

**Report to:** Children Young People and Families Scrutiny Committee

**Date:** 17 September 2009

**Subject:** Montrose School Up-date

**Report of:** Nick Hudson – Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

**Contact officer:** Janet Newton – Service Director, Schools for the Future  
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**Purpose / summary:** The purpose of this report is to update CYPF Scrutiny Committee on the situation regarding the proposal to discontinue Montrose School

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:**

**Recommendation / decision:** Members are asked to consider the content of the report.

**Key Decision:**

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial:	Individual pupil funding will be transferred and used to support pupils in the receiving schools. Revenue savings will be re-invested to further develop SEN provision.
Staffing:	Permanent staff that may be at risk of redundancy will be supported in finding alternative employment.
Policy:	Wigan Strategy for School Places and Buildings. LA Inclusion Strategy.
Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted?	Yes
Wards affected:	All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council's asset base or its occupation?**

In the event that the decision is made to implement the proposal for closure, the building/site will revert back to CYPS to decide its future use or declare it as surplus to requirements.

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

Yes

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

A full diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

A full diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution? **Yes**

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget? **Yes**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? **No**

**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:			
Discussion leading to a decision		Discussion	
Monitoring		Decision	
Sharing for corporate understanding		Information	

**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
CYPF Scrutiny Committee	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council
17 Sept 2009			

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
Proposed Closure of Montrose School	Cabinet	14 May 2009	CYPS Progress House Westwood Park Drive
The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Maintained Schools) England Regulations 2007 (as Amended)			

Planning and Developing Special Educational Provision: DCSF Guide for Local Authorities and Other Proposers (Publication date: 25.05.07)			Wigan WN3 4HH
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Proper Officer



Date

7 September 2009

## **1 Background**

- 1.1 The number of pupils with SEN, and the types of difficulties they experience, are regularly monitored and reviewed. As a result, improvements and developments in the SEN sector are ongoing, largely informed by the forecasted number of pupils who would access specialist provision in the future.
- 1.2 A reduction in pupil numbers has been identified over recent years. This is particularly significant at Montrose School, where pupil numbers are low and will continue to reduce over the next two years.
- 1.3 The school is established to cater for 70 pupils but, by September 2009, only 26 pupils will remain on roll. By September 2010, there will be only 19. This decline in pupil numbers calls into question the long-term viability of the school.

## **2 Proposal**

- 2.1 In a report to Cabinet on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2009, the Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services outlined the borough's current specialist provision for children and young people with special educational needs.
- 2.2 The report also explained the recommendation to proceed to statutory consultation on the proposal to close Montrose School with effect from 31<sup>st</sup> August 2010. Cabinet agreed that the proposal be progressed to Stage 1.

## **3 Consideration of Proposal**

### **3.1 Implications for Pupils**

Montrose School caters for children and young people from Reception age until they reach the end of Year 9, when they leave to continue their education elsewhere. If the proposal is agreed, a proportion of the pupils on roll at the end of the summer term 2010 will need to transfer early.

The LA maintains a number of special schools, including 3 others like Montrose, which cater for children with complex needs, ie, Hope School in the west of the borough, Oakfield in the centre and New Greenhall in the east. Consultation has taken place with the senior management of all the schools concerned regarding the number of pupils who will be requiring places if Montrose were to close.

Pupils of secondary age, who will transfer at the end of Year 7 and Year 8, will still go to the school they would have gone to at the end of Year 9. In most cases this will be Oakfield High School, in Hindley Green, which is the secondary special school in the centre of the borough.

Primary age children, ie, those in Reception-Year 6, will transfer to Hope School, which is the alternative special school in the west of the borough, where they will complete their education, unless their assessed needs indicate that an alternative specialist placement would be more beneficial.

The LA supports parents' legal rights to request mainstream education for their children if this is their preference. The development of resourced mainstream provision, along with outreach services from special schools and access initiatives to make mainstream settings more accessible, has increased diversity and choice for parents of children with special educational needs.

However, these proposals do not necessitate a move to mainstream schools for any of the children and young people currently attending Montrose. Parents can be reassured that a special school place, in an appropriate setting, will be available for all pupils.

### 3.2 Implications for Staff

If the proposal is agreed, some staff will find themselves 'at risk'. All permanent employees who fall into this category will be supported in finding alternative employment. A support team will be available, and there will be the opportunity for individual meetings. Established Council procedures will be used in an attempt to find alternative work for any members of staff who may be displaced.

## 4 Report on Stage 1 Consultation

- 4.1 Stage 1 statutory consultation took place between 20<sup>th</sup> June and 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2009.
- 4.2 The Local Authority produced a consultation booklet, explaining the proposal and its implications. The booklet was circulated in line with statutory guidance, to a wide range of interested parties including parents, staff and governors of Montrose School and other schools directly affected.
- 4.3 In addition, an accompanying letter to Montrose parents offered individual meetings with the Parent Partnership Manager and the Parent Champion, to provide further opportunity for them to make their views known and discuss future options for their children.
- 4.4 Separate meetings were also held with the governing body of Montrose School, members of staff and the student council, where issues raised were addressed.

## 5 Summary

After considering the LA's reasons for proposing the school's closure, at their meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> August 2009 Cabinet agreed that the Executive Director of CYPs should progress the proposal through statutory consultation.

Statutory notices will be published on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and a formal report made to CYP Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet on 12<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

## 6 Conclusion

Montrose School is established for 70 pupils, and is funded at 55 planned places. There are currently 26 pupils on roll which will reduce to 19 in September 2010. This calls into question the school's viability.

There are 3 other schools for children with complex needs across the borough, providing sufficient capacity to cater for all the children who will be displaced from Montrose School in the event that the school should close.

## **7 Recommendation**

Members are recommended to consider the content of this report.

## Diversity Impact Assessment form

Section: Children and Young People's Services

Policy/Service Area: Strategy and Commissioning

Person Completing Form: Elaine Baulcombe

Date: 20.07.09

Do any of the below groups suffer specific disadvantage (please indicate)

	Yes	No		Yes	No
Race		x	Disability		x
Ethnicity		x	Gender		x
Age		x	Religion		x
Class		x	Sexual Orientation		x

Is there evidence of disadvantage or associated problems?

There is sufficient capacity within existing provision to meet the current level of need.

Parental preference will be considered and continuity of quality education and care will be maintained.

Surplus funding will be re-directed to provide support in other areas of SEN.

How was the information collected and/or who have you consulted with?

Wide ranging consultation has taken place in line with statutory guidance, to include:

- families and pupils at Montrose school;
- families at other schools directly affected;
- governors, teachers and other staff at Montrose School and other schools directly affected;
- headteacher and chair of governors at all other Wigan schools;
- Primary Care Trust;
- NHS Foundation Trust;
- neighbouring authorities;
- trade unions representing staff at any of the schools directly affected;
- Elected Members.

Cabinet agreement to progress the proposal will lead to wider consultation through publication of statutory notices.

Action Plan – *What specific actions are planned to tackle any disadvantage identified?*

Is the policy in line with current equality legislation and relevant codes of practice?

Equality legislation has been taken into consideration and an Equality Impact Assessment has been completed.

The proposal supports SEN policies and is in line with the SEN Code of Practice.	
Timescale	
Responsibility	
Comments	

**Are the actions specified included in any other documents/plans?**

Departmental Service Plan	
Section/Team Plan	
Other (Specify)	

Date for further review