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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 29<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2007

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

## **PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES – FUTURE STRATEGY**

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### **Executive Summary**

This report provides a summary of the position in respect of secondary school places and describes recent developments, the current position and issues for the future. It identifies a significant increase in secondary surplus places over the medium term if further action is not taken and proposes a phased review of secondary school provision, involving schools and stakeholders, to identify any further opportunities for the removal of surplus places.

### **1.0 Background**

1.1 There are four elements in looking to plan future secondary school requirements across the Borough. These are, firstly, the numbers of children expected to enter school over the next seven years; secondly the capacity of the current stock of secondary schools, individually and in areas, thirdly the impact of school size on standards, and finally a series of factors with implications for place provision. These include developments within the Education System: for example, those arising from the Children Act and Extended Schools, Building Schools for the Future and the need for diversity in school provision, the duty to respond to parental preference, and external factors which impact on secondary school numbers; for example, Housing Market Renewal and new housing developments.

### **2.0 Pupil Numbers**

- 2.1 The projection method for Years 7 to 11 in secondary schools is as follows. In order to calculate the Year 7 intake for each future year, the actual number of pupils in Wirral primary schools is rolled forward to their equivalent Year 7 intake year, then multiplied by 101.7 to reflect a historical increase at this transition point which is related to movement to the maintained sector from independent schools. Individual school Year 7 intakes are then based on the previous three years Year 7 intake figures. Years 8 to 11 at each individual school are simply rolled forward.
- 2.2 Post-16 projections are not the focus of this report, however, for completeness, Year 12 pupil numbers are calculated from Year 11 actual numbers at individual schools (excluding schools without sixth forms), to which the individual school's historical staying on rate is applied. In a similar manner, Years 12 and 13 are calculated from the actual number on roll for the previous year, using the historical staying on rate.
- 2.3 The number of secondary age pupils has already begun to fall, following as a natural consequence of the longstanding falling roll in primary schools, and will continue to fall in the future, based upon numbers of actual pupils now in primary schools which will

translate into intakes up to 2014. Total secondary numbers on roll, actual and projected, to 2014 are as set out below.

	YEAR	PUPILS	ANNUAL CHANGE
	<b>ACTUAL</b>	2000	20599
2001		20995	+396
2002		21109	+114
2003		21432	+323
2004		21331	-101
2005		20955	-376
2006		20581	-374
<b>PROJECTED</b>	2007	20051	-530
	2008	19474	-577
	2009	19005	-469
	2010	18573	-432
	2011	18221	-352
	2012	17848	-373
	2013	17545	-303
	2014	17164	-381

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals are as at the January Census.

2.4 The above figures illustrate a significantly falling school roll across the Borough. The levels of reduction are not evenly distributed between areas, or between individual schools within areas. The table below shows 11 to 16 numbers on roll at January 2007, and projected to 2014, by area.

	2007	2014	% Projected Fall
Birkenhead	5936	4868	18%
Wallasey	5536	4617	17%
Bebington	4550	4032	11%
Deeside	4029	3647	10%

The numbers set out above are for secondary age pupils (11 – 16) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools or maintained sixth form provision. Actuals and Wirral areas are as at the January Census.

2.5 Pupils attending Wirral secondary schools over the next seven years already exist in Wirral primary schools. Migration is minimal, and while individual school rolls may vary, it seems reasonable to conclude that over the next seven years almost 3,000 fewer pupils will require 11 to 16 school provision, continuing a trend which has already resulted in over 1,300 fewer pupils in the system in 2007 than there were in 2003. The average size of a Wirral secondary school is around 1000 pupils, with a range of 645 to 1560.

### 3.0 School Capacity and Surplus Places

3.1 Establishing the projected number of pupils is the first step in planning ahead, the second step is the calculation of the capacity of both individual schools and overall LA capacity, in order to try to achieve the best match between need and provision, whilst at the same time retaining some flexibility to allow parental preferences to be considered.

- 3.2 The capacity of secondary schools is calculated by the DCSF Net Capacity method, used by all Local Authorities. This method replaced two former measures of school capacity, the Standard Number capacity (SN) and the More open Enrolment (MoE) method, which produced anomalies and variations year on year. When first introduced in 2002/2003, the Net Capacity method resulted in reductions at some schools and increases in others. It seems likely that the Net Capacity method will continue to be used by the DCSF and LAs in future years. There is little scope for “paper” reductions in surplus places using this method.
- 3.3 The Council is required to monitor surplus places, both by the DCSF and by the Audit Commission. The Audit Commission recommends that surplus places overall should be no higher than 10%. Below 4%, there may be little scope for parents to exercise their right to express a preference, while above 10% the Council is considered to be wasting resources supporting empty space, rather than directly funding education. In the most recent Supply of School Places return to the DCSF, the overall surplus percentage for secondary schools was calculated at 11%.
- 3.4 DCSF also uses the number of schools with more than 25% and more than 30 surplus places as a measure of how effectively the LA is managing places. In January 2007, two of Wirral’s 22 secondary schools were in this category. The Authority is obliged to make a statement about schools in this category, stating how and when the surplus place issue is to be addressed, or if no action is to be taken, the reasons for this decision.
- 3.5 Wirral is already above the Audit Commission’s recommended 10% maximum for surplus places, and has two schools in the 25% and 30 places category. No action is taken to address these issues, and applying the pupil projection methods given in 2.1 and 2.2 above, the overall Wirral surplus place percentage in secondary schools will increase to 23% by 2014, more than double the Audit Commission’s maximum acceptable level.
- 3.6 With regard to the DCSF 25% and 30 places measure, it is estimated that the number of schools exceeding this benchmark would rise to a third of secondary schools by 2013/2014.
- 3.7 Projections for percentage surplus and numbers of schools exceeding the 25% and 30 places measure by area are given in the table below.

	<b>2007 number on roll</b>	<b>2007 Capacity</b>	<b>% 2007 Surplus</b>	<b>% 2014 surplus (projected)</b>	<b>No. schools with 25% &amp; 30 places</b>
Birkenhead	6340	7539	16	30	4 out of 7
Wallasey	6572	7612	14	27	1 out of 5
Bebington	5486	5977	8	18	1 out of 5
Deeside	5190	5496	6	14	1 out of 5

The numbers set out above are for secondary and post-16 age pupils (11–19) in mainstream schools, e.g. not including pupils in special schools. Actuals are as at the January Census.

- 3.8 In 2007, the two areas upon which the falling roll has had most impact are Birkenhead and Wallasey. It should however be noted that surplus places are projected to increase in all parts of Wirral.
- 3.9 As in the primary school sector, there are a number of methods of removing surplus places.
- Re-allocation of space within schools for non-core purposes, such as extended services and other community provision.

- Removal of temporary accommodation.
- Changes in accommodation to meet the needs of a changing curriculum
- Proposals for school re-organisation where other measures are insufficient to reduce surplus capacity to an acceptable level.

3.10 The intention is that these methods will continue to be applied but increasingly it is the final one which will have most relevance.

### **View of the Schools Forum**

3.11 Members should note that in June 2005 the Schools Forum passed the following resolution:

“Resolved - That Wirral Schools Forum recognises that the local education authority has a duty to maintain and fund schools in an efficient and effective manner. This implies that the number of schools should reflect the pupil population and the needs of Wirral communities, which could mean the amalgamation or closure of schools for the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.”

### **4.0 School size, funding and standards**

4.1 Funding is delegated to the governing bodies of individual schools based on a multi-factorial budget formula, the principal component in which is the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU). Consequently, schools with more pupils on roll will clearly have a larger budget, while schools with fewer pupils will receive a smaller budget.

4.2 The budget formula ensures that all schools have sufficient resources to operate, regardless of size, although increasingly difficult compromises have to be made as schools get smaller – see further comment below. Smallness alone would not cause any school to become financially unviable. What does happen is that small schools draw in a greater share of the resource per pupil from the total available for distributing among all schools. Since the total sum available for spending on all our children does not increase if we choose as an Authority to organise our children in more schools than is necessary for the efficient and effective delivery of education, it follows that the maintenance of small schools, where this is not necessary, comes at the expense of all other children.

4.3 Larger schools can employ more staff, and through division of labour, employ more specialist subject teachers. Smaller schools may only require a small amount of teaching in certain subjects, and face compromises in terms of the range of subjects they are able to offer, and the grouping arrangements they are able to employ.

