

Cabinet – 21 October 2009

Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College: outcome of consultation on future

Portfolio:	Councillor R Walker, Children's Services
Service:	Walsall Children's Services - Serco
Wards:	All Walsall wards but particularly Bloxwich West, Bloxwich East, Willenhall North, Willenhall South and Short Heath
Key decision:	Yes
Forward plan:	Yes

1. Summary of report

- 1.1 This report provides details of the outcome of consultation on a single option (option A) for the future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College. This short consultation was agreed by Cabinet on 15 July 2009 when members considered a report on the outcome of consultation on three options for the future of the school.
- 1.2 The details of this option (option A in the initial consultation) are 'that current education provision at Sneyd ceases on 31 August 2012. No pupils would be admitted to Year 7 or the sixth form in September 2010 and subsequent years. Pupils would transfer on a year on year basis to places at other schools in the borough'.
- 1.3 This option reflects the grave circumstances at the school with regard to pupil numbers and standards.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Cabinet considers the responses to the consultation.
- 2.2 That Cabinet decides to proceed with the statutory process and approves the publication of a statutory proposal to close Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College from 31 August 2012, with no pupils admitted to Year 7 or the sixth form in September 2010 and subsequent years. Pupils would transfer on a year on year basis to places at other schools in the borough.
- 2.3 That Cabinet asks officers to explore the opportunity to provide support during the transition period with regard to admissions, transport and uniforms and report back on these matters to a future Cabinet meeting.

- 2.4 That Cabinet asks officers to continue to work on the development of an Expression of Interest for a University Technical College.

3. Background information

- 3.1 On 22 April 2009, Cabinet approved consultation on three options for the future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College. This followed previous consideration of the future of the school by Cabinet on 22 October 2008, when Members referred the matter to the Children and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel (CYPSP) for full consideration of **all** options available to the school and asked that the full implications of the community uses be considered in conjunction with any proposal coming forward in relation to the school.
- 3.2 The CYPSP held a special meeting at Sneyd on 20 November 2008 and reconvened on 18 December 2008. After considering the options and additional information, the Panel decided to establish a working group to consider the options in greater detail. The Working Group met on 6 January, 15 January and 3 February 2009 and reported back to the Panel on 5 March 2009.
- 3.2 The Panel resolved to recommend that:
- a) Cabinet pursue a solution that ensures the continuation of education provision on the site of Sneyd Community School, supported by further investigation into viable solutions between Council Officers, representatives of Walsall Children's Services Serco, the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) and the Office of the Schools Commissioner (OSC);
 - b) This solution for the continuation of education provision on the site of Sneyd Community School must:
 - 1. be financially viable
 - 2. be devised with particular attention paid to its impact on all schools within the north west area of Walsall
 - 3. meet the needs of the local community.
- 3.3 After full consideration of the report of the Working Group and a wide range of other information including pupil numbers, standards and viability issues, Cabinet decided to approve consultation on three options (detailed in **Appendix A**) for the future of the school; all of the options involved the closure of Sneyd but differed in future arrangements for the education of pupils who would be on roll at Sneyd in September 2009.
- 3.4 On 15 July 2009, Cabinet considered a report on the outcome of consultation and approved a short consultation, as advised by the DCSF, on a single option (option A) 'that current education provision at Sneyd ceases on 31 August 2012. No pupils would be admitted to Year 7 or the sixth form in September 2010 and subsequent years. Pupils would transfer on a year on year basis to places at other schools in the borough' as set out in the Cabinet report of 22 April 2009.

The consultation document is attached as **Appendix A**. The outcomes of this short consultation are set out in section 10 of this report.

3.5 Detailed information relating to pupil numbers, standards (including an update following the recent HMI monitoring visit) and viability are provided below.

3.6 Pupil numbers

3.6.1 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.

3.6.2 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. Table 1 below provides more details of the decline in numbers. The projected number on roll in January 2010 is based on data for September 2009 which shows a fall of 200 from January 2009; projections for following years are based on Year 7 admissions of 70 (as in September 2009).

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	893	- 122	12%
Projections			
2010	690	These projections are based on numbers on roll in September 2009.	
2011	574		
2012	494		
2013	460		

3.6.3 The number of pupils admitted to Year 7 has reduced over this period and this is illustrated in Table 2 below which provides details of the number of pupils in each year group in September 2009.

Table 2 Pupil numbers by year group at Sneyd (September 2009)

	Adm no	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 12	Year 13	Total
Sneyd	250	70	101	104	150	186	57	22	690

3.6.4 Analysis of the 2009 admissions round shows that of the 3,692 applications, there are 57 first preferences for Sneyd. Details of the preferences for Sneyd are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Preferences for Sneyd, 2009 Admission Round

	1 st preference	2nd preference	3 rd preference	4 th preference	5 th preference	Total preferences
Sneyd	57	60	39	18	4	178
Walsall schools	3,692	2,317	1,436	753	499	8,697

Data as at March 2009

- 3.6.5 In March 2009, 104 places were offered at Sneyd for September 2009; the actual intake into Year 7 was 70. As this intake replaced a Year 11 cohort of 226, this had a major impact on pupil numbers. In addition, some parents of pupils in other year groups have made alternative arrangements for the secondary education of their children and taken up places at other schools in Walsall and in neighbouring authorities. This major reduction in pupil numbers of approximately 200 since January 2009 will result in a very significant reduction in the revenue funding the school receives.
- 3.6.6 Sneyd does not have feeder schools however, traditionally, a large number of pupils have transferred from Mossley, Beacon, Abbey and Busill Jones Primary Schools. There has been a marked reduction in the number of first preferences from pupils at Busill Jones and Woodlands over the last three years and it is likely that this is in part a reflection of changes in the relative popularity of secondary schools and also the increasing ease of securing a place at other local schools because of the overall reduced demand for places. It is envisaged that this trend will continue.
- 3.6.7 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.
- 3.7 School Standards and Effectiveness
- 3.7.1 Sneyd is a National Challenge School. Rapid improvement is required by the government at National Challenge Schools to ensure that 30% of more pupils achieve five good grades at GCSE (or equivalent) including English and mathematics by 2011. Confidence in the school sustaining improvement and attaining the national expectation by 2011 is low at present (as indicated by both the Black Country Challenge and School Improvement Advisers). Failure to perform above this level in 2011 would result in a direction from the Secretary of State.
- 3.7.2 For a long period, Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College has failed to provide a high quality learning environment in which standards and quality of learning are sustained at a level that is satisfactory or better. Although Sneyd has been working to improve educational standards at the school for a number of years with additional support from the local authority and the Black Country Challenge, standards remain inadequate.

