significantly underachieve and this is adversely affecting the development of skills that will contribute to students' future economic well-being.

#### **Consultation:**

Colleagues in Children's Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report. There has also been some discussion of key issues with the Head teacher and the Chair of Governors of Sneyd Community School and the Head teacher of Frank F Harrison School.

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## OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF SNEYD

### 1 Demand for School Places

1.1 Any consideration of the future of Sneyd must be set in the context of the trend in pupil numbers at the school and the projected demand for places over the coming years.

1.2 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)	899	- 116	11%
<b>Projections</b>			
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		

1.3 Year-on-year reductions of this magnitude create a situation which is very difficult for schools to manage effectively especially where a school is struggling to make the necessary improvements to raise standards to at least a satisfactory level and where pupils are achieving their potential.

1.4 The number of pupils admitted to Year 7 has reduced over the last few years and this is illustrated in Table 2 below which provides details of the number of pupils in each year group in October 2008 and shows that admissions to Year 7 have effectively halved since the current Year 11 were admitted (225 pupils compared to 113 in Year 7).

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

	Adm no	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Sneyd	250	113	128	149	185	225	61	38	<b>899</b>

- 1.5 Processing of applications for the 2009 admissions round has progressed well and the first data exchange with neighbouring authorities has been completed. Analysis shows that of the 3,612 application forms, there are 57 first preferences for Sneyd. Details of the preferences for Sneyd are provided in Table 3. These numbers may change as a result of late applications. The preferences for Sneyd have changed over recent weeks with some parents changing their preferences and then changing them back again as a result of coverage in the media regarding the possible future of the school.

Table 3 Preferences for Sneyd, 2009 Admission Round

	1 <sup>st</sup> preference	2nd preference	3 <sup>rd</sup> preference	4 <sup>th</sup> preference	5 <sup>th</sup> preference	Total preferences
Sneyd	57	56	36	16	4	<b>169</b>
Walsall schools	3,612	2,268	1,405	732	578	<b>8,596</b>

Data as at 28 November 2008

- 1.6 At the equivalent stage for the 2008 admissions round Sneyd had a total of 65 first preferences; 118 offers of a school place were made in March 2008 and the school subsequently admitted 113 pupils to Year 7 (Oct 2008 census). If this pattern is followed for 2009, the number of offers is expected to be 103 and the number admitted is expected to be in the region of 99. The 2009 intake will replace a Year 11 cohort of 225 and, if the numbers in the sixth form remain similar, the total number of pupils will fall to approx 770 - 780.
- 1.7 Sneyd does not have formal feeder schools. Traditionally, a large number of pupils have transferred from Mossley, Beacon, Abbey, Busill Jones and Woodlands Primary Schools. However, 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 in this part of the borough. It is envisaged that this trend will continue for the next few years.
- 1.8 Details of the transferring to Sneyd and other secondary schools in Walsall and neighbouring authorities are provided in table 4 below. The small differences between the numbers of Year 6 and Year 7 pupils result from pupils moving to other schools during the intervening period. This data shows that a significant number of parents are expressing a preference for their children to be educated at other nearby schools including those in neighbouring authorities. Relatively few children from other local authorities are on the roll of Sneyd School (23 in October 2008).

Table 4 Year 6 / Year 7 transfers from primary schools in the Sneyd area

School	Y6 NOR Jan 2008	Y7 Sept 2008 Sneyd	Y7 Sept 2008 Other Walsall Schools	Y7 Sept 2008 Other LA Schools
Abbey Primary	19	15	3	1
Beacon Primary	42	14	20	4
Blakenall Heath Junior	59	7	49	2
Busill Jones Primary	45	8	30	4
Butts Primary	33	1	23	1
Croft Primary	18	1	16	0
Elmore Green Primary	38	6	27	4
Fibbersley Park Primary	48	3	40	1
Hatherton Primary	54	2	51	1
Lower Farm Primary	56	1	35	15
Mossley Primary	33	15	13	5
New Invention Junior	87	7	48	24
Rough Hay Primary	38	1	38	0
Short Heath Junior	57	2	52	2
St Giles CE Primary	40	4	35	0
Woodlands Primary	54	6	45	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>525</b>	<b>64</b>