4.4 Earlier in 2007, under the guidance of a seconded headteacher, a group of curriculum deputy headteachers representing different types of school met to discuss issues of curriculum viability. The group acknowledged that compromises were necessary as the number pupils in each year group reduced, limiting not only the breadth of subject choice available to pupils, but also placing pressure on teachers to teach outside their subject area, and on the school to employ more part-time staff, as well as limiting grouping arrangements and creating timetabling difficulties. The outcome is reported as Appendix A.

4.5 Given the diverse nature of Wirral's secondary school provision, the group's view was that a definite size beyond which a school was no longer viable was impossible to determine. However, the group agreed that the compromises became increasingly difficult for cohorts approaching 100 pupils.

- 4.6 National research on secondary school size has been scarce, but a study carried out in 2002 suggests that the optimum cohort size for a comprehensive school is between 175 and 200 pupils. For an 11 to 16 secondary school, this would result in between 875 and 1000 total pupils.
- 4.7 Other Councils who have already begun reviewing their secondary school provision have produced various optimum sizes, often with a range rather than a fixed number. Local context and population patterns are inevitably a factor in the variation between local authorities. Sefton Council, which is one of Wirral's statistical neighbours, have stated that they "will not be prescriptive on the issue on school size", but that as a guide they consider that 11 to 16 schools should have at least 90 pupils per year, and 11 to 18 schools at least 120. This is not dissimilar to the 100 pupil figure agreed by the Wirral working group.
- 4.8 With regard to organisational viability there can be no question that small schools face greater challenges. This of course does not mean that at any one time a particular small school cannot produce excellence through having outstanding teachers. In many parts of the country it is a clear necessity to maintain small schools because the alternative would be that children be transported, perhaps for a number of miles, to the nearest school. Authorities who have such schools receive additional funding from the government which enables them to spend more on these schools without it being at the expense of others, in order for them to be organisationally viable. Wirral does not receive this element of grant.
- 4.9 No Wirral secondary school is currently in an Ofsted category of concern, however were to this to occur, this could trigger a school review as there is a duty to consider whether schools in these categories should be closed or amalgamated with another school.
- 4.10 In thinking about how to provide the best educational opportunities for Wirral's future children and young people, we must give consideration as to whether we have not only the right number of schools, but the right size of schools to meet the needs of Wirral's secondary school population.

## **5.0 Other factors impacting on school capacity**

- 5.1 Other factors can be broadly grouped into changes to communities in Wirral which impact on pupil numbers and the debate about the nature and form of secondary education provision and the subsequent implications for school size, structures, inter-school relationships and locations, which has been brought about by the Children Bill and other recent and proposed legislation.
- 5.2 Looking firstly at changes to communities in Wirral, the biggest changes impacting on school provision over the next ten years are likely to come from the Housing Market Renewal Strategy in the Birkenhead, Tranmere, Rock Ferry and Seacombe areas. Once future options are brought forward to the Council and the community, then more detailed work will be undertaken to assess the implications for secondary school places and provision and consider options for the future to complement, integrate with and support the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI). However, it is unlikely that this will have a significant impact on pupil numbers.
- 5.3 Clearly, sufficient "spare" capacity has to remain in the system to deal with local growth fluctuations as a result of new development. The number of pupils generated on average by new housing developments is lower than is often thought to be the case; the Audit Commission recorded a range of three to six pupils per year group for every one hundred new homes built in their 1997 study 'Trading Places'. Added to this is the situation that family movement within Wirral means

that some children moving to new developments will already be on roll at a Wirral secondary school. The current planning development rules for parts of Wirral are also a factor to be taken into account, for example, the restrictions on new housing.

- 5.4 In addition to these “practical” factors regarding pupil numbers and premises capacity there is a need to set the places debate into a framework which considers not only pupil numbers but links provision to the aims, principles and aspirations for secondary education in Wirral, thereby providing a template for consideration when looking at individual schools, groups of schools or provision across larger areas.
- 5.5 It is also important that Aided school provision is considered in overall school place planning in any area. Across the borough, there are two all-ability mixed sex Catholic Aided secondary schools, and two single sex Catholic Aided grammar schools. There is no Church of England secondary school. There will be a continuing need to work in partnership with the Diocesan Bodies in looking at future capacity needs in the secondary sector. The generally falling roll may impact unevenly, to some extent, on Aided and community schools.
- 5.6 In the future, curriculum changes may alter some of the issues and ease some of the difficulties, for example, increased flexibility at KS3 may reduce the need for specialist teachers and facilities. The introduction of specialised diplomas at 14 to 19 may also lead to a change in staffing arrangements and facilities. We cannot determine the full impact of curriculum changes at this point in time, however these changes are unlikely to change the fact that smaller schools are unable to provide the breadth of choice for pupils that larger schools can.
- 5.7 The Government has recently announced their plans to require young people to remain in school, training or workplace training until the age of 18 from 2013. In 2006, Connexions estimated that 1,210 or 10% of young people aged 16 to 19 in Wirral were NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training), which is above the average proportion of NEET young people across the North West region (8.9%), but below the Merseyside regional average (10.8%). The document “Raising Expectations: Staying in education or training post-16 – from policy to legislation”, available at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19/documents/Raising%20Expectations.pdf> sets out the economic and social imperatives behind the change. The first age group to be affected will enter secondary school in September 2008. The change does not, however, mean that pupils would be forced to stay in school or continue with academic lessons, as the definition also includes vocational and further education college courses, as well as apprenticeships and work-based learning. The change in the participation age is unlikely to have a significant impact on overall numbers on roll in school-based provision.

## 6.0 **Academy and Independent School developments**

- 6.1 Birkenhead High School is a 3 to 19 fee-paying independent school for girls, operated by the Girls Day School Trust (GDST) and sited at Devonshire Place, Prenton. There are currently around 640 girls on roll across the age range, including 96 in post-16 education. The school draws pupils from across Wirral, with a small number travelling from out of borough. The admissions arrangements have recently been altered to enable boys to be admitted to the 3 to 7 age range.
- 6.2 In early October, it was announced that the GDST had approached the Academies division of the DCSF with a view to becoming an Academy from September 2009.

The school has released a statement via its website which can be read at: <http://www.gdst.net/birkenheadhigh/>

- 6.3 This application is at an early stage, and there has yet to be a full formal consultation which must involve the Authority. If it is approved by the Academies Division, the school would become an all girls Academy with approximately 900 free places for girls aged 3 to 19. Parents of existing pupils will no longer be required to pay fees. The school intends to phase admissions by admitting new pupils only to F2 (Reception), Year 7 and Year 12 (sixth form) in the first year, with all other year groups remaining unchanged in terms of “in-filling”. The school intends to select 10% of pupils in Year 7 on the basis of aptitude in music. All other places would be allocated on the basis of a “fair banding” system, the details of which are currently unclear.
- 6.4 The school indicates that there would be two forms of entry to F2, and four forms of entry to Year 7. Currently classes in primary phase have up to 20 pupils, whilst classes in secondary phase have no more than 24 pupils. The Academy would admit girls only up to age 16, but there is a possibility of boys being admitted into the Sixth Form department.
- 6.5 Shortly after the GDST announced their intention to apply for Academy status, the independent Birkenhead School (Boys) announced that it will become a co-educational school from September 2008. Ahead of this date, they have stated that girls will be admitted to Foundation 2, Year 1 and Year 2 (Key Stage 1) from January 2008, to Years 3 to 5 from April 2008, and to Year 6 and the Senior school from September 2008. They will remain independent, and retain their fees and selection system. Further detail is available via the school’s website. <http://www.birkenheadschoo.co.uk/news/coed.htm>
- 6.6 Changes to the independent school sector, creating more mainstream places for girls, is likely to have an impact on both primary and secondary school places and pupil numbers, particularly in schools in the local area to Birkenhead High School, (although the Academy proposal is to draw pupils from the wider Wirral area). There are four secondary schools within two miles of Birkenhead High School which admit girls, they are Park High, Prenton High for Girls, Ridgeway High and Woodchurch High Schools. Upton Hall School, a Catholic Aided grammar school for girls is just over 2 miles away. St Anselm’s Catholic Aided College is within 2 miles, and may be affected if boys are admitted to the new Academy’s Sixth Form. Other schools further afield may also be impacted if this change is approved.
- 6.7 It would be prudent to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the pre-consultation exercise referred to in section 10 below.