- 3.7.3 The school was first placed in an Ofsted category in 2005 when special measures were required. The 2005 report noted low standards and poor quality of teaching. In November 2006, after a period of substantial support, the school was removed from special measures and deemed satisfactory. However, improvements made by the school during this intervention were not sustained and a further inspection by Ofsted in November 2008 determined that the school required significant improvement and Sneyd was given a Notice to Improve. Significant improvements to teaching, education standards and also to sixth form provision are required. To date, improvement at Sneyd has only been identified as satisfactory both by Ofsted (May 2009) and by the Local Authority.
- 3.7.4 Standards are significantly lower than at similar schools. As full comparative data for 2009 will not be available for some time yet, the following data also relates to 2008. The 2008 Key Stage 4 results were disappointing and show a downward trend over the last two years. At 19% 5+A*-C (including English and maths), the school is in the **bottom 9% of all secondary schools in the country**. The three year improvement trend (Table 4 below) shows that there has been no evidence of sustained improvement on this indicator. Whilst Walsall has improved at over twice the national rate of improvement, Sneyd School has actually declined over that same period.

Table 4 GCSE Results
(% achieving 5+ A* - C (or equivalent) including English and mathematics)

	2006	2007	2008	2009	Improvement	
					2006-2008	2006-2009
Sneyd	20%	17%	19%	26.5%*	- 1%	6.5%*
Walsall	34.8%	35.5%	40.6%	43.1%*	+ 5.8%	8.3%*
National	45.3%	46.3%	47.6%	NA	+ 2.3%	NA

NA: not yet available

*Unvalidated

- 3.7.5 Sneyd's Contextual Value Added score (the score that compares pupil progress in the school to all students nationally) from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 4 of 961.3 places them as one of the **lowest 1% of schools in the country**. National data shows that for all pupils (with the exception of lower ability girls in science) the school's outcomes for the past three years have been **significantly below what was expected**. In many cases the 2008 results were significantly below those of the previous year. Sneyd has the second lowest average point score for A levels in the borough. More detailed comparative data for achievement at KS3 and GCSE is provided in **Appendix B**.
- 3.7.6 Unvalidated Key Stage 3 results in English, mathematics and science in 2009 were higher than in previous years; only English results met or exceeded the targets set by the school.
- 3.7.7 Unvalidated results for 2009 show improvement on the key GCSE measures although the school still remains below the 30% national benchmark for pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Confidence in the school sustaining improvement and attaining the national expectation of 30% by 2011 is low at present as the improvement evident in the 2009 results reflected high levels of support from the local authority and Black Country Challenge in addition to the school's own efforts. At KS4 the achievement of 5+A*-C including English and mathematics was 28%, close to the target of 30%. The achievement

for 5+A*-G and for 5+A*-G including English and mathematics decreased. The levels achieved are still below the unvalidated average for LA schools, but the gap has closed compared to previous years. Failure to perform above this level in 2011 would result in a direction from the Secretary of State. The school does not demonstrate a history of being able to sustain and build upon improvement following a period of significant intervention and this remains of concern to the Local Authority.

3.7.8 The Post 16 results have improved however, the partnership arrangements for the delivery of post 16 courses with Pool Hayes will continue in the 2009/10 academic year for Year 13 pupils only

3.7.9 Based on the most recent published national data (see Table 5 below) Sneyd school also has a high proportion of pupil absence.

Table 5 Absence levels

	Absence	Persistent absence (pupils with 20% or more absence from school)
Sneyd	9.6%	10.8%
Walsall	7.5%	6.7%
National	7.4%	6.6%

3.7.10 Over the last year a significant amount of **additional support** has been provided to the school and details of this are provided in Table 6 below. Additional funding of £83,500 has been focused on supporting pupils learning and a wide range of support from the Local Authority, National Strategy and Black Country consultants has been provided to teachers and leaders in the school.

Table 6 Additional support for Sneyd

By the Local Authority	By the Black Country Challenge (includes reference to programmes as well as individual support)
<p>Science review; teaching and learning quality assurance; raising attainment in maths and science; regular performance impact reviews.</p> <p>National strategies Regional Adviser support for English; local authority consultancy support for English.</p> <p>Weekly consultancy support for maths.</p> <p>ICT consultancy support KS4 and KS5</p> <p>£20,000 for learning mentor; tracking and interventions (EIW); £12,500 for raising achievement at KS4 (NRF)</p> <p>Education Welfare Service provides additional sessions from an Attendance Support Worker to target the high rate of persistent absence with a focus on all pupils whose attendance is between 80% – 85%.</p>	<p>£25,000 Academic coach for mathematics</p> <p>£26,000 Academic mentor and training</p> <p>Support from Shire Oak (NCSL/LLE)</p> <p>Leadership and Management training (NCSL)</p>

3.7.11 Whilst there has been satisfactory progress in addressing the issues, as recognised by Ofsted in May 2009, significant improvement is still required if the school is to perform at or above the expected national threshold level of 30% of pupils achieving 5+A*- C (or equivalent) including English and mathematics in 2011.

