**Reorganisation of Catholic Education in Flintshire**

**Please note, the full Consultation Document will give more detail about the proposed Reorganisation of Catholic Education in Flintshire.**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

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| **Question** | **Response** |
| **Background to the Proposal** | |
| **Why build a through school?** | The benefits of 3-18 schools can be summarised as follows:   * through coherent and consistent styles of teaching and learning across the school pupils’ learning experiences are more stable * the comprehensive and common system for assessing, recording and tracking pupil progress throughout his/her schooling ensures a more preventative intervention process is available and therefore pupils with additional needs can maintain relationships with supporting agencies throughout their school career if required. * by having a common ethos pupils do not have to adapt to a new culture on moving schools, in the case of this proposal this would also strengthen the catholic ethos and culture. * a greater flexibility to provide the appropriate curriculum for individuals regardless of age. * increased access for pupils to a range of specialist accommodation, facilities and learning resources. * a common attendance and behaviour policy means that routines are established and values understood from an early age. * parents may remain more involved in their children’s education as they do not have to establish new relationships with staff.   The great strength of all-through education is the continuity of educational experience which negates the transition “dips” in pupil performance. A 3-18 school provides the opportunity to provide a “bridge” between key stages in order to create a seamless transition for pupils in terms of curriculum planning, learning and teaching. It can allow for a significant sharing of subject expertise and primary pedagogy across curriculum the age ranges. |
| **In an All Through School where there are shared facilities (e.g. Sports Hall), how would the designers ensure that primary learners are not at a disadvantage over secondary needs?** | One of the advantages of an All Through School is that primary pupils can access the best facilities including dedicated science and technology labs, a dedicated chapel, music suites and sports facilities.  Careful timetabling enables the use of these facilities across all phases of education. |
| **Has there been a Feasibility Study in the area?**  **Is the land at St Richard Gwyn / St Mary’s large enough for a new school?**  **Will there be enough room for outdoor areas?**  **What effect might this have on traffic in the area?**  **Will the building works impact on pupils currently at St Richard Gwyn?** | There has been an in-depth Feasibility Study undertaken by an independent company on the grounds of St Richard Gwyn and St Mary’s, Flint.  This has included compliance with:   * Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 * Flintshire Land Development Plan * Parking Standards * Buildings Bulletin 98 * Flood Risk * Acoustics * Geo Environmental * Services and Infrastructure   Site Constraints have been investigated including:   * Topography * Residential Buildings * Site Access * Prevailing Wind * Solar Path * Ownership Boundary   These aspects are all positive and there is more than enough land for indoor and outdoor education and play facilities.  Additionally, there will be dedicated traffic routes and parking for the different phases of the school to ensure safety and reasonable limitation of traffic to different  sections of the school.  The likely choice of design will be on land that is not currently part of the school buildings to ensure that St Richard Gwyn can continue uninterrupted whilst the new build takes place. The timescale for the building phases will take account of key times and areas, for example, public examinations/ examination halls, to ensure that there is no detriment to pupils. |
| **Why have discussions been confidential to this point in time?** | Discussion between the LA, Diocese, Heads and Chairs of Governors thus far have been totally confidential to protect all Catholic schools in Flintshire from rumours and incorrect information which could have been seriously and unfairly detrimental to numbers on roll.  Incorrect assumptions and opinions may well have resulted in additional and unnecessary stress to staff, governors and parents. |
| **Why was the key information communicated by a film?** | As the yearlong statutory process begins now if the Cabinet approves the move to public consultation, it is the appropriate time to release the factual information regarding the proposal to all partners at exactly the same time.  Given the number of schools involved and the number of meetings required, and to ensure that precisely the same information was given at each of the 12 meetings on Tuesday 11th February, the only practical option was an information film introduced by the Headteacher/ Chair of Governors. This has the additional advantage of being available to be viewed a number of times by any stakeholder. |
| **What happens if we do nothing and keep the status quo of the current four schools?** | A number of issues were brought to light during this process that need addressing to achieve long-term sustainability for Catholic education within the county. These included:   * The need to reduce the number of surplus places. * To improve the learning environment of some schools. * To ensure there is excellent leadership across the sector. * To provide an all though curriculum for children from age   3 -18   * To further develop Welsh education   The Council accepts there is a need to modernise education provision throughout the county. Education improvement will not be sustained without changes in the way educational provision is delivered.  All four schools are under subscribed which makes finance very tight and can impact negatively on educational decisions. It is not sustainable for schools to continue on the current trajectory. Two of the schools are projected to have less than 50% of places filled in the coming years. Without the new proposal, this would be likely to lead to school closures with no Catholic provision planned for.  Additionally, some of the schools are not of adequate condition and suitability despite large financial investments. In the long term this will be detrimental to pupils’ education. |
| **What do you believe are the main reasons behind the current continuing decline in Catholic pupil numbers in all our Flintshire primary and secondary schools that have led to this proposal?** | The birth rate in Flintshire and across Wales has been steadily decreasing for a number of years. This is the case in both maintained and VA schools and closure and amalgamation is also happening across LA schools in Flintshire and across Wales. |
| **Pupils and Parents** | |
