

MEETING : SCHOOL PLANNING SELECT PANEL
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REPORT OF : PRINCIPAL MANAGER – PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
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TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TLC) – REPORT ON THE OPTIONS IDENTIFIED IN THE LOCALITY REVIEW FOR MACCLESFIELD

INTRODUCTION

1 On 10th December 2007 the Panel considered a Discussion Paper on the emerging options for the Macclesfield TLC Review. The Panel advised the Children's Service Executive:

- invites the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service jointly to consider with the Local Authority options for the establishment of a one form entry joint Church of England/Catholic primary school to serve south Macclesfield, with effect from September 2009, and invites the Diocese of Shrewsbury to make available the existing premises of St Edward's Primary School for the proposed school; and
- subject to recommendation above and to providing sufficient time for the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service to consider issues relating to the proposed school, authorises statutory public consultations on the two following proposals:
 - the possible closures of St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School, Macclesfield;
 - the possible closures of Ash Grove Primary School, St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School, Macclesfield;
- authorises statutory public consultations on the amalgamation of Bollington St John's and Bollington Cross CE Primary Schools in order to establish a 180 place CE voluntary aided primary school on one of the two existing sites, to be decided by the Chester Diocesan Board of Education, with effect from 1 September 2009, noting that it would be necessary to seek the Secretary of State's approval to waive the requirement to hold a competition for the proposed new school, or if this were unsuccessful, to hold a competition for the proposed school;
- authorises consultations on the reduction in the net capacity of Ivy Bank Primary School from 378 to 315 places by the removal of temporary accommodation, with a reduction in the admission number from 54 to 45 pupils from 1 September 2009; and
- authorises consultations on the reduction in the net capacity of Puss Bank Primary School from 420 to 315 places, with a reduction in the admission number from 60 to 45 pupils from 1 September 2009, and calls for a further report in 18 months time.

2 At the meeting of the Children's Services Executive on 18th December 2007, the Panel's recommendations were amended and the following was resolved:

- the statutory public consultation be held on the possible closures of Ash Grove Primary School, St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School, Macclesfield;
- subject to 1 above, a competition be held under provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to seek proposals to establish a new one form entry primary school to serve south Macclesfield, with effect from September 2009;
- subject to 1 and 2 above, the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service be invited jointly to consider with the Local Authority options for the establishment of a new school through the competition process to serve south Macclesfield, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury be invited to make available the premises of St Edward's Primary School to be the site of the proposed school;
- statutory public consultations be held on the proposed closure of Bollington St John's CE Primary School with effect from July 2009 with alternative places available at Bollington Cross CE Primary School;
- consultations be held on the reduction in the net capacity of Ivy Bank Primary School from 378 to 315 places by the removal of temporary accommodation, with a reduction in the admission number from 54 to 45 pupils from 1 September 2009; and
- consultation be held on the reduction in the net capacity of Puss Bank Primary School from 420 to 315 places, with a reduction in the admission number from 60 to 45 pupils from 1 September 2009.

3 Immediately prior to the meeting of the Children's Services Executive on 18th December and subsequently, a number of Notices of Motion to Council relating to the TLC review, were submitted for consideration. Immediately after the meeting of the Children's Services Executive on 18th December the decisions taken on the proposed school closures were subject to a call in notice. The details and chronology of the various Notices of Motion and decision calls in relating to the Macclesfield Review were set out in the report to the Children's Services Executive meeting of 23rd July 2008. This is reproduced as Appendix 1 to this report. A further Notice of Motion is scheduled for consideration at the meeting of the Council to be held on 16th October.

4 As a result of the time taken to consider the Notices of Motion as well as that associated with the scrutiny of the decisions that were called in, the planned timescale for the Review has been extended significantly. The delay in securing decisions on how to proceed after the informal consultation stage resulted in the possible timescale for public consultation falling into the period prior to the elections for the two new unitary authorities being created in Cheshire. As a consequence of this, the process of further consideration was delayed pending the elections to the new Cheshire East Council.

5 The consideration of Notices of Motion and the call in of decisions, generated advice for consideration by the Children's Services Executive. The advice provided was summarised in the progress report to the Panel on 17th March and in the light of that advice and other considerations, the Panel amended their recommendations to the Lead Member for Children's Services. In particular it requested that the proposals relating to St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's Catholic Primary School be considered as entirely separate and not dependent upon the proposed closure of Ash Grove Primary School. The Panel also requested that the opportunity be taken to consult with the Cheshire East Shadow Council and that its views be taken into consideration by the Children's Services Executive.

6 The opportunity to engage in discussions with the Cheshire East Shadow Council was taken at the earliest opportunity. However it was not until 17th July 2008 that the Shadow Authority's Cabinet was able to take a view on the issues.

7 The Panel's recommendations and the advice of the Cheshire East Shadow Council were presented to the meeting of the Children's Services Executive on the 23rd July 2008. Approval was given to:

- statutory public consultations on the possible closures of St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School, Macclesfield, with effect from July 2009, be authorised;
- subject to (1) above, invites the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service jointly to consider with the Local Authority options for the establishment of a new shared faith school to serve South Macclesfield, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury be invited to make available the premises of St Edward's RC Primary School to be the site of the proposed school;
- subject to (1) and (2) above, supports any application by the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) to waive the requirement to hold a competition to establish a new shared faith one form entry primary school to serve South Macclesfield, with effect from September 2009;
- statutory public consultations on the possible closure of Ash Grove Primary School, Macclesfield, with effect from July 2009, be authorised;
- noting the advice of the Cabinet of the Shadow Cheshire East Council that the Governing Bodies of Bollington Cross CE Primary School and Bollington St John's CE Primary School enter into a hard federation with a single Governing Body and Headteacher; the two Schools are invited to discuss the suggestion, involving any other appropriate schools in the area, and to report back to the October meeting of the School Planning Select Panel on progress, with particular reference to means of reducing surplus places.
- The proposed closure of Bollington St John's CE Primary School be held in abeyance pending a satisfactory outcome of the above discussions.

8 During the course of the year, the proposed reductions in the published admission numbers of Ivy Bank and Puss Bank schools, each to 1.5FE with effect from September 2009, was progressed through consideration by the Authority's Admissions Forum. These reductions have been agreed and implemented.

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF St BARNABAS CE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND St EDWARD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

9 There is currently a significant level of surplus school places across Macclesfield Town. This is more acute in the southern area of Macclesfield, which is currently served by three schools: St Barnabas CE Primary School, St Edward's Catholic Primary School and Ash Grove Primary School. Overall too few parents are opting to send their children to these schools and as a result there is a high level of surplus capacity in each school. The pupil population is forecast to continue falling, which will increase the uncertainty about the future stability and sustainability of the three schools.

BACKGROUND

10 St Barnabas and St Edward's are both 1 Form Entry schools, each with a capacity for 210 pupils.

11 The falling pupil population has already made an impact on these schools. In January 2008 St Barnabas CE Primary had 100 pupils registered on roll and 52.4%

surplus places. St Edward's Catholic Primary had 146 pupils registered on roll with 30.5% surplus places.

12 In the case of St Barnabas the forecast indicates that by 2013 the number of pupils on roll will have fallen to 58, with 72.4% surplus places. The forecast for St Edward's indicates that by 2013 there will be 161 pupils on roll, with a surplus capacity of 23.3%.

13 Primary pupil numbers have declined significantly in the area in the past 10 years. It is acknowledged that there is a small increase in the number of live births in the area, but this still leaves a pressing need to reduce surplus accommodation as the number of school places required significantly exceeds the demand from the local population.

