

**Meeting of the Decision Session –  
Cabinet Member for Education,  
Children and Young People**

**27 February 2013**

Report of the Director of Adults, Children and Education

**The Future of Derwent Schools Federation and Osbaldwick  
Primary School**

**Summary**

1. The report provides the Cabinet Member with details of the responses to the recent public consultation concerning the proposal to close Derwent Schools and to expand Osbaldwick School in order to create a two form of entry school, using both of the existing sites.
2. The report considers the proposed closure and expansion, particularly in light of low parental demand for places at Derwent, creating a high number of surplus places.
3. The report concludes that the primary education of children will be best served by expanding Osbaldwick School, building on the strong leadership and governance already available in the local education community and using the excellent facilities available at Derwent Schools.
4. The report sets out proposals that describe how an expanded Osbaldwick might be organised and how the two sites will work effectively as one school. The governing bodies of Derwent and Osbaldwick, together with the local authority (LA) have and will continue to communicate and consult with parents, carers and pupils openly and clearly about the future of their children's primary education to ensure that the best possible quality of education can be provided.
5. The report recommends that the LA should now publish a statutory notice proposing the closure of Derwent Schools Federation and an expansion of Osbaldwick Primary School, followed by a six-week representation period, after which the LA will consider all

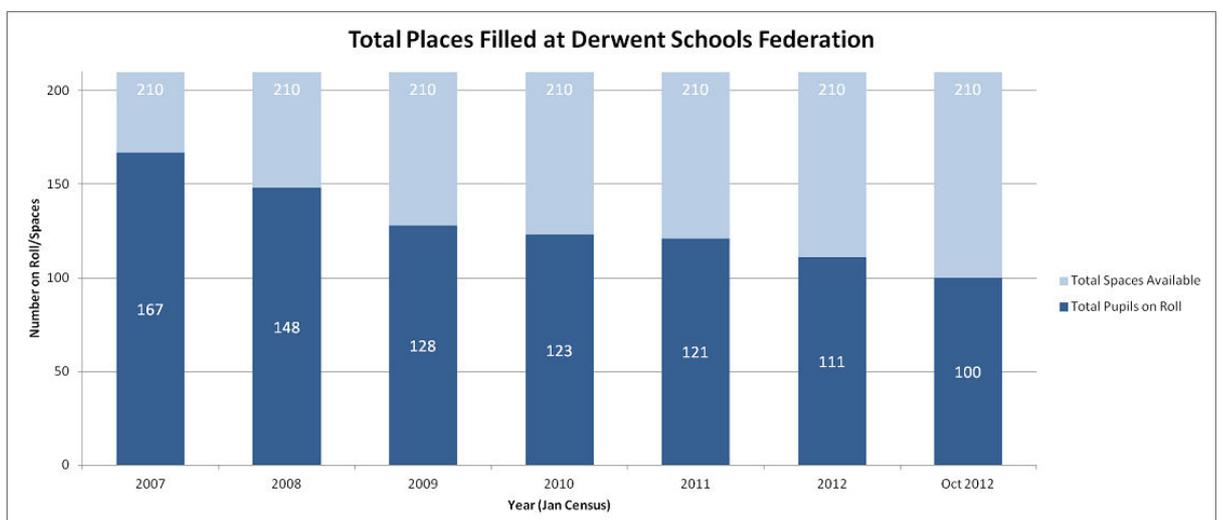
further observations and comments received and decide whether to proceed with the proposals.

