



# Primary Places Review Consultation

South Wallasey

October - December 2010



## About this document

This leaflet -

- describes the Council's options
- outlines the timetable for consultation and possible implementation
- tells you how to respond to consultation

The Council is rightly proud of education in Wirral. Teachers, governors, parents and pupils all play a part in this success. To provide the best education for children the Local Authority must make sure money spent on education is used in the best possible way. This means spending money on real children, not on empty places.

The Council has to review its school places to make sure that across Wirral, empty or surplus places stay below 10%. It also has to consider taking action when a school has 25% or more surplus places.

It is right that there should be some surplus places for parental choice. However, in Wirral the number of primary age children has been falling for some time. This means that some schools are getting smaller, producing a significant surplus of empty places.

Also, each school needs enough pupils to pay its costs in full. When pupil numbers become too low, the school risks having financial problems, and may have to cut back spending on staff and other resources. It also puts more pressure on teachers because they have to take on additional responsibilities.

The number of empty places in some local primary schools in your area is too high. We have to take action to reduce this number of empty places.

This consultation is for you to help decide what changes should be made at schools in this area.

## The Wirral picture

There are fewer primary age children in Wirral because fewer children are being born. This is happening in many parts of the country, not just in Wirral. It is clear that new families coming to live in Wirral and new housing developments will not make a significant difference.

Right now there are 13% surplus or empty places in primary schools across Wirral. There are more empty places in some areas and schools than in others. The number of primary age children in Wirral has been falling for many years.

## The Primary Places Review

The Local Authority (LA) divides Wirral into Small Planning Areas. Each area contains schools that serve related communities and geographical areas. Small Planning Areas are not the same as electoral wards or constituencies.

This is the sixth phase of a Primary Places Review which has looked at the whole of Wirral over the last few years. This consultation concerns schools in the small planning area of South Wallasey.

### Schools included in this area:

- Egremont Primary School
- Kingsway Primary School
- Park Primary School
- Riverside Primary School
- Somerville Primary School
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Wallasey

There is also a Nursery school in this area, **Brentwood Early Years Centre**.

Some of these schools have more surplus places than others. In January 2010 four schools had more than 25% surplus places. Egremont Primary School and St Joseph's both had 28% surplus places, Riverside Primary School had 37% surplus places and Kingsway Primary had 44% surplus places.

In the last few years, the birth rate has increased, although only slightly. There were 23,903 pupils in 2010 and there are expected to be 24,537 pupils by 2015 - that's just 634 more primary age children across the whole of Wirral. Wirral will have 10% surplus places by 2015, but in some areas surplus places will still be very high.

## Surplus places in South Wallasey

There are 2,043 pupil places in the six primary schools. At the last school census in 2010, there were 1,552 children in the six schools.

### 491 surplus places:

- = about 16 empty 30 place classes
- = more than two standard one form entry primary schools
- = 24% surplus places

Our target is to manage surplus places at **below 10%**.

Predictions have been made about how this situation might change over the next five years. These predictions are based on the number of children in schools now, and how many children have been born.

Over the next five years the number of pupils in South Wallasey schools is predicted to rise to **1,633 pupils in 2015**. This means if nothing changed, in five years time there would still be **20% surplus places**. This is double our 10% or less target. We must act to reduce the number of surplus places in South Wallasey.

## Small schools

Reducing surplus places is the main reason for the review. However, the Council has considered many other factors before choosing which options would work best in this area. The number of pupils on roll was one of these factors. The LA and school representatives spent a year talking about how the number of pupils on roll affects the quality of education. It was agreed that a primary school should have **at least 120 pupils**.

Government guidance says that 'Schools with **fewer than 150 pupils** may be educationally and financially sustainable only through substantial subsidies via their local authorities funding formula'.

The Authority's policy, 'In Pursuit of Excellence' says that **schools begin to have budget and organisational problems when they go below 180 pupils**. Here are some of the reasons why this happens.

- The amount of money schools are given to spend is based mostly on the number of pupils. Because fixed costs like cleaning and heating don't change, with fewer pupils, the school has less spare money to spend on equipment, books and teaching assistants.
- Because the LA wants all children to have the best possible education, the small school gets extra money for a while to protect it while rolls fall. This extra money does not last forever. If the roll keeps falling, the school could go into debt. Giving extra money to a smaller school also means that all the other schools have less money to spend on their own pupils.
- With less money, eventually the school has to start making teachers redundant. With fewer teachers, each teacher has to work harder to cover additional responsibilities.
- With fewer teachers, organising the classes can be awkward. As pupil numbers fall, class sizes stay about the same, but different age groups have to be taught together.

