

CABINET MEMBER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

CABINET

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE – REPORT ON THE INITIAL PHASE OF CONSULTATION

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** This report provides an analysis of the responses made to the first phase of consultations on our outline proposals for Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1** A consultation of this sort and scale rarely motivates parents or other stakeholders, who are satisfied with the proposals, to express a view. Negative responses invariably outnumber the positive ones. Whilst there are concerns about how the aims could be achieved there were many positive comments about the overall vision. The end product was seen as desirable, but the disruption required to achieve it generated a number of negative responses.
- 2.2** It is not surprising that such radical proposals involving school closures has attracted a number of concerns. At the next stage of consultation, after the opinions expressed in the first round have been analysed, it will be appropriate to address these and also set out in detail the case for closure for each individual school proposed at that stage as part of the statutory process.
- 2.3** Academies are undoubtedly a cause for concern for a number of staff, although by no means all. For parents, Academies are more of an unknown quantity. If a decision is made to go ahead with these proposals, it will be important over the next period to provide more information about Academies in general and detail around the specific proposals for Oldham, including sponsors and sites.

3. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 3.1** It is recommended that Cabinet;
- 3.1.1** take note of the results of consultations outlined in this report;
- 3.1.2** approve the responses set out in the appendix; and

3.1.3 agree to move into the second phase of consultations including the statutory consultation process for individual schools.

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1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1** This report provides an analysis of the responses made to the first phase of consultations on our outline proposals for Building Schools for the Future (BSF).
- 1.2** The first phase of consultation on Building Schools for the Future (BSF) was launched on 5th March 2007. A consultation booklet was sent by post to the parents of pupils in the seven schools identified for possible closure and through internal post to all parents via primary, secondary and special schools. Copies were also sent to schools for all staff and directly to governors. The booklet was made available in libraries, the One-stop-Shop, and community centres. An advertisement was placed in the local press and the Chronicle also publicised the consultation events in the course of a number of articles about the programme.
- 1.3** Meetings were held in all secondary schools for staff, governors and parents and in addition there have been three public meetings. Approximately 700 people attended the meetings, the largest number being staff from the schools.
- 1.4** Meetings were also held with Trades Unions, Governors Forum, Oldham Race Equality Partnership and the Oldham Partnership.
- 1.5** Attendance at meetings for staff has generally been high, but for parents and the public, turnout has been disappointing. This may not be surprising, given the fact that the earliest changes, as a result of the programme, will not be until 2011 and that the consultation deliberately focussed on the vision and outline proposals rather than detail at this early stage. However, there are also some lessons to be learnt about the process itself. (See section 8).
- 1.6** The closing date for responses was 11th May 2007. By that date 252 responses had been returned either by post or on line.

1.7 The following represents a summary of the most commonly expressed responses, by category of respondent. The quotations shown in italics, which are taken from the responses submitted, are intended to illustrate the points made, but are not necessarily proportionately representative.

2. **SCHOOL STAFF RESPONSES**

2.1 **Positives**

2.1.1 There has been little or no opposition to the principles set out in the booklet for dealing with staff, although many of them have wanted to go further and include more detail.

The most common positive statements from staff have been in regard to:

- The overall vision
 - *I fully endorse the views and ideas in the document. Our schools need major investment.*
- The significant investment in new buildings / facilities
 - *There is no doubt that our schools need transforming with up to date facilities for 21st century technology.*
- The opportunities that could be available in new schools
 - *Sounds fantastic using this great opportunity of extra funding to replace outdated buildings for secondary education.*
- The principle of schools catering for pupils from all backgrounds
 - *Fully support the vision and feel that community cohesion is number one priority for any vision for the future.*

2.2 **Concerns / questions**

2.2.1 At most, although not all staff meetings, the issue of academies dominated, including why they were necessary at all. A number of specific concerns were raised and questions asked. These were fairly common across the meetings, partly because some of the teaching unions ran a concerted campaign and circulated standard questions to ask. The main areas of concern raised were:

- It would involve a reduction in local control.
 - *Government / LA's should be in charge of national and local schools, not businesses who do not have a genuine interest in education.*
- The limited nature of any future guarantees about how the sponsor would operate and the possible long-term impact on terms and conditions, including the potential for creating a two-tier workforce if conditions changed for new staff or in the future.
 - *I am concerned about staffing structures. Teachers are entitled to work under the government agreed pay and working conditions.*

- The motives and possible actions of a private company as a sponsor.
 - *What say will businesses have in running these schools? This should be left to staff / governors / parents. Not someone who has money.*
- Single faith-based sponsors may hinder rather than help community cohesion.
 - *What message would this (a single faith sponsor) give to all the other minority faiths and especially those with no religious beliefs who form the majority in the 21st century.*
- What would happen if a sponsor went bankrupt or withdrew?
- Worries that Academies may take up all the money leaving little for community schools.
- Fears that Academies may be selective and would operate high levels of exclusions.
 - *If Academies have a policy of exclusions how will it impact on neighbouring schools?*

There was also concern that academies were only included as a result of pressures from central government.

