

**Name of meeting:** Children's Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 16<sup>th</sup> December 2019  
**Title of report:** Almondbury Community School

**Purpose of report:** To provide Children's Scrutiny panel with an update on the implementation of the Council's decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from the 1st September 2020.

Key Decision - Is it likely to result in spending or saving £250k or more, or to have a significant effect on two or more electoral wards?	n/a
Key Decision - Is it in the <u>Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports)?</u>	n/a
The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?	n/a
Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> & name	Jo-Anne Sanders (for Mel Meggs) – 03.12.19
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Finance IT and Transactional Services?	n/a
Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning Support?	n/a
Cabinet member <u>portfolio</u>	Cllr Carole Pattison – Learning and Aspiration Cllr Viv Kendrick – Children's Services

**Electoral wards affected:** Almondbury

**Ward councillors consulted:** N/A

**Public or private:** Public

**Has GDPR been considered?** GDPR has been considered. The information in this report does not identify any individuals.

## 1. Summary

Following the decision by Kirklees Council Cabinet to change the age range of Almondbury Community School (ACS) from 3-16 years to age 3 – 11 years on 1st September 2020, thereby removing the secondary phase of the school on the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019 and the subsequent Children's Scrutiny Panel call in meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> August 2019 where it was agreed that the decision should be freed for implementation, regular updates have been considered by Children's Scrutiny Panel.

A progress report was provided to Children's Scrutiny on 11th October 2019.

This report aims to provide Children's Scrutiny panel with a further update on the progress that has been made in terms of implementing the decision most importantly the transition arrangements for current pupils of Almondbury Community School.

## 2. Current position

### **Working in partnership with Almondbury Community School, King James's School, Netherhall High School and Newsome High School**

Officers have continued to work in partnership with Almondbury Community School, King James's School, Netherhall High School and Newsome High School. This has resulted in a number of positive actions detailed in this report.

### **Clarity for parents of secondary age pupils currently on roll at Almondbury Community School (Y7-11)**

The letter attached at Appendix A was sent on 17<sup>th</sup> October to parents and carers. The letter offers the opportunity for parents to preference a place at either King James's School, Netherhall High School or Newsome High School from September 2020 or earlier in some cases if this makes sense. This offer does not remove the right of parents to request in-year transfers.

The deadline for returning the preferences forms was Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November. As at 3<sup>rd</sup> December the vast majority had been returned with just 15 outstanding. Since before the deadline date intensive support has been put in place to encourage preference returns for every pupil. This has involved support from a cross section of services including Pupil Admissions, Attendance and Pupil Support, ACS staff and other key professionals already know to the family. This individual support for families continues for the remaining outstanding returns.

There are sufficient returns to move forward with the detailed planning for high quality transition. Plans are well developed to make the formal offer of a school place to all pupils in the very near future. The detailed transition planning will also inform the opportunities which can be made available for staff at ACS.

A statement has been published about commitments to a school uniform support package following engagement with a small number of parents. Details are attached at Appendix B. Officers are in the final stages of developing a process to enable pupils to receive free items of uniform and to provide a direct payment contribution to the parents of pupils who have already moved schools 'in-year' and have already purchased a new uniform.

Given the preference options provided, there have been very few questions from parents about support with transport. Where one or two questions have been raised there is ongoing work with the family to understand their individual circumstances.

## **Admissions Arrangements**

Verbal updates have been provided to Children's Scrutiny Panel after the publication of the October update report to confirm approval by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to amend admission arrangement for 2020/21 as follows:

- King James's School change to their catchment area (PAA) to include the primary admission areas of Almondbury Community School and All Hallows' CE(VA) Primary School
- Newsome High School change to their catchment area (PAA) to include the primary admission area of Lowerhouses CE(VC) J, I and EY School.
- Netherhall Learning Campus High School change to their catchment area (PAA) to include parts of Moldgreen Community Primary School and Dalton School primary catchment areas (south of A642) which form part of the current Almondbury Community School secondary catchment area.

The same changes will be consulted upon in the usual admission consultation cycle starting this month for 2021/22 admission arrangements. The intention is to normalise these arrangements into the future.