- Small schools can sometimes be successful, but this success relies on a small number of teachers. A single teacher leaving can have a major effect on the quality of the school.

Sometimes there can be a reason to keep a very small school, for example in a remote rural area. Councils with lots of small rural schools, like Cheshire East or Cumbria, receive extra Government money to support small schools. Wirral does not get this extra money, which means that if the Council chooses to keep small schools open, this happens at the expense of all Wirral's children.

## Larger schools

- Have more flexibility in their budget and more money to spend on resources like equipment, books, and support staff to meet children's needs. This is because fixed costs, like cleaning and heating, take up less of their budget.
- Additional responsibilities can be shared between more teachers. One of the benefits of this is that teachers then have more time to plan lessons, and to develop their skills.
- A larger pool of staff means the school can offer a broad range of resources and skills across subjects and key stages, including well-resourced pastoral care to create a caring environment.
- A larger school provides more opportunities for staff to develop their skills, enabling the school to develop and 'grow'.

There are many **other factors** that the Council has considered before choosing to consult on these options in this area. Here are some of them:

Pattern of parental choice	Distance between schools
Pupil mobility	Class sizes
Catchment zones	Special Educational Needs
Educational standards	Early Years education
Value for money	Implications for staff
Traffic and travel	Building work and expenditure
Housing changes	Other users of school buildings
Church school issues	



## The Consultation

Currently, there are 24% surplus places in South Wallasey. **By 2015 this is projected to stay high at 20% surplus places if the Council does not act.** The Council proposes reducing surplus capacity in these areas. There are several ways this could be done, and we are consulting you about the following options.

### Option A1:

Closure of Kingsway Primary School

### Option A2:

Amalgamate Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary School onto the Riverside site

### Option A3:

Amalgamate Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary School onto the Kingsway site

### Option B:

Closure of Brentwood Early Years Centre as a separate school and either:

**B1:** Keep the Brentwood site as the Foundation 1 provision for Somerville Primary School OR -

**B2:** New Foundation 1 provision on the Somerville Primary School site

The A and B options are not directly linked - this means that if an A option goes ahead, it does not stop a B option going ahead as well, and vice versa.



## About the schools

### Kingsway Primary School

Kingsway is a community primary school. The number of pupils has been going down and in January 2010, it had just 99 pupils on roll and 44% surplus places. Forecasts show the numbers will remain low, with 108 pupils in 2015. The school has a part-time Foundation 1 class, which in January 2010 had 10 children.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in December 2008 when it was judged to be a satisfactory school. A 3 year average of contextual value added shows that pupils make the expected rate of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

### Riverside Primary School

Riverside is a community primary school. The number of pupils has been going down and in January 2010 it had 194 pupils on roll and 37% surplus places. Forecasts show the numbers will continue to fall, reaching 164 pupils by 2015. The school has a Foundation 1 class which in January 2010 had 37 children.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in May 2009 when it was judged to be a satisfactory school. A 3 year average of contextual value added shows that pupils make the expected rate of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

### Brentwood Early Years Centre

Brentwood is an Authority maintained nursery school with 80 part-time places for three and four year olds. In January 2010 there were 52 part-time pupils attending the school.

Brentwood is also registered with Ofsted to provide 20 full day care places for children aged birth to 5 years, 48 weeks of the year from 8 am to 6 pm, 10 out of school places for 3 to 5 year olds attending the 'main' F1 provision, and 12 term-time only crèche places.

Ofsted inspected the daycare in December 2007, when the quality and standard of care was judged to be satisfactory. In February 2008 Ofsted inspected the nursery education provision which was judged to be good with outstanding features.

### Somerville Primary School

Somerville is a community primary school. The number of pupils has been going down and in January 2010 it had 459 pupils on roll and 13% surplus places. Forecasts show the numbers will rise, reaching 502 pupils by 2015. A pre-school playgroup is on site, but there is no Foundation 1 class.