3.8 Viability

3.8.1 The number of pupils at Sneyd is in decline, irrespective of the consultation proposal, and this is having a direct impact on the funding available to meet the annual running costs of the school, and the school's ability to deliver a viable education service. The other financial consequence of falling rolls at the school is that the cost per Sneyd pupil, to the Schools Budget, is increasing significantly, as highlighted in Table 7, below.

3.8.2 As the number of pupils on roll reduces, so does the funding delegated to the school. Inevitably, the quality of the education available to the pupils is affected during such a period because both the fixed costs of the school, and the delegated budget share allocated to the school, increasingly comprise a greater proportion of the school's resources. This is exemplified in Table 7 below which shows the delegated budget share allocations, at pupil unit level. Increasing as pupil numbers reduce, for both pupil-led and school and site specific factors. The impact of Sneyd's falling rolls on the operation of the delegated budget share formulae means that places at Sneyd schools are becoming very costly at the expense of all other pupils in the borough. We now know that pupil numbers at Sneyd have reduced more quickly than anticipated and this will increase even further the cost per pupil to the School's Budget during a possible closure period.

Table 7 Delegated budget share allocations

Pupil numbers	Pupil led delegated funding per pupil	School and site specific delegated funding per pupil	Total delegated funding per pupil	Annual increase in cost per pupil (base year 2009-10)	Additional cost to the Dedicated Schools Grant
	£	£	£	£	£
798 *	3,533	794	4,327	0	0
668 **	3,821	934	4,755	428	285,904
358 **	3,945	1,615	5,561	806	288,548
100 **	5,643	5,542	11,185	5,624	562,400
Total additional cost over 4 years					1,136,852

Notes to table

- * budget share allocation based upon 2009-10 actual budget share values
- ** budget share allocations based upon the estimated 2010-11 budget share values
- The figures exclude LSC funded post 16 pupils and SEN costs for named pupils

3.8.3 The school's 2010-11 original, draft budget submitted to the authority, initially highlighted a deficit of approximately £660,000 (based upon a school population of 668 which included an intake to Y7 of 100 pupils in September 2009) if no action was taken to reduce costs in the school. As the majority of costs are staffing related, then this is the budget area which needs the closest scrutiny. Since the school identified this potential budget deficit, the pupil numbers have reduced even further and there are now 611 pupils in the school, excluding the

79, 6th form students, as they are funded directly by the LSC. The projected school budget deficit for 2010-11 could escalate to £1m without a robust review of the use of resources within the school, and the breadth of the curriculum on offer. If the budget deficit is not addressed as a matter of urgency, this very large deficit will have to be met from the Schools' Budget, thereby reducing the funding available to all schools in the 2011-12 financial year,

- 3.8.3 Walsall Children's Services have started to support Sneyd school to work towards a balanced budget for 2010-11. However, as pupil numbers continue to reduce, then this challenge becomes more difficult, because the funding delivered via the delegated budget share will be insufficient to meet the fixed costs of the school and deliver a balanced curriculum for the remaining pupils.

The current aim of the support work is to balance the school's budget, or minimise the deficit, as at 31 March 2011. A financial proposal could then be put to the Schools Forum, in respect of the period 1 April 2011 to 31 August 2012, to agree funding to support the remaining Sneyd pupils, during the latter stages of the closure period, if this is the decision of Cabinet. Some savings have already been identified in the 2009-10 budget, which will carry over into the 2010-11 financial year, to help to reduce the possible deficit, but the budget review work is far from finished at this point in time. A range of options need to be considered, by the school, some of which may involve engaging the support of other schools.

- 3.8.4 Additional costs will also be incurred by the Council in respect of potential redundancy costs, which are unquantifiable at this point in time. A group of school improvement advisers is already working with the school to identify any areas of overstaffing in curriculum areas and to explore creative ways of maintaining an appropriate curriculum, during a period when funding is reducing. Inevitably there will be some redundancy costs for the Council to meet as the school becomes less financially and (subsequently) educationally viable. A worse case scenario, based upon closure of the school in 2012, would be costs of approximately £630k, if no staff were to leave. However, it is very likely that the £630k will be reduced due to staff turnover during the next three years. There may also be support available from other schools in respect of curriculum delivery, and there may be the potential for some staff to transfer to the receiving schools of Sneyd pupils. Until there is a clearer view on how the staffing situation will be managed, no definitive costs can be calculated,

- 3.8.5 Education support for pupils at Sneyd during any transition phase will be sought through the Black Country Challenge and the DCSF has indicated its intention to offer this support.

3.9 Overview

- 3.9.1 Local Authorities (LA) have a statutory responsibility under the Education Act, 1996, "to ensure that the schools in its area are sufficient in numbers, character and equipment to provide education suitable for different ages and abilities".

- 3.9.2 To meet this responsibility to manage school places in Walsall, the Council needs to ensure that it provides enough school places for Walsall pupils and qualifying out of the borough pupils.

- 3.9.3 The Council is also responsible for maximising the percentage of parental preferences for school places that are met. The Council cannot allow popular, over-subscribed schools to be reduced in size. In order to maximise the response to parental preferences for places at over-subscribed schools, it is necessary to remove surplus places at less popular schools.
- 3.9.4 The Information as to Provision of Education (England) Regulations, 2008, require local authorities to report to the Secretary of State those schools with a surplus of 25% or more places. The number of schools with 25% or more surplus places and the overall percentage of surplus school places in a local authority informs the inspection regime for the Council.
- 3.9.5 The management of school places makes an important contribution to monitoring and raising standards of achievement of pupils in Walsall schools by ensuring that all Walsall schools are both educationally and financially viable.
- 3.9.6 Schools with declining rolls receive reduced budgets which inevitably result in reductions to staffing levels that make delivery of a high quality, broad and responsive curriculum very challenging.