- 2.2.2** Questions were asked about job losses, protection of specific roles and salaries, the process for securing jobs, whether there would be any packages and the timing of information and decisions on all of these issues.
- 2.2.3** Staff had concerns about what would be done about funding of schools due for closure in the short term, whether we would be able to retain staff and manage the schools during the period of uncertainty and closure. There were also requests for staff to be involved in helping to plan for and design the new schools.
- 2.2.4** Questions were asked about whether existing and new schools will have 6th forms and what the strategy would be for 14 – 19 education.

3. PARENTS / GOVERNORS

3.1 Positives

From the meetings with parents and governors there were a number of positive comments about:

- The overall vision.
 - *The vision is brilliant.*
 - *I fully agree that excellent teaching and high quality learning should be available to all.*
- In addition, some parents and governors recognised Building Schools for the Future (BSF) as an opportunity to tackle some of what they saw as the existing inadequacies in the system including the buildings and facilities and performance.

- *I agree that schools should all have 21st century facilities.*
- *Closing them (schools) may well be the only way to break the cycle of (under) performance.*
- Lack of choice currently.
 - *Providing a wider choice is good.*
- The level of segregation.
 - *Community cohesion needs vigorously addressing.*
 - *I agree with the idea of placing schools with the aim of a mixed intake culturally and socially.*

3.2 Concerns / questions

3.2.1 Rebuilding rather than closure – a number of parents felt strongly that the number of closures would be disruptive and that existing schools should be retained and rebuilt on site.

- *Why close and disrupt schools? Schools can be fixed.*
- *I disagree with larger schools and closing five local community schools. Keep the five open and rebuild them! Losing control to private sponsors will not work.*

3.2.2 Size of school – some parents expressed concern about large schools, in some cases saying they had chosen current schools because they were relatively small. The main issues were around behaviour and meeting the individual needs of pupils including those with Special Educational Needs (SEN).

- *I would prefer smaller schools not larger, where the staff can gain a greater knowledge of individuals. Larger schools make it even harder to maintain discipline and control conflict. Children with these problems (SEN) cannot cope in large mainstream schools.*

3.2.3 Admissions, parents wanted to know what the admission arrangements and policies would be for the new schools.

3.2.4 Transition and continuity for pupils – there was considerable discussion at the meetings about how to manage the transition period, with a particular concern about staff leaving, use of temporary teachers and the need to avoid disruption to existing pupils, especially those taking exams.

- *There is too much emphasis on the buildings and too little on the effect the disruption will have on teachers and pupils.*
- *... disruption to schooling for those who'll be transferring between schools? Add that to morale and self-esteem of both staff and pupils.*

3.2.5 Social cohesion / integration – at some meetings and on some of the forms, concern was expressed about forced or manipulated integration of pupils from different backgrounds. In some cases these appeared to be thinly disguised racist attitudes but others raised questions about whether these changes would produce the

intended outcomes.

- *You cannot force people to integrate. People have a choice whether they want to or not.*

- 3.2.6** Location – there was considerable interest in where the sites for the new schools would be, a concern that existing communities close to schools would lose out. Some parents wanted to know why we could not simply rebuild the current schools on existing sites. Parents wanted to know how new uniforms and transport costs would be funded, particularly for less well off families.
- 3.2.7** Temporary re-location – where schools were being rebuilt or refurbished parents were keen to know what would happen to the pupils during the rebuilding.
- 3.2.8** Facilities, there were a number of questions and comments about sporting and other facilities at the new schools. Parents particularly wanted to know about sports halls, all weather pitches and on-site playing fields and whether these would be available to the community.
- 3.2.9** Sites and facilities at the closing schools, a number of questions were asked about what would happen to the sites and facilities, with a particular concern about existing facilities used by the community.
- 3.2.10** Academies, some parents also expressed concerns about Academies, although more often parents simply wanted to know more about them, who the sponsors would be and what implications this would have. In particular they were concerned about the make-up of the Governing Body.
- 3.2.11** Sustainability – parents wanted to know what were we doing to ensure that the new schools were economically and environmentally sustainable.