With the 2020/21 arrangements confirmed in mid-October, current Year 6 pupils at Almondbury Community School have been tracked with regard to their application for a secondary school place. Extra measures were introduced which resulted in all families who have not made an application were contacted directly before the 31<sup>st</sup> October application deadline. As a result, all pupils have submitted an application for a secondary school place.

## **Ofsted monitoring**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019 Ofsted undertook a monitoring visit at ACS. As an open school, this is normal practice and the outcome from the visit will be published in the form of a letter on Ofsted's website in due course.

## **3. Implications for the Council**

### **3.1. Working with People**

In order to ensure that smooth transition arrangements are in place for all children who are affected by the removal of the secondary phase at Almondbury Community School we are working closely with local schools to ensure that transition arrangements for pupils are carefully planned and managed and that the needs of each child are taken into account to ensure that they achieve the best outcomes.

### **3.2. Working with Partners**

Continued partnership working and a commitment to achieve the best outcome for every pupil by all is ensuring that progress is continuing to be made.

Regular meetings with Almondbury Community School Interim Executive Board are taking place along with the leaders of local secondary schools regarding the future of the secondary school pupils.

Discussions are taking place with the future academy sponsor, Impact Multi Academy Trust, to ensure that they are engaged at this stage and ensure that the primary pupils and their needs are also considered as part of the project.

### **3.3. Place Based Working**

Throughout the process and by strengthening partnership working we aim to ensure that there are long term sustainable, high quality educational opportunities for children locally. We have been able to offer all current ACS pupils the opportunity to submit a preference for a place at a local school.

### **3.4. Improving outcomes for children**

Throughout programme of works involved, improving outcomes for children is at the heart of everything. In addition to ensuring that there are sufficient secondary places in the local area we continue to aim to maximise opportunities to:

- Offer high quality and inclusive education and diversity of provision to all
- Provide a breadth of curriculum offer that enables young people to have access to the widest opportunities to fulfil their aspirations and ambitions
- Be financially viable and therefore have future security
- Promote equality of opportunity
- Strengthen community cohesion
- Use sustainable travel and transport for school

### **3.5. Other (e.g. Legal/Financial or Human Resources)**

Work has begun looking at the financial implications of the project to deliver on commitments made to deliver on the outcomes detailed above. Plans are in place to take a report detailing this to cabinet for their consideration and approval.

The impact on staffing is being considered and engagement has begun with staff, TU's and school leaders on future options. This work will progress as the outcome of the preferencing becomes clear and formal discussions can begin.

## **4. Consultees and their opinions**

There is a communications strategy in place that includes regular briefings with Ward Councillors where they are provided with regular updates.

Briefings with staff have taken place and regular TU meetings have been arranged.

Engagement with parents/carers is ongoing. An open evening was held on 24<sup>th</sup> October to help parents/carers make a decision about their preference. Representatives from King James's School, Netherhall High School and Newsome High School were available for one to one conversations with parents alongside local authority staff.

## **5. Next steps and timelines**

- Formal offer of a school place to be issued for all current ACS pupils
- Working with local schools on high quality transition arrangements
- Formal offer of the uniform support package to be made to parents
- Continued engagement with local schools and ACS staff and their unions on options for the future
- Admission arrangements consultation to propose normalising temporary admission arrangements
- Produce and review options and proposals relating to each of the school buildings to ensure that they can accommodate the required number of pupils and are fit for purpose going forward
- Build on links with the academy sponsor of the primary school to ensure that they are involved and can input into decisions relating to the primary school.

