

**Name of meeting:** Children's Scrutiny Panel  
**Date:** 11<sup>th</sup> October 2019  
**Title of report:** Almondbury Community School

**Purpose of report**

To provide scrutiny with an update about Almondbury Community School following the Council's decision to change the age range of the school from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020.

<b>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?</b>	No.
<b>Key Decision - Is it in the <a href="#">Council's Forward Plan (key decisions and private reports?)</a></b>	not applicable
<b>The Decision - Is it eligible for call in by Scrutiny?</b>	not applicable
<b>Date signed off by <u>Strategic Director</u> &amp; name</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director (Finance)?</b>  <b>Is it also signed off by the Service Director for Legal Governance and Commissioning?</b>	Jo-Anne Sanders (for Mel Meggs) – 3.10.19
<b>Cabinet member <a href="#">portfolio</a></b>	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

**(Have you considered GDPR?)**

Yes GDPR has been considered. The information in this report does not identify any individuals.

## 1. Summary/Background

On the 16<sup>th</sup> July 2019, a decision was made by Kirklees Council Cabinet about a statutory proposal to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from 3-16 years to age 3 – 11 years on 1st September 2020, thereby removing the secondary phase of the school.

At the same meeting, Kirklees Council Cabinet were advised that a 210 place mainstream primary school for the Almondbury community should be retained. In addition Kirklees Council Cabinet were reminded that as Almondbury Community School is a school with an Ofsted judgement of Special Measures, there would be a requirement for the school to become an academy, sponsored by a Multi Academy Trust.

An Academy Order was issued by the Regional School's Commissioner on the 16th May 2019 and that the retention of a Primary School as a sponsored academy would be subject to a due diligence process.

On 7th August 2019, the Children's Scrutiny Panel held a call in review meeting on aspects of the Cabinet decision of 16 July 2019 on 'Future options for Almondbury Community School – Final Decision. The scrutiny panel considered evidence from the councillors who were signatories to the Call-In, the Cabinet Member for Learning, Aspiration and Communities, the Cabinet Member for Children, senior officers from Children's Services, and members of the public.

The conclusion of the Children's Scrutiny Panel was that the decision should be freed for implementation but there were a number of learning points arising from the decision making process that Cabinet was asked to consider. Cabinet considered the findings at its meeting on 13 August 2019.

It was agreed that regular updates on Almondbury Community School will be considered by Children's Scrutiny Panel.

## 2. Key Issues/Current Position.

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

Officers continue to work in close partnership with King James's School, Netherhall High School and Newsome High School to develop an offer for existing secondary age pupils of Almondbury Community School. This close partnership will also support carefully planned transitional arrangements to ensure that children have access to a broad, high quality educational offer.

### **Applications to the Schools Adjudicator**

After the decisions associated with Almondbury Community School were released for implementation the local authority applied to a national body, the Office of the School Adjudicator, for a variation to the secondary Priority Admission Areas (PAAs) of Newsome High School and Netherhall High School for 2020/21. A complementary application has also been made by King James's Academy to the Education and Skill Funding Agency (ESFA). The requirement to do this was made clear in the Cabinet Report in July.

It was not possible to make these applications prior to this time.

A third application was made by the local authority to reduce the Pupil Admission Numbers in the primary phase of Almondbury Community School to 30 places for 2020/21. A positive decision was received from the Schools Adjudicator on 30 September which stated:

*'I determine that for admissions in September 2020 the published admission number for the reception year shall be 30 and that there shall be no published admission number for year 3.'*

The Primary School Guide for Parents and the Kirklees Admission policy for community and controlled schools 2020/21 have been updated to reflect this determination. There will also be an update to Almondbury Community School's website and the Kirklees School Organisation and Planning web page. This brings clarity for parents and carers whom are applying for a Reception place to start in September 2020.

### **Information available to year 6 parents making applications for secondary school (Y7) in 2020**

The following message was included in the guide for parents from 1 September and a similar message is provided on the Kirklees website when parents and carers are able to search for their priority admission area using their postcode:

***Almondbury Community School (ACS)** - Kirklees Cabinet granted approval on 16 July 2019 to a statutory proposal to change the age range of Almondbury Community School from age 3 to 16 years to age 3 to 11 years with effect from September 2020. The secondary schools priority admission areas (PAA's) are currently under review and the local authority has applied to the Office of the School Adjudicator for a variation to the PAA's in this area. We expect information about secondary schools PAA's in this area to be updated as soon as we receive the outcome of the request. If you would like to register an interest in receiving updates about this please email [acsadmissions@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:acsadmissions@kirklees.gov.uk) before the closing date for High School Applications which is on 31 October 2019.*

In addition, the attached letter was distributed to year 6 pupils by primary schools in the areas surrounding Almondbury on 30 September at appendix A.

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

The letter attached at Appendix B was sent by multiple methods on 27 September to parents and carers.

### **Clarity for parents**

Bringing further clarity for parents is our absolute priority. Progress is being made towards reaching the point when a letter can be sent to the parents of all current Almondbury Community School pupils in the secondary phase of the school and parents in the wider area with children in year 6 who will be applying for a secondary school place for 2020/21.

To provide comprehensive information is dependent upon the outcome of the determination of the Schools Adjudicator and the Education and Skills Funding Agency and officers are liaising with both Government Departments. A verbal update

from Officers will be made at the Children's Scrutiny Panel meeting if further information is available at this time.

### **Academy conversion**

Following the inspection of the school by Ofsted last December Almondbury Community School was issued with an Academy Order in May of this year. The Academy Order applies to the Primary phase of the school and since May the Regional Schools Commissioner has been considering whom would be a suitable academy sponsor. The school were informed that the sponsor will be Impact Education Multi Academy Trust and this information was communicated by Almondbury Community School to their parents and carers earlier this month.

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

### **3.1 Working with People**

Carefully planned transitional arrangements are required to ensure that children have access to a broad, high quality educational offer. Working in partnership with parents and carers, schools and staff is essential in securing the very best for children both now and in the future.

### **3.2 Working with Partners**

School leaders and staff care deeply about and are highly committed to the children and young people in the Almondbury area. Work to improve Almondbury Community School across all key stages is being overseen by the Executive Principal of a partner school Carr Manor Community School, based in Leeds. To take forward implementation the Council will work with Almondbury Community School leaders and staff, the Interim Executive Board, neighbouring secondary schools to secure pathways for secondary pupils, and the Regional Schools Commissioner and Impact Multi Academy Trust to support the transition for primary pupils as a future Primary school

### **3.3 Place Based Working**

The assessment of the need for school places in the Almondbury area has been assessed taking into account the current and future pupil cohort sizes. The decision and future partnership working will secure now and into the future, long term sustainable, high quality educational opportunities for children locally.

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

The decision and future partnership working will improve outcomes for children. By taking a strategic approach, Kirklees Council will ensure that sufficient secondary school places are available in Huddersfield South East and South West and 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

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

Ward councillors have been notified as information becomes available and a face to face briefing has been offered.

Regular engagement will continue throughout the next academic year.

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

- Communication to parents and carers in order to bring certainty at the earliest opportunity
- Working with professional associations and school staff
- Project team established and workstreams in place to carefully plan and deliver all aspects required to enable the best possible arrangements for September 2020 and into the future.
- Continue to work with the partnership of local schools to plan for and manage a high quality transition of pupils

#### **6. Contact officer**

**Jo-Anne Sanders** – Service Director Learning and Early Support

**Martin Wilby** – Senior Strategic Manager – Learning Places and Access

#### **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)

#### **8. Service Director responsible**

**Jo-Anne Sanders**- Service Director Learning and Early Support