



Oak



Ash



Elm

Tytherington

High School & Specialist Science College

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Achievement for All

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RAR/SAC

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Dear Parent/Carer

Today, Cheshire East Council has published details of the decision made by Councillor Hilda Gaddum, the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services, on Thursday, 24th June regarding consultation on proposals to close Macclesfield High School and expand Tytherington High School:

- (1) That the decision on a formal consultation be deferred but that informal consultations be undertaken up to Friday, 8th October 2010;
- (2) That all other options be explored in greater depth;
- (3) That the advice of the Cheshire East Admissions Forum be sought on the admission arrangements in Macclesfield;
- (4) That further discussions take place with the MP, Mr David Rutley, in the light of new information from the Government;
- (5) That any other suggestions from the public be examined;
- (6) That these proposals lead to a statutory period of consultation on revised options for consideration at the beginning of November.

Background

The need to consider alternative arrangements for the provision of secondary education in the town was initially generated by an approach by the Governing Body of Macclesfield High School to Cheshire East Council for support in the light of concerns over falling rolls at the school. Detailed research of the number of pupils currently in Macclesfield primary schools and data on live births indicates that there are insufficient pupils for there to be four viable secondary schools in the town. The current pattern of admissions to the four secondary schools indicates that by 2016 the Year 7 intake at Macclesfield High School will be 64. Current and projected pupil numbers indicate that the school will have a £500,000 deficit budget by 2012/13.

Following discussions between Senior Officers of Cheshire East Council and members of the Strategy Group of the Macclesfield and Bollington Education Improvement Partnership, it was agreed to establish a working group comprising of the leaders of the four High Schools, Macclesfield College, Park Lane Special School and Senior Council Officers. The remit of this group was to consider possible solutions to the issue of surplus places in the secondary sector which had the potential to provide the best possible outcomes for all young people in the town.

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At all times, consideration has been given to what arrangement would best meet the needs of all young people in Macclesfield while also recognising that the needs of students at Macclesfield High School were of particular concern in the short term.

The working group produced the following list of possible solutions. The strengths and weaknesses of each one were considered. These included costs, possible sources of funding and the potential of there being sufficient support to take a proposal forward:

1. No change.
2. Close Macclesfield High School and establish a Sixth Form College and three 11-16 High Schools.
3. Close Macclesfield High School and create a 14-19 'Vocational School'.
4. Change Macclesfield High School into a 3-19 'All Through School'.
5. Close Macclesfield High School and sell the buildings to Macclesfield College.
6. Close Macclesfield High School and expand All Hallows Catholic College.
7. Merge Macclesfield High School and All Hallows Catholic College.
8. Close Macclesfield High School and expand Fallibroome High School.
9. Merge Macclesfield High School and Fallibroome High School.
10. Close Macclesfield High School and expand Tytherington High School.
11. Merge Macclesfield High School and Tytherington High School.

Consideration was also given to the potential benefits of the Government's 'Academy Programme' in each option.

Many of these options were very quickly discarded for one or more of the following reasons:

- Did not address the issue of Macclesfield High School having significant budgetary difficulties due to falling rolls and unable to offer a suitable curriculum.
- Did not address the issue of declining pupil numbers in Macclesfield.
- Was not financially viable.
- Was not legally possible.
- Did not have sufficient support from either one or more of the stakeholders.
- Reduced 'choice' to an unacceptable level.

Eventually, the following short list was drawn up for more detailed consideration:

- A. Close Macclesfield High School and create a 14-19 Vocational School.
- B. Close Macclesfield High School and expand Fallibroome High School.
- C. Close Macclesfield High School and expand Tytherington High School.

Following further consultation involving the Leaders of all four Secondary Schools, Macclesfield College, Park Lane Special School and Senior Council Officers, there was universal agreement that Option C, the closure of Macclesfield High School and the expansion of Tytherington High School, had the greatest potential to deliver the desired outcomes.

This proposal was formally presented to the Governing Bodies of both schools.

Questions

Why does the Governing Body believe that the proposal to expand the school, using a split site model, will improve the quality of learning for current and future Tytherington learners?

Tytherington is described by OfSTED as a good school with a significant number of outstanding features. Most year groups are full and the intake for September 2010 is oversubscribed.

- The school has been judged by OfSTED as being good in its last three inspections, it is yet to be judged outstanding overall.

- The school was built in the early 1960s as a secondary modern school for girls. Despite making significant improvements to the premises during the last 15 years, the original buildings require major improvements and it could be strongly argued that they are not fit for purpose.
- The school still has 8 temporary classrooms which are up to 20 years old.
- The school is unable to meet curriculum requirements in ICT due to insufficient space and equipment.
- The school is currently finding it increasingly difficult to deliver a balanced budget. The school has no financial reserves as all available funds have been used to deliver the improvements seen in the last 10 years.
- The size of the Sixth Form does not allow the school to offer an appropriate range of subjects to meet the needs of all learners who wish to study at THS. A Sixth Form with numbers fluctuating between 160-200, in order to offer a sufficiently attractive curriculum, has to run some very small classes which are not economically viable. These have to be supported by diverting funds from other parts of the school.
- The Tytherington site is not sufficiently large enough to increase numbers above the current levels.
- Despite improvements, car parking space is still limited. There is no space to provide parking for Sixth Form students.
- Playing field space is very limited.