**6. Contact officer**

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director Learning and Early Support

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Martin Wilby – Senior Strategic Manager – Learning Places and Access

[Martin.wilby@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:Martin.wilby@kirklees.gov.uk)

**7. Background Papers and History of Decisions**

[Future Options for ACS - Cabinet Report - 19 March 2019 \(agenda item no 20\)](#)

(Background and seeking permission to consult)

[Future Options for ACS - Outcome Report for Cabinet 29 May 2019 \(agenda item no 9\)](#)

(Outcomes of the consultation and next steps including publication of statutory notices)

[Future Options for ACS - Final Decision report for Cabinet - 16 July 2019 \(agenda item no 8\)](#)

(Final decision)

[Call-in of Cabinet decision in relation to Almondbury Community School](#)

(Call-in in relation to the decision taken by Cabinet)

**8. Service Director responsible**

Jo-Anne Sanders – Service Director Learning and Early Support

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Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2019

Dear Parent / Carer,

**Ref: Almondbury Community School – Transition of Secondary Phase pupils**

You will already be aware that in July 2019 Kirklees Cabinet made the decision to change the age range of Almondbury Community School (ACS) and remove the secondary phase of the school from September 2020.

As previously communicated, this means ACS will operate as normal for the current academic year. From September 2020 there will be no new Year 7 starters and all existing pupils from the current Year 7 to current Year 10 will need to transfer to the roll of another school. To help manage transitions, the current Fernside site will be available for a further academic year.

We have listened to parents/carers and our shared priority is that transitions need to be well planned, well supported, take account of siblings and provide the opportunity for keeping friendship groups together.

Throughout the process we have continued to work in partnership with local secondary schools and government agencies and we wish to thank parents/carers for their patience during this period. As a result of this work, we are now able to provide the information we know is important to parents/carers to enable them to make an informed preference for one of the following schools, all of which are local to Almondbury.

<p><b>King James's School</b></p>	<p>Pupils will be able to join the roll of King James's School from September 2020. King James's will use the Fernside Avenue site (alongside their main school site) from September 2020 for at least one academic year. We are working with King James's to ensure that their main site is developed so that it can accommodate all pupils on a permanent basis in the future. Subject to the completion of this work, King James's will no longer use Fernside and all their pupils will be on the main site.*</p>
<p><b>Netherhall Learning Campus High School</b></p>	<p>Pupils will be able to join Netherhall Learning Campus High school, who currently have spaces in some year groups and will make additional places available where possible to meet the preferences expressed by ACS parents/carers. Any pupils who join Netherhall will be accommodated on Netherhall's main site. We are exploring opportunities for some refurbishment work to ensure suitable accommodation is available on a permanent basis.*</p>
<p><b>Newsome High School</b></p>	<p>Pupils will be able to join Newsome High School who currently have spaces in some year groups and will make additional places available where possible to meet the preferences expressed by ACS parents/carers. Any pupils who join Newsome will be accommodated on Newsome's main site.</p>

\* It is important to note that we are working in partnership with King James's and Netherhall to create a small number of extra places for future Year 7 intakes. This is in addition to supporting transitional arrangements for pupils.

We absolutely understand that you will want to consider this information carefully. For instance, you may wish to take into account how expressing your preference could impact on all your children in the future. We are very keen to support you in expressing your preference and would like to invite you to an open evening on Thursday October 24<sup>th</sup>.

The open evening will be held at Almondbury Community School, Fernside Avenue building, with representatives from King James's School, Newsome High School and Netherhall Learning Campus High School. Also available to provide advice will be staff from Kirklees Pupil Admissions and staff specialising in Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. You can drop in any time between 6pm and 8pm to gain further information and ask questions.

We know that many families have bought school uniform items for ACS which will not be needed in the future. As new uniform will be required for a different school, we can assure you that we will be providing a uniform support package for all existing ACS pupils (as at the date of this letter). Further details will follow and parents/carers are advised to wait until this information is available before purchasing any items of uniform.

Some questions have also been raised about support for transport arrangements. We anticipate that the offer of a place at one of three local schools will mean this is no longer a significant issue for the majority of parents/carers. The existing Kirklees Home to School Transport policy is available at [www.kirklees.gov.uk/schooltransport](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/schooltransport). If transport remains a concern we will speak with individual families to fully understand their circumstances

We understand that parents/carers will want to take account of all their children when making these important decisions. Relevant for parents/carers with younger children (currently in Year 6 and below) are the changes that have been made to secondary school catchment areas. Full details are available at: [www.kirklees.gov.uk/schoolorganisation](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/schoolorganisation) Information will also be available at the open evening.