- 1.9 Given this context and the very limited progress in addressing the standards issues at Sneyd over the last few years, the possibility of closure should be given careful consideration especially as displaced pupils could be accommodated at other schools in the borough especially if some additional places are created at nearby schools.
- 1.10 Members have asked that other options are put forward for consideration. In the longer term (10 years or so), pupil numbers are expected to increase as a result of increases in birth rate and extensive house building. Given the current economic downturn, there is some uncertainty about the pace of residential development over the next few years; work on many sites has halted and the number of planning applications has fallen significantly. Few major development sites are located close to Sneyd: in the western part of the borough the main developments areas are in Willenhall and Darlaston, with other developments along the A34 corridor.
- 1.11 Table 5 below provides details of planning applications for residential developments categorised by approved applications, pending applications and initial enquiries. The estimated pupil yield for developments in these categories is provided. Approved applications are forecast to yield a total of 311 secondary aged pupils which would give 62 in each year group (Y7 – Y11).
- 1.12 In view of this and the relative popularity of schools in the area it is considered that Sneyd would not be the school of first preference for families moving into the new properties in Willenhall and Darlaston although there would be some pupil drift northwards over 5-10 years as these and other planned major developments planned as part of the regeneration of Willenhall and Darlaston are taken forward. Detailed timescales for the implementation of these developments have not yet been finalised.

Table 5 Secondary pupil yield from residential developments

Pupil Yield							
Ward	Approved Applications	Pending Applications	Initial Enquiry	Total	Pupils Per Year Group	Schools in the Ward	Main Secondary Schools Attended
Bentley and Darlaston North	21	22	31	74	15	-	Willenhall Alumwell St Thomas More
Birchills Leamore	45	47	112	204	41	Frank F Harrison	Frank F Harrison Pool Hayes Willenhall
Bloxwich West	23	0	11	34	7	Sneyd	Walsall Academy Frank F Harrison
Darlaston South	98	19	139	256	51	Darlaston	Darlaston St Thomas More
Pleck	30	1	13	44	9	Alumwell	Alumwell
Short Heath	5	0	5	10	2	Pool Hayes Willenhall	Pool Hayes Willenhall
Willenhall North	26	0	0	26	5		Pool Hayes Willenhall
Willenhall South	63	27	85	175	35	St Thomas More	St Thomas More Pool Hayes Willenhall
<b>Total</b>	<b>311</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>823</b>	<b>165</b>		
<b>Pupils Per Year Group</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>165</b>			

1.13 Whilst there is expected to be a small increase in demand for school places in this timescale, the key issue is whether Sneyd would be sustainable over this period given the very rapid reduction in pupil numbers, the associated budgetary reductions and the very limited progress in improving standards.

## **2 Options for the Future**

### Introduction

2.1 Following a positive meeting between The Director of Children's Services, The Managing Director of Walsall Children's Services – Serco, The Headteacher and Chair of Governors of Sneyd the following was agreed:

- Sneyd as Sneyd could not continue; something different was needed.
- The school is failing to recruit students.

- Managing the financial situation will require careful consideration and planning. The Local Authority does not have significant sums of money it could allocate to the school.

A number of ways ahead were discussed and this paper outlines five options for consideration. In summary:

- A Close the school in 2015 – with no further intake from 2010 but allowing students in the school to continue to the end of Year 11. Establish other educational provision on the site.
  - B Downsize the school to reflect the fall in pupil numbers and establish other education provision on the site alongside the school (for example a pupil referral unit for children at risk of exclusion and those excluded from school).
  - C Establish a National Challenge Trust (Appendix A provides details).
  - D Establish an academy on the site: 11-19 years
  - E Close the school; significantly enlarge another; establish a 14-19 specialist academy alongside 14-19 or 16-19 provision so that learning continues on the Sneyd site.
- 2.2 The solution for the future of education on the Sneyd site will need to be reflected in, and consistent with, the Strategy for Change being developed as part of the Building Schools for The Future Strategy.
- 2.3 These options would need to be developed for further consideration in the light of the Panel's views on the appropriateness of these as possible ways forward, however, some general implications for these options is provided below.

