

By: ROSALIND TURNER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, CHILDREN,  
FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

To: SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD – 17<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2010

Subject: PROPOSED CLOSURE OF WILMINGTON ENTERPRISE COLLEGE  
AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH A GOVERNMENT FUNDED  
ACADEMY.

Classification: UNRESTRICTED

---

Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation on the proposal to close Wilmington Enterprise College and to replace it with a government-funded Academy. It seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the issuing of a public notice.

---

## **Introduction**

1. (1) Wilmington Enterprise College is Modern (non-selective) Community Secondary school with a mixed intake of 11–18 year old students.

(2) The school serves both rural and urban communities located in the Dartford district. It primarily serves the children living in the electoral divisions of Wilmington (Mrs Ann Allen) and Dartford West (Mr Jan Ozog), but also draws in pupils from all over Dartford. The school is sited about a mile away from the border with the London Borough of Bexley. A considerable number (82 or 11.3%) of Wilmington pupils live in the London Borough of Bexley.

(3) Wilmington Enterprise College is part of the Wilmington, Hextable and Swanley Partnership. This is a 14 – 19 consortium comprising the two Wilmington Grammar Schools, Hextable School, Swanley Technology College and North West Kent College. The Partnership enables the member schools to offer a rich selection of curriculum options across the 14-19 age range. The Partnership has been widely recognised for its success in developing new Diploma Programmes in a range of subjects including Creative and Media, ICT, Business, Engineering and Construction. Students are able to follow courses on different sites for part of their timetable.

(4) The socio-economic profile of the student intake is below Kent average overall. 11.2% are entitled to free school meals which although lower than the national average of 13.4% is still higher than the Kent average of 8.6%. The proportion of students with statements of special educational needs is 3.7%; above the Kent average of 2% and the National average of 2.1%.

(5) The school has low numbers of students from minority ethnic backgrounds, and a very low number of students are at early stages of learning English.

(6) Wilmington Enterprise College is the lead school for specific learning difficulties in supporting secondary schools in the Dartford East and West, Gravesham and Swanley Partnerships. The College also manages, on site, the learning mentor for looked after children for the Dartford West Partnership. The school has Business Enterprise specialist status and Healthy School Status.

[7] Following the HMI monitoring visit in September 2009, the category of 'inadequate progress' was a growing concern following the recently published new Ofsted 'Framework for School Inspections'./ Under the new guidance, the Secretary of State has the right to intervene if two consecutive 'inadequate progress' reports are received.

[8] The Local Authority then determined to lead on a 'structural solution' from a highly performing similar school. The Leigh Academy Trust was then approached.

[9] Wilmington Enterprise College has been in Special Measures since March 2009, progress had been measured as inadequate to September 2009, and there is every indication that the next HMI monitoring visit would yield a similar outcome. We must also be mindful of the impact on other Dartford, Hextable and Swanley Secondary Schools of a delay.

## **The Proposal**

2. (1) It is proposed that the Academy will replace Wilmington Enterprise College. Academy will be part of a hard federation with the Leigh Technology Academy and the Longfield Academy. It is proposed that the Leigh Academies Trust will become the sole legal body responsible and the lead sponsors with Kent County Council as co-sponsors.

(2) Following discussions with Wilmington Enterprise College IEB, local schools, councillors and stakeholders, the Leigh Academies Trust was chosen as lead sponsor because they have the capacity, through the Leigh Academy and the Longfield Academy, to manage the school improvement issues at Wilmington Enterprise College. This was deemed to be the most appropriate option, as capacity, locality and expertise were the deciding factors in the local authority commissioning the Leigh Academies Trust to provide an outstanding education and learning experience for young people in Dartford West into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

[3] Most importantly, the Local Authority, is the guardian of standards for all current and future students. As a consequence the structural solution for a swift and decisive change was commissioned.

(4) It is proposed that the new Academy will open in September 2010 on the existing site and premises. The Published Admission Number will be 150, with a capacity of 750 with up to 200 post 16 places. Longer term, we would broadly expect a new build would be provided for the Academy. The new buildings are expected to be built for completion in September 2013 on the same site, adjacent to the current premises.