14 The initial informal consultation undertaken by the Authority proposed the closure of both St Barnabas and St Edward's. During the course of the consultation period members of both school communities identified a positive opportunity to respond to the changing local circumstances through the retention of a single school to serve the area. With the help and support of the Dioceses of Chester and Shrewsbury, this concept has been worked up into greater detail as the basis of the present proposal, which has attracted wide support.

15 Earlier in the year a Bishop's Working Party was established involving the Headteachers, Chairs of Governors, local Clergy, Officers of both Dioceses and the Local Authority in further discussions. As a result the proposals for the establishment of the new Joint Church School have been significantly refined. It is proposed that the new school would be characterised both by a wholehearted desire to emphasise what both schools have in common and by a commitment to the full appreciation of each Christian tradition. It is intended that the children attending the Joint Church School would know and appreciate their own Christian tradition and also be enriched by a wider experience of another.

16 The proposals were sufficiently developed by the end of the last school year, to enable a submission to be made to the Secretary of State for his agreement to waive the requirement for a competition to establish the new school. This agreement has now been secured; this will simplify and expedite the process.

17 The proposed new school will be a 1 Form Entry primary school with a net capacity for 210 pupils. In addition, it is proposed that a new 52 place nursery will be created on the same site. The school will be a voluntary aided primary school of a religious character in the joint trusteeship of the Diocese of Shrewsbury and the Diocese of Chester, aided by Cheshire East Council.

18 Those children attending St Barnabas or St Edward's schools at the time of closure will automatically have places allocated to them at the new school at the time of its opening. Any remaining school places will be made available in the usual way for other children according to the priorities of the School's Admission Policy, which will need to be prepared and agreed by the Temporary Governing Body of the new school. A smooth transition will be planned for those pupils moving to the new school, including a number of joint activities over the year ahead, and familiarisation visits where necessary.

19 It is suggested that the arrangements for admissions will follow the same process currently used by St Edward's and other Voluntary Aided schools. Priority for admission will be given to children in public care and those with Statements of Special Educational Needs which name the school. Thereafter it is proposed that the

Admissions Policy will give priority to children baptised in either the Roman Catholic Church or the Church of England, living in the parishes of St Barnabas and St Edward's. It is expected that younger brothers and sisters of children attending the school at the time the requested admission becomes effective, will be given a higher priority. Remaining places will be made available to children of other families according to the priorities in the Admissions Policy.

CONSULTATION

20 Formal consultations with staff, governors, parents and members of the community were held on 25th September 2008.

21 It was decided, with the agreement of both schools, to have one consultation event for the public, and to hold a joint meeting for the staff of both schools, and a joint meeting of the Governing Bodies.

22 The staff of both schools expressed their strong and enthusiastic support for the proposal to close both schools and open a new joint Church school. Concerns were expressed about the timescale for the implementation of the proposal should a decision to proceed be taken, the associated building programme, future admission arrangements and other detailed issues associated with managing the processes of closure and establishment of the new school.

23 The debate with the two Governing Bodies was similar in nature to the meeting of the school staff. The range of issues raised and concerns expressed also related to the items that would need to be addressed in the implementation of the proposal should a decision to proceed be taken. Both Governing Bodies expressed their support for the proposals.

24 Appendix 2 summarises the feedback received to date through letters, e-mails and oral representations made during the public consultation event.

PREMISES ISSUES

25 The Diocese of Shrewsbury has given its agreement to the use of the St Edward's site as the base for the proposed new Joint Church School. An initial appraisal has been undertaken of the site and school buildings. This has identified a number of significant issues that will require further investigation and careful consideration.

26 The buildings currently used by St Edward's are over 40 years old and, although well maintained, show the expected range of issues of buildings of that age. Some of the classrooms and other accommodation areas do not comply with the current recommendations for school buildings. Accommodation for administration, car parking and access to the site will all need to be improved as part of an overall development project. The site itself has a considerable change in level which will bring constraints in developing and refurbishing the existing buildings and the creation of the proposed nursery.

27 With the agreement of the Dioceses of Chester and Shrewsbury, further work is being undertaken. This will identify the options and costs associated with the development of the site to create a school able to: provide a high quality learning environment for children, enable access to the wider extended services now required to be delivered through schools, as well as providing a focal point for community activities. The challenges associated with addressing these building issues may result in the timescale for the opening of the new school premises to be later than

was hoped. Nevertheless, it is the view of the two Dioceses and the Governing Bodies of both schools that it would be prudent to proceed with the proposed school closures and creation of the new school from September 2009, as intended.

28 By proceeding on the original time line, a Temporary Governing Body for the school can be established at the earliest opportunity and it will then be able to play a major role in decision taking about site development issues and the management of the associated building project.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Revenue

29 A summary of the savings generated by this proposal are set out below based on the 2008/09 values and assuming the closure takes effect in summer 2009. It assumes also that the new school will not be entitled to excess area funding or entitlement to a temporary split site allowance pending completion of building works.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Ongoing
Long-term formula savings	£55.318	£94.830	£94.830	£94.830
Rationalisation allowance payable to receiving schools	£20.949	£14.964	£0	£0
Net savings	£34.369	£79.866	£94.830	£94.830

Capital

30 At this stage it is impossible to identify the costs associated with developing the premises for the new school. The project has, however, been included in the Primary Strategy for Change submission made on behalf of the Cheshire East Shadow Council and will need to be included in its Capital Programme.

CONCLUSION

31 The need to remove surplus accommodation in the area served by St Barnabas and St Edward's is now widely accepted. There is considerable enthusiasm and support for the proposals to close the existing schools and open a new Joint Church School on the St Edward's site. The Panel is invited to recommend the publication of notices proposing the closures of St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's Catholic Primary School in Summer 2009. As the proposed new Joint Church School will be Voluntary Aided, the proposal for the establishment of the School will be made by the Dioceses of Chester and Shrewsbury with the support of the County Council.

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ASH GROVE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

32 The issues relating to Ash Grove were considered alongside the two other schools in the area with Children's Centres on site, at the commencement of the Macclesfield Review. At that time, as informal consultations were being undertaken on a range of proposals relating to other schools in the area, no action was proposed in relation to Ash Grove. However, the informal consultations identified a high level of concern from parents that if other schools in the area were reduced in size or closed, their children would have to attend Ash Grove School. In the light of the decision to propose the creation of the new Joint Church School, the level of concern expressed by parents and the need to reduce the number of surplus places in the area, the

Panel recommended that formal consultation be undertaken on the proposed closure of Ash Grove Primary School.

BACKGROUND

33 As indicated earlier in this report, the level of surplus school places in the area of Macclesfield served by Ash Grove is already at a significant level. Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery has a capacity for 149 pupils. There has been a significant reduction in pupil numbers attending Ash Grove since 1999. In January 2008 the school had 96 pupils on roll and 35.6% surplus places. The level of surplus places is forecast to rise to 45.6% by 2013.

34 The school is not the preferred choice of many parents living in its catchment area. In January 2008, less than 20% of parents who live in the school's catchment area chose to send their children to Ash Grove. The considerable reduction in the number of pupils attending the school in recent years and the present low number on roll, which looks set to continue, threatens the future stability and sustainability of the school.

35 In addition to the issues associated with pupil numbers, concern has been expressed about the performance of the school. The OFSTED Inspection report of Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery (November 2006) recognised that the school did much to support the personal development of children but nevertheless standards at the school were considered to be "exceptionally low". School attendance was also identified as being below average and it was further reported that "few children reach the national expectations for children of their age".