**Option A**

**Close the school in 2015 – with no further intake from 2010 but allowing students in the school to continue to the end of Year 11. Establish other educational provision on the site.**

- 2.4 With this option the number of pupils would reduce each year as a result of no admissions to Year 7 from September 2010.

Educational Establishment	Structural change	General implications
Sneyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Close Sneyd as a school in August 2015</li> <li>• No admissions to Year 7 from September 2010</li> <li>• No admissions to year 12 from September 2010</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sneyd would 'wither on the vine' as pupil numbers reduced significantly over the years to 2015</li> <li>• Financial issues as budget is largely based on number of pupils on roll</li> <li>• Ensuring that appropriate curriculum breadth is available</li> <li>• Staff retention issues (both in general and senior leadership), subject expertise</li> <li>• Social viability</li> <li>• Parents with more than 1 secondary aged child would</li> </ul>



		<p>not be able to access places for all of their children at Sneyd</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues around standards and the quality of teaching and learning still need to be addressed</li> </ul>
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**Option B**

**Downsize the school to reflect the fall in pupil numbers and establish other education provision on the site alongside the school (for example a pupil referral unit for children at risk of exclusion and those excluded from school).**

2.5 This would see secondary school provision retained on the Sneyd site and offers an opportunity to develop other educational provision.

<b>Educational Establishment</b>	<b>Structural change</b>	<b>General implications</b>
Sneyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School size and age range determined (11 – 16 or 11 – 19) and accommodation reduced in line with requirements</li> <li>• Change of age range would require statutory proposal</li> <li>• Other educational provision established on site?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine number of places required in short / medium / long term</li> <li>• Viability of sixth form provision in a smaller school</li> <li>• Accommodation for a smaller school would need to be in line with DCSF requirements</li> <li>• Capital investment would be needed to address accommodation implications</li> <li>• Ensuring that a smaller staff can deliver the appropriate curriculum breadth across a smaller school, especially at key stage 4</li> <li>• Other education provision – identify possible developments, could include PRU</li> <li>• Issues around standards and the quality of teaching and learning still need to be addressed</li> </ul>

## **Option C**

### **Establish a National Challenge Trust (Appendix A provides details).**

2.6 There are two routes to establishing a National Challenge Trust enshrined in recent legislation. If the Panel is supportive of the creation of a National Challenge Trust for Sneyd, Members are asked to consider whether their preference would be for

- closing the school and reopening it as a trust school  
or
- replacing the governing body with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to steer the school towards trust status.

2.7 Both Trust routes require a statutory process to be followed and the timescale for setting up Trust arrangements for September 2009 would be tight given that partners have still to be identified and all the accompanying changes which would need to be put in place with regard to staffing and property etc.

<b>Educational Establishment</b>	<b>Structural change</b>	<b>General implications</b>
Sneyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• School size and age range determined (11 – 16 or 11 – 19) and accommodation reduced in line with requirements</li><li>• Statutory process to be followed to establish Trust</li><li>• Change of age range would be a 'significant change' with statutory process to be followed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 possible ways of establishing National Challenge Trust</li><li>• Issues around number of places required in short / medium / long term and associated viability issues in terms of finance, staffing and curriculum</li><li>• Need to find a strong school for the partnership or a powerful external partner such as a local business or university with appropriate experience</li><li>• Possibility of a 'fresh start' for secondary provision for the local community</li><li>• Additional revenue available to provide support</li><li>• Viability of sixth form provision in a smaller school</li><li>• Accommodation for a smaller school would need to be in line with DCSF requirements</li><li>• Capital investment would be needed to address accommodation implications</li></ul>

