

Consultation results on the proposed closure of Southfield Technology College and Stainburn School and Science College and the presumption of a new academy in Workington, with pupils representing Stainburn School

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Results of Consultation

Participant Details

- Stainburn pupils representatives from Years 11/10/9/8/7
- Consultation date Wednesday 4th February 2014 12.45pm-1.30pm

These questions were collated from the queries and concerns raised by the students during Vertical Tutor Time. The questions were discussed with, Partnership Development and Participation Officers at the consultation held with the pupils. The answers given below, where appropriate, reflect the position on 12 February, and may differ from those given during the consultation event.

All answers assume that the proposal to close both Southfield and Stainburn schools and open a new academy will be approved. This is yet to be confirmed.

Section1: Questions and Answer session led by Stainburn pupils

| Questions from year 11 | |
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| Question | Answer |
| When do we get a new Head teacher? Will we be on the interview panel? | <p>Lorrayne Hughes has been appointed as Executive Head for Southfield and Stainburn. The LA has also applied to the Department for Education to put in place a single joint Interim Executive Board to replace the current governing bodies. Two heads of school have also been appointed, David Dawes, who will be head of Stainburn, and Sandy Todd, who will be head of Southfield.</p> <p>On creation of the academy a new head teacher will be appointed. It would be up to the academy sponsor and new governing body to decide whether there could be pupil representation on the interview panel.</p> |
| Did the local authority really not think about consulting until Mr McGrath asked? | <p>When a local authority wants to make changes to a school, it is under a legal duty to consult with students. It was never an option to avoid this, and the county council could have been the subject of a legal challenge had it not consulted properly. This could have delayed or stopped altogether the process of bringing the schools together, so it was always intended that the views of students would be taken into account.</p> |
| When exactly will the merger take place? | <p>All the information from the focus groups from both Stainburn and Southfield will be collated and included in the report that goes to the county council's Cabinet. The views of pupils have to be included in the Cabinet report – as do the views of parents, staff and governors – to enable Members to make a decision about what happens next.</p> |

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| | <p>We expect the process to work like this:</p> <p>3 April: Consultation results considered and the county council's Cabinet decide whether to move to the next stage of the process, the publication of the formal notice which is required to close a school</p> <p>2 May Publication of the Statutory Notice</p> <p>30 May Closing date for responses to Statutory Notice</p> <p>24 July: A final decision will be made by the Cabinet</p> <p>31 December – Southfield and Stainburn officially close</p> <p>1 January 2015 – New academy opens, probably using the current Southfield and Stainburn buildings</p> <p>We expect that students won't see too many changes between now and 31 December. Any changes that are made will be designed to make sure that the schools deliver the best possible education right up until they're replaced by the academy. The majority of teaching and non-teaching staff will be the same, clubs and sports activities will continue as before, and we'll try to make sure that there's as little disruption as possible to your learning. If there are any changes, Mrs Hughes will make sure you know about them in advance.</p> |
| <p>Is school closure just a cost cutting exercise?</p> | <p>The county council doesn't save any money by closing schools. So anything you've read or heard about the county council needing to make millions of pounds worth of savings isn't linked to the closure of the two schools.</p> <p>The money the county council receives for education is 'ring-fenced' by the government. This means it has to be spent on schools, and can't be spent on anything else. School budgets are calculated on the basis of a formula, based for the most part on the number of students at the school – basically, the more students the school has, the more money it gets.</p> <p>If a single school has a smaller budget than the two current schools, 'savings' are distributed to other schools within Cumbria via the funding formula. No money stays within the county council.</p> <p>There may be some 'savings' in capital funding – that is, money that the county council would have had to spend to maintain the Southfield and Stainburn buildings in their current condition. That would have covered things like replacing the boilers or the heating system, or making sure the roof doesn't leak. These things can be incredibly expensive – it might cost £300,000 to replace a school's roof, for example. Because there will be a new school building, this</p> |