4. Resource considerations

4.1 Financial:

Revenue

- 4.1.1 There would be additional transport costs as the majority of pupils would have to transfer to a more distant school; the cost of transport would need to be met for pupils who live outside the statutory walking distance of 3 miles to their nearest appropriate school. Children from low income families may qualify for transport to schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home. Children from low income groups are legally defined as those who are entitled to free school meals or those whose families are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit. Eligibility for transport assistance is assessed on an annual basis.
- 4.1.2 The staff employed at Sneyd are employees of Walsall Council. If the decision is made to close the school, support will be provided to staff to find alternative employment in a Walsall school. Receiving schools are often keen to secure the services of staff from closing schools as they bring with them knowledge of the pupils and their families in addition to their professional expertise; they can also provide a sense of security for transferring pupils. As additional staff would be required at other schools, it is likely that many staff would secure alternative employment. In the event that these efforts are unsuccessful and staff remained without alternative employment when the school closed, they would be entitled to redundancy payment and in some cases access to their pensions. Every effort would be taken to minimise redundancies.

Capital

- 4.1.3 There are no direct capital costs with option A as pupils would take up available places at other schools in Walsall and no additional accommodation would be required.

Costs relating to closure of the Sneyd school building

- 4.1.4 There would be capital costs associated with the closure of the Sneyd School building in August 2012. Costs which would need to be covered for the period the building is vacant include boarding up, security and rates.

Capital resources

- 4.1.5 The estimated capital costs would relate solely to the closure of the Sneyd building and provision would need to be made for these costs when the Council has received notification of its capital allocations for 2012/13.

4.2 Legal:

- 4.2.1 The closure of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College is subject to statutory procedures. Consultation on the single option (option A) has now taken place and it is now for the proposing authority ie Cabinet to decide whether it wishes to proceed. Details of the consultation process are provided in section 10 of this report.

- 4.2.2 If Cabinet decides to proceed to the next stage, a statutory notice would be published on 6 November 2009 and a six week representation period would follow during which representations and comments could be made. The final decision would be taken by Cabinet in January 2010.

4.3 Staffing:

- 4.3.1 The staff employed at Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College are employees of Walsall Council. If the decision is made to close the school, support will be provided to staff to find alternative employment in a Walsall School. Receiving schools are often keen to secure the services of staff from closing schools as they bring with them knowledge of the pupils and their families in addition to their professional expertise; they can also provide a sense of security for transferring pupils. As additional staff would be required at a number of other schools if this option is taken forward, it is likely that many staff would secure alternative employment. In the event that these efforts are unsuccessful and staff remained without alternative employment when the school closed, they would be entitled to redundancy payment and in some cases access to their pensions. Every effort would be taken to minimise redundancies.

5. Citizen impact

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

6. Community safety

There are no direct implications for community safety.

7. Environmental impact

There are no environmental issues arising from this report.

8. Performance and risk management issues

- 8.1 **Risk:** The proposal to close the current education provision at Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College will mitigate the risks of Sneyd becoming financially unviable over a long period of time.
- 8.2 **Performance management:** The option to close the current education provision at Sneyd Community will remove the danger of the school's academic results declining further.

9. Equality implications

- 9.1 Existing and potential future pupils at the school will be supported to find alternative school places as needed.
- 9.2 Pupils moving to higher performing schools will receive enhanced opportunities to maximise their educational potential.

10. Consultation

- 10.1 The short consultation on the single option for the future of Sneyd commenced on 14 September and ended on 2 October 2009.
- 10.2 A consultation document which set out the details of this option was issued to parents, staff, governors and members of the student council at Sneyd. The document was also sent to parents, staff, governors and members of the student council at schools where it is expected that pupils from Sneyd would take up a significant number of available places; these schools are: Alumwell, Blue Coat, Brownhills, Grace Academy Darlaston and Joseph Leckie. A limited number of places is available at more local schools. The consultation document was also sent to the parents of all Year 6 children at primary schools in the local area and from which pupils have transferred to Sneyd in September 2009. The document was also circulated to all Walsall schools, other stakeholders and statutory consultees and was made available to the public through local libraries and the schools; it was also posted on the Education Walsall website. In total, over 7,000 copies of the consultation document were issued.

Written Consultation Responses

- 10.3 Although over 7,000 copies of the consultation document, which included a response form, were issued, only 30 response forms were returned and one email was received. This is a disappointing level of response especially in view of the matter under consideration and the number of consultation documents issued. One spoilt response form was received. Details of those participating in the consultation are provided in Table 8 below.

Table 8 Number of consultation responses received

School	School Council / pupils	Staff	Parents	Governors	Total
Sneyd	2	1	11 (inc email)	1 (also staff)	15
Other secondary schools	0	1	2	1	4
Primary schools	10	1	0	1	12
Other	0	0	0	0	0
Total	12	3	13	3	31

- 10.4 A total of 15 responses were received from members of the Sneyd school community. Respondees stated their preference for the school to remain open and expressed concerns about the possible impact of transition arrangements on pupils who would need to continue their education at other schools. Concern was also raised about the availability of places at other schools in the locality during the transition period and the likelihood of pupils in the immediate area attending pupils in neighbouring authorities. There was some acceptance that the school had underperformed in recent years. The need to make appropriate arrangements for the current Year 9 pupils as soon as possible after a final decision being made was emphasised.
- 10.5 Responses from other school communities recognised the seriousness of the matter and the reasons why the proposed closure is considered necessary. Questions were raised about how pupil places would be allocated and the possible impact of additional pupils at receiving schools.
- 10.6 A primary school not in the locality of Sneyd had used the consultation as an exercise in citizenship.