## 7.0 Inclusion

- 7.1 Concurrent with the proposed review of mainstream secondary school provision, a seconded special school headteacher will be leading on an investigation of the future of secondary special school provision in Wirral. This will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet.
- 7.2 Nationally, there has been an increasing emphasis on inclusive education, that is, the education of more children and young people with special needs within mainstream educational settings. There may be opportunities to locate special needs bases within mainstream secondary schools, or indeed to co-locate special schools with their mainstream counterparts.
- 7.3 The numbers of pupils involved are relatively small, and while this is an important accommodation factor to be considered, especially within the Council’s vision for

Building Schools for the Future, the impact on surplus places and school size is expected to be minimal.

## **8.0 Building Schools for the Future and PFI**

- 8.1 The Council's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) has resulted in the rebuild or significant remodelling of 9 secondary schools and one primary school. A unitary charge is payable on these buildings for twenty-five years after the building is handed over to the Local Authority. This liability remains whether or not the building remains in use as a school, however it does not preclude options affecting schools occupying PFI buildings.
- 8.2 Due partly to Wirral's participation in PFI, the Council's place in the national Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is in wave D, which means full participation by 2016. In advance of the full BSF programme, Wirral was invited to take part in a One School Pathfinder scheme to fully re-build one secondary school, and the rebuilding of Woodchurch High School was approved by Cabinet on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2006. Design and programme development are underway, architects and relevant Technical Services staff have been appointed to the scheme. Completion is anticipated in August 2009, with subsequent demolition of part of the existing buildings and ground works.
- 8.3 As part of the full BSF programme, the Council will be required to draw up a Strategy for Change and an outline business case articulating its vision for transforming secondary school provision and outlining the principles that would underpin the programme.

These principles are likely to include:

- Meeting the demands of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning activities and curriculum changes
- Access to ICT
- Inclusion
- Extended schools provision
- Specialist facilities
- Promoting physical and mental well-being

- 8.4 It is important to start planning and consulting early with schools, parents/carers and other stakeholders, and to begin thinking in depth about what modern schools should look like and where funding and work can be targeted most effectively.

## **9.0 Secondary Place Review Process**

- 9.1 It is proposed that in addition to the existing measures set out in 3.9 above that a review of secondary school places is begun in Autumn 2007 to match current provision against future predicted need and draw up proposals for discussion and further consultation, leading to formal proposals, where appropriate. This will also enable the Authority to be prepared for BSF, and for any further "advance" projects that might arise of a similar nature to the current One School Pathfinder at Woodchurch High School.
- 9.2 Surplus places are currently highest in Birkenhead and Wallasey, lower in Deeside and Bebington. However preliminary analysis indicates that Birkenhead and Bebington have interlinked pupil populations at the secondary level, and consequently should be reviewed together in Phase 1 during 2007/2008. Wallasey and Deeside areas will then form Phase 2 of the Secondary review. Should a

school be placed in an Ofsted category of concern during this time, it may alter the timescale for schools in that area.

9.3 As in the on-going Primary Places Review, it is proposed that a review document be produced for each area, including the following information:

- (a) Relevant cabinet reports
- (b) Maps of the area
- (c) School data, including Aided provision.
- (d) Demographics and projections
- (e) Current school populations plotted by address.
- (f) Asset Management Data
- (g) Other services / provision currently located on school sites.
- (h) School performance data
- (i) Diocesan Body statement

This document would be used as the basis for pre-consultation discussions with school governors and headteachers, Diocesan Bodies, other Council departments and relevant external bodies, with a view to producing options for more formal consultation as appropriate.

9.4 The outcome of the pre-consultation, including any options for formal consultation, will be the subject of a future report to Cabinet. If Cabinet approves options for formal consultation at that stage, the next step would be to publish the options and hold wide consultation with stakeholders including parents/carers.

9.5 Following consultation, a further report will be brought to Cabinet, containing recommendations for next steps, which may include statutory proposals. The earliest date for implementation of such proposals would be September 2009.

9.6 The challenges created by the falling roll also offer an opportunity to make a significant investment and complete the transformation of Wirral's secondary schools, begun by PFI, to ensure that all pupils and their communities have access to high-quality secondary education, in high quality facilities, fit for purpose for 21<sup>st</sup> century education and provide stability in this sector for a significant period of time.

9.7 The review process proposed in this report will enable the Council to be well-placed to make best use of BSF and other funding streams, by developing a comprehensive strategic vision for the future of secondary school provision in Wirral.

## 10.0 Financial Implications

10.1 Inaction will mean spending larger proportions of the overall schools budget on fixed costs, and consequently less directly on pupils. The decisions on school re-organisation emanating from the Primary Places Review have already demonstrated value for money and enabled the Authority to devote more resources to children's education in order to produce better quality outcomes, leading to higher standards and more efficient use of capital. The first three phases of the Primary Places Review will enable more than £500,000 to be redistributed each year which would otherwise have been spent on fixed costs.

## 11.0 Staffing Implications

11.1 Current staffing levels will need to be taken into account in determining the number and timescale of proposed area reviews.

## **12.0 Equal Opportunities Implications**

12.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.

## **13.0 Community Safety Implications**

13.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

## **14.0 Local Agenda 21 Implications**

14.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

## **15.0 Planning Implications**

15.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.

15.2 Any proposals that may arise out of options after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

## **16.0 Anti-Poverty Implications**

16.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

## **17.0 Social Inclusion Implications**

17.1 School re-organisation and transforming secondary mainstream and secondary special accommodation through BSF and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of new school buildings through BSF, raising the school's profile within the community.

## **18.0 Local Member Support Implications**

18.1 Secondary school re-organisation has relevance to all Wards.

## **19.0 Background Papers**

19.1 Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.

Asset Management Plan and Statement of Priorities.

School Census, January 2007

Supply of School Places return, August 2007, to DCSF requirements.

Other data held in Department

## **Recommendations**

That

- (1) approval be given to the principle of a two phase review of secondary school provision beginning with pre-consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Birkenhead and Bebington;
- (2) approval be given to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the review from the pre-consultation stage onwards; and
- (3) options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with my recommendations for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal, consultation with all stakeholders.

**Howard Cooper**  
**Director of Children's Services**

## **APPENDIX**

### **Secondary School Place Review**

#### **Introduction**

Wirral Borough Council is justly proud of education in Wirral. The secondary school phase in particular is very successful and enjoys an enviable reputation. In 2004 the Council was awarded Beacon Council status for transforming secondary education, that transformation was based on “powerful partnerships”, schools and the local authority working together to improve opportunities and raise standards for all children in Wirral.

Over the past 20 years we have seen some fundamental changes to our education service, from the introduction of Local Management for schools, Excellence in Cities and PFI to the creation of Children’s Services. Whatever challenges we have faced have been addressed through collaboration and consultation.

We now face another very significant challenge, the prospect of a declining school population as a result of falling rolls. The birth rate has been falling in Wirral for some years, this is very much in line with national trends. The number of children of primary school age has fallen and the Council embarked upon a review of primary school provision in 2004.

Those pupil numbers are now coming through into the secondary sector and some schools are already facing a sharp decline in year 7 numbers. It is now necessary to review the number of secondary school places so as to ensure we are able to offer the best educational opportunities for all our children.

The Audit Commission requires the Council to monitor the number of surplus places in our schools. We have a responsibility to ensure that overall we have no more than 10% surplus capacity and that when an individual school has 25% or more surplus places, what action should be taken. This responsibility arises from the need to make best use of resources in the public sector whilst providing for parental choice. Indeed one of the four major priority themes of the Children’s Services department for 2007/08 is improving value for money in services which means continuing to reduce surplus places in primary schools and beginning to address the issue in secondary schools.

#### **The Wirral Context**

The number of primary age children in Wirral has fallen and will continue to fall for at least the next 5 years. Net migration has not been a significant factor and we do not expect that the number of new families coming to live in Wirral will change the picture overall.

By 2012 we expect there will be almost 2,500 fewer pupils of compulsory school age in our secondary schools than we have in 2007. In deciding what action to take we clearly have to recognise and acknowledge the diversity of provision in our secondary schools. Some areas have selective schools, some are co-educational, some single sex, some 11-16 others 11-18.