National context

- The current very challenging economic climate has led to the recently elected Coalition Government announcing significant cuts in public expenditure. For example, the 'Building Schools for the Future' programme has been put on hold and is unlikely to be continued in its current form. Securing capital investment in the foreseeable future is likely to become increasingly challenging. Although the Government has made a commitment to maintain front line services in education by protecting 'core budgets', announcements have already been made to significantly reduce area based grants. This will impact on front line services as the support that this funding currently provides will be more limited and, in some cases, will not be available at all in the future.
- There are strong indications that there is likely to be fundamental change to education policy.

Main advantages of the proposal

Tytherington students will have access to much better facilities by taking over the new high school buildings on the Learning Zone campus.

Increased numbers in the main school will generate a larger and more economically viable Sixth Form. This will also enable the school to provide a much broader curriculum offer for the Sixth Form.

New partnership arrangements with Macclesfield College and Park Lane Special School will significantly increase the curriculum offer at KS4 and KS5.

It will enable the school to operate two separate timetables for KS3 and KS4/KS5. This will significantly reduce the compromises, which tend to have the greatest impact at KS3, that have to be made in order to make a timetable work.

An overall 30% reduction in the number of students on the current Tytherington site will create more space. Temporary accommodation will not be required and capital investment, one of the conditions of the proposal, can be focussed on making major improvements to the original 1960s buildings.

It will enable the school to place a much greater focus on KS3 learners. Further enhancement of the partnerships we have with our partner primary schools will enable us to prepare all students to take full advantage of the fantastic opportunities we will be able to offer on the Learning Zone campus.

On all counts, Tytherington High School students will benefit as will those from Macclesfield High School.

Transition arrangements

Whilst the vision is to create a split site school, it is recognised that the proposal will also require governors to take on responsibility for completion of the successful education of the Macclesfield High School learners who will still be on roll at the school at the time of closure. With this in mind, some provisional work has already been undertaken to demonstrate how it will be possible to avoid combining year groups from the two schools. Such arrangements are made possible by the split site arrangement.

For example, students joining the Tytherington Sixth Form in September 2010 would not expect to have a change of teacher at the end of Year 12 other than where 'normal' changes in staffing occur. However, it will be possible for these students and their teachers to undertake their studies on the Learning Zone campus.

It would not be in the interest of any students, especially those who have embarked on examination courses, to have their learning disrupted. Therefore, students starting Years 10 and 11 in September 2011 will continue to be educated on the existing site except where access is required to vocational courses as part of the current East Cheshire Partnership arrangements.

From September 2011, each Year 7 intake would be accommodated on the current Tytherington campus. Therefore, it is likely that this will be the first cohort to transfer 'en masse' to the Learning Zone campus in September 2014.

Risks

Consideration has been given to the following major risks (*the responses received by Cheshire East Council are included*):

1. The current admission arrangements (oversubscription criteria) to schools in the town do not give fair access to all levels of ability to all four high schools.
The Council has given a commitment to investigate this and challenge any arrangements which prevent fair access.
2. There will be no funding for major capital investment on the Tytherington site.
The Council has indicated the will to commit significant capital investment to the proposal. This will need to be secure before the Governing Body would formally commit to the proposed changes. The Council is also committed to pursuing a major contribution from the Department for Education and work on this has already commenced.
3. During the planning and 'transition' periods, the additional work has the potential to have a negative impact on the efficient and effective operation of the school and pupil progress.
The Council has given a commitment to provide the resources to give additional capacity. This is already in place for the 2010/11 academic year and is fully committed irrespective of the proposal being accepted.
4. The changes will result in significantly higher transport costs.
The Council has investigated this issue and the response is that transport costs will not significantly increase.

Summary

The Governing Body believes that the proposals provide a unique opportunity to access the resources that will secure the future of the school, provide Tytherington learners with a learning experience of the very highest quality and will help establish a much more stable secondary education system which will be of benefit to all learners in the town.

The Consultation process

Given the sensitive nature of the proposals, which include the closure of Macclesfield High School, it was not possible to consult widely without the agreement of the Governing Bodies of both schools and Cheshire East Council as a first stage in a wider process.

As part of the informal consultation process, parents and carers of pupils in Years 6-11 are invited to attend a consultation event on **Thursday, 15th July** starting at 6.30 p.m. in the main school hall. The evening will start with a presentation which will last for approximately 30 minutes. There will then be an opportunity to break into discussion groups.

Further consultation events will take place in the autumn term. Information on the consultation arrangements can be found on the Cheshire East Council website:

http://www.cheshireeast.gov.uk/education_and_learning/schools/macclesfield_secondary_schools.aspx

which will be regularly updated.

Yours sincerely

M R SMITH

Chair of Governors

R A ROBINSON

Headteacher