The school was inspected by Ofsted in April 2008 when it was judged to be a good school. The pre-school playgroup was inspected in April 2007, when the quality and standard of both care and nursery education were judged to be good. A 3 year average of contextual value added shows that pupils make the expected rate of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

## About the options

### Why can't we keep the schools as they are?

This is not a viable option.

Pupil numbers have already fallen and are not projected to increase for the foreseeable future. This is important because the budget a school receives is based largely on the number of pupils on roll. As the school roll falls, the budget shrinks and schools have to make difficult decisions about staffing levels and curriculum delivery. Kingsway is already a small school, and Riverside is expected to fall into that category in the next few years. Surplus places are high at both schools. This represents a waste of resources that would be better spent on children's education, not on empty space.

### Why include Brentwood Early Years Centre?

Just as in primary schools, the number of nursery children attending Brentwood has also been falling. In January 2010 there were 52 part-time nursery age pupils attending, compared with 80 places. This is the same size as a nursery class attached to a primary school.

In 2000, the Foundation Stage curriculum was introduced nationally for children aged 3 to 5. Continuity between Foundation 1 (nursery) and Foundation 2 (reception) is important. Across Wirral, just over half of all infant and primary schools have a Foundation 1 class which allows the Foundation curriculum to be managed and eases the change from nursery into 'big school'. Many other schools have private pre-schools on site, which while not part of the school, allows a close working relationship between staff and pupils to develop.

There are two other Early Years Centres in Wirral - both of these are now SureStart Children's Centres for their area. The Children's Centre in this part of Wirral is Seacombe Family Centre, and Brentwood is now the only nursery school in Wirral not to have become a Children's Centre.

When we are thinking about changes to primary school education, it is reasonable to think about whether childrens and families needs currently served by Brentwood could be equally or better met by Early Years provision belonging to a primary school.

### What would the options be if Brentwood closed?

We are asking for your views on the following options for Early Years provision in this area:

- B1 - Brentwood site becomes Foundation 1 for Somerville Primary School

This means that Foundation 1 pupils would continue to attend the Brentwood building, but under the governance of Somerville Primary School. Extended crèche and day care facilities would stay in the Brentwood building.

- B2 - New Foundation 1 provision on the Somerville site

This option would mean a newly built extension at Somerville to house Foundation 1 pupils as well as the extended crèche and day care facilities.

We understand that the day care, crèche and after school facilities provided at Brentwood are highly valued by local parents, and if any change is made, these facilities will continue to be provided as long as there is demand.

### What about other options?

If other options come out of the consultation, these will be considered before any decision is made whether to go further with options for change in this area.

### What would the A options mean for the current children?

The main concern in any option would be to place the children in their new schools with as little disturbance to their education as possible. In A1, Kingsway would close. Parents would be asked to say which local school they would prefer to send their child to. The usual admission criteria are used to allocate places. New classrooms would also be built at Somerville Primary School.

In an earlier phase of the Review, Poulton Primary School closed and all the pupils were guaranteed a place at nearby Park Primary School. This meant that children could all move together with their friends. We could consider guaranteeing all former Kingsway pupils a place at either Somerville or Riverside as part of this option. **Please tell us your views on this.**

In the A2 and A3 options, both Kingsway and Riverside would close, and then a new school would open in one of the two buildings. All the pupils from both schools would be guaranteed a place at the school, although some parents may of course decide to transfer elsewhere.

Children would be entitled to free transport if they live further than statutory walking distance from the nearest appropriate school. This is 2 miles for children aged under 8, and 3 miles for children aged 8 years old and over.

### What will the options mean for staff?

If a school closes, all the staff would be made redundant and can be redeployed to other schools.

If two schools amalgamate, both schools close and then a new school opens on one site. This means all the staff at both schools are made redundant and can be redeployed. The new school will of course need staff, and it is up to the new governing body to make appointments.

Wirral LA has an excellent record on redeployment both for teachers and other school staff.

### Is this all about selling sites?

All three sites are Council owned. Decisions about sites no longer needed for school purposes are only made after all the educational decisions are complete. The Council could decide to use the site for another purpose.

If a site was sold, the money would be invested in Council facilities, including schools. There are no plans or planning applications in relation to any of the sites involved.