| **How do I know that my primary age child will be safe in a much bigger All Through School?** | The new school will run in 5 distinctive sections – Wraparound Care, Nursery, Primary, Secondary and Sixth Form. The new school will be designed to ensure that each section can work independently of others and will have separate entrances and exits and different parking and approached to each section. Timetables will ensure that any shared facilities keep the phases separate from one another. |
| **What about children with Additional Learning Needs?** | Provision for ALN will be enhanced under the proposal because each child will be known and cared for throughout their school education on the same site, negating the challenges caused by transition at Year 7.  Specialist staff will be employed with more training and development opportunities and facilities enhanced in the new All Through School. |
| **What will the proposal mean for children currently attending the four schools? Will my child be offered a place at the new school?** | All children attending the four schools at present will be guaranteed a place at the new school. |
| **Will there still be a close link with parents, staff and children in both the primary element and the secondary element of the new school?** | Pupils in the primary phase of the new school will have their own classroom teachers for much of the curriculum, although they will have the opportunity for more specialist teachers in subjects such as science, technology and music. Parents will build close relationships with these teachers and support staff but also have better opportunities to get to know staff in the secondary phase thus ensuring a seamless transition at Year 6-Year 7. |
| **Where can pupils from St Anthony’s go for a Catholic education when the school closes?** | Pupils will be offered places at the nearest Welsh Catholic school – Venerable Edward Morgan, Shotton however take up of this offer remains parental choice. |
| **How do we ensure that primary children from St Winefride’s and Venerable Edward Morgan are not disadvantaged when transitioning to Y7 in the new All Through School vs their peer group who are already there?** | It is envisaged the pupils from St Winefrides and Venerable Edward Morgan will have many opportunities to work with staff and pupils in the All Through School and make occasional use of the facilities throughout their time in primary school. A comprehensive early transition process will be in place for any pupil joining the new school at Year 7 that has been at another school for their primary education. |
| **If I decide not to allow my child to transfer from primary to secondary sections of the school, can I transfer to another school?** | Yes. Parents still retain the right to choose a different school at the secondary phase should they so wish.  Another advantage of an All Through School means that transition from primary phase to secondary phase can be much smoother than children needing to go to a new school at the age of 11. |
| **Will the FCC transport policy remain the same?** | Yes. At present, there are no plans to change the transport policy in Flintshire |
| **Leadership and Governance** | |
| **Who will be the governors of the new school?** | A temporary governing body will be established should the proposal go ahead. A new governing body will be established when the school opens. |
| **Who will be the Headteacher of the new school?** | The temporary governing body will work with the Diocese and local authority to appoint the Headteacher of the new school. The aim is for the Headteacher to be appointed at least 2 years before the new school opens on site. |
| **How will early planning help the school to be successful?** | Establishing the new school governance and leadership two years in advance of the opening pf the school is essential to ensure that the planning of all policies, practices, staffing, infrastructure and management structures are in place to plan for the success of the school. This also allows for communication with all partners throughout period to ensure that introductory procedures go smoothly as the new school opens. |
| **Staff** | |
| **What will happen with the staff?** | It is anticipated that where possible, the staff of the schools would be incorporated into the new school. Details of the staffing structure would be decided upon by the Headteacher and Governing Body of the new school. Staff and unions will work closely with the local authority HR and the head of the new school and the temporary governing body throughout this process.  The majority of the positions will be ring fenced for staff of the current 4 schools. This will mean that for many roles, there will be no need for staff to reapply for their jobs. Others may find that there are opportunities to apply for promotions.  Should there be overstaffing, some staff may benefit from an opportunity to take voluntary redundancy.  All posts will be appointed under CES contracts. |
| **Parish Links** | |
| **How will links between the schools and the individual parishes be retained?** | Whereas Catholic primary schools usually link with the individual parish from which their pupils are drawn, a Catholic secondary school covers a wider catchment area and will normally have links with a number of parishes. In the same way a 3-18 school will have links with all local parishes.  The membership of the temporary governing body will be drawn from all the parishes. |
| **About the School** | |
| **Will there be any changes to the local catchment area if the proposal goes ahead?** | There will be no change to the catchment area because of the proposal. |
| **What will be the name of the school?** | The temporary governing body in conjunction with current staff and pupils will seek views on the name of the school. This will be undertaken in conjunction with the Diocese who formally open the school. |
| **What about school uniform?**  . | This discussion will be had with the temporary governing body in conjunction with the current leaders of the schools – options will be considered and a consensus taken on the best way forward. This may include a ‘grace period’ regarding current uniforms and/or support with uniform costs initially for some families. |
| **What about policies?** | This will be a decision of the Governing Body and the Headteacher of the school under the guidance of the Diocese. The school will review its policies to ensure that all children in the school are covered by the school’s governance and safeguarding policies. |
| **Consultation** | |
| **How can I voice my opinions about the proposal?** | Should the Cabinet give permission, there will be a full public consultation and a statutory process that will take up to a year to come to a final decision. Details will follow. |
| **Timescale** | |
| **What is the timescale for the proposed consultation and statutory process if the Cabinet grant permission to move the proposal forward to the next stage?** | Please see the Anticipated Proposal Statutory Timeline document at [www.rcdwxmeducation.org](http://www.rcdwxmeducation.org) under Wrexham Diocese – Catholic Reorganisation in Flintshire. |
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