### **Next steps:**

Parents/carers with children in Years 7 to 10 are asked to make a preference for the school they would like their child(ren) to transfer to in September 2020 using the attached form. The deadline for making a preference is 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019.

It is important that we fully understand parental preferences so we can work in partnership with local schools and carry out detailed planning. This will help us to ensure smooth transitions, a high quality curriculum offer for every pupil and a high level of support.

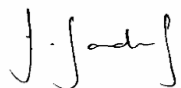
Most pupils will join their new school in September 2020, although there may be opportunities for some groups of pupils to move earlier where this makes sense and a high quality transition can be planned.

Individual support will be provided for Parents/carers of pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan by specialist staff.

We will write to you again, including the formal offer of a school place, as soon as possible after the closing date for preferences. We are only asking parents/carers for one preference per child as every effort will be made to match this preference with the formal offer of a school place.

We would like to reiterate that the decision to change the age range of ACS was taken because we want all children and young people to enjoy the best possible standards of care and education in a school which is sustainable for the long term. Our absolute priority is to support young people and achieve excellent outcomes.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Sanders', written in a cursive style.

Jo-Anne Sanders

Service Director for Learning & Early Support



# Almondbury Community School - Pupil Preference Form

Please select your preferred school below (select **one** school only by putting an X in the relevant box):

King James's School.....

Netherhall Learning Campus High School.....

Newsome High School.....

**None of the above. Please provide me with information about the in-year admission process.....**

Parent/carer name/s \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_

Child's current Year group \_\_\_\_\_

**Please complete one form for each of your children currently in years 7 to 10  
and return by 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019**

## Completed forms can be returned by:

Handing in to the office at Almondbury Community School  
(additional copies of the forms are also available from the school office)

**or**

Emailing to; [acsadmissions@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:acsadmissions@kirklees.gov.uk)

(a Word version of the form can be downloaded from [www.kirklees.gov.uk/schoolorganisation](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/schoolorganisation) )

I have read and understood the information on this form and I confirm that I have parental responsibility for this child

Signature of parent/carer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

*(The information you provide will be used only in order to allocate your child a school place. It will be stored securely and will not be disclosed to any other person or agency, apart from relevant schools and admission authorities).*

## Almondbury Community School Uniform Support

Full details of a uniform package will be made available in good time to support well managed transitions. This is likely to include the free provision of school specific items of uniform e.g. where item contain school branding. Wherever possible parents are therefore advised not to purchase new uniform items until further information is made available. It is recognised that children will grow out of generic items of uniform such as shirts, blouses, trousers, skirts and shoes and parents may wish to take into account the uniform policy at the school they have placed a preference if they are replacing these items. Electronic links to the uniform policies which are available on each school website are provided below;

<b>Almondbury Community School</b>	<b>Netherhall Learning Campus High School</b>
<a href="https://www.almondburycs.org.uk/page/?title=School+Uniform&amp;pid=99">https://www.almondburycs.org.uk/page/?title=School+Uniform&amp;pid=99</a>	<a href="http://www.nlconline.org.uk/highschool/school-life-1/uniform">http://www.nlconline.org.uk/highschool/school-life-1/uniform</a>
<b>King James’s School</b>	<b>Newsome High School</b>
<a href="http://www.kingjames.org.uk/app/os#!/parents-2/uniform-2">http://www.kingjames.org.uk/app/os#!/parents-2/uniform-2</a>	<a href="https://newsomehigh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Uniform-Expectations.pdf">https://newsomehigh.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/Uniform-Expectations.pdf</a>

Where parents/carers have chosen to exercise their right to apply for a school place outside the managed transition process and their child has already transferred to another school, support will still be available. This will come in the form of direct payment from Kirklees Council to the parent/carer towards the cost of school specific items of uniform (as most families in this situation will have already purchased these items). This will apply to all pupils in current years 7 to 10 who were on the role of Almondbury Community School on the last day of term in July 2019.

Every child is being tracked from this time and specific information will be sent directly to each family when it is available.