We have foundation schools and voluntary aided schools as well as community schools. The nature of a school as well as its geographical location in the borough may well have a bearing on parental preference and the popularity of particular schools. This is part of the backdrop against which the secondary review will be conducted.

## Secondary School rolls in Wirral (as at January 2007)

The number of pupils of compulsory school age in our mainstream secondary schools is presently just over 20,000. The figures below do not include our special schools which currently have around 100 pupils in each year group.

In 2007

Year 11 outgoing cohort	4320
Year 6 outgoing cohort	3678

This means that in September 2007 secondary schools will admit over 600 fewer pupils into year 7 than leave in year 11.

The year 2 cohort in 2007 was 3361 which means that in September 2011 our secondary schools will be admitting 1000 fewer pupils into year7 than are currently in year 11.

	<b>JAN 2007</b>	<b>SEPT 2011</b>
<b>Year 7</b>	3778	3361
<b>Year 8</b>	3899	3512
<b>Year 9</b>	3972	3490
<b>Year 10</b>	4114	3629
<b>Year 11</b>	4320	3678
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,083</b>	<b>17,670</b>

\* previous experience suggests that 101% of Primary numbers transfer to Secondary Schools.

These aggregate figures give an indication of the scale of the issue of falling rolls, the tables that follow show how parental preferences and admissions have influenced school rolls to date with some projections for the future.

**BEBINGTON**

<b>Year of entry to Secondary</b>	<b>Present Year Group</b>	<b>Present Rolls</b>	<b>Year by Year Change</b>
2007	Year 6	705	20 more than Jan 06
2008	Year 5	737	50 more girls 20 fewer boys
2009	Year 4	698	70 fewer girls 30 more boys
2010	Year 3	693	
2011	Year 2	661	40 fewer boys
2012	Year 1	685	40 more boys 20 fewer girls

**DEESIDE**

<b>Year of entry to Secondary</b>	<b>Present Year Group</b>	<b>Present Rolls</b>	<b>Year by Year Change</b>
2007	Year 6	743	Slight fall on Jan 06
2008	Year 5	703	40 fewer boys
2009	Year 4	733	22 more boys
2010	Year 3	722	
2011	Year 2	706	50 fewer boys 30 more girls
2012	Year 1	674	30 more boys 55 fewer girls

Overall a gradual decline in numbers 70 fewer transfers each year by 2012 compared to 2007.

Boys decline more than girls.

**BIRKENHEAD**

<b>Year of entry to Secondary</b>	<b>Present Year Group</b>	<b>Present Rolls</b>	<b>Year by Year Change</b>
2007	Year 6	1168	100 fewer than Jan 06
2008	Year 5	1215	40 more boys
2009	Year 4	1130	60 fewer boys 20 fewer girls
2010	Year 3	1203	50 more boys 30 more girls
2011	Year 2	1110	70 fewer boys 20 fewer girls
2012	Year 1	1142	50 more boys 20 fewer girls

Some turbulence in numbers from Year to Year particularly in number of boys.

**WALLASEY**

<b>Year of entry to Secondary</b>	<b>Present Year Group</b>	<b>Present Rolls</b>	<b>Year by Year Change</b>
2007	Year 6	1062	Same as Jan 06
2008	Year 5	974	90 fewer girls
2009	Year 4	929	20 more girls 70 fewer boys
2010	Year 3	894	24 fewer girls 10 fewer boys
2011	Year 2	884	16 more girls 26 fewer boys
2012	Year 1	889	30 fewer girls 30 more boys

Big fall in 2008 almost all girls.

Continuing decline in numbers.

180 fewer pupils transferring in September 2011/12 than in 2007.

Decline in number of girls 80, boys 100.

**Falling Rolls – Transfers to Secondary**

From Yr 6 primary rolls

Year of Secondary Entry	Year on year change by gender		
Sept 2007	Birkenhead	- 100 in total	
Sept 2008	Bebington	- 26 boys	+ 59 girls
	Deeside	- 40 boys	-5 girls
	Birkenhead	+39 boys	+ 11 girls
	Wallasey	+4 boys	- 97 girls
Sept 2009	Bebington	+ 24 boys	-74 girls
	Deeside	+ 22 boys	+11 girls
	Birkenhead	- 61 boys	- 26 girls
	Wallasey	- 71 boys	+27 girls
Sept 2010	Bebington	-9 boys	+10 girls
	Deeside	+1 boys	-6 girls
	Birkenhead	+ 47 boys	+27 girls
	Wallasey	- 9 boys	- 26 girls
Sept 2011	Bebington	- 31 boys	+2 girls
	Deeside	- 42 boys	+ 22 girls
	Birkenhead	- 74 boys	- 12 girls
	Wallasey	- 29 boys	+ 15 girls
Sept 2012	Bebington	+ 37 boys	- 10 girls
	Deeside	+ 18 boys	- 47 girls
	Birkenhead	+ 43 boys	- 42 girls
	Wallasey	+ 37 boys	- 27 girls

## **School size, falling rolls, curriculum and standards**

### **Curriculum Issues**

The secondary school curriculum is largely subject based. Curriculum delivery involves a school day, structured into periods of time usually 5 X 1hr periods or 6 X 50 minute periods. Some schools use a variation of this structure but most will use a weekly /fortnightly timetable to provide 25/50 1 hour lessons or 30/60 50 minute lessons.

Pupils are taught in year groups according to age and grouped in a variety of ways including mixed ability, separate gender grouping, aptitude and fine setting based on ability.

Teaching is generally by specialist subject teachers but sometimes by teachers with particular expertise in meeting the needs of identified groups of pupils.

At Key Stage 3 and more so at Key Stages 4 and 5 the range of subjects and learning experiences offered by a school determines the skill set of the teaching staff that the school needs to employ. The needs of the pupils at the school will very much influence the composition of the support staff and the number of pupils will have implications for the administration function of the school.

The funding arrangements that we have for schools in England delegate resources to Governing Bodies largely on the basis of an age weighted pupil unit. It is the responsibility of Governing Bodies to allocate resources to meet their objectives both statutory and non statutory, to their best effect.

Clearly the fewer pupils at a school, the smaller the delegated budget, the fewer teachers and support staff a school can afford to employ.

Larger schools employ more staff and are able, through a greater division of labour, to employ more specialist subject teachers.

Smaller schools may only require a small amount of teaching in certain subjects.

Small schools therefore face a greater number of compromises in terms of the subjects they are able to offer and the grouping arrangements they are able to employ.

Our thinking about how to provide the best educational opportunities for children in Wirral, from a given level of resource must give consideration to how schools could collaborate to make better provision, as well as whether we have the right number and the right size of schools to meet the needs of the secondary school population of the future.

Although we expect changes in both curriculum and funding for schools in the near future, these changes are unlikely to change the fact that smaller schools are unable to provide the breadth of choice for pupils that larger schools can.

It may well be that the curriculum offer deemed appropriate will vary from one type of school to another. Given that our secondary schools include 11-16 all ability schools, 11-18 all ability schools and 11-18 grammar schools, this again makes any view as to the minimum size or viable size of a school a matter for local consideration.

Earlier this year a group of our curriculum deputy headteachers came together to investigate issues of curriculum viability. The group which was representative of our different types of school identified and acknowledged the compromises that are necessary in a school as the number of pupils in year group gets smaller.

These compromises include:

- A reduced number of subjects being offered to pupils
- Restrictions on the combinations of subjects pupils are able to choose.
- The need to employ more part time teaching staff
- The need for teaching staff to teach subjects outside their specialist area
- Limitations on the grouping arrangements for pupils
- Difficulties in timetabling to make the best use of specialist staff and facilities

In the future curriculum changes may alter some of the issues and ease some of the difficulties, for example increased flexibility at KS3 may reduce the need for specialist teachers and facilities. The introduction of specialised diplomas may also lead to a change in staffing arrangements. We cannot however determine the full impact of curriculum changes at this point in time.

Whilst we do not feel it is possible to be categorical in regard to what the minimum size cohort should be to ensure viability, the compromises become increasingly difficult to manage for cohorts approaching 100 pupils. This is illustrated in the accompanying models.

Recruitment of staff and timetabling would present considerably more difficulty in model A than model B as the scope for specialised teaching is more limited. The range of pupils abilities and their personalised learning needs will determine just how difficult it would be to provide an appropriate curriculum as will the flexibility and skill set of the staff employed.