36 In recognition of the concerns about the performance of the school, the Authority has ensured that a high level of support from council officers and advisers has been forthcoming and that the school has been monitored closely. Despite this high level of support, the school has failed to deal satisfactorily with the key issues that were identified in the OFSTED Inspection of 2006. In these circumstances, it has been difficult to be optimistic about the future role of the school and thereby its capacity to generate sufficient impetus to secure future improvement.

37 It is widely accepted that the quality of a school's leadership and management is a key component in the range of factors that need to be in place to enable a school to achieve high standards. Regrettably senior management in Ash Grove School has been subject to considerable change over recent years and there have been considerable periods of acting headship or acting deputy headship and therefore a lack of continuity and stability. The most recent Headteacher left post before the end of the last school year and the then acting Deputy Headteacher is currently the acting Headteacher.

CONSULTATION

38 Formal consultation with staff, governors, parents and members of the community was held at the school on 24 September 2008.

39 Considerable opposition to the proposed closure was registered by staff, Governors and parents who attended the drop-in consultation meeting.

40 Appendix 3 summarises the feedback received through letters, emails and oral representations at the public consultation event.

41 Many of the concerns expressed in response to the proposed closure focus on the position that the school has in the local community and the potential impact of its loss to the children and families involved with it. In particular, when considered alongside the proposed closures of St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, it is felt that even with the creation of the proposed new Joint Church School, there would be a significant reduction in the choice of schools in that part of south Macclesfield.

42 It is pointed out also that, based on the Authority's forecasts of pupils for the area, there would be insufficient places at the new joint Church School to accommodate all of the children currently forecast to attend the three schools. Furthermore, it is argued that there would be a number of parents who would not wish their children to attend a faith based school and that they in particular would have very limited options. The highest density of families with children attending Ash Grove live in the area to the south and east of the school, which is the furthestmost point from other schools. The Authority has estimated that 63% of children would have a journey of less than a mile and a half, although it is accepted that this is considerable distance for young children. A number of parents have paced out the actual walking distance to alternative schools, which is understandably rather more than the "as the crow flies" calculation of distance used as standard practice by the Authority.

43 Concern has also been registered that the practical realities facing parents arising from the proposed school closure were not fully appreciated by the Authority when the proposal was made. For example, it is understood that parents taking children to alternative schools may have to make two bus journeys as there is no direct route accessible to them. It has also been reported that the bus company places constraints on the number of buggies allowed on the bus at one time, which may also present difficulties.

44 It has been pointed out also that ensuring children attend school is already a challenging exercise for the school and by requiring families to take their children an even greater distance, this difficulty will be exacerbated.

45 The fact that the Ash Grove Primary School catchment is within an area of high social deprivation, was also expressed in a variety of different ways. There is no doubt that the needs of the area are significant and the removal of the school would be a loss of a major amenity.

46 Representations were also made about the level of need of children attending the school. For example, there are currently some 26% of pupils on the special educational needs register, which is higher than the national average.

47 The high quality of the school premises and their recent refurbishment together with the very significant investment in the establishment of the Children's Centre was also referred to. It was felt that the Children's Centre was making an impact and there was a steady growth in activity including new opportunities for parental engagement and learning, and other community activities.

48 The Governing Body of the school has set out its concerns formally in a letter to the Lead Member for Children's Services, which is attached as Appendix 4. This letter, while providing further detail of the concerns mentioned above, also points out a significant number of positive developments at the school. These include the operation of the first summer holiday play scheme, a rise in the number of children coming into reception and that the school now qualifies for additional funding and resources provided through the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). This

programme, while rigorous and demanding of the school, has been proven to make an impact on other schools in other parts of the country by providing additional focused assistance to raise standards of attainment and achievement within the school.

49 The Governing Body also points out the significant investment which the Authority has already made in the school and the associated Children's Centre in terms of the provision of premises and its significant refurbishment. In its view the potential impact of the Children's Centre on the school has yet to be realised but that the indicators mentioned above in relation to the play scheme and the increase in reception are likely to continue having a positive affect on the school in the future. Furthermore, in its view the school provides a very significant social and community resource within the area and cannot be regarded solely as an educational institution.

50 The Governing Body has also prepared a draft action plan (Appendix 5) setting out its views on the key issues that need to be addressed to develop the school and secure its place at the heart of its community.

51 There is no doubt that in recent times a number of key individuals have worked hard to bring elements of provision and community support together. The Governing Body has been strengthened in the last few months and has an increasingly clear focus on the need for decisive action to lift the performance and perception of the school.

52 It is arguable therefore that to take a decision on the future of Ash Grove at this time could be unhelpfully early in the school's programme of planned recovery. However, the school recognises that on previous occasions there have been "false dawns" when it was considered that significant improvements were in hand, but which never materialised. Nevertheless, there are more indicators at this time than previously of the potential to make a significant impact in the school's overall performance.

53 It would seem wholly inappropriate, however, to let matters run without taking decisive action. The level of surplus places in the area demands attention and the closure of Ash Grove will go some way to reducing the overall level within Macclesfield Town and across the new Cheshire East Council area. It is also recognised that closing the school now may remove a pivotal community asset at a time when its potential may be beginning to be realised. The Panel may wish to consider deferring a decision at this time to enable the School Governing Body to put its action plan in place and to give it the opportunity to deliver the significant changes intended.

54 Should this course of action commend itself to the Panel, it is recommended that a number of conditions be specified. In particular, it is recommended that a fixed period of time, possibly two or three years, be agreed for the school to deliver the Action Plan and show that it is capable of responding positively to the challenges before it. It is further recommended that the Governors Action Plan be discussed in detail with officers/advisers to ensure that clear measurable targets and milestones are included, and that there are appropriate connections with other plans agreed by the Authority through the ISP and other support arrangements. Clear agreement would also need to be formalised between the Authority and the Governing Body to initiate the review of the Action Plan at the end of the agreed period. At that time, assuming that progress has been made, consideration could be given to what further support would be appropriate. On the other hand, should the school have failed to respond to the challenges before it, further consideration would need to be given to progressing with consultation on its proposed closure.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

Revenue

55 A summary of the savings generated by the proposal to close Ash Grove Primary School are set out below based on the 2008/09 values and assuming the closure takes effect in summer 2009.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Ongoing
Long-term formula savings	£61.623	£105.639	£105.639	£105.639
Rationalisation allowance payable to receiving schools	£20.949	£14.964	£0	£0
Net savings	£40.674	£90.675	£105.639	£105.639

56 Clearly if the school does not close, then these savings will not be forthcoming.

CONCLUSION

57 A decision on whether to close Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery is not straightforward. The falling number on roll, and the forecast that this will continue to drop, taken together with the relative unpopularity of the school with local parents, and the need to reduce surplus capacity in the area are factors pointing towards school closure. However, the school is on the periphery of south Macclesfield and where the children currently attending the school reside, may present some difficulties for them to attend alternative schools. The school itself has taken considerable steps in recent times to strengthen its Governing Body and to ensure that it has a clearer focus on improving its performance. The opening of the Children's Centre which is integrated with the school is also seen as a potential driver for future development and improvement.

58 The Panel is invited to consider the issues and make its recommendations to the Lead Member for Children's Services.

BOLLINGTON SCHOOLS: INVITATION TO CONSIDER FEDERATION

59 The invitation to the Governing Bodies of Bollington Cross CE Primary School and Bollington St John's CE Primary School to consider a possible hard federation, involving other schools as necessary, has been taken forward. Since the beginning of the new school year two meetings have been convened by the Authority to which all five schools in the Bollington area have been invited (Bollington Cross CE Primary, Bollington St John's CE Primary, St Gregory's RC Primary, Dean Valley Primary and Pott Shrigley CE Primary Schools). Other school meetings have also taken place during this time.

