

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE WILMINGTON ENTERPRISE COLLEGE AND REPLACE
WITH A NEW GOVERNMENT FUNDED ACADEMY**

Summary of points raised during the Public Meeting held on 1 February 2010

Comment or Question	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 120 people attended the public meeting, including headteachers, staff, governors and parents. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel members were Mrs Valerie Dagger, Chair of School Organisation Advisory Board and Simon Webb, Area Children's Services Officer. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The proposal is to close Wilmington Enterprise College and replace it with a new government funded Academy. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be a parallel consultation on the establishment of an Academy which will be managed by DCSF consultants. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wilmington Enterprise College is in Special Measures and a National Challenge School. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Authority are considering the following options: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Closure b. Amalgamation c. Federation d. National Challenge Trust School e. Academy 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the proposal is accepted, the current Wilmington Enterprise College will close on 31 August 2010 and a new Academy will open on 1 September 2010. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new Academy has capacity to accommodate 750 students from age 11-16 and approximately 200 students from age 16-19. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leigh Academy Trust will be the lead sponsor with Kent County Council as co-sponsors. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The process involves: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a letter of intent • Expression of Interest 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Consultation • Funding agreed by the Secretary of State • Proposed implementation Sept 2010 • Building of new Academy 2013 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implications for staff include the appointment of a principal. • All existing staff have the right to transfer to the new Academy • Current pupils will automatically transfer • Students who have expressed an interest in their children attending WEC from September 2010 will still be given preference at the new Academy. 	
<p>Timetable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 Jan 2010 School Organisation Advisory Board consider public consultation • 25 Jan 2010 Start of Consultation • 1 Feb 2010 Public Meeting • 8 Mar 2010 Close of Consultation • 17 Mar 2010 SOAB meeting to consider issuing a Public Notice • Mar 2010 Report to Cabinet Member • Mar 2010 Public Notice issued if agreed by Cabinet Member • Apr 2010 End of Statutory Representation Period • Sep 2010 Wilmington Enterprise College closes and new Academy opens 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following the consultation, the outcomes will be reported to the School Organisation Advisory Board. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a decision is made to take the proposal forward a Public Notice will be issued. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representations regarding the proposal can still be made. • A determination will then be reached on whether the proposal is to be implemented and in certain circumstances that could include referral to the statutory Schools Adjudicator. 	
<p>Concerns were raised over the pastoral or SEN provision offered at Leigh Academy in comparison to the care offered presently at WEC. With reported class sizes of 60, students with special needs would find it extremely difficult to cope.</p>	<p>Frank Green said SEN issues are understood and can cause a great deal of concern. Comments were sought from the Ofsted inspection team on the changes implemented at Leigh Academy to see if they are effective. The outcome was an 'outstanding' from Ofsted.</p>

	<p>Frank Green appreciated that there are differences; the Leigh Academy consists of four colleges, each with its own Principal. We believe that these smaller schools within the Academy develop deeper relationships and lay stronger foundations for learning, which underpin outstanding achievement. 95% of students achieve 5 good grade GCSE's despite their starting point.</p>
	<p>Frank Green's suggestion was made that parents could come and observe lessons and get a clear understanding of how the academy operates. It would also give the staff an opportunity to allay any parental anxieties.</p>
<p>Was it the Local Authority's intention to replicate the Leigh Academy at WEC?</p>	<p>Frank Green said the Longfield Academy is not a replica of the Leigh, although it does have certain aspects that are the same in terms of the structure. There are two smaller schools, with two principals.</p>
<p>Parental concerns were expressed about the size of the classes.</p>	<p>Many classes are taught to groups of 60 and students are taught within their college instead of classes of mixed colleges. Frank Green said the intention is that much of the teaching at Leigh is structured around independent learning to help students prepare for life after school.</p>
<p>There was criticism from parents about noise levels in 60 strong classes and also concerns that many children would not get the attention they required in such large classes.</p>	<p>Frank Green explained the way students learn will vary dependant upon the activity taking place. Children that attend High School are not academic learners, so their learning style is different to those in a selected school. Some learn from problem solving, others from experimental techniques.</p>
	<p>Within the small college structure, teachers are able to work with each student to set high, yet realistic targets for academic and personal achievement.</p>
	<p>Parents were invited to visit and experience learning for themselves.</p>
<p>Leigh Academy have experimented with class sizes as large as 60. This surely has a negative effect on the teaching of students.</p>	<p>Mark Poulter explained this is not unique to academies and has been tried over a number of schools. By bringing classes together for certain lessons, the students can be supported in a flexible range of ways. Large lecture style groupings can be a very effective depending on the learning activity and objectives, providing for individuals and smaller groups to also be supported.</p>
<p>Why an Academy? Why have the Local Authority not explored other opportunities?</p>	<p>Simon Webb said there were four other options. Closure is not an option because the provision is</p>