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| | <p>is money that can be spent at other schools in Cumbria that might otherwise not have seen improvements made. Whilst you're still using the Southfield and Stainburn buildings, we'll do any work that's necessary to make sure they can continue to operate, of course.</p> |
| <p>What will happen to the sixth form/ Which site will the sixth form be on to start with and will it change part way through our 2 year course?</p> | <p>At the moment, we don't know. If Southfield and Stainburn close and an academy replaces them, it will have a sixth form. A new school will be built, probably on one of the two existing school sites, so at some point some students will have to move from their current site to the new site.</p> <p>The Academy will open in the existing school buildings on 1 January 2015, and well before that the Academy sponsor will have to decide where to house the sixth form. We expect that the sponsor will discuss this with existing Southfield and Stainburn staff, and students will be told in advance where the sixth form will be located.</p> |
| <p>Will our teachers be able to keep their jobs?</p> | <p>We expect the majority if not all of the teachers will transfer to the academy, although some may choose to move on. If and when the schools close, all of the staff employed would transfer to the academy under the 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006' (TUPE for short). This protects staff jobs, but should also mean that there's continuity for students.</p> |
| <p>Who will select the Academy sponsor?</p> | <p>The county council will consider all of the bids submitted, and will select the one it feels best meets the needs of young people in Workington. We want to make sure the sponsor is going to be able to provide the best possible education. But the county council does not make the final decision, which falls to government ministers. The county council will tell the government which sponsor it prefers, but there is no guarantee that this sponsor will be chosen.</p> |
| <p>Will we still be able to have a prom?</p> | <p>Many academies do still have proms but this decision would ultimately rest with the academy sponsor, the new governing body and importantly the schools' leadership. There's no reason at this stage to think you wouldn't be able to have a prom.</p> |

Questions from Year 10

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>When the 2 schools become one school where will we study here or Southfield?</p> | <p>Again, we don't know the answer to this yet. Both the Southfield and Stainburn buildings will still be there and available for use on 1 January 2015, so it's possible that students will stay exactly where they are until the new school year starts in September 2015, or until a new building is completed. This is something we will need to discuss with the academy sponsor when we know who that is going to be. We'll make sure you know as soon as possible what arrangements are going to be in place and when.</p> |

Questions from Year 9

| Question | Answer |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Year 9 students should be choosing their options for GCSE very soon- will the schools' closure affect our options? • Some students might go to college in Year 10 – will it still be possible? • One student is worried because they came to Stainburn to get away from someone in Southfield – how can this student be reassured? | <p>We wouldn't expect Year 9 students' option choices to be negatively affected. If anything, there may be extra options, but we would expect all current Year 9 students to be able to follow their option choices through to GCSE.</p> <p>There's no reason that existing arrangements for Year 10 students to attend college cannot continue.</p> <p>Bringing the two schools together is bound to create some concerns around student relationships. Everyone involved with the two schools will be working hard to make sure they come together smoothly, and will want to understand any likely areas of difficulty. We would expect the schools to join together for events in the run up to the formation of the academy to ensure that the two student groups become more familiar with each other, and also that they will discuss with students any individual concerns they may have.</p> |
| <p>Will we have the same teachers?</p> | <p>We expect the majority if not all of the teachers will transfer to the academy, although some may choose to move on. If and when the schools close, all of the staff employed would transfer to the academy under the 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006' (TUPE for short). This protects staff jobs, but should also mean that there's continuity for students.</p> |

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| <p>When are we going to be told exact dates?</p> | <p>The key dates for decisions being made are set out above. We'll make sure that students know what decisions have been made and how they affect them as soon as we can. We do appreciate that students need to know what's going on, but the process of bringing two schools together into one is sometimes quite slow; not much can happen for several weeks, so please don't feel anxious if you haven't heard of any changes you think might affect you. On the other hand, sometimes things happen quite quickly and at short notice, so sometimes it's difficult to make sure everyone hears the same message at the same time. We'll try to make sure you know exactly what's happening and why it's happening as soon as we can.</p> |
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| <p>Questions from Year 8</p> | |
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| <p>Question</p> | <p>Answer</p> |
| <p>Are we still going to have Stainburn teachers in September and January?</p> | <p>We expect the majority if not all of the teachers will transfer to the academy, although some may choose to move on. If and when the schools close, all of the staff employed would transfer to the academy under the 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006' (TUPE for short). This protects staff jobs, but should also mean that there's continuity for students.</p> |