BACKGROUND

60 At the commencement of the Review there was a general acceptance of the need to take action to reduce the high level of surplus places in Bollington. As there are two Church of England schools, each of which has a high level of surplus capacity, the focus of attention was drawn to those two schools. The debate quickly turned to the relative merits of the two school sites and the proposal to close Bollington St John's CE Primary emerged.

61 The number of pupils attending Bollington schools has continued to fall and the latest forecasts for 2013 are shown below. (Baseline Jan 2008)

School	NOR Jan 08 (Plasc)	NOR Sep 08 (School Figures)	Forecast Jan 2013 (based on Jan 08)	Net Capacity (Jan 2008)
Bollington Cross	90	95	117	150
Bollington St John's	63	48	59	120
Dean Valley	192	178	157	210
Pott Shrigley	47	40	37	42
St Gregory's	98	90	78	105
Total	490	451	448	627

62 The number on roll at the beginning of the current school year has been obtained from the schools and shown above. As can be seen, in most cases the Authority's forecasts have not been reached and the 2013 forecast will need to be reduced accordingly.

63 At the meeting of the Children's Services Executive held on 23rd July 2008 the advice of the shadow Cheshire East Cabinet was received and considered. In the light of that advice, the decision was taken to invite the two Church of England schools in Bollington to enter into discussions, involving other schools as necessary, about establishing a possible hard federation and with a view to reduce surplus capacity.

CURRENT POSITION

64 At the initial meeting of the Bollington schools there was broad agreement about the challenges that all five schools would need to face in relation to the continuing decline in the pupil population. The desire was expressed to achieve a solution at the earliest possible opportunity in order to improve local stability. It was recognised, however, that neither federation nor collaboration between the schools alone would meet the challenges of the falling rolls. It was felt that any solution had to be practical and not just a paper exercise. It was hoped also that all of the schools in the Bollington area would be involved and although the time for moving this forward was short, schools agreed to continue their dialogue through September.

65 A number of schools expressed their interest in entering into federation of one form or another. In particular, Pott Shrigley CE Primary School and Bollington St John's CE Primary School felt that there would be merit in meeting further to explore a possible hard federation with a view to locating both schools in their federated form on the St John's site.

66 The possibility of all five schools engaging in a soft federation to help work together to consider issues such as pre-school provision and the future intake into reception of all five schools, was also discussed. All schools agreed to give further consideration to the issues.

67 A further meeting of Bollington schools took place at the beginning of October at which the various issues were discussed further. The representatives of Pott Shrigley and Bollington St John's schools reported back on their dialogue about establishing a possible hard federation. Both school Governing Bodies have now discussed the matter and have agreed in principle to proceed further, although the possibility of both schools being located on one site has been ruled out by the Pott Shrigley Governing Body, which has expressed its determination for the school to

remain on its present site. Nevertheless, both schools have worked together to look into options for the reduction of surplus capacity.

68 The preliminary investigation into the options available has identified the possibility of removing from school use two classrooms at the Bollington St John's site. These rooms, which can be satisfactorily isolated from the rest of the school, could be utilised by the Macclesfield and Bollington Education Improvement Partnership (EIP) both as the base for the EIP Co-ordinator and for training rooms. Consideration of this is at an early stage and as yet no agreement has been achieved with the EIP and nor have the practicalities been resolved. Nevertheless, should this prove practicable, it would lead to the removal of a number of surplus places, the precise number being dependent upon a review of the school's net capacity and detailed discussions on the published admission number. The initial suggestion from the two schools is that the net capacity should be 63, giving a reduction of 57 school places.

69 At their meeting at the beginning of October, all five schools reaffirmed their willingness to work together and indeed already do so through the EIP. At this stage of development Bollington St John's and Pott Shrigley schools have presented a positive response to the challenge which goes some way to addressing the issue of surplus places. While all the schools have spent much time looking at the issues and have given serious thought to finding a positive way forward, they have concluded that there is no immediate solution that presents itself at this time.

70 This development is to be welcomed and the schools involved congratulated for their willingness to take this significant step forward. However, the pupil forecast based on Jan 2008 for the five Bollington schools in 2013 is 448 with a current total net capacity of 627. This initiative if agreed would reduce the net capacity of Bollington St John's from 120 to 63 and the total net capacity in Bollington to 570. This would still leave a forecast of 122 surplus school places in the Bollington area by 2013. Clearly this is still a much higher level of surplus capacity than would be preferred but is nevertheless a helpful initial action that could be built upon at a later stage.

CONCLUSION

71 While a very significant suggestion has been made, it will make only a minor impact on the level of surplus school places in the area. The Panel is invited to consider these issues and determine its recommendation to the Lead Member for Children's Services.

RECOMMENDED

That the Panel recommends the Lead Member for Children's Services to:

- 1 approve the issue of statutory public notices proposing the closure of St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's Catholic Primary School, Macclesfield, in July 2009;
- 2 subject to 1 above, to issue on behalf of the Dioceses of Chester and Shrewsbury a proposal to establish a new joint Church School on the current St Edward's Catholic Primary School site, with effect from September 2009;
- 3 a. authorise discussions with the Governing Body of Ash Grove Primary School to enter into an agreement supported by an action plan with explicit measurable targets, to seek to develop and improve the school over an agreed period, with the recommendation to Cheshire East Council that the position of Ash Grove Primary School be reviewed at a specified future time;
or
b. approve the issue of a statutory public notice proposing the closure of Ash Grove Primary School from July 2009;
- 4 a. note the positive developments in relation to a possible hard federation between Bollington St John's CE Primary School and Pott Shrigley CE Primary School, and request that they continue developing detailed proposals for further consideration; and
b. note also the commitment of all schools in the area to work together and invite them to continue their current dialogue..

TRANSFORMING LEARNING COMMUNITIES (TLC): OPTIONS IDENTIFIED BY THE LOCALITY REVIEW FOR MACCLESFIELD

NOTICES OF MOTION & CALL-IN OF PREVIOUS DECISIONS
NOTICE OF MOTION TO COUNCIL ON 6 DECEMBER 2007

1 The following Notice of Motion, in the names of Councillors Mrs E Carter and K Edwards, was submitted to Council on 6 December 2007 in accordance with Standing Order No 12:

“This Council recognises the need to develop the educational system in Cheshire to meet the requirements of parents and pupils in the 21st century for schools that meet the aspirations of all and give maximum opportunities to all pupils to develop their abilities and talents to the full. All Members supported the policy of Transforming Learning Communities to that end.

Council regrets, therefore, the adaptation of the policy in the Macclesfield area to propose concentrating the loss of vital educational services to relatively deprived areas. We regret schools in urban communities are closed thus seriously restricting parental choice within the town.

Council cannot be confident that the policy of Transforming Learning Communities as currently being proposed in the Macclesfield area, if implemented, will meet the aspirations and needs of children and young people in Macclesfield Town as a whole.

In particular Council is concerned that the suggested proposals concentrate all restrictions on the availability of school places in the southern half of Macclesfield. Council considers before progressing further these suggested proposals that these issues should be considered by the Scrutiny Review of Transforming Learning Communities.

Council therefore requests the Executive to instruct officers to halt the TLC process in the Macclesfield area to allow for a major reconsideration of the options proposed to ensure fairness and justice in educational provision for parents and pupils in Macclesfield area as a result of the Transforming Learning Communities process.”

2 Council, at its meeting on 6 December, ordered that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Executive for decision, taking advice from the Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee.