**Option D**  
**Establish an academy on the site: 11-19 years**

2.8 This option would see the closure of Sneyd and the opening of an academy.

<b>Educational Establishment</b>	<b>Structural change</b>	<b>General implications</b>
Sneyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of Sneyd and any other schools which would become part of the academy</li> <li>• Expression of Interest would need to be developed</li> <li>• Academy proposal would need support of DCSF and a sponsor would be needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closure of a secondary school</li> <li>• Number of 11 – 16 and 16 – 19 places would need to be agreed and consideration given to the implications for other secondary schools in the borough</li> <li>• Date of opening? Possibly January or September 2010 but dependant upon complexity of arrangements</li> <li>• Community response to possible academy</li> </ul>

### **Option E**

**Close the school; significantly enlarge another school; establish a 14-19 specialist academy alongside 14-19 or 16-19 provision so that learning continues on the Sneyd site.**

2.9 Wolverhampton University and Walsall College have indicated an interest in supporting the development of a 14-19 Engineering Academy that would serve Walsall and, eventually, the region. The DCSF has indicated a strong interest in this proposal. Whilst this is a more complex option it has a benefit of attracting additional partners and funding to the Borough.

2.10 There are a number of possible ways forward with this option depending on the range of provision on the Sneyd and Frank F Harrison sites, four examples are provided below.

1	11 – 14 provision (KS3) on one site 14 – 19 provision and academy on the other site
2	Both sites offer 11 – 16 14 – 19 academy on one site Post 16 provision on the other site
3	11 – 16 provision on one site 14 – 19 academy and Post 16 provision on the other site
4	11 – 19 provision on one site 14 - 19 academy on the other site

2.11 Details of some of the structural changes associated with this and the possible implications are provided below. These could be explored in more detail subject to the panel's preferences.

<b>Educational Establishment</b>	<b>Structural change</b>	<b>General implications</b>
Sneyd	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close Sneyd but retain education provision on site (examples in 2.10)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although Sneyd would no longer be a separate school, education provision would be retained on site</li> <li>An Interim Executive Board would be appointed at Sneyd to oversee the school during the transitional period</li> <li>Support would continue to be offered to Sneyd through the Local Authority and The Black Country Challenge</li> </ul>
Frank F Harrison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significantly enlarge Frank F Harrison which would operate from both the existing site and the Sneyd site.</li> <li>Depending on the best option both sites could have KS3/4 provision with KS5 provision located on one or other site; or one site could provide 11-14 and the other 14-19 provision.</li> <li>A 14-19 Engineering College would be developed and either a 14-19 centre of Post</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial viability: operating from 2 sites would attract a split site allowance in the school budget however, there would be 2 lots of overheads and some additional staffing costs</li> <li>The school, operating across both sites, would have one Head Teacher, one staffing structure and one set of governors</li> <li>The 14-19 Academy would not be part of the enlarged</li> </ul>

	<p>16 centre – depending on the final options recommended.</p>	<p>Frank F Harrison School. The 14-19 Academy would appoint governors and a principal. We would expect a working partnership with the school to be developed through the Expression of Interest when written</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examination results for the school would exclude any KS4 and post 16 pupils on the roll of the academy</li> <li>• Any implications for the Frank F Harrison / Hatherton Primary federation would need to be considered as this model is developed</li> <li>• Some pupils at FFH might have to move to the Sneyd site in order to free up temporary accommodation for the proposed academy</li> <li>• There are a number of complex staffing issues that would need to be addressed if we take this model forward</li> <li>• Timing of a rebuild of the school accommodation would be challenging and would ideally correspond with the building of an academy</li> <li>• Accommodation at the Sneyd site and FFH would need to be reviewed and investment prioritised to facilitate the proposal</li> </ul>
<p>14-19 Engineering academy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing an academy would be subject to the signing of a Funding Agreement by the Secretary of State following the determination of associated statutory proposals by the Local Authority</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This would be subject to the submission of an Expression of Interest, consultation, feasibility work and sign-off of a Funding Agreement by the Secretary of State</li> <li>• Premises and site issues would need to be resolved to enable leases etc to be put in place</li> <li>• A principal and staff would need to be appointed to the academy</li> </ul>

