

**Children's Services Scrutiny  
29 January 2009**

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**The Academies' Programme**

**Purpose of Report**

1. This report provides an update on The Wellington Academy (TWA) and sets out the case to explore the development of two further academies in Salisbury.

**Background**

2. The proposal for the Salisbury academies is for one single faith academy to replace Salisbury High Foundation School, Bemerton Heath and the other is for a joint faith academy to replace three schools at Laverstock: Wyvern College Voluntary Aided Church of England (boys), St Edmund's Voluntary Controlled Church of England (girls) and St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Aided school. We await the final Statement of Intent letter from the DCSF giving approval to explore these two further academies although we have received verbal indications they will get the go ahead this month.
3. A previous paper was submitted to Cabinet on 27 March 2008 in relation to the Laverstock academy but did not progress due to unresolved issues from the Schools' Commissioner in relation to the size of the academy and finding a link Higher Education (HE) establishment. If the current three schools on the Laverstock site come together, even before considering a sixth form, the academy would be 1585 students. The DCSF want academies to be 1200 ideally (before a sixth form) and 1500 maximum. Currently Salisbury High School has 836 students on roll. No HE link can be found by the DCSF, Local Authority (LA) or Diocese as local HE partners are already overcommitted to other academies.
4. The academy proposal for Salisbury High School is a relatively recent development. In July 2008 the government announced that any secondary school with results at, or below, 30% 5A\*- C GCSE, including English and mathematics, were part of The National Challenge. As a result, both school plans and LA plans had to be submitted and 'structural solutions' such as replacing with an academy had to be considered. In the case of Laverstock the headteachers and chairs of governors have been meeting with both the Salisbury and Clifton Diocese and the LA to explore plans for an academy for over a year. Meetings will be resumed following the Statement of Intent approval to proceed from the DCSF.

## **Main Considerations for the Council**

### **The Wellington Academy**

5. This is the seventh report on The Wellington Academy (TWA), previous reports produced on: 27.02.07, 03.07.07, 28.09.07, 25.03.08, 22.05.08, 13.11.08. TWA is well into the fourth of the five stages of converting Castledown Foundation School, Ludgershall to an academy - The Implementation Stage. This began in May 2008 and will take 15 months to the opening of the academy in September 2009 (within the existing building of Castledown). Design Group, Project Steering Group, Education Group and Transitions Group meetings are all continuing and good progress is being made. The Principal Designate, Andy Schofield, has been in post since 1 September 2008 and the new governing body for the academy has met. Mark Connolly is the LA governor.
6. The Invitation to Tender (ITT) saw two of the national six Design and Build contractors Balfour Beatty and Kier in competition for 12 weeks in the autumn term 2008 producing exciting designs for TWA. This culminated on 18 December 2008 with both contractors presenting their designs to the Project Steering Group at Wellington College, Crowthorne. The National Framework has a robust scoring mechanism to evaluate each bid with opinions sought from the LA and sponsor. Contributions, particularly to the educational aspects from the LA were collated on 22 December 2008 in the presence of a member of TWA scrutiny task group. The final evaluation and scoring Design Group meeting was held at Wellington College, Crowthorne on 7 January 2009. The Project Steering Group (PSG) meeting on 15 January 2009 ratified the chosen contractor although there are further conditions to be satisfied before an announcement. (See **Agenda Item 18** for a CONFIDENTIAL Part 2 report on the Evaluation of bids received and selection of preferred bidder)

### **Salisbury**

7. School place planning in Salisbury is extremely complex due to the pattern of school types including single sex grammar schools and denominational diversity. Further complications are added by the current financial climate and timing of house building. In the autumn term 2008 the LA commissioned Place Mace to provide a report on when we might need a further secondary school in Salisbury due to plans in the Regional Spatial Strategy and in preparation for Building Schools for the Future (BSF) readiness to deliver. The report shows that the 11-15 population will be fairly stable over the next five years then it is scheduled to grow, reaching 25% above current levels in 15 years' time. There is evidence that the provision of places at some schools is not meeting the needs and aspirations of students and parents in the area as some are witnessing a declining demand for places. Offering forthcoming diplomas and post 16 entitlement within the existing pattern of provision will be extremely challenging for schools in Salisbury if they remain as they are.