3 The Executive, on 28 February 2008 resolved that:

- (1) the Executive remains satisfied that the TLC process, which is based on an agreed set of principles, has been applied consistently and fairly in respect of all schools;
- (2) the Executive is further satisfied that the consultation undertaken to date in relation to the TLC process has been thorough and systematic, and compares well with comparable processes in other authorities;

- (3) the Executive notes the advice of the Performance and Overview Committee to the Lead Member for Children's Services as endorsed by the Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee;
- (3) the Executive acknowledges that there are pressing and compelling reasons for continuing with the Macclesfield Locality Review without delay, that to halt the process would constitute a significant risk to the Authority's capacity to manage the provision of school places and the roll-out of integrated and extended services in and around schools, and that there are therefore no justifiable reasons for halting the process while a major review is conducted; and
- (5) accordingly the Motion is not adopted.

CALL-IN OF DECISIONS TAKEN AT CHILDREN'S SERVICES EXECUTIVE ON 18 DECEMBER 2007

4 Resolutions (1)–(4) below, which approved by the Lead Member for Children's Services on 18 December 2007, were called in by Councillors K Edwards, Ms P Merrick and Mrs D Flude under paragraph 12.3 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, and the matter was referred to Performance and Overview Committee on 24 January 2008 for consideration.

"That

- (1) the statutory public consultation be held on the possible closures of Ash Grove Primary School, St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School, Macclesfield;
- (2) subject to (1) above, a competition be held under provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to seek proposals to establish a new one form entry primary school to serve south Macclesfield, with effect from September 2009;
- (3) subject to (1) and (2) above, the Chester Diocesan Board of Education and the Diocese of Shrewsbury Education Service be invited jointly to consider with the Local Authority options for the establishment of a new school through the competition process to serve south Macclesfield, and the Diocese of Shrewsbury be invited to make available the premises of St Edward's Primary School to be the site of the proposed school;
- (4) statutory public consultations be held on the proposed closure of Bollington St John's CE Primary School with effect from July 2009 with alternative places available at Bollington Cross CE Primary School;

5 The Performance and Overview Committee offered the following advice in relation to resolutions (1)–(3):

RESOLVED:

That the Lead Member for Children's Services be advised that any public consultations on the proposals concerning Ash Grove Primary School, St Barnabas CE Primary School and St Edward's RC Primary School should clearly indicate an option to retain Ash Grove Primary School and that the proposal to investigate the possible establishment of a joint faith school be welcomed.

- 6 No advice was offered in relation to resolution (4).
- 7 On 25 February 2008 the Lead Member for Children's Services resolved:
- "That the advice of the Performance and Overview Committee be noted and the decision be deferred to a future meeting following advice from the School Planning Select Panel on 17 March 2008."

The advice of the School Planning Select Panel is set out in the report itself.

NOTICES OF MOTION TO COUNCIL ON 14 FEBRUARY 2008

- 8 Councillors K Edwards and Ms P Merrick gave notice of the following motion under the provisions of standing order no.12:-

ROAD SAFETY

"This Council recognises the supreme importance of road safety measures as a contribution to creating a safe and strong community throughout Cheshire. This Council particularly recognises concerns of parents for the safety of their children on the roads and footways of Cheshire.

The Council therefore calls on the Executive Members for Environment and Children's Services to establish a clear policy of taking road safety issues fully into account before considering formal consultations on the possibility of closing any school in Cheshire."

- 9 Council ordered that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Executive for decision, taking advice from the Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee and from Environment Scrutiny Select Committee.

- 10 Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee considered the matter at their meeting on 14 April and will be advising the Executive at its meeting on 29 May to accept the Notice of Motion subject to certain amendments.

- 11 Councillors K Edwards and Mrs D Flude gave notice of the following motion under the provisions of standing order no. 12:-

EDUCATION SERVICES

"Cheshire County Council is recognised for its significant achievements in providing excellent educational services to the people of Cheshire through continuous additional expenditure, now subsumed within the ring fenced funding provided by the Government.

The Council's commitment to education is seen in the world class facilities provided in the recently completed Macclesfield Learning Zone and the programme of Children's Centres linked to primary schools being provided across the county. This provision is reflected in the consistently above average results of Cheshire pupils at every level of their education.

Given this commitment the Council calls on the Lead Member for Children's Services to ensure that:

- 1 *educational standards in Macclesfield are maintained and encouraged to rise further*

- 2 *the three Children's Centres associated with primary schools work with those schools in a seamless manner to drive up educational achievement, and*
- 3 *the exciting new venture of a joint faith primary school in South Macclesfield is carried vigorously forward*

so that through these policies the County Council will be able to hand over an excellent legacy of educational provision in Macclesfield to any future Unitary Authority."

12 Council ordered that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Executive for decision, taking advice from the Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee.

13 At the meeting of Children's Services Scrutiny Select Committee on 14 April 2008, it was recommended that the notice of motion be adopted subject to the deletion of the word "*those*" at the third paragraph section 2.

14 This recommendation was agreed at the meeting of the Children's Services Executive on 24 April and therefore the matter is now resolved.



St Barnabas CE Primary / St Edward's Catholic Primary – Formal Consultation
Thursday 25th September 2008 (5.00-7.00pm)

The formal consultation event took place for parents/ carers and members of the local community on Thursday 25th September between 5.00pm and 7.00pm at St Edward's Catholic Primary School, approximately 50 people attended. 178 forms were received during the consultation period, 130 in support, 28 disagreeing with the proposal unless a new joint church school is established and 20 against the proposal to close the schools.

Agree	Disagree (unless new joint church school is built)	Disagree
St Barnabas CE Primary School		
22	1	4
St Edward's Catholic Primary School		
54	5	7
Members of the community / various		
54	22	9

The main concern raised by the majority of the parents was that the new school would be built on the current St Edward's Catholic Primary School site with adequate funding to allow the new school to be fit for purpose / 21st Century teaching, although the majority of parents were in favour of the proposal in principle. Other concerns / points raised were:

- Will the building be big enough?
- Wouldn't neutral land be better?
- Concerns for parents and children walking long distances and crossing busy roads
- Concerns for staff
- Parents chose St Barnabas, a small school for a reason
- Could access be developed from Robin Hood Avenue?
- The new school should be bigger
- Transition is very important
- We need to be supported and kept informed
- Would class sizes increase, quality of education will decrease
- This is an exciting proposal
- St Barnabas parents feel that they are losing their school
- You are proposing big changes for all the schools in a small area
- The process is very long and drawn out
- Will buses be made available?
- The St Barnabas site is worth quite a lot of money, was this taken into account when choosing the site?
- Withdraw areas will be needed in the new school
- The pre-school is full at St Edward's

- The nursery next to St Barnabas is full
- The combination of two 'very good faith schools' would bode well for the future
- Some concern if Ash Grove was to close too
- Concern that RC faith may die out over time
- What pre-school / after school provision will be in place at the new school, the facilities on offer at Ash Grove are too far away to access
- There may be conflicts in the teaching styles
- Building works may affect the local community
- Crossing patrols would need to be installed in at least 3 locations
- Where would the children go during the building works?
- Agree provided that funding is made available for refurbishment to a desired standard without the use of temporary mobile classrooms



Ash Grove Primary School & Nursery – Formal Consultation
Wednesday 24th September 2008 (5.00-7.00pm)

The formal consultation event took place for parents/ carers and members of the local community on Wednesday 24th September between 5.00pm and 7.00pm, approximately 100 people attended. 54 forms were received during the consultation period, 1 in support and 53 against the proposal to close the school. Some letters and drawings from the local community and children at the school have been received, along with a petition with 122 names listed who are opposed to the closure proposal.

