

Frequently Asked Questions distributed to all parents at both Derwent Schools and Osbaldwick Primary, together with staff and governors

Derwent Schools and Osbaldwick Primary

Frequently Asked Questions

The following paragraphs set out responses to the most frequently asked questions in relation to the consultation about Derwent Schools Federation and Osbaldwick Primary Schools. We are currently undertaking a process of consultation and your feedback and ideas are always welcome. These FAQs are responses to your questions about what might happen if Derwent Schools were to close and Osbaldwick Primary was to expand to operate across two sites.

Questions related to teaching

How would teaching staff be arranged across both sites?

All staff presently working at Osbaldwick Primary would continue to be employed and work from both sites, so there would be vacancies to fill at an expanded school. The Governing Bodies have agreed that Derwent staff would be given the opportunity to apply for a position at an expanded Osbaldwick Primary first. Any unfilled vacancies after this first application phase would go on to a wider application process ready for a September 2013 start. A rigorous process would ensure high quality staff with proven good teaching would be employed in all teaching positions.

Would the same teachers continue to teach the year groups they teach at present?

Teachers are deployed according to the individual circumstances within schools. Some teachers are likely to change year group if Osbaldwick Primary were to expand. Moving teachers according to the needs of the school is a best practice approach adopted by schools across York.

How would children be allocated to forms in each year group?

There are a number of ways this might be done. A final decision is yet to be made by the Governing Body, but it would be based upon the best

opportunities available for children to learn and succeed and we would like to seek the views of parents.

Options could include:

Asking children to nominate two or more close friends they would like to be with in their new form. A similar situation occurs when children move to secondary school.

By mixed ability

Combination of the two above

By date of birth

Mathematics in the Junior age range is arranged by set. This method is well supported by parents. This procedure could be broadened across the Upper Key Stage 2 and Lower Key Stage 2 on each site.

Would behaviour be of the same high standard and would the processes for managing any behaviour issues be the same as they are now?

High standards of behaviour and performance would be expected from all children at an enlarged school community. The larger school would have clear policies about behaviour. Staff would work with the children to deliver the high standards that would be expected across both sites.

Would the quality of teaching be affected?

High quality staff in all positions across the school would ensure that teaching standards are excellent, with the expectations for overall school performance being positive.

How big would the class sizes be?

From September 2013, class sizes are likely to be around 22 to 26. This may increase to a maximum of 30 per class in subsequent years.

Why are you proposing to split the age groups up across the sites, why not keep KS1 at one site and KS2 at another?

An innovative arrangement has been proposed for the sites. Nursery, Reception, Y1, Y5 and Y6 would be at the Derwent site and Y2, Y3 and Y4 at the Osbaldwick site. The Governing Bodies of Derwent and Osbaldwick believe that split age groups would benefit an expanded school because:

Academic progress would be maximised, ensuring high quality education.

The two sites are very different sizes, with Derwent site being substantially larger and therefore able to take more classes.

The Derwent site has a well established early years and foundation stage provision which includes an outdoor learning area that is larger than that at the Osbaldwick site. The aim would be to have all early years through to Y1 based at the Derwent site, where well established outreach facilities, such as the Children's Centre, are also present.

The long horse shoe shape of the Derwent building allows a natural divide between one side and the other. Years 5 and 6 would benefit from having an independent block of space where they can begin to become more independent in preparation for their move into a secondary environment. This would help to promote confidence and would make the transition to secondary school smoother.

Years 5 and 6 would also be able to make best use of the outdoor sporting and ICT facilities. The school has a floodlit multi use games facility that can be used all year round.

Years 2, 3, and 4 would be based at the Osbaldwick site. Children in Y2 are preparing for their statutory test year ready for the junior curriculum and consequently Y2 and Y3 teachers work closely together to ensure optimum success and smooth transition. Keeping Years 2, 3 and 4 together on the same site would concentrate efforts to allow teachers and children to focus on their learning styles and abilities prior to moving to a more independent environment at the Derwent site.

A mix of year groups would avoid the problems that can emerge from having a traditional infant and junior split. The proposed mix of year groups would overcome such concerns and allow teachers to work as a Primary School team on two sites encouraging older infants to prepare for the KS2 curriculum. On the Osbaldwick site, Y4s would become the oldest age group and therefore would automatically feel more responsible, thus helping them to prepare for their move to Upper KS2.

This arrangement of year groups would allow setting in maths without movement between sites with four sets on each site.

Any other options for a split in year groups could involve losses in learning time due to the need to move from one site to another which would be unacceptable.

The combined resources in place at both sites, together with classroom sizes best meet the needs of the age groups concerned.

The Children's Centre would work with the community, focussing on areas and issues that would be of benefit for parents/carers, children and other groups. Children's Centre meetings and activities would be located at both sites.

Questions about wrap-around care

How would pre school and nursery provision work?

How would out of school hours activities work?

What would be the cost of the breakfast club?

Would this be a good time to introduce a holiday club?

In recognising the significance and importance of wrap-around care and holiday clubs for parents/carers, time is being taken to consider the options and arrangements carefully.