2.12 These statutory proposals would be linked and would need to be considered alongside a proposal to open a 14-19 academy. Whilst standards have improved at Frank F Harrison over recent years, the school itself has, however, been identified as a National Challenge school. The development of the Engineering Academy would bring opportunities to explore how the governance of Frank F Harrison could be augmented

through the development of formal working arrangements of the new Academy. For example, partners of the new Academy could be co-opted on to the Governing Body of the Frank F Harrison / Hatherton Federation. Similarly consideration to the development of a National Challenge Trust should also be explored as part of the consultation process.

- 2.13 The complexity of the processes and arrangements necessary to take this option forward are such that September 2010 is the earliest date this could be implemented with the possibility of an academy facility being opened earlier.

### 3. 2009 EXAMINATION RESULTS

- 3.1 Over the last few years the levels of achievement at Sneyd have been very low in terms of both raw and contextualised data (where schools are compared with similar schools), and pupils' progression from one key stage to the next has been lower than expected. Details of this are provided in table 6 below.

Table 6 Achievement at Sneyd compared to Walsall and national data

	<b>Sneyd</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009 Target</b>
KS3	L5+ English	70.1%	68.5%	55.9%	57.5%	67.0%
	L5+ Maths	55.2%	58.6%	55.9%	58.0%	80.0%
	L5+ Science	52.8%	53.4%	52.7%	54.1%	73.0%
	L5+ English & Maths	49.4%	51.6%	44.1%	47.0%	66.0%
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma	15.0%	20.0%	17.0%	19.0%	30.0%
	2 Levels English			26.0%	53.0%	45.0%
	2 Levels Maths			8.0%	3.0%	20.0%

	<b>Walsall</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009 Target</b>
KS3	L5+ English	68.7%	67.9%	68.2%	70.2%	77.0%
	L5+ Maths	67.0%	72.2%	70.4%	71.6%	80.0%
	L5+ Science	61.3%	67.2%	66.8%	62.2%	78.0%
	L5+ English & Maths	58.6%	61.4%	61.3%	62.9%	73.0%
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma	35.7%	34.9%	35.5%	40.4%	48.0%
	2 Levels English			47.0%	56.0%	57.0%
	2 Levels Maths			23.0%	19.0%	32.0%

	<b>National</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009 Target</b>
KS3	L5+ English	74.0%	73.0%	74.0%	73.0%	
	L5+ Maths	74.0%	77.0%	76.0%	77.0%	
	L5+ Science	70.0%	72.0%	73.0%	71.0%	
	L5+ English & Maths	66.0%	67.0%	67.0%	66.0%	
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma		45.8%	46.8%	49.7%	
	2 Levels English			59.0%	63.0%	
	2 Levels Maths			29.0%	24.0%	

*Not Available*

3.2 Given current performance, it is likely to be very challenging for the school to meet its published targets despite the high level of support from the local authority and the Black Country Challenge.

3.3 The school's current predictions based on their internal monitoring shows that 26.1% of students are expected to achieve 5 good GCSE including English and mathematics in 2009. This would represent a satisfactory improvement although the school still remains below the national 30% threshold and FFT predictions.

	<b>Sneyd expected results in 2009 based on previous pupil progression rates</b>	<b>School Prediction</b>	<b>FFT B</b>	<b>FFT D</b>	<b>Target</b>
<b>5+ A*-C (including English and mathematics)</b>	18.9%	26.1%	30.0%	35.0%	30.0%

3.4 The local authority has set up a Progress Impact Review Team to work with the school to prioritise interventions and coordinate support for the leadership team in securing improved outcomes for pupils.