Section 2: Additional questions asked during the consultation

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Why did we only find out that the head teacher was leaving in the paper?</p> | <p>We hadn't planned that it would be announced through the press before students were told, and we appreciate it wasn't the best way for you to have heard the news. We'll try to make sure that this sort of thing doesn't happen again.</p> |
| <p>Why did you force Mr McGrath to go?</p> | <p>We didn't. When schools are judged to require Special Measures by Ofsted, the county council has to produce an action plan setting out what it will do to support better educational standards at the school. The county council is able to change the management and leadership of schools in Special Measures and can take control of the schools' budgets if it feels this is appropriate. In this case, though, it was Mr McGrath's decision to step down from his role to allow renewed leadership to take the next steps.</p> |
| <p>Don't you think it was very suspicious that Ofsted failed both schools and both school heads were removed in the same week?</p> | <p>Schools have a right to challenge the findings set out in an Ofsted report, and the governors in Southfield did just that. The report on Stainburn could have been published earlier than it was, but the county council would have been unable to announce its intention to form a single new academy until both reports had become public. We didn't feel it was helpful to Stainburn students and staff in particular to leave them in limbo – with an Ofsted report saying the school required Special Measures, but with the county council unable to be clear about its intentions. So we asked Ofsted to delay the publication of Stainburn's report until they had considered Southfield's challenge and were ready to also publish that report.</p> <p>Both Mr McGrath and Mrs Dalkin made the decision to stand down from their posts. They both felt this was in the best interests of the schools and in the best interests of bringing them together to form a new academy.</p> <p>We appreciate the effect the Ofsted reports have had on students and staff in both schools, and we also know that some of you were shocked and surprised when Mr McGrath and Mrs Dalkin left at such short notice. We'll try to allay some of your anxiety by keeping in touch as things change and develop over the coming months, but would encourage you to discuss any concerns you have with your teachers, who will be able to pass on any questions you might have.</p> |

Section 3: Questions not answered during the consultation

Year 11

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>What will happen to Stainburn students when noisy building work is happening?</p> | <p>Many academy sponsors have substantial experience of setting up new schools, and will have a good understanding of the disruption that can occur at a time of change. The county council would work very closely with the sponsor to make sure any disruption is kept to an absolute minimum. Whilst we want to bring about changes and improvements quickly, we do recognise that the education of pupils already attending the two schools is absolutely paramount and we will do everything we can to make sure that through this period of change, they are supported to reach their full educational potential.</p> <p>It will be the aim to carry out as much of the building work as possible in non school time.</p> |
| <p>Why couldn't we just be a Bright Tribe Academy in the first place?</p> | <p>As you know, Bright Tribe had been working for over a year with both Stainburn and Southfield in preparation for becoming their academy sponsor. The government has to approve the conversion of schools into academies, though, and they were eventually unable to support the conversion of Southfield. They would have supported the conversion of Stainburn to become a Bright Tribe academy, but the two Ofsted reports changed things.</p> <p>Bright Tribe will still be able to submit a proposal to become the sponsor of the new academy, along with any other potential sponsor providers who are interested in the opportunity.</p> |

Year 10

| Question | Answer |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will we have a new uniform and will we have to pay for it? We will only have ours for a year! • Will we be asked to contribute our ideas to the design? • What will happen to our courses when the schools | <p>The academy sponsor and governing body will be responsible for determining issues around the day-to-day running of the new school. It might be that the sponsor will expect future Year 7 starters to buy a new 'branded' uniform, but sponsors will appreciate the issues that students and parents have around the cost of new uniforms, and we hope will come to a sensible conclusion as to what should happen.</p> <p>The design of the uniform is something that other academy sponsors have involved students in, and we can discuss that</p> |