## **Background**

6. Derwent is a one form of entry school taking children from nursery (age 3) through to Year 6. Over 80% of the parents who live in the Derwent catchment area select other schools as their first preference, many choosing Osbaldwick. With only 100 pupils on roll in October 2012, representing 51% in surplus places, pupils are being taught in a building that can accommodate 210. Such small numbers means that pupils across Years 3 to 6 are taught in mixed year groups (Years 3 and 4, 4 and 5, 5 and 6). Some areas in the building are therefore no longer used.
7. The small numbers of pupils at Derwent directly affects the operating costs of the school. The average cost per pupil per year is £8,600 compared with under £4,500 at Osbaldwick.
8. The Derwent site benefits from a number of excellent facilities used by both the school and the local community. To the rear of the site is a floodlit multi use games area, together with a purpose-built changing room block. The main building is host to a satellite children's centre, opened in 2011. The children's centre will continue to provide services from the Derwent site to families in need of support in the local area.
9. Osbaldwick is also currently a one form of entry school, with a capacity for 210 pupils. In October 2012, there were 202 pupils on roll. Osbaldwick takes children from Reception through to Year 6. The school is facing a rising demand from parents who select it as their first preference both within its own catchment and also outside of its catchment area.
10. Both schools benefit from good wrap around care. Derwent operates a well attended Breakfast Club and Osbaldwick operates both a playgroup and an after school club. In 2010, both Derwent and Osbaldwick were inspected by Ofsted. Derwent was judged overall as being 'satisfactory.' Osbaldwick was considered by Ofsted to be a 'good school with outstanding outcomes.'
11. The headteacher at Derwent (Mrs Carole Torode) retired in December 2012. Both governing bodies appointed the current headteacher of Osbaldwick (Miss Lesley Barringer), as interim

executive headteacher of both Derwent and Osbaldwick from January 2013.

12. Formerly Derwent Infant and Derwent Junior, the future of the Derwent site was last publicly debated in 2006 when the governing bodies proposed a plan to federate the two schools together to share resources and expertise to help raise standards and add greater value for money. The plan was supported by both City of York Council and the other schools in the city. Despite these changes, demand for places continued to decrease.
13. The LA launched a public consultation regarding the future of Derwent Schools Federation and Osbaldwick Primary School in December 2012. This was predicated on the low number of pupils at Derwent, the increasing number of surplus places, and the rising demand for places at Osbaldwick leading to increasing pressure on space.
14. LAs are required to keep surplus capacity under review and to ensure an appropriate balance between supply and demand so that resources are used effectively.
15. The chart below shows that the number of pupils at Derwent has been falling since 2007. With 100 pupils on roll at the October 2012 census point, Derwent has the highest surplus places across the city. This trend is set to continue. Currently, only seven parents have requested Derwent as their first preference for Reception class in September 2013. If this number remained unchanged, following the departure of the current Y6 to secondary school, the total number of pupils on roll at Derwent would fall to 93. The percentage of surplus places would increase to 56%.



16. The table below shows the pupil numbers in each year group at the schools in October 2012.

<b>Current class sizes</b>			
<b>Derwent</b>		<b>Osballdwick</b>	
Class	Size	Class	Size
Nursery	8	Reception	30
Reception	15	Y1	31
Y1 + Y2 (mixed class)	15	Y2	30
Y1 + Y2 (mixed class)	15	Y3	27
Y3 + Y4 (mixed class)	19	Y4	30
Y4 + Y5 (mixed class)	17	Y5	28
Y5 + Y6 (mixed class)	19	Y6	29
<b>Total</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>205</b>

17. Declining pupil numbers impacts upon the school in several ways. The school will receive less funding, usually resulting in a reduction in the number of staff. A smaller school provides limited opportunities for promotion making it harder to retain ambitious staff.
18. Annex 1 includes the presentation provided at the public consultation meeting at both Derwent and Osballdwick schools on 28 January 2013. This details the school preferences of parents living in both catchment areas.

### **Options**

19. The consultation document noted that in addition to closing Derwent and expanding Osballdwick, four other options were considered with the governing bodies of both schools. These options were:
- Close Derwent and transfer the pupils to other schools in the area.
  - Close both Derwent and Osballdwick and then create a new school.
  - Federate Derwent with Osballdwick under one Head teacher and one Governing Body.
  - Apply to the Government for Derwent to become a sponsored Academy.