### Aren't small schools better?

It's important to understand that small schools and small classes are not the same. There is little connection between the total size of a school and class size. Evidence says that some children can benefit from smaller classes, particularly in Foundation 2, but as rolls fall, small schools can afford fewer teaching staff, and will have to use mixed age teaching with larger classes, while larger schools can afford more teachers and often operate smaller classes. Options A2 and A3 would create a school with about 272 pupils in 2015. This is a viable size of school - but not a very large school.



## What happens next?

### Report to Cabinet

After the Consultation ends, all the views and opinions received in writing and at the consultation events will be reported to the Council's Cabinet. Cabinet members will decide what to do next. They may decide not to go further with an option at this stage. Members might change the options, consider other options put forward as part of the consultation, or they could ask for more consultation.

### Representation period

If Council's Cabinet decides to go ahead with an option, what happens next depends on the option that is chosen. Some options can go straight to a formal proposal notice, while some have an extra consultation period before the notices can be published. After this, there are six weeks when formal written objections and comments can be sent to the Director of Children's Services.

### Final decision

After the representation period ends, a decision is made either by Cabinet or by the independent School's Adjudicator. The decision can be to:

- Approve the proposal
- Approve the proposal with changes
- Approve the proposal subject to other factors, such as obtaining planning permission
- Reject the proposal.

### Implementing the proposal(s)

If any proposal is approved, either by the Authority or by the Adjudicator, it will be put into practice. **The earliest any proposal could take place is September 2011.** Some could take longer - they might need building work, for example.

If the proposals require a new school to be established as a result of an amalgamation (A2 or A3), the Authority is usually required to hold a **competition** to determine who will establish the new school. The competition process includes further consultation and is likely to add at least six months to the timescale for a decision.

## Having your say

### If you want more information

Find out more by going to:

[www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces](http://www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces).

Click on South Wallasey under Current Consultations.

If you don't have access to the Internet at home, you can go to your local library where staff will help you log on and print out the information.

The full Consultation document and a background Review pack will also be available for you to read at your school, and at the following places:

- **Libraries:** Seacombe, Wallasey Central and Birkenhead Central
- **Community Centres:** Manor Trust and Seacombe
- **Children's Centres:** Liscard and Seacombe

You can also read the documents at Wallasey Town Hall. Otherwise, if you have any queries or you need copies in a different format such as **large print** or in a different language, you can contact the Primary Places Review team by phone on

**0151 666 4351** or by email at [primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

## Consultation events

These events are an opportunity for parents, staff, governors and other people directly related to the schools to have their views heard and noted by senior representatives of the Children and Young People's Department and a member of Council's Cabinet.

School	Date
Riverside Primary School	7pm, Tuesday 2nd November
Kingsway Primary School	7pm, Wednesday 3rd November
Brentwood Early Years Centre	7pm, Wednesday 10th November

People associated with other local schools, and members of the public who want to, can write in with their views. **Anyone who wants to can write and say what they think.**

## How to respond

**What do you think? Please make sure your response is received by -**

**Friday 3rd December 2010**

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. The address is on the back of this leaflet.

Your comments can be sent by post, through your school or by e-mail. If you find it helpful you can complete and return the feedback form on the next page. There is also a **feedback form** on the Consultation website: [www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces](http://www.wirral-abc.gov.uk/primaryplaces)

Let us know what aspects you support and if there are any areas which particularly concern you.

# South Wallasey Consultation Feedback Form

Please let us know the main relationships you have with the school(s) by putting a tick in the appropriate box or boxes. You might be a parent and a member of staff, for example.

School	Parent	Staff	Governor	Other
Brentwood				
Kingsway				
Riverside				
Somerville				
Other (please specify)				

## Comments:

Please use this space for your comments. You can write more on another sheet if necessary.

*Continued overleaf...*



*Continued:*

Please tell us your name and address, postcode and e-mail address if you have one. We will not use your personal information for anything other than this consultation.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please note: In order to ensure that this process is fully open and transparent, other people will be able to read all the responses to this consultation.

Address:  
**Primary Places Review - South Wallasey,  
Director of Children's Services,  
Hamilton Building,  
Conway Street,  
Birkenhead, CH41 4FD.**

E-mail: [primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:primaryplaces@wirral.gov.uk)

**Make sure your response is received by: FRIDAY 3rd DECEMBER 2010**