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| <p>close and reopen as one school- will for example our history class join up with what will be the Year 11 Southfield class?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will we find out who our Head teacher will be? • Will we be consulted about the new build –e.g. design and colour schemes? | <p>once a sponsor has been identified.</p> <p>It's possible that classes will join up once the schools come together, but that won't happen if you're studying for exams under different exam boards. If there's some benefit to be gained by joining classes together that could happen. If not, it won't.</p> <p>The academy head teacher will be appointed by the academy sponsor, and you already know that Mrs Hughes, Mr Dawes and Mrs Todd have been appointed to the existing schools.</p> <p>The government will be responsible for the new build, so the county council can't decide whether or not you'll be involved. The vast majority of companies involved in the design and construction of schools would usually involve students in some way, though.</p> |
| <p>Will there be teachers and parents on the interim governing body?</p> | <p>It's unlikely. The Interim Executive Board (IEB – the temporary governing body) will be made up of senior officers of the county council plus an independent chair of governors working closely with the Executive Head Teacher. The board will only operate until the new academy is established, at which point it will have its own governing body.</p> |
| <p>How will our school be different in September?</p> | <p>In September the schools will, as now, have an Executive Head Teacher, two heads of school and an Interim Executive Board. In January, potentially, the two schools will be operating as a single academy and would eventually move into a new single school building.</p> <p>In some ways, there'll be very little change in September. Most of the teachers are likely to be the same as they are now, and your lessons are likely to take place in the same rooms in the same buildings. But obviously both schools have been judged to require Special Measures, so it's possible that some things could change – we all want to improve quickly those things that Ofsted have said need to be improved</p> |
| <p>Will our class size increase?</p> | <p>Some class sizes might increase. Others might decrease. But there won't be any unreasonably large classes.</p> |
| <p>Will we still have a Head boy and Head Girl and one school Council?</p> | <p>We don't know yet. The academy sponsor will decide what happens in the new academy from January 2015, but there's no reason that you shouldn't be able to have a Head Boy and Head Girl, or a school council.</p> |

Year 9

| Question | Answer |
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| Some students might go to college in Year 10- will it still be possible? | There's no reason Year 10 students shouldn't be able to go to college. |
| Will there be chances to meet Southfield students informally e.g. activities before we merge? | We would expect so, yes. Many of the officers working for the county council have experience of helping to bring two or more schools together, and we appreciate the importance and benefits of students from different schools being able to meet informally before they actually come together in the same school. We'll be working with Mr Dawes, Mrs Todd and Mrs Hughes to make sure this happens. There is much good practice learnt from other similar situations across the country that will assist in this. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be more sports teams if the 2 schools join up? • What new technology will be made available to help our learning? • Will we still hold awards like Rights Respecting Award, International School, Adventure Learning School, or do we get stripped of them. | <p>The academy sponsor and governing body will be responsible for making decisions about the running of the new school.</p> <p>Bringing the two schools together, though, should hopefully allow for more sports opportunities and because the new school will be on a sounder financial footing than either Southfield or Stainburn would be as separate schools, that should mean more is available to spend on equipment and new technology.</p> <p>We're not sure about the awards – we'll check this out and let you know.</p> |
| Will there be more fights between the 2 schools? | We certainly hope not! Mrs Hughes, the two new heads of School, and everyone else involved in bringing the schools together will be working hard to make sure this doesn't happen. We need your help with that too, though. |

| Questions | Answers |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will we still have events like sports day and activities week? • Will we still have adventure learning events like camping? • Who will be our Head teacher? • Do we get to sit in and contribute to the head teacher's interview? • Will we get new timetables in the new school? • Will we keep our Vertical Tutor Groups and the 3 Colleges? | <p>Again, this will be for the academy sponsor to decide. We don't know who that's going to be yet, so we can't be certain about what they'll want to do. However, we'd expect that any sponsor would encourage sporting activities and hold events like a sports day, as well as other events away from the school sites – whether that be camping or other activities.</p> <p>We don't know who the head teacher of the academy will be, and we can't say whether students will be involved in the interview process. Many schools do now involve students in this process, though.</p> <p>From January 2015, when the new school opens, it's most likely that the timetables in place at the end of the Autumn 2014 term will remain in place, but there might be a few minor changes. From September 2015, it's likely that a new timetable will be in place, but we would expect students who have begun their GCSE courses by then will continue with them.</p> <p>We're not sure yet about Vertical Tutor Groups and the three colleges – this will need to be discussed with the successful sponsor after the summer holidays.</p> |
| <p>Can you explain how the school will be better?</p> | <p>Even though the recent Ofsted reports found that both schools require Special Measures, it doesn't mean everything about them isn't working properly. Far from it. Ofsted found that both schools have things about them which are excellent, and we can make sure those good things are available to all of the students by bringing the schools together – we can share the good practice that's already there. At the same time, we'll be working hard prior to the new school opening to improve the things that Ofsted found are not as good as they should be.</p> <p>A new school will be more financially sound. So, for example, a single school will have a very similar budget available to it as the two existing schools, but will only have to pay one head teacher rather than two and will only have to maintain one building, so it should have more money to spend on teaching and learning resources as a proportion of its total budget than two separate schools would have had.</p> <p>Forming a single school will also allow a new school to be built, something we probably couldn't achieve if the schools remained separate. So that means students will have access</p> |

to more modern facilities. It also means that the money that would have had to be spent on heating and lighting old, inefficient buildings, can be spent instead on teaching and learning resources, i.e. it can be spent on 'education' rather than on keeping the building warm enough for students to work in.