(5) The academy will be at the core of the community and will be characterised by:

- creating an environment that automatically has high expectations for all.
- having the highest standards of behaviour and commitment.
- developing an enthusiasm for learning by creating a modern, challenging curriculum.
- creating a culture of continuous improvement.
- developing its distinctive approach to creating excellence in education by working in close partnership with the Leigh Technology Academy and Longfield Academy.
- enabling a greater proportion of young people to achieve the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for our Knowledge Society.

(6) The vision for the Wilmington Academy is that it will establish an outstanding Academy that will develop new first class approaches to education. The Academy will instil a pride in and love of learning, motivating students to aim high, become skilled and flexible learners and develop into socially, emotionally and behaviourally confident citizens, employees and employers. The Academy will have a particular focus on vocational education creating a mix of academic and vocational experience.

## **The Consultation**

4. (1) The consultation process began on the 25<sup>th</sup> January 2010 and finished on the 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

(2) A consultation document, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1 was circulated according to the County Procedures for Review. This circulation included Local Members, Dartford and Gravesham Borough Council, Sevenoaks Council, London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley, local Parish Councils, DCSF, SEEDA, LSC, the local libraries, Members of Parliament, Trade Unions, all SOAB members, all Dartford Members, KCC Officers and all Dartford and Swanley Primary and Secondary Schools.

(3) Wilmington Enterprise College was sent enough copies for all staff, governors, parents and carers to receive one. Attached to the consultation document was a reply form for respondents to express their views. Approximately 2900 copies of the document were circulated.

(4) The document can be viewed on the KCC website at:  
<https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/education-consultations/cons-Wilmington%20PCD1-2010.pdf>

(5) A public meeting was held at Wilmington Enterprise College on 1st February 2010. Mrs Valerie Dagger, Chair of SOAB, chaired the meeting. In attendance were: Simon Webb, Area Children's Services Officer for Dartford and Gravesham; Mrs Jane Wheatley, Executive Head Teacher, Wilmington Enterprise College; Mr Frank Green, Chief Executive Officer, Leigh Academies Trust; Mr Mark Poulter, Head of School, Wilmington Enterprise College and Mrs Janice Brooke Chair of Interim Executive Board for Wilmington Enterprise College. Cllr Ann Allen attended as the local elected member for Wilmington and as a member of the Interim Executive Board.

About 150 members of the public attended.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

### *Written Responses (as at 5 March 2010)*

5. (1) Thirty one responses have been received, of which 17 are in favour, nine are undecided and five are opposed.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 2.

### *Public Meeting Responses*

(3) A summary of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 3.

## **Views of the Pupils**

6. (1) The executive headteacher of Wilmington Enterprise College has kept the pupils and their parents informed and involved through the school newsletter and regular assemblies. Responses from pupils so far indicate that pupils are looking forward to the school becoming an Academy. The Area Children's Services Officer met with the School Council on 2 March 2010 and the students offered these comments:

- The students whom were all, from Year 7 to Year 13, broadly in favour of change to the Academy.
- Concern was raised about the transition plan from the current building to the new building as the students needed to be assured that their learning would not be interrupted.
- All students sought to be part of the consultation and decision-making process for the new design and construction of the building.
- The Council also expressed a wish to visit the Leigh Academy in order to be reassured on the class size and how their learning would be enhanced.
- The ACSO agreed to talk to each of the four House groups in late March 2010 to respond to any questions the students may have.

## **Views of Local Members**

7. The Local Member for the County Division where Wilmington Enterprise College is sited is Mrs Ann Allen. Mrs Allen said:

"With reference to this report, I would say that I welcome and support the proposals as a positive and constructive way forward for the pupils and staff of Wilmington Enterprise College."

## **Views of the Interim Executive Board**

8. [1] Following the resignation of the governing body of Wilmington Enterprise College, delegated authority is now vested in a local authority Interim Executive Board (IEB).

(2) Their response is as follows:

- (a) The IEB were, naturally, disappointed that their tenure was expected to be ended after only one year, however, they are not opposed in principle to an Academy being established on the site.
- (b) The process for change has been outlined to the IEB, however, they believe the Local Authority have moved too swiftly for all the necessary arrangements to be in place by September.
- (c) They recognise that the new facilities being built will enhance teaching and learning and are a significant benefit to the students, along with the enhanced budget which an Academy is entitled to.