## **Salisbury High School (SHS)**

8. In 2008, SHS achieved 29% 5A\*- C GCSE including English and mathematics. The LA achieved 53% and nationally the result was 48%. This means that standards at SHS are well below the LA and national averages. SHS is not predicted to be above the 30% 5 A\*-C GCSE with English and mathematics by 2011. SHS is situated in the centre of Bemerton Heath in Salisbury an area of high multiple deprivation. Raising standards in areas such as this is clearly extremely difficult for any school to achieve. Replacing SHS with an academy is a sensible structural solution for this area as the school could become the centre of a hub of community area support.
9. Meetings have been held with the governors of SHS who are willing to begin to explore the options of becoming an academy. The Salisbury Diocese is keen to join the LA as sponsors. The academy model we would wish to explore is that of another high performing secondary school in Wiltshire being moored alongside SHS as a Local Leader of Education (LLE). The Fugglestone Red area adjacent to SHS is proposed for further housing. There may be an opportunity to explore relocating the school on a nearby site with other community facilities, including a new primary school.

## **Laverstock Schools**

### **St Joseph's Catholic Voluntary Aided School**

10. St Joseph's Catholic School in Laverstock is currently also included in The National Challenge as results over the last few years have been low: 18% in 2005, 22% in 2006 and 25% in 2007 5A\*- C GCSE including English and mathematics. However, in 2008 results rose to 39%. The school's predictions for 2010 at 28% clearly mean the school is still considered to be part of The National Challenge over the next few years. As this is a small secondary school it will struggle to offer high quality diverse provision post 14 in its current position. There are currently 370 students on roll.

### **Wyvern College Voluntary Aided Church of England School**

11. Results for Wyvern have been steadily improving and in 2008 the school achieved 39% 5A\*- C GCSE with English and mathematics. They are not considered to be a school in The National Challenge. However the current headteacher leaves the school at the end of February 2009 and moves to another headship. The deputy headteacher will become acting headteacher until July 2009 to maintain stability. There are currently 451 students on roll.

### **St Edmund's Voluntary Controlled Church of England School**

12. Results at St Edmund's are good with 64% 5 A\*- C GCSE with English and mathematics, which means attainment is well above the LA and national averages. As a current high performing school St Edmund's understandably does not wish to

jeopardise students' life chances although the buildings are not currently fit for purpose and as with all secondary schools they will find 14-19 provision extremely challenging to deliver. There are currently 764 students on roll.

### **State of the Buildings**

13. **Laverstock** The three schools on this campus present a major challenge in terms of the quality and suitability of their current building stock. Wyvern and St Edmund's have a complex mix of poor quality buildings with a significant number of relocatables on site. A recent survey of the schools has considered the long term needs of the buildings and identified that the proportion of the buildings that should be rebuilt to address these issues is 100% at Wyvern, 95% at St Edmund's and 46% at St Joseph's.

**Salisbury High School** This School also has a poor mix of buildings with an estimated maintenance backlog approaching £2 million. The recent survey identified that 95% of the school should be rebuilt to ensure that appropriate provision is made for future generations of students.

### **Schools within Schools and Vulnerable Student Research**

14. We are working with James Wetz (former headteacher at St Laurence School Bradford on Avon) sponsored by the Gulbekian Society to explore the concept of schools within schools and provision for vulnerable students in an area of high multiple deprivation. This research work which is extensive and free to Wiltshire could support the exploratory design of these academy buildings and help to shape the educational provision and related community developments. It is an exciting project and unique to Wiltshire LA.

### **Risk Assessment**

15. Wiltshire is scheduled for the last of the BSF waves in 2016. A separate paper has been produced about bringing forward the LA's submission to the DCSF and Partnership for Schools. This was submitted in November 2008 and we wait to hear the result. There is no guarantee that there will be a BSF programme by 2016 and no guarantee of acceptance into an earlier wave of projects either. However the buildings at all four of the Salisbury schools are not fit for purpose now and they have significant maintenance issues. If we do not explore these two further academies in Salisbury it will be impossible to see standards rise in the area and it is likely that schools not out of The National Challenge by 2011 will be closed by the government.
16. If the approval is given by the DCSF to bring BSF forward early projects have been identified based on the DCSF's criteria of prioritising deprivation and low performance. This would put SHS as a top priority although Laverstock would be one of the last to be considered as after the initial high priority schools have been identified, future rebuilds must be in the same geographical area prioritised by deprivation and low performance.