Year 7

| Question | Answer |
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| <p>Will we have to pay to go to Southfield if we have to go there?</p> | <p>National guidelines say that, free transport for those of secondary school age will operate for those living more than 3 miles away from the new school measured using a safe walking route as determined by Cumbria County Council.</p> <p>However, those children aged 11 to 16 years living in the catchment area, who are attending a school at the time of its closure, and who transfer to the new catchment school, receive free transport until the time they would have left that school had it remained open, providing the distance between home and school is more than 2 miles. This only applies if students have to go to a different site which is further from their home than the site they previously attended.</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will Year 7 go to school / Here or Southfield? • Will all the New Year 7s who are year 6 now have to come here in September? • Will year 7 still have Adventure learning 12 times a week? • Will there be a year 6 summer school and if there is who will be able to go – both schools? • Will we have a new school name, and can we be involved in choosing it? • How will an academy | <p>We still don't have answers to a lot of these questions. Some of them will only be able to be answered when a new academy sponsor is chosen, and that is unlikely to happen much before the summer holidays.</p> <p>We expect that the new Year 7 intake in September will be to both schools – so students whose parents have applied for Southfield will go there, and where the application was for Stainburn, students will go there. From September 2015 it's likely that all of the Year 7 intake will go to one or other of the sites.</p> <p>Some things about your timetable might change in the coming days and weeks, but we would expect most things to continue as they are for some time yet. The new academy is planned to open in January 2015, but we expect even then there will be very little change to the courses of study. There might be more changes from September 2015, but those students who have started an exam course will be able to continue with them.</p> <p>We're not yet sure about this year's Year 6 summer school, and will need to talk to Mrs Hughes about that.</p> <p>The school is likely to have a new name, and we hope the</p> |

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| <p>change our lessons?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be a new PE kit? | <p>sponsor will involve students in choosing it.</p> <p>We don't know how the academy will change your lessons, but we would expect that you'll have at least the choice of subjects you have now, and hopefully more.</p> <p>There will probably be a new PE kit, but we don't know yet what it'll look like.</p> |
| <p>Where will the new school be?</p> | <p>We don't know yet. We need to do some surveys of the Southfield and Stainburn sites to see whether there's anything that would stop us from building a new school on them. That means checking the ground conditions to make sure they meet modern building standards, checking how level the ground is, whether it's liable to flooding, whether there are old mine shafts under the ground and so on. The academy sponsor and the government (who are providing the money for the new school building) will consider the results from the site surveys and decide. Again, we'll let you know when we know more.</p> |
| <p>Will we do 'any mixing up and meeting' events with Southfield Students?</p> | <p>Yes, we would expect this to happen. Mrs Hughes and the staff will be considering how best to do this over the next few weeks and months. The interim school leaders and executive head teacher will be planning to ensure that opportunities to bridge the joining of both schools will be taken and support students in this work. There is much good practice learnt from other similar situations across the country that will assist in this.</p> |

Section 4: Pupils thoughts and feelings.

Participants were asked to finish the sentence “If I had my way my school would...”

Results recorded:

- If I had my way my school would not change.
- If I had my way my school would be kept the same as there is nothing wrong with it.
- If I had my way my school would be settled with little disruption.
- If I had my way my school would be the same x3.
- If I had my way my school would have better learning facilities.
- If I had my way the school would improve learning.
- If I had my way it wouldn't bother me what happen as long as it's done properly.

Section 5: Any other comments:

- If the schools did change maybe it would have a good benefit and positive impact?
- We haven't been given information in time and having to find out from the newspapers is not good.
- It doesn't bother me what happens as long as whatever does happen is beneficial for us.