

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 27 June 2013

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Children, Young People and Families

SUBJECT: Amalgamation of Pupil Referral Units –
Consultation feedback

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 This report provides a summary of the responses received during the consultation on the amalgamation of The Bridge School Pupil Referral Unit and the KS4 Gateway Pupil Referral Unit in Halton and seeks approval for amalgamation.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board gives approval for the amalgamation of The Bridge School and KS4 Gateway by :**

- 1) **Extending the age range of The Bridge School from accepting 11-14 year olds to accepting 11-16 year olds from 1st September 2013;**
- 2) **Bringing existing KS4 Gateway staff, pupils and provision under the leadership of The Bridge School with effect from 1st September 2013; and**
- 3) **Ceasing the KS4 Gateway Pupil Referral Unit as a distinct unit from 31st August 2013.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 At the Executive Board meeting on the 28th March 2013 it was agreed that consultation could be undertaken to amalgamate The Bridge School Pupil Referral Unit and KS4 Gateway Pupil Referral Unit by bringing existing Key Stage 4 staff and provision under the leadership of The Bridge School with effect from 1st September 2013.

3.2 This amalgamation is considered to have many benefits including:

- Ability to achieve a smoother transition and consistency for pupils from KS3 to KS4 under one Leadership and Management Team
- One Leadership and Management Team for parents and pupils who attend the PRU to work and communicate with

- A clearly defined management structure governed by the Management Committee to ensure high quality provision across both key stages
- Allowing a rationalisation of current responsibility roles, such as SENCO and Heads of Curriculum areas
- A formal recognition of the sharing of rooms, resources and staff that is already happening across both PRUs
- Developing a more sustainable structure by securing efficiencies in terms of administrative work and Service Level Agreements for other PRU support e.g. Human Resources, Payroll, Legal, SIMS, IT support, School Meals, Financial Management
- Achieving better value for money
- Greater career progression opportunities for staff

3.3 The consultation began on the 15th April 2013. Letters were sent to pupils, parents, staff, trade unions, Management Committee members, Halton Secondary School/Academy Head teachers, contracted providers for the KS4 Gateway, Local Authority Education Welfare Officers, Local Authority Youth Offending Team officer, Local Authority Children in Care officer, and information appeared in the Weekly News and The World newspapers with the opportunity to provide written feedback by 13th May 2013.

3.4 At the close of the consultation 34 responses had been received. A total of 23 respondents agreed with the proposal and 10 respondents did not agree with the proposal. One respondent felt they did not have enough information to agree or disagree with the proposal. A breakdown of respondents is shown below:

3.5

TOTAL responses per group	YES	NO	Comment only	Total respondents
KS3 Pupil	4	4		8 (of a total 22 pupils)
KS4 Pupil	8	6		14 (of a total 68 pupils)
Staff	4		1	5 (of a total 17 staff)
Management Committee member	3			3 (of a total 4 members)
Halton Head Teachers	3			3 (of a total 8 schools)
Other	1			1
TOTAL	23	10	1	34

3.6 The issues raised by those who did not support the proposal were:

3.7 **Extending the age range** – A small proportion (3) of the KS4 pupils raised concerns about mixing with younger pupils who they perceived to be childish and immature and 1 KS4 pupil commented on the potential for

bullying.

- 3.8 Whilst the perceptions raised are very small The Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee will ensure that robust mechanisms are in place to support the proposed amalgamation, including the review and endorsement of agreed strategies to support Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils. Pupils opinions and views will be taken into account in developing these strategies and pupils will be involved in the preparation for amalgamation by giving them an active role in the planning process.
- 3.9 The school bullying policy will be updated to reflect the amalgamation, including updating staff awareness and training.
- 3.10 The amalgamation of both Pupil Referral Units will be representative of what pupils have already experienced in secondary school with Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils together within one school. There is already a mixing of existing KS3 and KS4 PRU pupils who make use of the shared building for some lessons and activities. An example of this is the successful celebration and careers events held for KS4 pupils that KS3 pupils help to organise and prepare lunch.
- 3.11 **Uniform** – 2 respondents commented that they did not want to wear a uniform. These comments were made by Key Stage 3 pupils, who already wear a uniform.
- 3.12 The Pupil Referral Unit Management Committee will consult fully with pupils and parents before making any decisions about the introduction of uniforms to Key Stage 4 pupils, Key Stage 3 pupils already wear a uniform.
- 3.13 The comments made by those who did support the proposal were:
- 3.14 **Sustainability** – 2 respondents commented that the amalgamation would allow economy of scale, supporting the sustainability of the service.
- 3.15 **Improved outcomes** – 4 respondents commented that the amalgamation would allow for improved partnership working, increasing effectiveness of the service and outcomes for pupils.
- 3.16 **Full use of building** – 2 respondents commented that the amalgamation would allow opportunities to make use of the building resources across both key stages.
- 3.17 A full record of the comments received is attached in Appendix A.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The Local Authority has a statutory duty to arrange education for pupils who, because of exclusion or other reasons, would not otherwise receive suitable education.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The amalgamation of the Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) as one school allows for cost efficiencies to be secured in terms of Leadership and Management roles, administrative work and Service Level Agreements for other PRU support e.g. Human Resources, Payroll, Legal, SIMS, IT support, School Meals, Financial Management. This will allow the PRU Management Committee to achieve better value for money.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The amalgamation of both PRUs will allow the PRU Management Committee to work within a clearly defined management structure to ensure high quality provision across both key stages, increasing their ability to provide a positive experience for pupils and their parents.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