## **Financial Implications**

### **Capital Costs**

17. **Salisbury Academies' Costs.** Academies bring one-off grant to rebuild the schools unlike the BSF programme which is PFI credits. To proceed with these academies will require Local Authority finance for off site works and project support costs. A bid has been made to the capital programme for the 2 newly proposed Salisbury academies of £7.17 million over the next 2 years. Laverstock requires £4.05m in total over 2 years and SHS £3.12m in total over 2 years. This has been profiled as £0.4 million in 2009/10 and £3.65 million in 2010/11 for Laverstock and £1.12m in 2009/10 and £2.0m in 2010/11 for SHS. This will provide £1.52 million in 2009/10 to start these academies.
18. **The Wellington Academy Costs.** £500k for off site works was put into the capital programme and awarded in 2008/09. In addition, project support costs of £889K fell to Schools' Branch to fund through unsupported borrowing. This was profiled over 25 years and original costs were £43K each year. Due to a capital receipt this was reduced to £667 in total, £32K each year. This annual amount has been put forward as a bid for funding in the 2009/10 revenue budget. No decision has yet been made on this.
19. Schools' Branch bid for, and was awarded, a £105K development grant to support academies and BSF work. The majority of this money is now committed:
  - £16,050K for additional project support from Place Mace from an experienced academy Overall Project Manager (OPM)
  - £40,000K for a range of support from Place Mace including the Salisbury Area Review of pupil place planning and BSF preparations
  - £43,380k of adviser time for two experienced secondary school advisers to lead on the Salisbury Academies.

Total £99,430

### **Revenue Costs**

20. The costs to the DfCE of the unsupported borrowing for TWA are outlined in paragraph 18 above. The remaining revenue implications fall to the overall schools budget funded by the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). Obviously there will be a reduction to the overall level of DSG in respect of the budget for each new academy as academies are funded directly by the DCSF. The deduction is expected to mirror the LA formula for funding each school and therefore should be revenue neutral to the overall delegated schools' budget for Wiltshire.

21. Academies also have to receive an additional allowance in respect of the funding that LAs hold back centrally from maintained schools. This is called the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant (LACSEG) and is top sliced from the LA's DSG to be paid to an academy. It is estimated that the top slice for TWA in 2009/10 will be £18,000 and the full year effect to be top sliced in 2010/11 and beyond is £31,000. Using the prescribed formula the expected top slice for the Laverstock Academy (currently 3 schools) in its first year would be £64,000 and £109,000 in a full year. As the number of academies increases the impact on central DSG funded budgets held by the LA is greater and could potentially have implications for service delivery.
22. Academies will receive School Standards Grants, Standards Fund and Leadership Incentive funds. In the first year of opening, an academy is entitled to receive the full amount of School Standards Grant (SSG) that would have been paid to a school or schools that close when an academy opens. In the case of TWA this means that Castledown will not receive any SSG in the year of closure (from April to August 2009) and this may have an impact on the financial position of the closing school.
23. Any balance remaining on a school's budget (surplus or deficit) which closes when an academy opens is returned to the LA. However the LA may pass the surplus to the academy if it chooses although deficits must be retained by the LA. Schools Forum is currently considering the position in relation to surpluses and whether they should be retained in addition to the deficits. Any deficits from closing schools need to be written off from within the overall schools' budget and therefore this has implications for the funding for schools across Wiltshire. It should be noted that Castledown is currently forecasting a surplus for 2009/10 however; the removal of SSG could leave a possible deficit on closure of £130,000 if no remedial action is taken. The Laverstock schools are currently forecasting a net deficit which would transfer to the LA if the academy proceeds.
24. In summary, to replace 5 Wiltshire schools with 3 academies will require approximately £8.7 million from the LA which will enable approximately £85 million to be drawn down from the DCSF.

### **Recommendations**

25. That the Children's Services Scrutiny notes the good progress of The Wellington Academy and the intention to explore two further academies in Salisbury.

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