11 Overview and recommendations

- 11.1 Discussions between officers and officials from the Office for the Schools Commissioner have continued throughout this process in order to secure the best possible way forward for pupils at Sneyd and at all schools in Walsall in the short, medium and longer terms.
- 11.2 It has been made explicit by the Office for the Schools Commissioner that the Sneyd School community's preference for an 11-19 academy would not be supported. At the meeting on 15 July 2009, Cabinet noted that an 11-19 academy is not a viable proposal for the future of Sneyd.
- 11.3 In view of all of the above information, officers recommend that Cabinet decides to proceed with the statutory process and approves the publication of a statutory proposal to close Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College from 31 August 2012, with no pupils admitted to Year 7 or the sixth form in September 2010 and subsequent years. Pupils would transfer on a year on year basis to places at other schools in the borough.

- 11.4 Subject to 11.3 above, the Council has a clear intent to ensure that pupils affected by the proposed transition arrangements do not become disaffected because of transport and uniform issues when transferring to other schools. Officers will be asked to explore the opportunity to provide support during the transition period with regard to admissions, transport and uniforms and report back on these matters to a future Cabinet meeting.
- 11.5 Members had asked for the continued use of the community facilities on the Sneyd site to be taken into account throughout this process and with this option this would be secured at least until 2012 and potentially for many years after once a final decision has been made about the type of learning that will continue on the Sneyd site.
- 11.6 During the consultation period there has been a number of meetings between the local authority, the DCSF, Walsall College and Wolverhampton University regarding a 14-19 Engineering Academy / University Technical College (the new designation for such establishments). In addition, there are on-going discussions with headteachers. Conversations have also been held with Directors for Children's Services across the region and the level of interest from other Black Country authorities is encouraging. A statement of interest has been submitted and positive feedback has been received from the DCSF. Whilst the implementation of this project remains challenging, it would bring additional opportunities for students in Walsall and Cabinet is recommended to ask officers to continue to develop an Expression of Interest with partners, ensuring that a wide range of stakeholders is fully engaged during the next phase.

Background papers

Cabinet report, 22 October 2008: Review of Secondary Schools: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College.

Scrutiny report, 20 November 2008: Cabinet report dated 22 October 2008: Review of Secondary Schools: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College

Scrutiny report, 18 December 2008: Options for the Future: Sneyd Community – a Specialist Maths and Computing College

Sneyd Working Group, 5 March 2009: Report to the Children's and Young People Scrutiny and Performance Panel

Scrutiny Report to Cabinet, 18 March 2009: Review of Secondary Schools: the Future of Sneyd Community School – A Specialist maths and Computing College

Cabinet report, 22 April 2009: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College – Options for Consultation.

Cabinet report, 22 April 2009: The Future of Sneyd – A Specialist Maths and Computing College – Options for Consultation – supplementary report.

Cabinet report 15 July 2009: Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College: outcome of consultation on future.

Consultation response forms

Letters from consultees


Ofsted report, November 2008

Letter from HMI following monitoring visit, June 2009

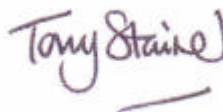
Office of the Schools Commissioner, Note of Visit, dated 5 June 2009

Author

Susan Lupton
Head of Planning and Development Services
☎ 01922 686231
✉ susan.lupton@walsallcs.serco.com



Signed:
Executive Director:
Pauline Pilkington
9 October 2009



Signed:
Tony Stainer
Managing Director, Walsall Children's
Services - Serco
9 October 2009



Signed:
Portfolio Holder: Councillor R Walker
9 October 2009



Walsall Council

Walsall Children's Services



THE FUTURE OF SNEYD COMMUNITY – A SPECIALIST MATHS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

14 September 2009

THE FUTURE OF SNEYD COMMUNITY – A SPECIALIST MATHS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE

INTRODUCTION

Walsall Children's Services – Serco is undertaking public consultation on behalf of Walsall Council on the future of Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College. This short consultation on a single option follows consideration by Cabinet in July 2009 on the outcome of consultation on three options held in May/June 2009.

The consultation period of three weeks will last until 2 October 2009. No decisions will be taken by Walsall Council until 21 October 2009, following full consideration of consultation responses.

SNEYD COMMUNITY – A SPECIALIST MATHS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE

Sneyd Community – A Specialist Maths and Computing College provides secondary education for pupils between the ages of 11 and 18 years; the school has specialist status for maths and computing.

WHY IS THE FUTURE OF SNEYD UNDER CONSIDERATION?

The future of the school is under consideration as a result of a sustained and significant fall in the number of pupils on roll at the school and also because of the challenges the school continues to face in its efforts to raise standards. These factors have resulted in the school becoming educationally and financially unviable.

Pupil numbers In January 2009, there were 893 pupils on roll at Sneyd; 99 of these pupils were in the sixth form. The number of places in each year group is 250 but the number of pupils admitted to Year 7 has fallen considerably over the last five years. In Jan 2009, there were only 110 pupils in Year 7, approximately half the number (226) in Year 11. As a result of the fall in admissions, 34% of places at the school are empty / surplus. Most of the funding a school receives is based on the number of pupils on roll and a reduction in pupil numbers affects the financial viability of a school.

Standards Sneyd is a National Challenge School. Rapid improvement is required by the government at National Challenge Schools to ensure that 30% of more pupils achieve five good grades at GCSE (or equivalent) including English and mathematics by 2011. Although Sneyd has been working to improve educational standards at the school for a number of years with additional support from the local authority and the Black Country Challenge, standards remain inadequate. The school was in special measures between January 2005 and November 2006. However, improvements made by the school during this intervention were not sustained once the school was removed from special measures. A further inspection by Ofsted in November 2008 determined that the school required significant improvement and Sneyd was given a Notice to Improve. To date, improvement at Sneyd has only been identified as steady both by Ofsted (May 2009) and by the Local Authority.