	<p>required in this part of Dartford.</p> <p>Amalgamation – only possible if school in close proximity to a similar school. DTC has been completely rebuilt and no large sites available in Dartford to move school to.</p> <p>Federation – The joining of two schools with one governing body. DCSF will not support hard federation because WEC in special measures.</p> <p>National Challenge Trust School – change of ownership required as governed by Trust Board.</p> <p>Academy – offers the best option and means school will be linked to Leigh Technology Academy, one of the best schools in the area.</p>
Concerns over vertical tutoring system employed at Leigh Technology Academy.	<p>Mark Poulter explained at the Leigh Academy vertical tutoring allows students aged between 11-18 to work together. Younger students are inspired by the older children and the older children develop a range of leadership skills. The students work together to achieve shared goals and values.</p>
To the detriment of Wilmington Enterprise College many experienced teachers are leaving. Results are therefore disappointing.	<p>Simon Webb said the College went into Special Measures in March 2009 and since that time it has become necessary to remove unsatisfactory teachers.</p> <p>Staff have been consulted on the implications of transferring to the new Academy and any associated costs will be borne by the DCSF. It is up to the Local Authority to ensure that teaching is, of least, a good standard.</p>
Concern that uncertainty over the Academy plans will result in teachers being disillusioned and look for other jobs.	<p>SW advised staff employed at WEC would be protected under TUPE legislation and have the right to transfer to the Academy under their existing terms and conditions of service. There will be a full and extensive programme of consultation meetings and other support arrangements in due course.</p>
Achievement at the college is disappointing and the number of supply teachers employed is alarming.	<p>Simon Webb advised projections for the current Y10 students are in excess of 40%, including English & Maths. It was necessary to employ supply teachers to bridge the gaps where incompetent teacher were dismissed. Exciting new appointments are being made in many departments.</p>
Funding	<p>Simon Webb said the DCSF meets the capital and running costs for the Academy in full. The new Academy can expect to be completely rebuilt to provide state of the art learning accommodation fit for the 21st century. The costs of the rebuild are borne by central government.</p>
Option Choices	<p>Simon Webb stated that students' options will be</p>

	honoured by the new Academy and the Wilmington, Hextable and Swanley Partnership will enable member schools to offer a range of curriculum options across the 14-19 age range.
Can admission arrangements be guaranteed? Will siblings automatically get priority?	Simon Webb explained the Academy would need to adhere to national schools admission code to ensure fair practice. The sibling rule would still apply.
Parents have concerns that the Leigh Technology Academy appears remote and unapproachable.	Simon Webb extended the invitation to visit the Academy to all parents. Mark Poulter said the Academy has a Student Council that sits the first Monday of every month.
Academies are introduced to replace failing schools that have poor results.	Simon Webb said this is not the case as there have been many successes.
Parents were disappointed with the lack of progress at WEC. How will standards improve before the proposed Academy comes into force?	Simon Webb apologised as the Local Authority were under the impression that parents had been notified of outcomes. The college and Local Authority will continue to ensure that the students progress and achieve to the best of their ability. College has a robust Interim Executive Board who will challenge senior staff to make sure that progress is sustained and consistent throughout the school. When HMI visit next, staff will be informed of the outcomes.
If the proposal for an Academy does not progress what is Plan B?	Simon Webb said if college continues in its present form, it runs the risk of Secretary of State bringing in a partnership from anywhere in the country to drive it forward. It is the Local Authority's opinion that a local solution is best. Government exerts pressure on underperforming schools to find a solution which neither the parents, staff or Local Authority will have a say in.
Parents acknowledged there are significant weaknesses at Wilmington Enterprise College, with standards of teaching and levels of attainment but who is accountable?	Simon Webb, on behalf of the Local Authority explained it would do everything in its power to get the College back on track. Steps are being taken to ensure that the progress within College is accelerated. Unsatisfactory teachers will be dismissed.
Very little time has been given to demonstrate tangible progress yet it appears the college will have record levels of achievement this year. Surely college should concentrate of sustaining levels of progress before embarking on Academy proposal?	Simon Webb informed the meeting the Local Authority cannot determine when Ofsted will visit and inspect. To ensure progress is rapid and sustained, significant levels of support have been put into the college. Results are improving due to the hard work of the HT and staff. The vertical tutoring system has already been implemented within WEC and feedback is

	encouraging. Local Authority believes the best option for the children is the proposal for WEC to become an Academy.
Choices for children are limited if Wilmington Enterprise College is to become the third Dartford Academy, especially if you have a child with Special Needs.	Simon Webb said the Special Needs provision will remain the same at the new Academy. Funding direct from the government has been secured, irrespective of which political party is elected later in the year.
How will the disruption be managed whilst transition takes place?	Simon Webb advised that KCC is rehearsed and successful at managing the transition.
Your views are important to us, so please complete the response form and return it to Simon Webb, Area Children's Services Officer, either in the post or via the school.	
Thank you for attending this meeting.	