**Model A**
**Assumptions**

11 - 16 Co ed

Year Groups of 100

PTR 16:1 therefore 31.25 FTE

Overall contact ratio .8

50 X 1 hour, 2 week timetable

 KS3 class size 25 KS4 class  
size 20

1250 lessons available

Subject	Lessons per fortnight	Lessons needed per year group		Lessons needed per KS		Total Needed	FTE Equivalent
		KS3	KS4	KS3	KS4		
Maths	6	24	30	72	60	132	3.3
English	6	24	30	72	60	132	3.3
Science	10	40	50	120	100	220	5.5
History	3	12	15	36	30	66	1.65
Geography	3	12	15	36	30	66	1.65
MFL	3	12	15	36	30	66	1.65
PE	4	16	20	48	40	88	2.2
DT	3	12	15	36	30	66	1.65
Art	3	12	15	36	30	66	1.65
Music	2	8	10	24	20	44	1.1
RE	2	8	10	24	20	44	1.1
ICT	2	8	10	24	20	44	1.1
PHSE	2	8	10	24	20	44	1.1
Other	1	4	5	12	10	22	0.55
<b>Totals</b>	<b>50</b>			<b>600</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>1100</b>	

**1100 lessons needed**

**Model B**
**Assumptions**

11-16 Co-ed

Year Groups of 150

PTR 16:1 therefore 46.875 FTE

Overall contact ratio .8

50 X 1 hour 2 week T/T

KS3 class size 25 KS4 class size 19

therefore 6 groups @ KS3 8 groups @ KS4

1875 lessons available

Subject		Lessons needed/Yr group		Total		Total	FTE
		KS3	KS4	KS3	KS4		
Maths	6	36	48	108	96	204	5.1
English	6	36	64	108	96	204	5.1
Science	10	60	80	180	160	340	8.5
History	3	18	24	54	48	102	2.55
Geography	3	18	24	54	48	102	2.55
MFL	3	18	24	54	48	102	2.55
PE	4	24	32	72	64	136	3.4
DT	3	18	24	54	48	102	2.55
Art	3	18	24	54	48	102	2.55
Music	2	12	16	36	32	68	1.7
RE	2	12	16	36	32	68	1.7
ICT	2	12	16	36	32	68	1.7
PHSE	2	12	16	36	32	68	1.7
Other	1	6	8	18	16	34	0.85
Totals	50			900	800	1700	
<b>1700 lessons needed</b>							

## **Staffing Issues**

We have already recognised that larger schools are able to employ more specialist subject teachers and that as the size of the cohort falls the more that full time teachers will be required to teach outside their specialist area. Whilst this can be planned for with appropriate training, it can put additional pressure on teachers and also lead to difficulties when recruiting new staff. Operational difficulties can also arise when subject teachers belong to a number of different curriculum areas, departmental meetings for example can be difficult to organise.

Staffing structures are likely to offer less opportunity for career development which may mean that the retention of good staff is made more difficult.

Similar issues will apply to the employment of support staff, larger schools are more likely to be able to employ specialist support staff and once again the quality of provision may suffer where those staff are not employed. Bursars and IT managers are two roles that have emerged in our larger schools. These highly qualified staff relieve teachers and headteachers of specific functions so that they can concentrate on their roles in teaching and learning.

## **Financial Issues**

Schools just as any other organisation face a number of costs associated with their operation. Some of those costs are fixed some more variable. In other words some costs depend on the number of children in the school and some do not. The more obvious fixed costs a school faces are to do with buildings and accommodation. In the short term heating, lighting, grounds and buildings maintenance or the unitary charge of a PFI contract, these costs don't fall if pupil numbers go down. The cost of a headteacher or a caretaker are fixed and can't be reduced as pupil numbers fall. Often other costs are more variable, educational resources, books, paper or photocopying can be reduced but as pupil numbers in a school fall so the burden of fixed costs is greater leaving less funds to be spent on those vital other items.

The financial consequences of falling rolls are that the LA receives less money from central government to fund its education service and to delegate to schools

As school budgets are largely determined by pupil numbers then the fewer pupils in a school the smaller the school's budget.

Small schools and schools which have a rapidly falling roll may qualify for some protection under the local formula for delegation. Any financial support for such schools however does mean less money for all other schools.

Falling rolls also puts pressure on the central budget the LA is allowed to retain, affecting the ability of the LA to meet its statutory obligations and to provide support for schools.

Where efficiency gains from reducing surplus places result in net savings it is important to recognise that such savings are reinvested in the Dedicated Schools Grant to the benefit of all schools.

For the Year 2005/06 the average funding per pupil in secondary schools in Wirral varied as follows

**11-18 schools**

Highest revenue income per pupil	4940
Lowest revenue income per pupil	3851

a 28% difference

**11-16 schools**

Highest revenue income per pupil	5170
Lowest revenue income per pupil	4420

A 17% difference

Revenue income per pupil includes all funds delegated by the local formula plus standards fund and other grants. Those schools with the highest revenue income per pupil are the schools with the highest proportion of surplus places. Maintaining surplus places clearly comes at a cost and that cost is born by all schools.

**What does the research about school size tell us?**

In a nutshell, very little!

The only significant research that has been conducted for schools in England was completed in 2002 when the NfER analysed the relationship between GCSE achievement and school size.

The findings suggest a small, but statistically significant, relationship and conclude that the optimum year group size in a comprehensive school is between 175 and 200 pupils.

It is interesting to note that in other local authorities where a review of secondary schools places has been undertaken this is the only reference to research into the effect of school size and achievement cited.

A number of articles have been written about the perceived effect of school size on behaviour and in recent years groups such as Human Scale Education have emerged advocating the benefits of smaller, more “personal” schools.

In recent times schools have grown in size. Since 1990 the average secondary school has increased from 720 to over 1000 pupils. In 2006 there were however 156 maintained secondary schools in England with fewer than 500 pupils.

**What have other Local Authorities done?**

As has been stated, the fall in the birth rate that has led to falling rolls in our schools is reflective of a national trend. Some LA's are ahead of Wirral in the process of review, others are behind. Around the country the approach taken by different local authorities varies very often to reflect their local context.

Most commonly the approach taken includes an attempt to define the optimum size for a school. Typically the optimum size for an 11-16 school is said to be 1000 pupils but sometimes this is expressed as a range and sometimes as a minimum cohort size.

#### Some examples

Hampshire	-	Optimum range	900 – 1200
Wigan	-	Proposes	1000 – 1200
Lancashire	-	optimum size	1050
Newham	-	optimum	1200
Nottinghamshire	-	'Strong support for	800 – 1000 pupils'
Buckinghamshire	-		850 – 1350
Hertfordshire	-	Specific reorganisation plans with PAN of 240	
Cambridgeshire	-	Specific proposals including new schools to have a minimum capacity of 600 places	
Warrington	-	recognises that a cohort of below 120 is likely to present difficulty in delivering the entitlement	
Sefton	-	'The authority will not be prescriptive on the issue of school size' As a guide they consider that 11-16 schools should have at least 90 pupils per year and 11-18 schools at least 120	

There is certainly some variation between local authorities, undoubtedly reflecting local contexts, population patterns and existing policies.

September 2007

## Minutes - Cabinet - 29 November 2007

Present

Chair S Foulkes

Councillors George Davies, PL Davies, G Gardiner, PJ Hackett, SA Holbrook, SE Kelly, M McLaughlin, RK Moon, Jean Quinn

In attendance: C Blakeley, S L Clarke, JE Green, SR Mountney, WW Smith

### **Minute 361 - CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING: PROVISION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES – FUTURE STRATEGY**

The Director of Children's Services gave a summary of the position in respect of secondary school places and described recent developments, the current position and issues for the future. His report identified a significant increase in secondary surplus places over the medium term if further action were not taken and proposed a phased review of secondary school provision, involving schools and stakeholders, to identify any further opportunities for the removal of surplus places.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning referred to the rationale for the review being similar to that for Primary School reviews. He felt that the process gave everyone the opportunity to get involved and thanked those staff that had been involved in the initial work.

The Leader of the Council referred to the additional factors that would be involved in the review of secondary school provision and indicated that he had been impressed with the work that had been undertaken to date and the links that had been made with Headteachers and Chairs of Governors.