Options for out of school clubs and activities would be discussed with the various providers on both sites. There is a strong commitment to provide a high quality service for all children in the school and to allow parents/carers options for childcare across the site. It is likely that the breakfast club would be on the Derwent site as this would be the first to start. After breakfast, children in Y2, Y3 and Y4 would be escorted by staff to the Osbaldwick Primary site for their start and handed over to the staff on duty as is the practice now. After school club would also be on one site and again children on the other site would be escorted, just as the Derwent pupils accessing the provision do now. The chosen site will be based on facilities available.

Questions about how an expanded school would operate

Would there be staggered start and finish times across the two sites?

To allow parents/carers to drop off and pick up children between the two sites, there would be staggered start and finish times. An example could be:

Start at Derwent site at 8:40am and finish at 3:10pm.
Start at Osbaldwick site at 8:55am and finish at 3:25pm.

Activity clubs would begin at 3.30pm. Again children would be escorted where appropriate to the other site and back, if required.

Would children move between sites during the day?

Most activities would take place at each child's base site. There may be times where movement between sites during the school day is required. An example would be when a class at Osbaldwick site uses the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) which is at the Derwent site. Children would finish the day at the same site as they started at.

Would there be an opportunity to look around both sites?

Many thanks to the parents and children who looked around the Derwent and Osbaldwick sites on the 17th January. Your positive and enthusiastic comments were very much appreciated, together with your questions and feedback.

How would the leadership of the school be arranged?

There would be senior leaders on both sites who would be accessible to parents. The Headteacher and members of the Senior Leadership team would work at both sites to ensure consistency of approach and high standards of teaching and learning and behaviour. There would be regular meetings of the senior leadership team and staff teams. The current Governing Body of Osbaldwick Primary School would become the Governing Body of the expanded Osbaldwick Primary School, which would also include representation from the existing Derwent Schools Governing Body.

How would you ensure a smooth transition for all pupils?

If City of York Council decided to approve the proposal, familiarisation visits and activities would be arranged at both sites during the summer term prior to September 2013, with particular attention on the younger age groups. There are bound to be initial worries about new and unfamiliar surroundings, but children are very resilient especially when supported and encouraged by their parents and the familiar staff members they see on a day to day basis:

All pupils would visit both sites to help reassure them and to encourage familiarity.

Similarly, both schools would be open to parents/carers of all children to get to know the sites. This would enable parents/carers to talk to their children about where they would be taught, where and how they would be picked up and dropped off, and where they would be before and after school.

Staff would do their very best to answer pupils' questions and give the reassurances children need from people they trust, but avoid creating 'unknown' concerns until final decisions are made.

How would the children get from one site to the other?

The proposed split of year groups across the two sites would automatically minimise the need to move pupils from one site to another during the school day. Inevitably, there would be some movement of pupils for some activities such as performances. On these occasions, pupils would be supervised when walking the short distance between the two sites.

Questions related to admissions arrangements

Will the numbers that apply to Derwent Schools and Osbaldwick Primary for September 2013 be published?

Yes, this information will be published and will be available to the public.

If the proposal does not go ahead, what would happen?

The existing schools would continue to operate in the short term if the proposal does not go ahead. It makes sense though, to retain the excellent facilities at Derwent Schools as in future years we know that there will be an increasing demand for places.

Why don't schools just take children from their own catchments?

By law, parents have to be asked for their school preferences. Parents can choose which schools to send their children to, subject to places being available. The catchment system gives local parents a higher priority to those living outside of the school catchment.

Why didn't the Local Authority simply shut Derwent Schools and split the children between other schools?

The proposal to expand Osbaldwick Primary and close Derwent Schools does not reduce the number of school places to the local community. An expanded Osbaldwick Primary allows for an improvement in the use of

resources and opportunities to increase educational outcome and performance.

If I live in the existing Osbaldwick or Derwent catchment, is my child/ren guaranteed a place at an expanded Osbaldwick Primary?

An expanded Osbaldwick Primary will be able to offer up to 60 places to local children in the coming years. Last year Osbaldwick Primary could not offer places to all children that put it as their first preference.

If the proposal goes ahead, City of York Council will offer places in an expanded Osbaldwick Primary to all parents who have already applied to either Derwent or Osbaldwick for a place in September 2013.

School places in future years cannot be guaranteed anywhere; however, the catchment system does give priority to local children.

Other questions

How can it be financially beneficial to keep two sites open?

Closing Derwent Schools and expanding Osbaldwick Primary would mean a more effective and efficient use of resources supporting the teaching and learning of all pupils. There would be one Governing Body and one Leadership Team managing one budget across two sites.

How much influence do parents have on the final decision?

City of York Council, Osbaldwick Primary and Derwent Schools are encouraging people to comment on the consultation proposal before February 15th 2013. Comments will be collated and reported on to Council Members to help them make their decisions.

Would there be implications for increasing traffic around the new school and larger catchment area.

With less than 5 minutes walking time, between the two sites, it is not anticipated that car traffic levels should increase. Parents/carers would be actively encouraged to leave cars at home and walk to school where possible. A staggered start and finish time would be introduced to help parents/carers with this.

What is the timetable for this consultation process?

15 February 2013 - public consultation finishes.

End of February 2013 - the Council's Cabinet Member will consider the proposal and the responses received during the consultation period.

March 2013 - if the proposal is agreed, a statutory notice for closure will be published followed by a further 6 week representation period.

May 2013 - City of York Council's full Cabinet will consider any further representations received and make a final decision.

02 September 2013 - if the proposal is agreed, an expanded Osbaldwick Primary School will open.