The following points were the main concerns raised:

- The community needs to stay together / community spirit is focused around the school
- The cost of additional support in the area will rise
- Cannot afford to pay for a new uniform
- Distance to the alternative schools is a concern
- If travelling further to school, may need to reduce hours in work / resign
- The school serves a wide area
- Great education and teaching staff
- The staff are very supportive towards all children
- The school is the heart of the community
- Parents have problems and children have to get themselves ready for school
- Children would struggle in a new environment
- The after school club is great
- The uncertainty about the schools future is affecting the children
- Shouldn't be forced to send our children to a faith school
- The school serves vulnerable families and attendance may suffer if the school closes
- Pastoral care is a huge issue in the school
- Small school provides security / second home to the children it serves
- Closure will have negative impact on the children's education
- The children will find change extremely difficult
- Why are you picking on the quietest community?
- You are proposing to close 2 of 3 primary schools in the towns area of greatest need
- School has good links with the children's centre
- School provides a non-judgemental environment
- Excellent level of care from school staff
- The school building is excellent – what will you do with it if the school closes?
- Would federation with Hollinhey be a possibility?
- Concern over school being knocked down for development

- School hosts activities and after school clubs, the activities over the summer holidays are full
- You are making vulnerable children more vulnerable
- Children may go into care system if they do not have the support of the school
- Should carry out a survey to look at the intentions of the parents regarding future schooling
- There is an alleyway on the way to St Edward's where numerous people have been attacked, this is not a safe walking route for children or parents
- Ash Grove is inclusive, unlike other schools in Macclesfield
- The staff and acting headteacher always give 100%
- The school have improved since the new head arrived, give us chance to improve further
- If the school closes, pressure will be put on other County Council services
- It should not be about resources and funding in this area, the Moss needs support. If you close the school, you are moving the problem
- Children attend the school from Women's Domestic Violence Refuge nearby
- Children that walk to school on their own will struggle to cross main roads
- The school has been on the estate for 72 years
- The school needs a secure management team
- If the school closed then the estate is likely to return to the its previous problems
- A training centre for parents is crucial for the area and parents have confidence to attend Children's Centre as they are familiar with the school

APPENDIX 4
SCHOOL PLANNING SELECT PANEL
13 OCTOBER 2008



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Headteacher: Mrs J. Stephenson

1st October 2008

Councillor David Rowlands
Children's Services Director
Cheshire County Council
County Hall
Chester
CH1 1SQ

Dear Councillor Rowlands,

We the governors for Ash Grove Primary School ask you to give serious consideration to the case for keeping Ash Grove Primary School open. We submit the following evidence in response to the points raised in the Proposal document, and other important points that we feel compelled to bring to your notice.

MOVEMENT OF PUPILS

Parental choice - the plans for the other two local schools, St Barnabas CE and St Edward's RC, are well advanced with the proposal of a 200-place joint-faith school. This would take in the existing population of the two schools, leaving the 100 pupils from Ash Grove with the dilemma of where to go. Our contention is that it is essential that the parents of this community have the choice of a non-faith based school to work alongside the new ecumenical school. Whilst it is true that some will choose the new school, it is equally true that others would prefer a secular education for their children, or may have unease about how the new school will provide for both Anglicans and Roman Catholic pupils. Indeed, five children (5% of school population) have recently transferred to Ash Grove expressing their concerns about this matter. The existence of the two schools working in cooperation and offering parents a good choice would give a fair balance to the parents in this community.

Pupil numbers - the school is full at the lower end. There are currently 19 pupils in reception class. 12 pupils left year 6 this summer. This represents a 7% increase in the school roll, which contradicts the predictions shown in the proposal. 18 of those 19 in Reception came through our Nursery, reflecting a rising trend of parents choosing to keep their children at Ash Grove. We have anecdotal evidence that the birth rate on the estate is increasing, though data to prove this is hard to establish.

ADMISSION TO ALTERNATIVE SCHOOLS

Distance - we are deeply concerned about the practicalities of parents taking their children to local schools that will be offered as alternatives. Within a two mile radius of Ash Grove, and including that and the two faith schools, there are 11 schools given as alternatives. However, these are measured "as the crow flies", and take no account of actual journeys or main roads, so are not real alternatives. Our parents have measured the distance to the nearest community school using a pedometer. It is 1.29 miles (40minutes) for a single journey to Ivy Bank, measured from the centre of the Moss estate. All other schools are still further away. Thus, Ivy Bank is the only viable alternative, but it would take a parent 2 hours 40 minutes in total to walk each day, which is just not realistic. The journey also entails crossing a very busy main road; this would be highly dangerous for those of our children who bring themselves to school.

Surplus places – as shown above, the only school within possible "pram-pushing" distance is Ivy Bank. This currently has 48 empty spaces. Supposing that the new joint-faith school absorbs the populations of the two schools amalgamating, this will fill its 200 place capacity with its own pupils. This leaves 52 pupils from Ash Grove with no viable alternative school. When this is compounded by the other facts above concerning the vulnerability of many of our pupils and the problems of getting the pupils into school on time, this raises grave concerns about the future protection and provision for our pupils.

TRANSPORT

Public transport - All possibilities of taking a bus involve going into the terminus and out again, thus increasing the distance and cost (£1.80 for a single journey adult fare). Only two buggies are allowed on a bus at a time, and double buggies are not welcomed. Parents have worked out that they would need to leave home at 8 a.m. at the latest, in order to get to another school. This alone would have a severe impact on their ability to get to work on time, with the negative effect on family income if jobs are lost.

Attendance - bearing in mind that many of our parents are single mothers without use of a car, and that attendance and punctuality are our ongoing concerns, there is strong evidence that some just would not bother to make the journey or would be highly irregular in their attendance. This would not be welcome news for the receiving schools, whose own attendance figures would take a marked dip. Taking these parents into punitive litigation by fining them would also be counter-productive, reinforcing the circles of deprivation.

SITE AND BUILDINGS

Premises and resources – our premises are in very good working order and have been very well maintained and resourced. They present a very positive image of a traditional school building at the heart of its community. Parents from other schools who have attended the holiday playscheme as below, who may never have been inside our school before, have made a gratifying

number of very positive comments about the school's provision and resources from people who have never been inside before.

Holiday provision - The first summer holiday playscheme, organised by our Children's Centre and working in effective cooperation with other local providers, has been outstandingly successful, with very high attendance figures throughout. Several local residents have said that it has been the quietest and most peaceful summer ever, as the children on the estate have been purposefully occupied and the parents have had a united function. There are plans for more playschemes each holiday. The success of this has been aided by the ability of the Children's Centre to use Ash Grove's facilities when needed, through the shared access door; this is not a feature of other local Children's Centres.

Transfer of pupils - during the transition period for the amalgamation of St Edwards and St Barnabas, inevitable disruption of premises will occur. Keeping us open will enable those parents who prefer us to benefit from our very good premises and resources. Closing us will mean that those of our pupils who may choose the new faith school will have to attend a total of three different premises, with all the attendant problems this will bring.

FINANCE

Fair Funding formula - We understand that keeping a small school open costs more money, and that there are many small schools in Cheshire in which it is more expensive to educate children. We set against this fact, the particular needs of our pupils which can best be met in smaller classes: this is the moral and humanitarian case against the financial case. However, our goal must be to increase pupil numbers so that we can come closer to a viable financial situation. Alongside this, the planned improvements in our provision and standards will lead to the discontinuation of the need for extra financial support from the Local Authority.

The cost of raising standards – We realise that the key to our future development must be the improvement in pupil performance. From September 2008 the school has been designated as part of the Intensifying Support Programme (ISP). This very rigorous and demanding programme has had proven impact on results in schools nationally across the past three years. Staffing is now stable for the foreseeable future, which will be most beneficial to the implementation of the ISP. Assessment and tracking procedures have been greatly improved with the support of the Acting Deputy, Jennie Stephenson. There is every indication that all these rigorous measures will have a crucial impact on standards of both attainment and achievement. The ISP is an expensive programme; this investment would be wasted if we are closed and the impact is lost.