Standards are significantly lower than at similar schools. The 2008 Key Stage 4 results were disappointing and show a downward trend over the last two years. At 19% 5+A*-C (including English and maths) the school is in the bottom 9% of all secondary schools in the country. Its CVA, which measures the progress made by pupils at the school is, at 961, one of the lowest (bottom 1%) in the country. Indications for 2009 do not suggest improvement will be rapid; it remains unlikely that the school will secure 30% in 2011. Confidence in the school sustaining improvement and attaining the national expectation by 2011 is low at present (as indicated by both the Black Country Challenge and School Improvement Advisers). Failure to perform above this level in 2011 would result in a direction from the Secretary of State. Unvalidated results for 2009 show improvement on the key GCSE measures although the school still remains below the 30% national benchmark for pupils achieving 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics. The school

does not demonstrate a history of being able to sustain and build upon improvement following a period of significant intervention and this remains of concern to the Local Authority.

WHAT IS THE PROPOSAL?

In July 2009, Cabinet considered the outcome of consultation on three options for the future of Sneyd and decided to hold a further, short consultation on a single option (option A). Details of this option are provided below. This option allows for the continuation of education provision on the Sneyd site in the form of a 14-19 Engineering Academy or a Skills Centre.

OPTION A

Current education provision at Sneyd ceases on 31 August 2012. No pupils would be admitted to Year 7 or the sixth form in September 2010 and subsequent years. Pupils would transfer on a year on year basis to places at other schools in the borough.

Pupils who start Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 at Sneyd in September 2009 would complete their key stage at Sneyd. All pupils currently in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 would also complete their key stage at Sneyd. There would be no admissions to Year 7 or to the sixth form in September 2010 and following years. Details of the phased implementation of this option are provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Phased transfer arrangements

Year Group in 2009/10 school year	Transfer to alternative school
Y7 (2009 admission)	Sept 2012
Y8	Sept 2011
Y9	Sept 2010
Y10	Sept 2011 (Post 16)
Y11	Sept 2010 (Post 16)
Y12	Leave August 2011; alternative places available in Sept 2010 as appropriate
Y13	Leave August 2010

This would mean that the year groups on roll at Sneyd in the three school years prior to closure would be as shown in Table 2 below. In the 2009/10 school year, all year groups would operate. In 2010/11, the school population would comprise pupils in Year 8, Year 9, Year 11 and Year 13. In the 2011/12 school year, there would only be pupils in Year 9. During this transition period the local authority will work with the Black Country Challenge to provide support to the school.

Table 2 Proposed phased implementation arrangements

School Year		
2009/10	2010/11	2011/12
Y7	Y8	Y9
Y8	Y9	Y10 At alternative schools
Y9	Y10 At alternative schools	Y11 At alternative schools
Y10	Y11	Left school or Y12 at alternative schools
Y11	Left school or Y12 at alternative schools	Left school or Y13 at alternative schools
Y12	Y13	Left school Aug 2011
Y13	Left school Aug 2010	

Shaded boxes show the year groups on the Sneyd site.

There would be sufficient places available at other schools to accommodate transferring pupils from Sneyd. Details of the estimated availability of places at alternative schools are provided in **Appendix 1**.

Details of the advantages and disadvantages associated with this option are provided in Table 3.

Table 3 Option A advantages and disadvantages

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would provide a realistic timescale • Enables pupils to access places at higher achieving schools • Availability of places would enable pupils to transfer in groups • Minimises disruption for pupils • Pupils would complete their key stage at Sneyd • Receiving schools have time to plan for additional pupils from 2010 • Temporary accommodation would not be required • Additional posts would be available at the receiving schools, creating opportunities for Sneyd staff • 14 -19 proposal ensures the continuity of education provision on the Sneyd site • Pupils from Sneyd would have access to a broader range of curriculum opportunities at the receiving schools • Community use of the facilities on the Sneyd site would be secured through this option along side the proposed 14 – 19 provision • Additional places would be provided at Pool Hayes as part of the implementation of the secondary strategy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving schools would receive a large number of additional pupils • With the rapid decline in pupil numbers at Sneyd, the Schools Funding Formula is unlikely to be sufficient to fund the running of Sneyd especially in 2011/12 when there would only be pupils in Year 9 • Challenge of meeting Year 9 entitlement to a broad balanced curriculum in 2011/12 • Staff retention issues at Sneyd over the period to closure

HOW WOULD THIS OPTION AFFECT PUPILS AT SNEYD?

All pupils on roll at Sneyd would be offered a place at an alternative school.

Pupils who start Key Stage 3 or Key Stage 4 at Sneyd in September 2009 would complete their key stage at Sneyd as would all pupils currently in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4. At the end of their key stage pupils would transfer to other schools on a year on year phased basis from September 2010 as described above. Pupils starting sixth form studies in September 2009 would also be able to complete their two years of study at Sneyd.

Staff in the admissions team would work with parents to find the most appropriate alternative school place for their children. There would be extensive liaison between Sneyd and the schools to which pupils would transfer in order to minimise any disruption for pupils.

Pupils admitted to Year 7 in September 2009 would be able to complete Key Stage 3 at Sneyd, however, in view of the uncertainty about the future of the school, some parents may prefer their child to transfer to another school and in these cases the admissions team and Choice Adviser will help parents to find an alternative school place.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

Subject to Cabinet's decision in October, it is expected that the final decision regarding the future of Sneyd will be taken in January 2010. If the decision is to close the school, parents of Year 9 pupils (who would transfer to another school in September 2010) will be sent an application form and information about the

availability of places, options and transport etc and arrangements will be made for school visits. Completed applications will be processed in line with published admissions criteria and places offered. Given the availability of places, it is expected that pupils will be able to move to other schools in friendship groups. At present there are some places available in the relevant year group at Frank F Harrison, Pool Hayes and Willenhall, however, some pupils would transfer to more distant schools where larger numbers of places are available (Alumwell, Blue Coat CE, Brownhills, Darlaston and Joseph Leckie); small numbers of places are also available at other schools and details of these can be found in **Appendix 1**. In the autumn term 2010 this process would be followed for pupils in Year 8 in the 2009/10 school year but arrangements would be completed earlier in the year. Similar arrangements will be put in place for pupils starting Year 7 at Sneyd in September 2009 who would transfer to other schools in September 2012.