## **Views of the Main Sponsor**

9. The Leigh Academies Trust are in full support of this proposal.

## **Views of the Area Children's Services Officer**

10. (1) The DCSF National Challenge team have challenged the local authority to ensure that all such category of school achieves at least thirty percent 5A\*- C including Maths and English, by September 2010.

(2) The Ofsted framework, which changed from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009, instructs the DCSF to issue a closure notice, or to make a structural change, to the local authority should two consecutive Inspection Monitoring visits issue an 'inadequate' notice.

(3) Given the very strong likelihood that a second 'inadequate' notice will be published, the local authority has taken the initiative to seek support from the Leigh Academy Trust and have commissioned them to drive forward the recovery improvements and to lead on the creation of the Wilmington Academy

(4) As a consequence of the commissioning process, both the Leigh Academy Trust and the local authority will work in partnership to ensure that an Expression of Interest is secured to obtain Academy status for Wilmington Enterprise College from the 1<sup>st</sup> September 2010.

(5) It is very clear that the site issues for Wilmington Enterprise College and Wilmington Boys Grammar will need to be considered as part of the Academy process and its development.

(6) Parents at the Public Meeting were concerned at the class organisation, which will mirror the current arrangements at the Leigh Academy, e.g. teaching class sizes of 60. I have visited the Leigh Academy on a number of occasions and seen how effective this method of teaching and quality of learning is for all abilities of students. The recent Ofsted report for the Leigh Academy reflects this. The Head of School at Wilmington Enterprise College is arranging visits for the parents to visit the Leigh Academy to see the teaching at first hand.

(7) The early entry of Year 11 students in November 2009 has yielded some much improved results from August 2009. The College has currently achieved 24% of pupils achieving both English and Maths GCSE results. It is expected, with further teaching and support given by the Advisory Staff, paid for by National Challenge Funding, that the projected figures are for the College to achieve 31% 5 A\*-C English and Maths for August 2010.

(8) Currently 25% of the Kent Advisory Staff are supporting the learning of students in Years 10 and 11. This is due to the removal of inadequate staff from the College. Many of these vacant posts are being covered by supply staff.

[9] A response from the Governing Body of Hextable School offer the following responses:

1. The third secondary provision within Dartford led and managed by the Leigh Academy Trust will lead to a reduction in choice for parents.
2. The need for the 14-19 Partnership to continue to ensure a wide choice for all students.

3. The impact on intakes of the remaining Local Authority schools

(10) It is welcomed that the Leigh Academy Trust is the Lead Sponsor for the Wilmington Academy, as between the Leigh and Longfield Academies, they have staff who will be able to support and fill these vacancies.

### **Views of Local Member of Parliament**

11. The Local Member of Parliament is Dr Howard Stoate. Dr Stoate and MPs from adjacent wards have been informed of the proposal.

### **Views of Dartford Borough Council**

11. Dartford Borough Council has been fully informed of the proposal.

### **Views of the Local Children's Services Partnership**

12. The Partnership has been informed of the proposal and is fully supportive.

### **Proposed Timetable**

13. It is proposed that planning for the building work will commence after a decision has been reached on the proposal.

7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010	School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider a public consultation.
25 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2010	Start of Consultation.
1 <sup>st</sup> Feb 2010	Public Meeting.
8 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2010	Close of Consultation.
17 <sup>th</sup> Mar 2010	School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider issuing a Public Notice
Mar 2010	Report to Cabinet Member
Mar 2010	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member
April 2010	End of Statutory Representation Period
Sept 2010	Wilmington Enterprise College closes New Academy opens

### **Recommendation**

14. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on the issuing of a public notice on this proposal.

Simon Webb  
Area Children's Services Officer  
Dartford & Gravesham  
Tel 01732 525110

The local member is Mrs Ann Allen

---

*Background Documents:*

*None*

*Previous Committee report*

School Organisation Advisory Board – 7 January 2010