Special Educational Needs – we currently have 26% of our pupils on the SEN register, two statemented pupils and two more with statements pending. This is much higher than the national average. The social and personal development exhibited by our pupils, with their wide range of ability levels, is

not recognised in national test scores but is critically important in their future lives. It is nurtured carefully in Ash Grove, but we have many anxieties about how well they can be accommodated in other, probably larger, schools.

STAFFING

Future employment - Our staff are experienced and therefore expensive to employ. Forced redeployment is not an option, and so they would enter a highly competitive job market at a time when newly qualified teachers are struggling to find employment, and when other schools are already fully staffed. As governors we feel duty-bound to reflect our deep concern about the effect of closure on all our staff.

HOUSING

Catchment areas – there are anomalies in our allocated area which make it difficult to work out the true expectations of percentage of uptake. For example, children from Langley, which is in our catchment area, are highly unlikely to attend our school when right on the doorstep of Hollinhey school, and divided by a busy main road. We reject the notion that there are sufficient places in the area to meet demand, were we to close.

Extended use of premises – recent changes in benefits will mean many single mothers struggling to find employment, another negative blow for our community. The school has capacity for adult education to house a learning centre for parents. In addition, we are in discussion about exciting ways of creating strategic links with the new Macclesfield Learning Zone to make the school a satellite centre for parental education. A range of other providers and organisations are keen to offer help, seeing the enormous benefits to be gained by the school heading up the regeneration of the community.

We also wish to bring to your attention the following special features of our provision

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF OUR SCHOOL

Our central concern is to represent to you the needs of *our* particular pupils and *this* particular community.

Vulnerable pupils - Our school serves a community of significant social need. It is within the top 10% most deprived areas in Cheshire. Furthermore, this ranking will be much higher under the new Cheshire East administration. (Source: Cheshire CC's Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007). Some of our children have complex and multiple needs which can best be addressed by staff who know and understand this particular community. The County Children and Young People's Plan, in line with the Government agenda encapsulated in Building Brighter Futures, lays great emphasis on protecting children and supporting families in areas of the greatest social need. Our case is that we can make a considerable contribution to that agenda, now and in the future, if we are enabled to stay open.

Community hub - the school has an attached new purpose-built Children's Centre. This is already making a positive impact on liaison and support for parents and families in the local area, including engaging with hard to reach groups. The school currently provides a breakfast club and an after school club, and provided extra opportunities for its pupils through a range of after-school clubs. We are committed to the expansion of our role at the centre of the community and to working in partnership to promote the wellbeing of the local people. This in itself will have an impact on the educational achievements of our pupils. We are working with the Moss Rose Community Support Group and a wide variety of other interested parties to ascertain how we can all work together to improve local well-being. We are exploring the possibility of re-naming the school as a Community Primary School to reflect the school's contribution to community cohesion. We will be submitting a detailed and robust Action Plan to show our intentions for working in harmony with our community.

Victims of domestic violence - Ash Grove works in close cooperation with the local Women's Aid Hostel and is proud of this feature of its work. Up to six pupils at any one time can be on roll at our school. The frequency of transition of these pupils, their particular vulnerability and need for special support, add an extra dimension our work which needs to be recognised and celebrated. The staff at the Hostel say that the children always receive a warm welcome at Ash Grove, and are quickly made to feel part of the school. They are deeply concerned about what will happen to these children if we are closed. Causing these pupils to travel further by closing our school, or giving them no viable option but a faith school (which many say they do not want) is adding another problem to their existing burden. This can hardly be said to comply with the priorities in the County Children's plan.

PLANNED DEVELOPMENTS

Leadership - It cannot be denied that the school has suffered during turbulent times recently. However, a rigorous improvement plan is now in place. The leadership of the school is currently in the capable hands of Jennie Stephenson, Acting Headteacher until December 2008. This, alongside the development of the understanding of roles and responsibilities within the governing body, sets us on course to a period of solid growth that will substantially improve the school's effectiveness.

REPUTATION

The voice of the people - we reject the notion that the school is unpopular with the majority of parents in our community. We are sad and sorry that only negative views have been taken into account so far, because this does not reflect the opinions we hear on a daily basis. We welcome the opportunity to demonstrate that we have the strong support of our local community as we represent the case for keeping the school open. No doubt many of these will be contacting you, and we trust that you will give fair consideration to all these

views and to our radical and rigorous plans for the future of our school, and its secure place within the community it serves.

Yours sincerely,

The Governing Body of Ash Grove Primary School and Nursery, Macclesfield

LM WAT^CCay.

SE Sue Bowen

LE CBB, LEA Burton

SD Sam Sudd

MM N. Milbaine

DM Duffell

HB HB Birch

IS S. Stephenson

ML M. Lisle

MG M. Gilling

KM K. M. M. M.

KE K. E. K.

cc: Hannah Beer, Administrative Officer, for appropriate distribution

APPENDIX 5
SCHOOL PLANNING SELECT PANEL
13 OCTOBER 2008

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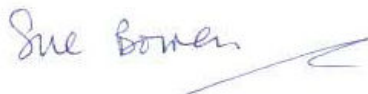
Councillor David Rowlands
Children's Services Director
Cheshire County Council
County hall
Chester
CH1 1SQ

2nd October 2008

Dear Councillor Rowlands,

I attach a copy of the governors' Action plan to show how our school, if allowed to remain open, will interact with its community. I hope that you will find some of our ideas interesting and original, and that they will help to strengthen the case for us to remain, and continue to grow, at the heart of our community.

Yours sincerely,



Sue Bowen
School Governor, Ash Grove Primary School

Sue Bowen B Ed (Hons) M Sc
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Action Plan For the development of Ash Grove Primary School at the heart of its community

Rationale: that the school should become a vital centre to its community, making a substantial contribution to community cohesion; that the community and those organisations which support it should make a recognised and coordinated contribution to the success of the school, its pupils and its families.

The Action Plan has been constructed to meet the Five Outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda, thus reflecting national and local concerns about all aspects of the well-being of children and young people.

The Plan outlines many possible areas of use of our extra facilities of an outside classroom, which we envisage having a regular weekly range of users. It also builds on the success of our links with our adjoining Children's Centre.

All the named organisations have pledged support provided the school continues to survive. The school will play a crucial role in supporting and mobilising the work undertaken by these agencies. As the school is under formal notice of possible closure, the **coordination of these initiatives will fail to happen if the school is closed**. The proposed starting date of most of these initiatives reflects the impending decision about our future.