Similar assistance will be offered to Year 11 pupils who wish to join the sixth form at another school.

Receiving schools would hold a programme of transition activities in conjunction with Sneyd during the summer term. Transition activities are expected to include a variety of visits, joint activities including sports and performances and taster activities.

TRANSPORT TO OTHER SCHOOLS

The majority of pupils would transfer to a more distant school and the cost of transport would be met for pupils who live outside the statutory walking distance of 3 miles to their nearest appropriate school. Children from low income families may qualify for transport to schools between 2 and 6 miles from their home. Children from low income groups are legally defined as those who are entitled to free school meals or those whose families are in receipt of their maximum level of Working Tax Credit. Eligibility for transport assistance is assessed on an annual basis.

Transport costs would only be met for eligible pupils who transferred to another school at the end of their key stage. Post 16 pupils do not receive assistance with transport costs as they are over statutory school age, however, provision may be continued for pupils with a SEN statement.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RECEIVING SCHOOLS?

At the end of Year 9, Sneyd pupils would transfer to other schools at which places are available. Although some places are available at nearby schools, some pupils would take up places at more distant schools where there are larger numbers of empty places, for example Alumwell, Blue Coat CE, Brownhills, Grace Academy Darlaston and Joseph Leckie. Depending upon the numbers transferring to individual schools, additional staff may be required and additional teaching groups may need to be set up.

Receiving schools would hold a programme of transition activities in conjunction with Sneyd during the summer term. Transition activities are expected to include a variety of visits, joint activities including sports and performances and taster activities.

WILL YEAR 7 PUPILS BE ADMITTED TO SNEYD IN SEPTEMBER 2010?

If option A is implemented, no pupils would be admitted to Year 7 at Sneyd in September 2010. However, as the final decision is not expected to be taken until January 2010, parents will be able to include a preference for a place at Sneyd on their Preference Form as the closing date for applications for transfer to secondary school is 23 October 2009. Parents are urged to include other schools on their Preference Form because if the final decision is to close Sneyd, all preferences for Sneyd will be set aside. In following years parents would be able to list local secondary schools on their Preference Forms and it is expected that pupils would get a place at a local school.

HOW WOULD THIS OPTION AFFECT STAFF AT SNEYD?

The staff employed at Sneyd are employees of Walsall Council. If the decision is made to close the school, support will be provided to staff to find alternative employment in a Walsall school. Receiving schools are often keen to secure the services of staff from closing schools as they bring with them knowledge of the pupils and their families in addition to their professional expertise; they can also provide a sense of security for transferring pupils. As additional staff would be required at a number of other schools, it is likely that many staff would secure alternative employment. In the event that these efforts are unsuccessful and staff remained without alternative employment when the school closed, they would be entitled to redundancy payment and in some cases access to their pensions. Every effort would be taken to minimise redundancies.

HOW WOULD THIS OPTION AFFECT THE GOVERNORS AT SNEYD?

If it is decided to close Sneyd, the remit of the existing governing body would end on 31 August 2012. There would be opportunities for governors to be appointed to the governing body of other schools following elections for parent and staff representatives. There may also be opportunities for community governors to join other governing bodies.

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO THE SNEYD BUILDINGS AND SITE?

The existing buildings and site would continue to be used until August 2012. The Council wishes to retain education provision on the Sneyd site and detailed consideration is being given to the establishment of a 14-19 Engineering Academy or Skills Centre on the Sneyd site.

HOW WILL COMMUNITY USE OF FACILITIES ON THE SNEYD SITE BE RETAINED?

Community use of the facilities on the Sneyd site would be retained until August 2012. In the medium and longer term, these facilities could continue to be made available for community use through another secondary school, the proposed 14-19 Engineering Academy or Skills Centre or through other arrangements.

HOW CAN I MAKE MY VIEWS KNOWN?

The attached consultation response form provides an opportunity to comment on the proposal. Please do complete the consultation response form. We do want to hear your views. Unfortunately it will not be possible to send individual replies to consultation responses; however, issues raised will be included in a report on the outcome of consultation which will be considered by Walsall Council (Cabinet).

All responses should be received by 2 October 2009. A report on the response to the consultation will be considered by Walsall Council (Cabinet) on 21 October 2009.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The timetable below is provisional and is dependent upon decisions at each stage; however, every effort will be made to keep to it.