20. These alternatives do not appear to offer a credible way forward as:
- Expected increases in pupil numbers, together with rises in the local population due to the Derwenthorpe housing project, means that this option would remove pupil places from the city that will soon be needed. It would also remove an excellent school building which has some outstanding facilities, such as the MUGA (multi use games area) that can be used by both the school and the community.
  - Closing two schools and opening one would be costly. It would also mean closing one very popular school judged by Ofsted to be good with outstanding outcomes and another that's in good condition with some outstanding facilities.
  - A federation between Derwent and Osbaldwick would not resolve the issue of surplus space as separate admissions limits would continue together with separate Ofsted inspection arrangements. Nor would this create value for money, as separate budgets would still be required.
  - The creation of a sponsored academy would mean changes in leadership and governance. This would not address the issues of surplus places or value for money at Derwent, or overcrowding and increasing parental demand for places at Osbaldwick.
21. The consultation document encouraged people to give their views regarding these and any other options that should be explored. The responses are considered below.

### **Public consultation – summary**

22. Both governing bodies have worked together to arrange and organise public consultation events involving parents, carers, children, and staff of both schools. Osbaldwick Primary School governing body organised a well attended public meeting at Osbaldwick Primary School on 10 December 2012 to explain the need for the public consultation. Comments received at that event are shown at Annex 2. Osbaldwick's governing body invited written questions in advance of the meeting and those questions were answered along with others raised on the night. Following this meeting a set of Q&A responses was sent out from Osbaldwick Primary School governors to parents and carers to ensure those

who could not attend the meeting were kept informed around the main issues being raised.

23. Parents from both schools were given the opportunity to visit each site on 17 January 2013. Many parents, carers and children took the opportunity to look around the buildings and talk with staff. Many (40) also took the opportunity to fill in a questionnaire produced by the schools and to make comments. Annex 3 shows the questionnaire issued on the 17 January and quotes the comments received.
24. Two consultation meetings with LA officers and school leadership teams were held with parents at each school on 28 January 2013. The meetings gave parents the opportunity to meet LA officers and to ask questions and air their views. Both meetings were well attended.
25. The formal consultation began on 10 December 2012 and closed on 15 February 2013. The consultation document described the reasons for the consultation, the options already considered, and set out the proposals and their potential implications. It also explained how people could send the LA their views.
26. Five hundred and twenty paper copies of the consultation document were distributed to pupils, parents and staff at Osbaldwick and Derwent schools, Tang Hall Primary and Tang Hall Library. The consultation paper was also promoted on-line on the council's website at [www.york.gov.uk/education](http://www.york.gov.uk/education).

### **Issues raised during the consultation process**

27. The initial public consultation with parents and carers generated much discussion within both school communities. The governing bodies have welcomed the responses from parents and carers and have incorporated some suggestions into their plans for operating an expanded Osbaldwick school across both sites. The various issues raised by parents, carers and staff are detailed in the annexes to this report. A small number of detailed emailed responses were also received by the LA (6 in total). These covered a diverse and broad range of views with some objecting to the proposals and others supporting them. These are all included in annex 4.
28. The responses received inevitably reflect a wide diversity of views and the perspectives of different stakeholders. The LA produced a

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that was distributed to all parents and carers at both Derwent Schools and Osbaldwick Primary, together with staff and governors on 25 January 2013. The FAQ document is included at Annex 5.

29. The FAQ document highlights and addresses the general messages and major issues that have been raised by those who have responded to the consultation document. The majority of issues concern the detail of school organisation and implementation arrangements if the proposals proceed.

### **Support for pupils and parents**

30. If the proposals move forward it will be important to respond to any ongoing concerns of parents, carers, pupils and staff. The LA and the governing bodies will ensure that:
- the needs of individual pupils are taken into account
  - pupils with special educational needs continue to receive the same levels of support
  - early years provision, including the maintained nursery, out of school clubs and children's centre provision will continue to the same standard
  - consultation with parents and carers will continue regarding all of the detailed arrangements including the provision of sweatshirts/uniform for all pupils transferring from Derwent.