1. Be Healthy

Development area	Action planned	Supporting organisation	Contact details	Timescale	Success criteria
Physical health	Collaboration with health services in on-site Children's Centre re continuity of care to age 11	Ash Grove Children's Centre	Mark Gaffney, Manager	As each service comes on line in Children's centre	Effective continuity of care for children and families utilising very good knowledge of pupils by Centre and School staff

Mental & emotional health	Working groups of children on nearby allotments	CCC Mental Health team in conjunction with Mayfield Centre	Jackie Earles	To be arranged	Children enjoy learning about growing things and working to a shared purpose
	Become a Nurturing school	Advice to be sought re how to set this up		To be arranged	Celebrate and extend what we do best, our care for the children
Healthy lifestyles	Street Soccer initiative, encouraging children & young people to get involved in activity during early evenings	Macclesfield Town Football Club	Ian Cosier, community officer	To begin January 2009. Funding bids to be supported by MTFC	Fewer disaffected youngsters on Moss streets
Physical health	Availability of medical resources for families and all residents through on-site pharmacy	Cheshire PCT: provision agreed subject to appeal	Lee Davies, Contracts Manager	January 2009	Easier access to medical resources for residents, also encouraging knowledge of school and its resources
Healthy eating	Luncheon club for OAPs : Weekly meals available by school cook for OAPs to eat with the children	School Kitchen	Ruth Potts, School cook	To be arranged	Increased appreciation of the school and what it provides by older members of community

2. Stay Safe

Development area	Action planned	Supporting organisation	Contact details	Timescale	Success criteria
Safe from maltreatment & violence	Continued excellent intensive support given by staff to all vulnerable pupils based on close personal knowledge	School especially pastoral care, Senco and BST	All staff	Ongoing	Our most vulnerable pupils feel protected and safe
	Continued excellent links with Women's Aid Hostel which ensure that this particularly vulnerable group feel safe in school	WAH	Marie Jones, senior project worker	Ongoing	
Safe from bullying	Presentations given by local voluntary youth agency with extensive experience in anti-bullying tactics including role play	Just Drop In	Ross Thompson, manager	January 2009	Children know how to deal with difficult issues of being bullied, leading to increased confidence especially on transition to High School
Security, stability and being cared for	Continued existence of our school's excellent care for individual children	School	Jennie Stephenson	Ongoing	Safe secure children who know they are valued & respected

Safety and purposeful activity in school holidays	Continued expansion of excellent holiday playscheme making full use of facilities and resources of both organisation	Children's Centre and school	Mark Gaffney Jennie Stephenson	October holiday scheme and thereafter every holiday time	Happy children with meaningful activity during holiday time, leading to more peaceful holiday times for the community
Safe from accidental injury	"Whatever it takes" programme to be introduced in school	Fire Service	Via Marilyn Kerby, Community Support officer, MBC	January 2009	Children understand dangers of misuse of fire

3. Enjoy and achieve

Development area	Action planned	Supporting organisation	Contact details	Timescale	Success criteria
Ready for school	Transition events between under-threes, Foundation stage and main primary school to be regular	Children's Centre and school	Mark Gaffney Sonia Wolvin Jennie Stephenson	Ongoing	Transition builds on success of Children's Centre to ensure happy confident entry to school
	Literacy project: two year programme introducing books for youngest children in most deprived families	Macclesfield Castle Rotary Club	Sue Bowen Mark Gaffney	November 2008	Increased engagement with, and enjoyment of, books in families which may not possess many

	CC team to engage with hard to reach families in community to encourage confidence in involvement with Centre	Children's Centre	Mark Gaffney	Ongoing	Continuity of information and support from CC to school ensuring hard to reach families are confident about coming into school
Children attend and enjoy school	EWO and family liaison officer to ensure regular attendance and punctuality	Macclesfield High School family liaison officer. EWO	Pauline Holt Jon King/Gill Jenkins, EWOS	November 2008	Attendance rates to rise to meet national average of 94.8% Punctuality to improve and be rewarded
	Clear start to school day (including Wake up Shake up) Future consultation re length of school day	School and governors	Jennie Stephenson AHT	Started September 2008	Everyone is clear about when school starts - physical wake-up - marked impact on quality of learning.
	Individual learning is effectively supported	School working with leaning Mentor	Kath McBride, LM	Started Sept 2008	Full engagement of children in all learning
Children achieve national educational standards	Raising standards to be key focus: see Strategic School Development Plan and Intensifying support plan	School	Jennie Stephenson supported by Maggie Swindells, School adviser	SSDP and ISP have immediate effect	Steady rise in levels of achievement and attainment. Pupils achieve targets set and agreed by governors

	Foundation subjects: extra support from Macc High School, specifically in music and science	Macclesfield HS	Ged Ward HT, MHS Pauline Holt, Family coordinator, MHS		Enhanced provision from specialist teachers supporting excellent teaching in school
	Extra support for development of MFL	Park Royal PS	Nick Warren, HT	From November 2008	All KS2 children engaged in learning a modern foreign language
Children achieve personal & social development & enjoy recreation	Expanded use of school grounds & after school clubs & lettings	School & governors	Jennie Stephenson	November 2008	Wider use of existing facilities leading to better marketing of school
	Strengthened links with Macc Town FC: Street soccer, in and out of school clubs and regular visits to football ground	MTFC	Ian Cosier, community officer	In and out of school clubs to begin with immediate effect. Street Soccer, grants to be applied for, expected to begin January 2009.	Purposeful activity for disaffected young people and worthwhile use of school grounds out of school hours
Raising aspirations	Wide range of initiatives in school focusing on achievement for all	School	Jennie Stephenson AGT and full governing body support	November 2008	Children and community have far higher aspirations about what they can achieve

4. Make a positive contribution

Development area	Action planned	Supporting organisation	Contact details	Timescale	Success criteria
Children engage in decision making	School Council established but needs further development	School	Jennie Stephenson	Ongoing	Children fully involved in all expansion & improvement efforts, understanding benefits to themselves and others
Children support community and environment	Children to be actively involved in all of this action plan and understand why it is important to them and their community	School Mental health team to support use of allotments	Jennie Stephenson Jackie Earles	To be arranged	
Community supports its school	Support for learning from older members of community	Intergen organisation, model based in Trafford, to give advice re setting up similar	Brian Hooley, area coordinator	January 2009	Worthwhile support for pupils in many aspects of learning, and good marketing of school
Law abiding, positive behaviour	Children to understand principles of living together in peace & harmony	ASB working with police. Behaviour support teacher	Richard Christopherson ASB Louise Corlett, BST	January 2009	School's reputation within the community is improved and demonstrated to be fair and effective

	Street Soccer & other initiatives tackle problem of disaffected youths on streets	MTFC	Ian Cosey Paul McGuire	January 2009	Fewer disaffected youth son street corners
Changes & challenges	Stronger links with secondary schools especially nearest receiving school	Macclesfield HS	Ged Ward, HT	Beginning October 2008	Children are enabled to deal with changes more confidently, especially transition at age 11
Enterprising behaviour	Mini-enterprise in school, older teenagers working with primary age pupils	Cre8 and Worth Unlimited, local youth organisation supported by Churches together	Rob Wardle, centre manager	January 2009	Mutual understanding and respect gained from shared project
	Outreach branch in school, engaging with children & young people re responsible and enterprising behaviour	Just Drop In Centre	Ross Thompson, centre manager	January 2009	Good availability for local young people to advice & support

4. Achieve economic well-being

Development area	Action planned	Supporting organisation	Contact details	Timescale	Success criteria
Advice systems made easily available for residents	CAB to open branch office one day a week, on school site.	CAB	Jackie Grinham	TBA	Good availability for local people of advice & support
Housing advice	Weekly on-site surgery by Peaks & Plains organisation	Peaks & Plains	Tim Pinder, MD	From January 2007	Reduction of housing problems for families with consequent greater security for our children
Sustainable communities	Social cohesion within our community, with the school playing a central & crucial role. Children to understand how and why this works. Parents carers and families supported towards being economically active & secure	All above-mentioned have a part to play in this	All	To be arranged	Children are proud to come to our school and to be part of our community, and demonstrate that they take care of it, now and in the future.
Engagement in further education	Outreach initiatives organised by Macclesfield Further	Macc College:	Nick McGeough, Field Officer,	From January 2009, taster courses	Benefits to our pupils in terms of parents' increased engagement

	Education College: range of courses, implementation and support for grants	CAB	Macc FE College. CAB for support to parents in applying for benefits for training	Further grants will need to be applied for	with formal education, thus supporting their children's learning
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