14 September 2009	Short consultation starts (approx 3 weeks)
2 October 2009	Consultation ends
21 October 2009	Walsall Council (Cabinet) considers response to consultation and decides whether to proceed with the proposal
November 2009	Statutory notice(s) published, 6 weeks representation period
January 2010	Consideration of proposal by Walsall Cabinet and final decision taken
January 2010	Notification of decision to pupils, parents, staff and governors at the schools

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

More information is available from:

Susan Lupton, Head of Planning and Development
Tel 01922 686231
Susan.lupton@walsallcs.serco.com

This document is available in large print. Please contact:

David Whitehouse
Tel 01922 686341
David.whitehouse@walsallcs.serco.com



Walsall Children's Services

Appendix 1

Availability of Places at Secondary Schools in Walsall (Sept 2009)

The columns headed Y9 provide an indication of places expected to be available for pupils transferring into Year 10 at other schools in September 2010

	Adm no	Estimated Pupil numbers Sept 2009					Estimated Available places Sept 2009					
		Y7#	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Y7	Y8	Y9	Y10	Y11	Total
Aldridge	259	259	258	258	258	258	0	1	1	1	1	4
Alumwell	195	189	179	151	160	155	6	16	44	35	40	141
Barr Beacon	245*	260	251	236	243	242	0	0	9	2	3	14
Blue Coat CE	180	178	150	127	163	154	2	30	53	17	26	128
Brownhills	182**	100	85	120	127	149	68	97	62	55	33	315
Darlaston	245	131	134	155	179	172	114	111	90	66	73	454
Frank F Harrison	180	180	179	172	164	159	0	1	8	16	21	46
Joseph Leckie	240	180	145	156	146	188	60	95	84	94	52	385
Pool Hayes	213	213	216	208	202	206	0	0	5	11	7	23
Queen Mary's G	96	96	96	95	96	96	0	0	1	0	0	1
Queen Mary's H	96	97	96	97	93	95	0	0	0	3	1	4
Shelfield Community Academy	240	242	252	237	184	213	0	0	3	56	27	86
Shire Oak	238	240	250	245	234	231	0	0	0	4	7	11
St Francis of Assisi	180	186	183	183	178	180	0	0	0	2	0	2
St Thomas More	210***	243	248	240	230	234	0	0	0	0	0	0
Streetly	243	243	244	231	213	240	0	0	12	30	3	45
Walsall Academy	168	168	168	168	168	168	0	0	0	0	0	0
Willenhall	270	270	273	255	269	260	0	0	15	1	10	26
Total	3,680	3,475	3,407	3,334	3,307	3,400	250	351	387	393	304	1,685
Sneyd Pupils	250	100	110	127	148	183						

Offers as at March for September 2009 admission.

* Barr Beacon: 260 from Sept 2009 (Y7 only), 245 Adm No for Y8 – Y11

** Brownhills: 168 from Sept 2009 (Y7 only), 182 Adm No for Y8 – Y11

*** St Thomas More: 243 from Sept 2009 (Y7 only), 210 Adm No for Y8 – Y11



Walsall Children’s Services

THE FUTURE OF SNEYD COMMUNITY – A SPECIALIST MATHS AND COMPUTING COLLEGE

CONSULTATION RESPONSE FORM

Walsall Children’s Services – Serco is undertaking public consultation on the proposals set out in the consultation document. The consultation period will end on 2 October 2009.

A consultation document has been published and is available from: Walsall Children’s Services – Serco; Sneyd and local libraries. It is also available on the Walsall Children’s Services – Serco website:-www.educationwalsall.com and can be accessed through the School Organisation section.

All interested parties are invited to make their views known by using this form to comment on the proposals. The form should be returned by **2 October 2009** to:-

Susan Lupton
Head of Planning and Development Services
Walsall Children’s Services - Serco
Education Development Centre
Pelsall Lane, Rushall
Walsall, WS4 1NG

Please note that it will not be possible to reply individually to consultation responses. However, issues raised will be included in a report on the outcome of consultation which will be considered by Walsall Council (Cabinet).

Comments and objections made during this consultation period will not automatically go forward into the statutory phase of the process.

It will help us to analyse consultation responses if you would indicate your interest in the proposal:

School	Pupil	Parent	Staff	Governor
Sneyd				
Other secondary school (state which)				
Primary school (state which)				
Other	Please state your interest			

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

Consultation Process

1. Have you seen a copy of the consultation pack?
Yes [] No []
2. Have you found this document helpful?
Yes [] No []
3. Please indicate your views on option A.

Views

Other comments

4. Please use the space below for any other comments.

Comment:

Thank you for taking the time to complete this consultation response form. All responses will be made available to Walsall's Cabinet to assist in their decision making on these matters.

This form should be returned by **2 October 2009** to the address given on page 9.

CONFIDENTIAL DRAFT

Appendix B

Achievement at Sneyd compared to Walsall and national data

	Sneyd	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 Target	2009*
KS3	L5+ English	70.1%	68.5%	55.9%	57.5%	67.0%	70.9
	L5+ Maths	55.2%	58.6%	55.9%	58.0%	80.0%	72.3
	L5+ Science	52.8%	53.4%	52.7%	54.1%	73.0%	60.8
	L5+ English & Maths	49.4%	51.6%	44.1%	47.0%	60.0%	62.8
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma	15.0%	20.0%	17.0%	19.0%	30.0%	26.5
	2 Levels English			24.0%	46.0%	45.0%	
	2 Levels Maths			6.0%	3.0%	20.0%	

	Walsall	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 Target	2009*
KS3	L5+ English	68.7%	67.9%	68.2%	70.8%	77.0%	71.1
	L5+ Maths	67.0%	72.2%	70.4%	71.7%	80.0%	72.3
	L5+ Science	61.3%	67.2%	66.8%	65.6%	78.0%	68.4
	L5+ English & Maths	58.6%	61.4%	61.3%	62.9%	73.0%	66.5
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma	35.7%	34.9%	35.5%	40.6%	48.3%	43.1
	2 Levels English			42.0%	50.0%	57.0%	
	2 Levels Maths			21.0%	17.0%	31.8%	

	National	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 Target	2009
KS3	L5+ English	74.0%	73.0%	74.0%			
	L5+ Maths	74.0%	77.0%	76.0%			
	L5+ Science	70.0%	72.0%	73.0%			
	L5+ English & Maths	66.0%	67.0%	67.0%			
GCSE	5+A*-C inc En & Ma		45.8%	46.8%	47.6%		
	2 Levels English			54.0%	55.0%		
	2 Levels Maths			27.0%	22.0%		

Not Available

*unvalidated