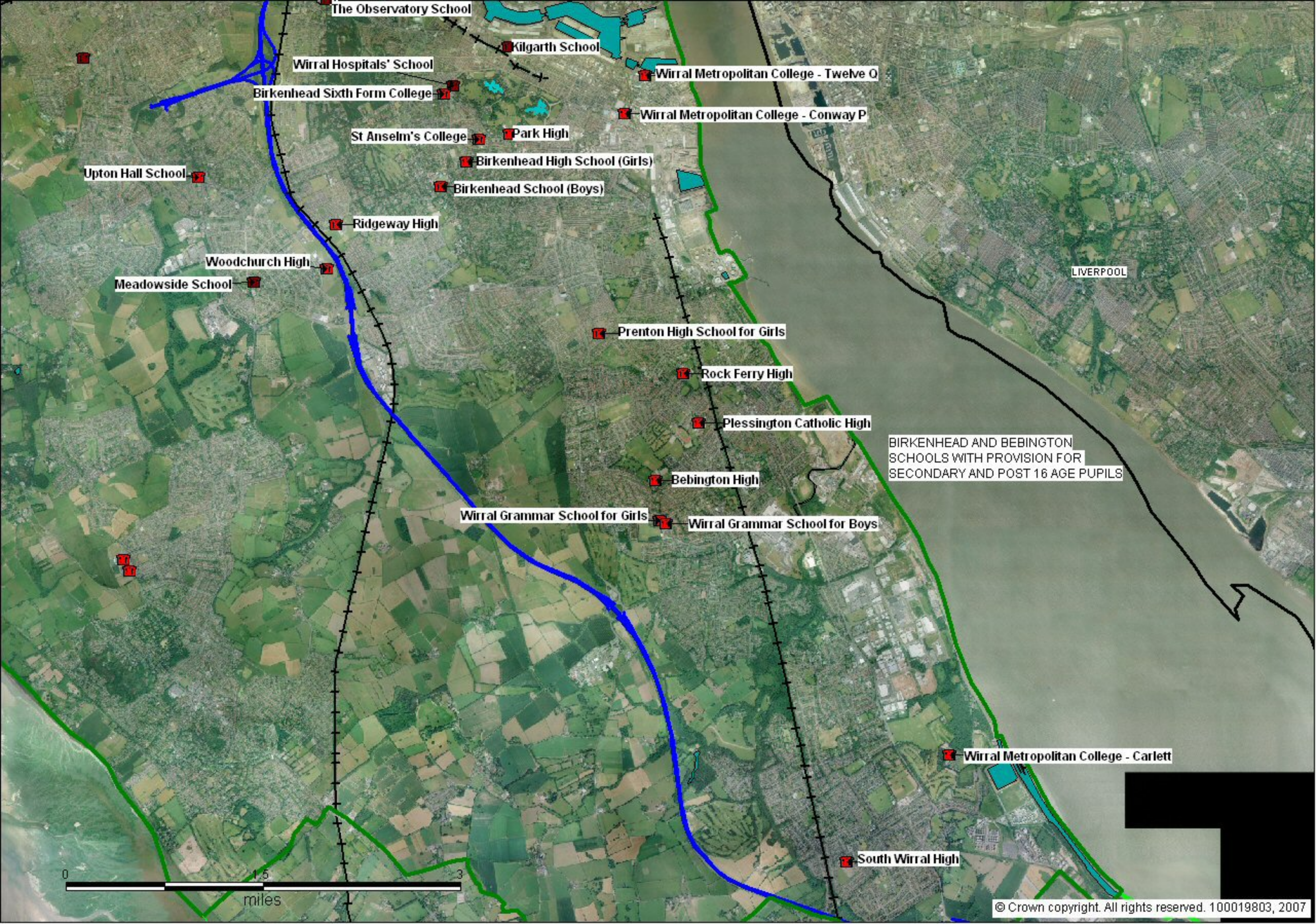
The Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group stated that whilst it was necessary to address the issue of numbers set out in the report, the additional factors for consideration needed to be set out.

The Director of Children's Services agreed to arrange a seminar for all members of the Council on the different governance arrangements in schools.

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Minute Decision :

Resolved - That

- (1) approval be given to the principle of a two phase review of secondary school provision beginning with pre-consultation with headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Birkenhead and Bebington;
- (2) approval be given to invite representatives from Birkenhead High School to participate in the review from the pre-consultation stage onwards; and
- (3) options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with recommendations from the Director of Children's Services for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal, consultation with all stakeholders.



The Observatory School

Kilgarth School

Wirral Hospitals' School

Wirral Metropolitan College - Twelve O

Birkenhead Sixth Form College

Wirral Metropolitan College - Conway P

St Anselm's College

Park High

Birkenhead High School (Girls)

Birkenhead School (Boys)

Upton Hall School

Ridgeway High

Woodchurch High

Meadowside School

Prenton High School for Girls

Rock Ferry High

Plessington Catholic High

Bebington High

Wirral Grammar School for Girls

Wirral Grammar School for Boys

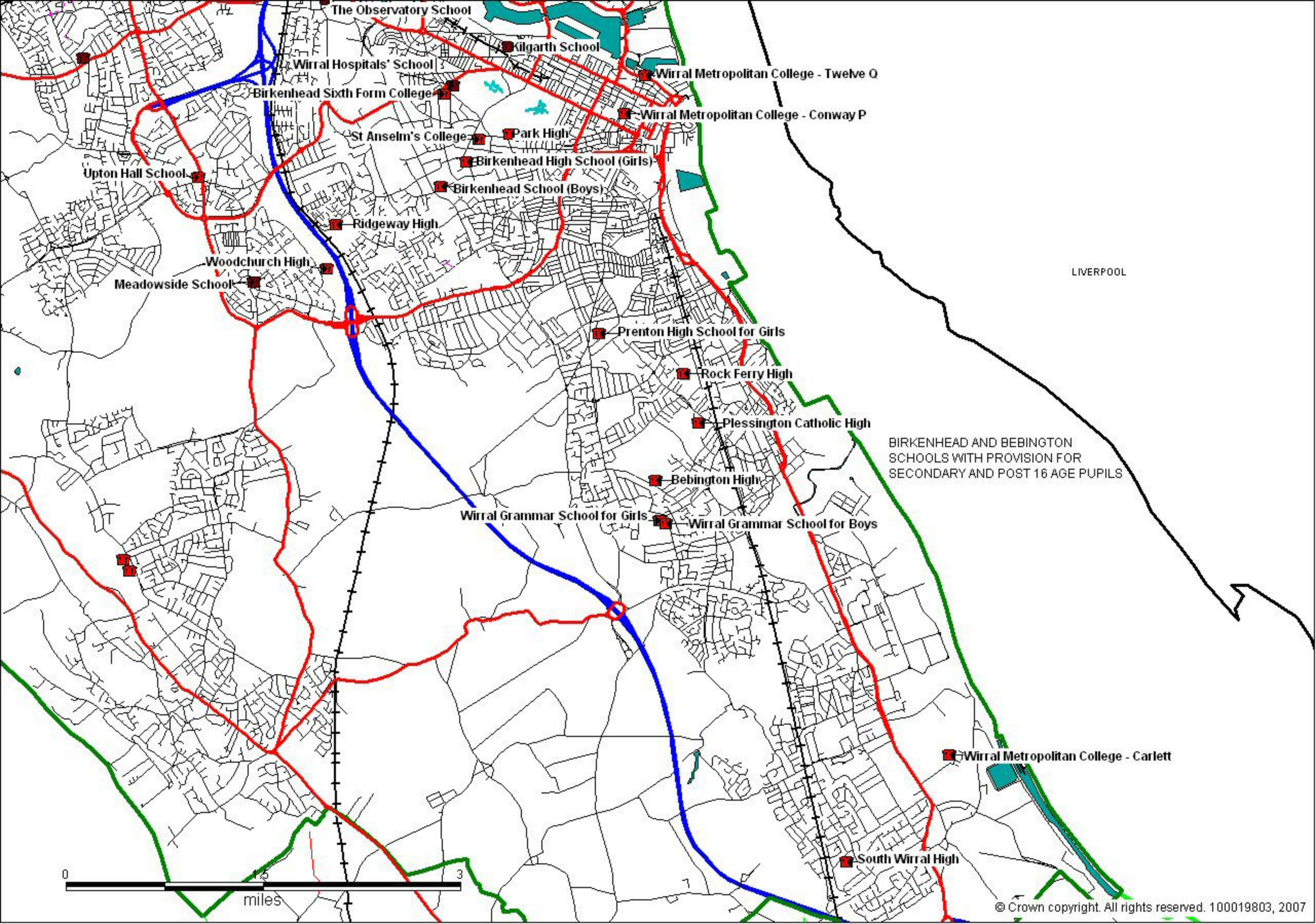
BIRKENHEAD AND BEBINGTON  
SCHOOLS WITH PROVISION FOR  
SECONDARY AND POST 16 AGE PUPILS