Progression to further education or training post 16 years old is a key priority for work with pupils attending the PRUs. The amalgamation of both PRUs allows the PRU Management Committee to provide consistent Information, Advice and Guidance across each year group to support pupils' plans for progression.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The amalgamation of both PRUs allows for smoother integration of multi-agency working throughout all year groups.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

N/A

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

N/A

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The funding of PRUs through the Place-plus funding model from April 2013 does bring uncertainty to the future funding amount PRUs will receive according to pupil number. Failure to achieve cost efficiencies and best value could result in individual PRUs becoming unsustainable.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The amalgamation of both PRUs ensures an inclusive and coherent approach to managing the behaviour of pupils who have been excluded from mainstream schools.

9.0 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

The implications of the School Funding Reform on PRUs and the current vacancies at the Key Stage 4 Gateway provide an opportunity to achieve greater consistency and better value for money by amalgamating both PRUs.

10.0 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

Maintaining two PRUs but putting in place one leadership structure across both PRUs – this option was rejected as whilst remaining as two PRUs there is limited cost efficiencies that can be achieved, e.g. each PRU would have to purchase their own Service Level Agreements.

11.0 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

1st September 2013.

12.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
School Funding Reform – Arrangements for 2013-14	Rutland House	Simon Clough

APPENDIX A

Group	YES	NO	COMMENTS
Halton Head Teacher	YES		
Halton Head Teacher	YES		I agree that the amalgamation of KS3 and KS4 provision would lead to economies of scale which should improve the offer and outcomes for vulnerable Halton students.
Halton Head Teacher	YES		
Other	YES		<p>It makes sense to make full use of the building, where opportunities exist to deliver a broader curriculum on one site (similar to the old technical colleges). This then would ensure that quality assurance issues were addressed through regular observation by the management team.</p> <p>I believe that this model would also result in improved attendance, as the pupils would see this as them attending school. Monitoring and intervening in attendance matters would become more efficient as matters that arise at The Bridge could be addressed immediately rather than waiting for the issues to be brought to the school's attention by external providers.</p> <p>I agree with making the best of the staffing and administrative structure, with support and training to help develop skills. Key Workers, who do a good job in sometimes difficult circumstances, could be trained up to High Level Teaching Assistant and would be in a position to deliver curriculum or cover staff absence. I would be concerned however, that we may end up with more chiefs, whose salaries would command a large chunk of any restricted budget in the current climate (Heads of Curriculum areas??)</p> <p>What is wrong with a good old fashioned Teacher in Charge and Deputy?</p>
KS3 Pupil	YES		
KS3 Pupil	YES		
KS3 Pupil	YES		
KS3 Pupil	YES		Comment not readable
KS3 Pupil		NO	
KS3 Pupil		NO	No uniform
KS3 Pupil		NO	No uniform
KS3 Pupil		NO	
KS4 Pupil	YES		

KS4 Pupil		NO	
KS4 Pupil		NO	Other pupils can be childish and show offs
KS4 Pupil		NO	I am concerned about how I would mix with people
KS4 Pupil		NO	Bullying
KS4 Pupil	YES		Concerned on how to mix with younger people, they act childish
KS4 Pupil		NO	Year 7s stink
KS4 Pupil		NO	Because they are a lot more immature and childish
KS4 Pupil	YES		
KS4 Pupil	YES		
KS4 Pupil	YES		
KS4 Pupil	YES		
KS4 Pupil	YES		
KS4 Pupil	YES		Access to more rooms
Management Committee member	YES		
Management Committee member	YES		
Management Committee member	YES		I believe that the amalgamation of the two PRU's into one is essential for the school's continued sustainability. It will create one school with one management structure, which in turn will lead to greater clarity and responsibility within the school that is greatly needed to move it to be a better school.
Staff	YES		The amalgamation will provide an opportunity to further develop an early intervention approach to improve the outcomes for some of the vulnerable pupils in Halton.
Staff	YES		
Staff	YES		
Staff	YES		
Staff			I think there are both advantages and disadvantages to an amalgamation. However, I do not have enough information to say whether or not I agree.
	23	10	