### **Proposal to make a change to the existing catchment areas**

31. An expanded Osbaldwick would change from being one form of entry to two forms of entry providing up to 60 places per year group. This will mean the school should be able to meet the anticipated local demand for primary places in the foreseeable future, given current parental preferences. It is proposed to make minor changes to the catchment area of Tang Hall Primary School and the existing Derwent catchment area. In order to better balance the available school places within local catchment areas, it is proposed that Tang Hall Primary School will include the area north of Tang Hall Beck and west of Tang Hall Lane, in its catchment area for admissions from September 2014. No objections to this proposal were made or received during the consultation period. The governing bodies of Osbaldwick, Derwent and Tang Hall schools have been consulted on this proposal.

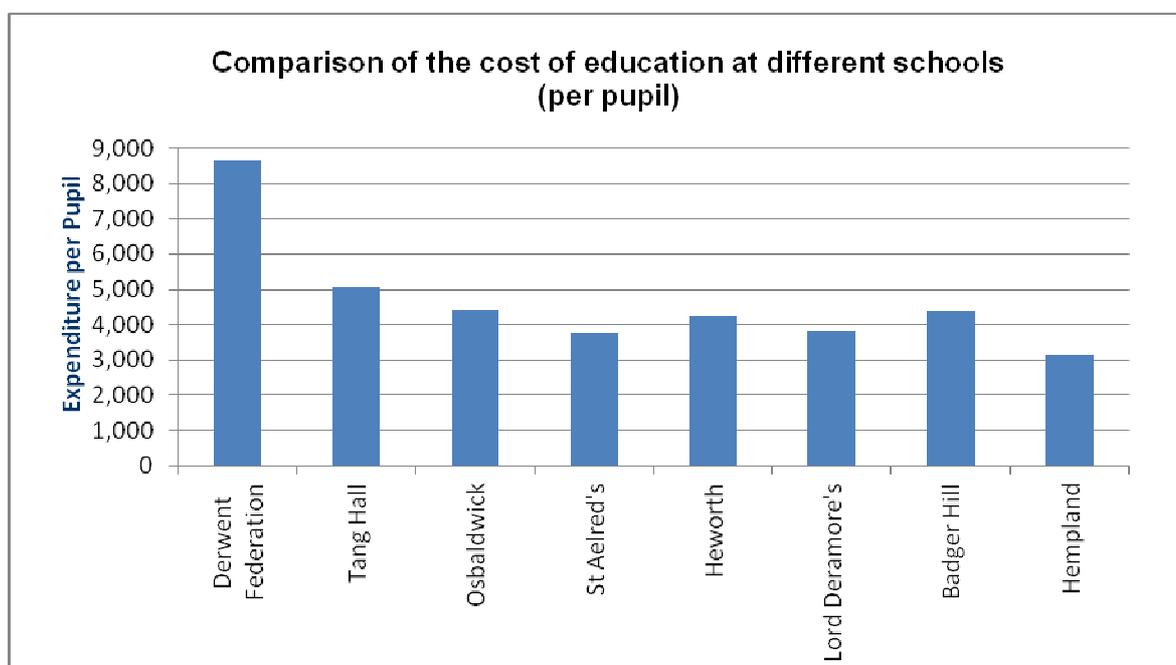
32. Archbishop Holgate's CE Academy is the local secondary school serving the catchment area of these schools. The leadership of that school fully support the proposals set out in this report.

## Council Plan

33. The provision of primary education is a key responsibility of the council. The LA is confident that this proposal will ensure that local children can access high quality teaching and learning in a vibrant, secure and well resourced primary school.