Wirral Metropolitan College - Carlett

South Wirral High

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miles

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LIVERPOOL

BIRKENHEAD AND BEBINGTON  
SCHOOLS WITH PROVISION FOR  
SECONDARY AND POST 16 AGE PUPILS



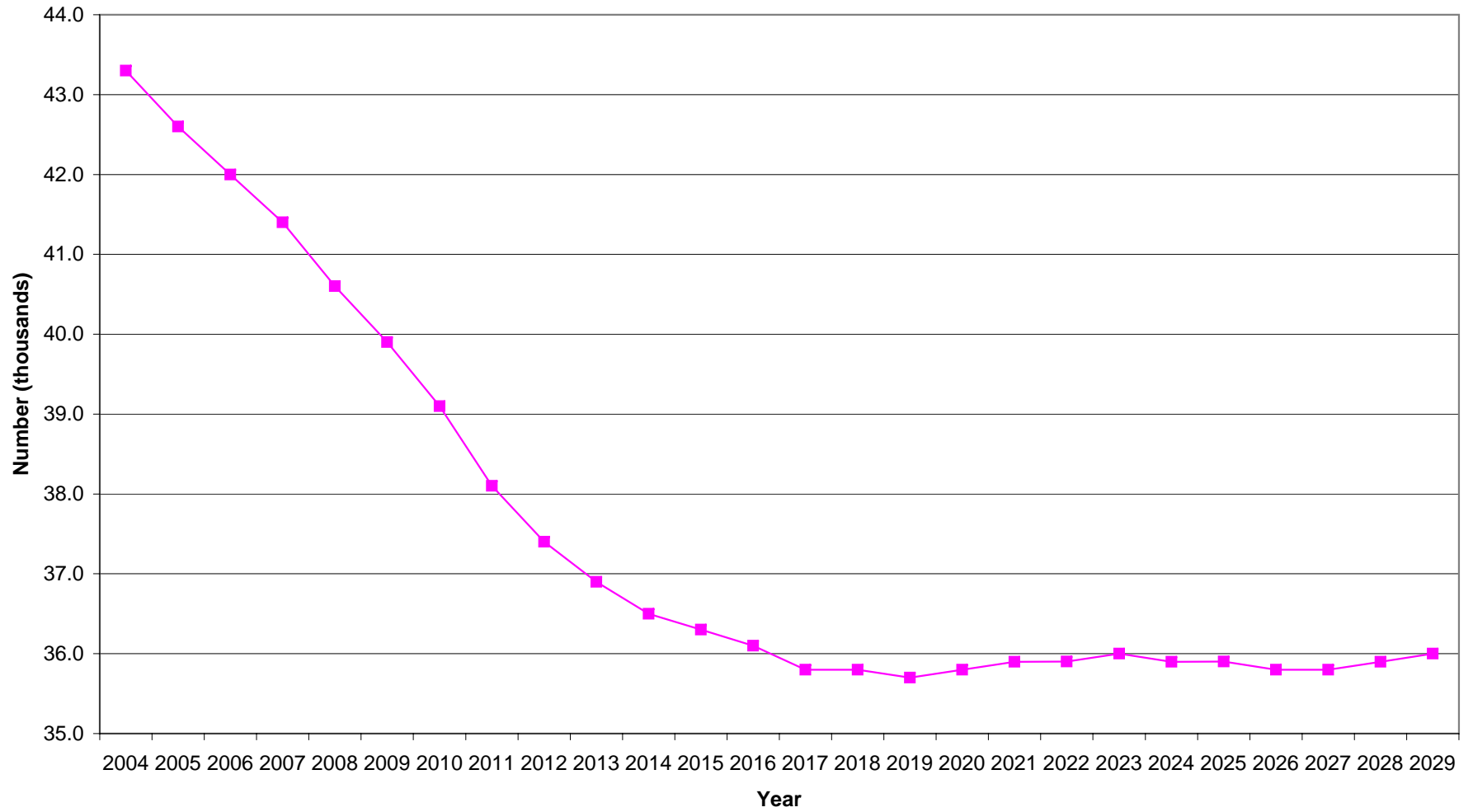
DRAFT

**SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN**

**OVERALL ANALYSIS FOR THE AUTHORITY**

	<i>NET Capacity</i>	<i>JAN 2008 actual</i>	<i>JAN 2009 estimate</i>	<i>JAN 2010 estimate</i>	<i>JAN 2011 estimate</i>	<i>JAN 2012 estimate</i>	<i>JAN 2013 estimate</i>	<i>Jan-08 unfilled places</i>	<i>percentage occupancy</i>	<i>Jan-13 unfilled places</i>	<i>percentage occupancy</i>
<b>SECONDARY</b>											
Community & Foundation	21440	18498	18006	17424	17019	16627	16330	2942	86.3	5110	76.2
Aided	5184	4567	4636	4635	4625	4573	4508	617	88.1	676	87.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>All ages</b>	<b>26624</b>	<b>23065</b>	<b>22643</b>	<b>22058</b>	<b>21644</b>	<b>21200</b>	<b>20838</b>	<b>86.6</b>	<b>5786</b>	<b>78.3</b>