#### **4 OFSTED INSPECTION, November 2008**

- 4.1 Sneyd was inspected by Ofsted on 12 – 13 November 2008. The school was advised by HMI Paul Joyce (reporting inspector) that it is failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education and that *“the school requires significant improvement because it is performing significantly less well than in all the circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform”*. The school is therefore given a ‘Notice to Improve’, Ofsted Dec 2009.
- 4.2 Many students do not make the progress expected from their starting points and a high proportion of students significantly underachieve. Standards are exceptionally low. Inadequate progress is adversely affecting the development of skills that will contribute to students’ future economic well being.
- 4.3 Significant improvement is required in relation to the level of students’ achievement throughout the school and also the quality of teaching and learning. The school’s sixth form also requires significant improvement.
- 4.4 The Ofsted report has been circulated to the Panel.

## APPENDIX A NATIONAL CHALLENGE TRUST ARRANGEMENTS

Different trust arrangements are available for schools wishing to make such changes to their governance arrangements; however, as Sneyd is a National Challenge school and is in an Ofsted category, the DCSF would expect the LA to apply for a National Challenge Trust as introduced in September 2008. The arrangements for this are set out below in extracts from the DCSF guidance.

“National Challenge Trusts (NCTs) are hard-edged solutions for schools that are unable to raise their results but where establishing an academy may not be the right solution. Becoming a trust school is a way for schools to raise standards through strengthening collaboration and drawing on the expertise and energy of their partners to support their strategic leadership”.

“NCTs will exist as foundation schools with a foundation (Trust) acquired under the provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. NCTs will be local authority maintained schools supported by a trust with charitable status. The role in law of the foundation (Trust) of a National Challenge Trust school will be to appoint a majority of governors to the governing body of the school and to hold land on trust on behalf of the school. The governing body of the school will continue to be responsible for the running of the school and will receive the school’s delegated budget from the local authority. As a foundation school, the governing body of the school will employ staff and will be the admissions authority, so that the school will be a self-governing school within the local authority maintained family of schools”.

“NCTs will be different from the existing Trust school model in the following ways:

- the decision to create a NCT is triggered by local authority intervention rather than by the school – **either** by closing the school and reopening it as a trust school **or** by removing the governing body and replacing it with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to steer the school towards trust status;
- the trust must represent a radical option for transforming the school, with a clear focus on school improvement and with the involvement of at least one strong education partner – which may be a school or a non-school education partner such as an HE or FE college;
- there must be governance arrangements which allow the strong education partner to take over the running of the weaker school through the Trust appointing a majority of the governors to the weak school;
- up to £750,000 in funding over 3 years (or up to £1 million in the case of secondary modern schools – non selective schools in selective areas) is available to support National Challenge Trust schools where NCT has been approved by the department (DCSF) as part of the local authority’s national Challenge strategy”.

The choice of trust partners is of great importance. A trust would effectively be an improvement partnership and could be led by a strong, local school to collaborate and build capacity; a powerful external partner such as a local business or university would add energy and capacity to the trust. Closure of the weak school and the opening of a new trust school would give the school and the community it serves a fresh start and a break with previous underachievement; the additional funding available would enable the school to restructure leadership, attract fresh teachers and develop ambitious plans for raising attainment. The DCSF has indicated to Walsall that a strong school would be one where:

- a 60%+ students achieve 5+ GCSE grades A\*-C including English and maths
- b there is a positive Contextual Value Added Score
- c the head teacher is a National Leader of Education
- d a school with a subject specialism.

No school in Walsall would meet all 4 criteria. In view of this it is proposed to explore the possibility of other partners from the HE and FE sectors should scrutiny request this course of action.

For the purpose of National Challenge governance solutions that involve closure and reopening of schools, exemption from the requirement to hold a competition for the new school will be signed off by Ministers as part of the overall approval of National Challenge plans.

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