## Financial Implications

34. With the highest amount of surplus spaces in the city at 51%, the continuation of low demand for places at Derwent leads to increasingly high costs of educational provision. This trend will continue to be an issue for the foreseeable future. The LA is fully aware of the pressures on budgets and the importance of providing the best value for money possible. The cost of provision of education per pupil at Derwent is almost double that of other schools. This makes keeping Derwent open difficult to justify as the following chart shows:



## **HR Implications**

35. The proposal to close Derwent Schools Federation with effect from 31 August 2012 means that all staff employed at the school on that date would be redundant by reason of the closure. Formal consultation on these potential redundancies has already started with staff, their trade unions and professional associations.
36. The current position suggests that there would be a total of up to 25 staff (16.7 full time equivalent posts) affected by redundancy, 7 (6.6 fte) teachers and 18 (10.1 fte) support staff. In order to mitigate potential redundancies, volunteers for redundancy would be sought first and then redeployment for as many staff as possible thereafter.
37. One main redeployment opportunity will be provided by the governing body of Osbaldwick Primary School, who have given an undertaking to ring fence any vacant posts that arise on its establishment as a result of the expansion of their school, to those staff that have been identified as redundant due to the closure of Derwent Schools. Other sources of redeployment will continue to be sought up until the date of closure.
38. Staff, who have not volunteered for redundancy or secured redeployment by 1 September 2013, will receive a redundancy payment in line with City of York Council's scheme.

## **Other Implications**

39. There are no specific Equalities, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information technology, or Property implications arising at this time.

## **Risk Management**

40. If Derwent Schools Federation is to close and Osbaldwick Primary School is to expand, a managed process will be put in place by Council Officers working in conjunction with both governing bodies with the aim to have an expanded school across two sites ready for September 2013.

## **Conclusions**

41. The general economic climate has worsened considerably in recent years and significant reductions in public expenditure introduced. Although schools have seen some protection, it is clear that pressures on schools are increasing and many are having to make difficult decisions to balance their budgets. The LA has a responsibility to ensure an appropriate balance between supply and demand of school places so that resources are used effectively.
42. The initial public consultation generated much discussion within both school communities. The governing bodies have welcomed the responses from parents and have incorporated some suggestions into their plans for operating an expanded Osbaldwick School across both sites.
43. Following the consultation the LA remains of the view that the interests of children and families in the local area are best served by building on the strong leadership and governance already available in the local education community and improving on the use made of the existing school buildings and facilities. Consolidating the admission preferences of most parents provides better value for money than existing arrangements and will give children in the local area greater opportunities to achieve the best possible educational attainment and outcomes, as they prepare to move into the secondary school environment.

## **Recommendations**

44. The Cabinet Member is recommended to:
  - i. Consider the feedback and responses received and included in Annexes 2, 3 and 4.
  - ii. Agree to publish Public Notices in accordance with section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to discontinue Derwent Schools Federation from 31 August 2013 followed by a six-week statutory representation period. The notices will include the proposed expansion of Osbaldwick Primary School, and the changes to catchment area of Tang Hall Primary School described at para 31 above.

- iii. Request the Cabinet, following the representation period, consider any further observations and comments received and to then decide whether to proceed with the proposals.

*Reason: To ensure the provision of high quality and sustainable primary education in the local community.*

### Contact details

<b>Authors:</b>	<b>Chief Officer responsible for the report:</b>		
Claire McCormick School Planning Adults, Children and Education 01904 554334	Kevin Hall Assistant Director 01904 554207		
	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b> 19.02.13
	Pete Dwyer Director of Adults, Children and Education 01904 554200		
	<b>Report Approved</b>	✓	<b>Date</b> 19.02.13
<b>Specialist Implications Officer(s):</b> Richard Hartle (Finance) – ext 4225 Jo Sheen (HR) - ext 4250			
Wards affected: Hull Road, Osbaldwick, Heworth Without, Derwent		<b>All</b>	
<b>For further information please contact the authors of the report</b>			

### Annexes

Annex 1	Presentation	Presentation given at Osbaldwick and Derwent Public Consultation Event on 28 January 2013
Annex 2	Comments	Comments received at the public meeting at Osbaldwick on 10 December 2012.
Annex 3	Questionnaire	Questionnaire issued to Parents, Carers and Children on 17 January following their visit to Derwent School Federation.
Annex 4	E-mails	Details of the 6 e-mails received in response to the consultation document.
Annex 5	Frequently Asked Questions	Frequently Asked Questions distributed to all parents at both Derwent Schools and Osbaldwick Primary, together with staff and governors.