**Number of Wirral pupils aged 10 to 19 from 2004 and projected to 2029**  
Source: Office for National Statistics



**SCHOOL ORGANISATION PLAN  
SECONDARY SCHOOLS BY AREA  
PUPIL NUMBERS**

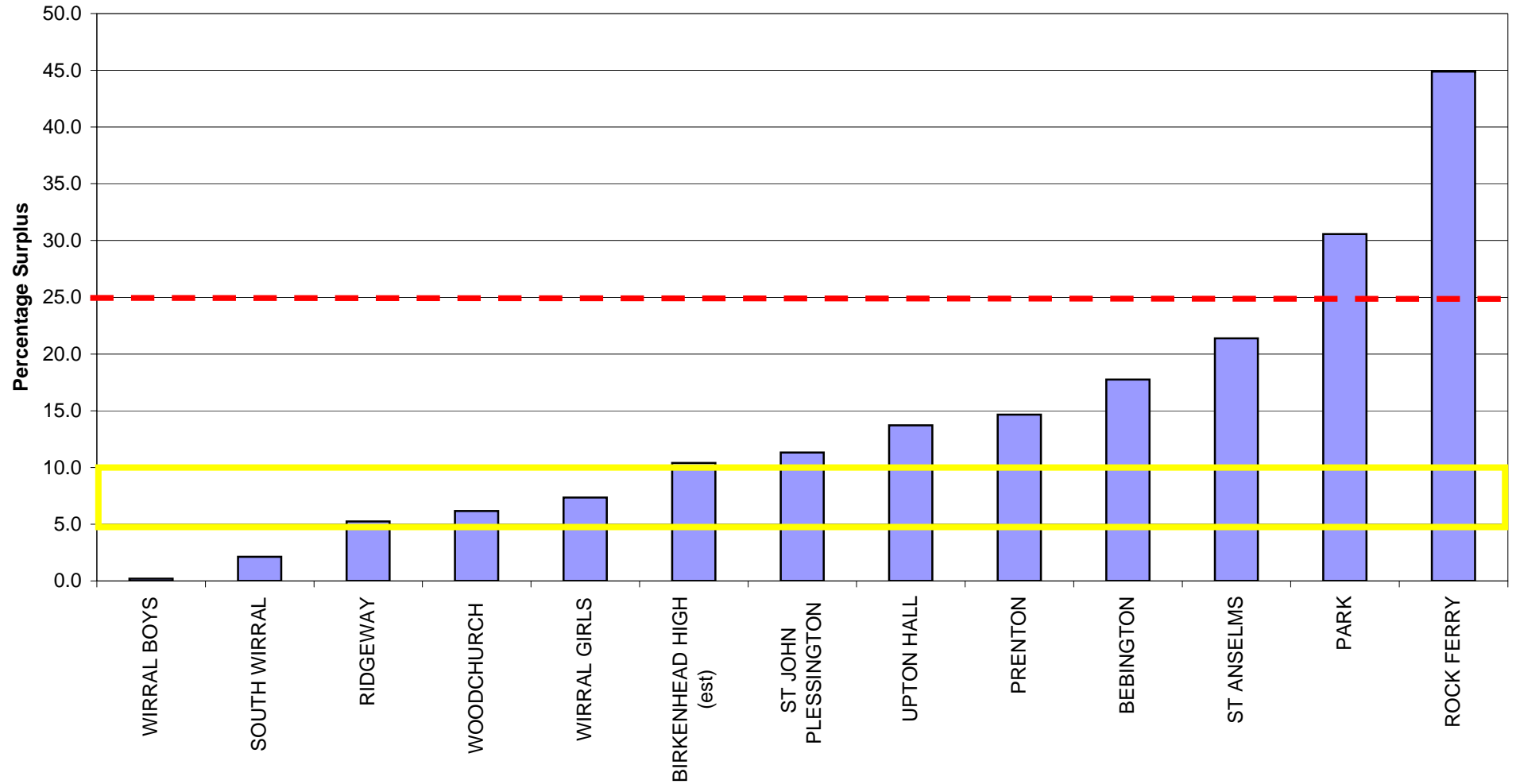
COMMUNITY /FOUNDATION SCHOOLS			ADNO	Net Capacity	Jan 2008 actual	JAN 2009 estimate	JAN 2010 estimate	JAN 2011 estimate	JAN 2012 estimate	JAN 2013 estimate	Jan-08 variation	percentage occupancy	Jan-13 variation	percentage occupancy
			2007	2007										
<b>BIRKENHEAD</b>	4017	PARK HIGH*	252	1250	868	772					382	69		
	4010	PRENTON HIGH GIRLS*	159	750	640	646					110	85		
	4018	RIDGEWAY HIGH	154	801	759	747					42	95		
	4011	ROCK FERRY HIGH	259	1250	689	572					561	55		
	4012	WOODCHURCH HIGH	268	1379	1294	1307					85	94		
<b>BIRKENHEAD TOTAL</b>			<b>5430</b>		<b>4250</b>	<b>4044</b>	<b>3919</b>	<b>3781</b>	<b>3693</b>	<b>3646</b>	<b>1180</b>	<b>78</b>	<b>1784</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>BEBINGTON</b>	4070	BEBINGTON HIGH*	241	1251	990	937					261	79		
	4071	SOUTH WIRRAL HIGH*	212	1180	1149	1151					31	97		
	4052	WIRRAL GRAMMAR GIRLS*	160	1129	1047	1056					82	93		
	5401	WIRRAL GRAMMAR BOYS	154	1013	1007	999					6	99		
<b>BEBINGTON TOTAL</b>			<b>4573</b>		<b>4193</b>	<b>4143</b>	<b>4055</b>	<b>3990</b>	<b>3932</b>	<b>3888</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>685</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>CATHOLIC AIDED SCHOOLS</b>			<i>Areas covered by these schools are wider than their geographic location</i>											
	4605	ST JOHN PLESSINGTON	242	1404	1271	1291					133	91		
	5900	ST ANSELMS COLLEGE	131	1066	831	830					235	78		
	5901	UPTON HALL SCHOOL	156	1043	885	896					158	85		
<b>AIDED TOTAL</b>			<b>3513</b>		<b>2987</b>	<b>3017</b>	<b>2993</b>	<b>2980</b>	<b>2946</b>	<b>2894</b>	<b>526</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>619</b>	<b>18</b>

\* Denotes school in the Wirral PFI Scheme.

nb: 2007 Actuals do not include over 16's in schools without a sixth form, under 11's, or those aged 19 and above

Autumn 2007 census is used as an estimate of the January 2008 Census for the purposes of projections. Actual January 2008 Census data will be used as soon as it is available.

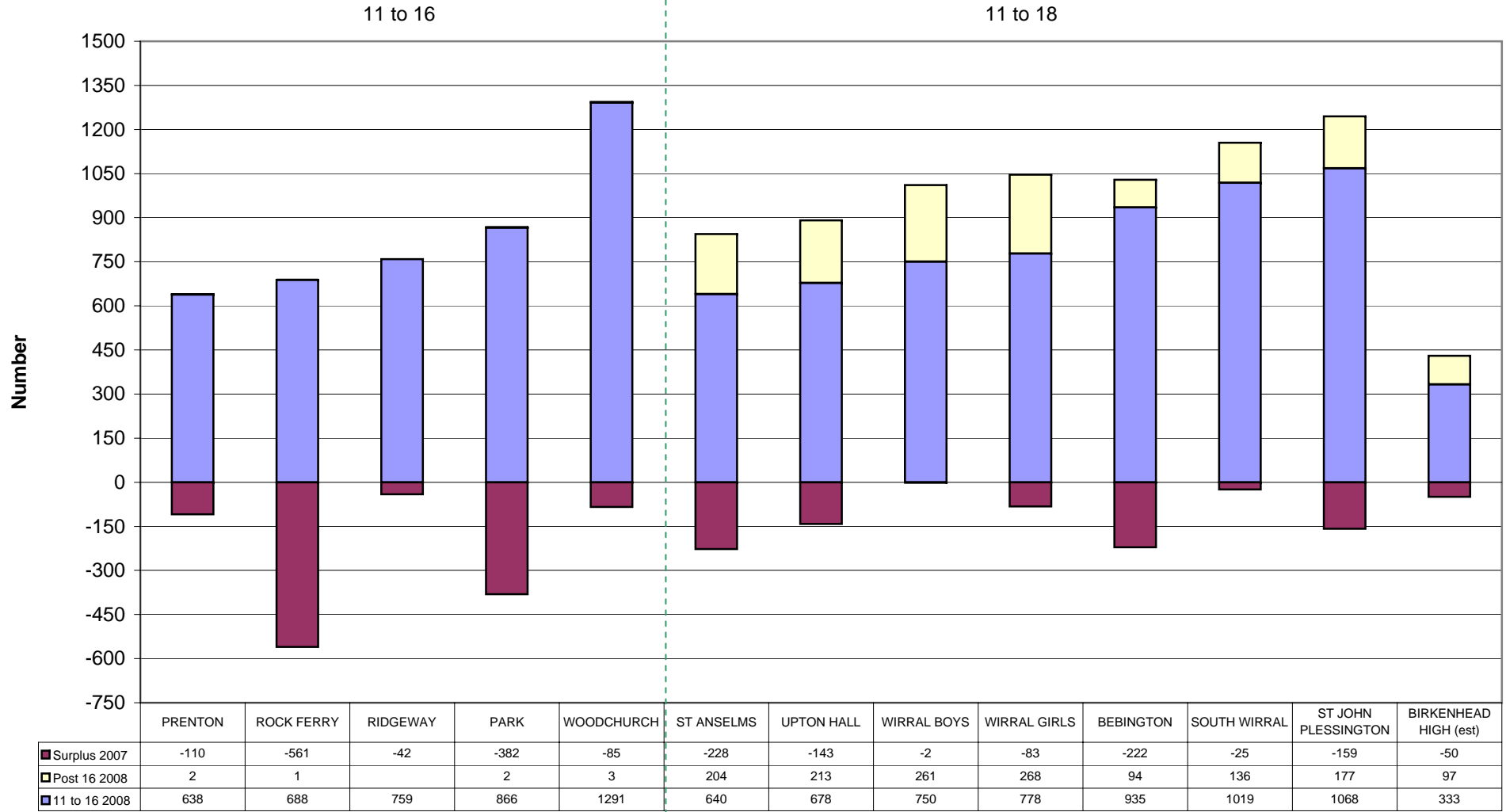
### % Surplus Places in January 2008



Surplus for Birkenhead High based on Capacity of 480 in Senior department, pending final figure.

School

## Number on roll at January 2008 and Number of Surplus Places



**School**

Surplus for Birkenhead High based on 2007 figures and Capacity of 480 in Senior department, pending final figure.