4. OTHER RESPONDENTS

4.1 Positives

4.1.1 Respondents were positive about the vision and the need for development.

- *Good, to be congratulated for a forward thinking view.*
- *BSF would be a great investment on the children of the future, they have great potential and ability of becoming positive and successful participants of our society. Our children's lives are dominated by school and home so these places should be taken seriously. I personally believe improving the structure and opportunities in school would inspire children to study and it will make school enjoyable.*
- Some were positive about Academies and their role in integration.
 - *The principles for academy proposals seem to be good and powerful, principles catering for all pupils of all backgrounds ruling out any racial discrimination, and I'm happy to read all children will be treated equally and provided with the same educational opportunities regardless of*

their special needs. I hope the future schools can provide for children with physical impairments for example lifts in schools for children with wheelchairs.

- *The ideal of having a mixed campus of pupils with specific learning difficulties mixing with normal pupils is a fantastic one.*
- The concept of schools as learning centres was welcomed.
 - *The proposals to use schools as learning centres is good.*
 - *What needs to be included is daytime access to sites since the majority of adults work and courses are during school hours.*
- Respondents were impressed by the sample building plans used for illustration purposes.
 - *The building looks great and the concept will bring schools in the 21st century.*
 - *I like the design of the new schools, they're very trendy and I think they will encourage people of all ages to study there.*
- There were suggestions about faith issues.
 - *I would appreciate it if you could consider a school for Muslims inviting all pupils of all faiths because Islam is not as extreme as it has been portrayed amongst our children. Islam is peace and full of harmony.*

4.2 Concerns / questions

- 4.2.1** Vision – there was some doubt about the likelihood of success.
- *I do not agree that this vision will be met by the proposals planned in this case.*
- 4.2.2** Academies – some respondents were sceptical about Academies or thought there was insufficient information, including about possible sites.
- *We cannot rely on business to deliver this service.*
- 4.2.3** Faith schools – there were some doubts about faith schools.
- *Whilst you promote 'improvement / wider choice / all backgrounds working together' you have left the two best performing but most segregational schools in Oldham to their own devices.*
 - *I don't think that the church schools will welcome a multi-faith intake. It is currently impossible to get a place in such schools, why should they relax these rules now?*
- 4.2.4** Social cohesion / integration – there were both positive and negative comments.
- *Children of different races / faiths should be learning together from as early as nursery / infants.*
 - *How will the authority prevent 'white flight' from the Academies?*

5. PUPILS

- 5.1** Not many pupils have been engaged at this early stage but there are plans for extensive involvement of pupils at the next stage of consultation. Of those pupils

who attended the meetings the most common questions were about the implications for their own education, including whether or not they would keep the same teachers and whether their school would suffer during the period leading up to the closure.

6. TRADES UNIONS

6.1 The Trades Unions have expressed support for the overall vision for the future of Oldham's secondary schools. However, they are particularly concerned about Academies. Ideally they would like the new schools but no academies.

6.2 Major concerns expressed were about pay and conditions of service for teaching and non-teaching staff, which some considered would not be as favourable as they are now. There was a request that unions be recognised within Academies.

6.3 The unions have been active in advising staff during this round of consultation and this was clear in the questions asked by staff at their meetings and in written responses. A more formal approach will, of course, be needed for the next round of consultations and Human Resources colleagues are already becoming involved.

7. SCHOOL SPECIFIC

7.1 A number of specific questions and comments were made about the proposals for each individual school. Many of the questions were answered at the time and others have been noted for consideration. Not all are included here, but the following is a summary.

7.2 For each of the schools proposed for closure there was some defence of the school, questions about why the school had been chosen for closure and some lobbying to retain and rebuild on its existing site.

7.3 For those schools where the option of rebuild or refurbishment was left open, there was lobbying for a full rebuild.

7.4 There was concern at New Bridge that the principle of co-location, was being undermined by the proposed closure of Kaskenmoor.

- *Kaskenmoor has just been the school of choice for integration with New Bridge. Why the sudden change?*
- *Inclusion lessens and potentially disappears with a campus which is exclusively populated by young people with disabilities.*

7.5 There were particular issues raised at the meetings in the Roman Catholic schools. These included confusion over whether the new school would be an Academy and questions about the admission of pupils from other faiths, whether every catholic child would have a place, would it have a 6th form, would there be playing fields and how the governing body would be constituted.

7.6 At the Church of England schools reassurances were sought that Anglican parents in Oldham would still be able to secure places. Parents from outside Oldham were similarly concerned. At Crompton House in particular, there was concern that admitting pupils from other faiths and no faith would undermine the schools'

Christian ethos. At both schools the point was made that any expansion was dependant on securing the necessary refurbishment and extensions.

8. CONSULTATION ISSUES

- 8.1** A number of questions and comments were raised about the consultation itself. that it was not a genuine consultation and the decisions had already been made. There were some concerns that primary schools and parents had not been fully engaged and that the consultation document was not readily accessible to all members of the community.
- 8.2** All of the comments made will be invaluable in planning the next round of consultation.

9. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

- 9.1** A consultation of this sort and scale rarely motivates parents or other stakeholders, who are satisfied with the proposals, to express a view. Negative responses invariably outnumber positive ones. Whilst there are concerns about how the aims could be achieved there were many positive comments about the overall vision. The end product was seen as desirable, but the disruption required to achieve it generated a number of negative responses.
- 9.2** It is not surprising that such radical proposals involving school closures has attracted a number of concerns. At the next stage of consultation, after the opinions expressed in the first round have been analysed, it will be appropriate to address these and also set out in detail the case for closure for each individual school proposed at that stage as part of the statutory process.
- 9.3** Academies are undoubtedly a cause for concern for a number of staff, although by no means all. For parents, academies are more of an unknown quantity. If a decision is made to go ahead with these proposals, it will be important over the next period to provide more information about academies in general and detail around the specific proposals for Oldham, including sponsors and sites.

10. FUTURE CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1** Full consideration is being given as to how the maximum number of stakeholders, from all sectors of the community, can become involved in the next phase of consultations. The issue of translation / interpretation has been the subject of debate, and with some 40 + languages presently spoken in Oldham there is no simple solution. Further thought will be given to this matter for the second stage of consultation, including the idea of workshops at primary school in particular community languages.
- 10.2** In response to concerns, two very useful follow-up sessions were held at Breeze Hill School, where the first meeting was held and no parents attended, and Grange School, where information was not in an accessible form for some parents who attended, before the closure of the first phase of consultation on 11th May.

10.3 Following the report of outcomes from the initial phase of consultation the following will also need to be planned into the next phase.

- Consultation and engagement with children and young people.
- Attention to primary schools / parents.
- Details and opinions on sites.
- Transport, transport costs and traffic management issues.
- More information on where pupils currently in schools live in relation to proposed new schools.
- Further information on academies, including sites and sponsorship details.
- Further information about plans for Admission Policy changes.
- Human Resources issues including transfer of undertakings (TUPE), recruitment, retention and retraining.
- More detailed plans on how to support pupils and staff during the transition.
- The sequence / phasing of proposed changes.
- Alternative proposals, especially for the 14 – 19 group.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

11.1 It is recommended that Cabinet:

- take note of the results of consultations outlined in this report;
- approve the responses set out in the appendix; and
- agree to move into the second phase of consultations, including the statutory consultation process for individual schools.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

The following is a list of background papers on which this Report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100D(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents, which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by that Act.

DOCUMENT	DATE	FILE OR OTHER REFERENCE	PLACE OF INSPECTION
Readiness To Deliver Submission	10 / 2006	BSF	Level 8, Civic Centre
Cabinet Report	10 / 2003	BSF	Level 8, Civic Centre
Cabinet Report	10 / 2006	BSF	Level 8, Civic Centre
Reports to Overview & Scrutiny	08 / 2006, 09 / 2006, 01 / 2007	BSF	Level 8, Civic Centre
Various documents	2003 - 2007	BSF	Level 8, Civic Centre

AUTHOR OF THE REPORT	TEL NO	DATE	ID NUMBER
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Signed _____ EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Dated _____
Signed _____ CABINET MEMBER	Dated _____

Ref: Document7

APPENDIX A

BUILDING SCHOOLS FOR THE FUTURE (BSF) – RESPONSE TO FIRST PHASE OF CONSULTATION

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out a proposed response to the issues raised during the first phase consultation on Building Schools for the Future (BSF).

2. RESPONSES TO THE MAIN ISSUES RAISED IN CONSULTATIONS

2.1 Academies

2.1.1 *Issue: Fundamental opposition to the principle of academies.*

Response:

Academies are a central plank of the Government's education policy. They offer an opportunity to create new schools with high expectations, a strong ethos of achievement and a commitment to serve pupils from all faiths and those with no faith. The potential sponsors with whom the Council has been in dialogue will be valuable partners in providing further impetus to school improvement and community cohesion. There is a clear expectation that academies are a part of any BSF proposals. Academies have significant financial advantages to the LA and enable a more ambitious overall BSF programme to be undertaken thus benefiting a wider range of children and young people of the Borough. The principles we have established for academies in Oldham are designed to secure sponsors that will work in partnership with the Council and other schools.

2.1.2 *Issue: Loss of local control*

Response:

The degree of control which Local Authorities (LA) has over its schools has fundamentally shifted over the last 15 years and already varies for different types of school (eg. aided, specialist). Much of the work which the LA does with its schools is based on strong relationships and the ability to influence and challenge rather than direct. This will be equally true of academies. The potential sponsors that the Council has been in dialogue with, including those already announced, are committed to working in partnership with the LA and with other schools in Oldham.

2.1.3 *Issue: Future guarantees for the workforce*

Response:

It is not possible to give absolute guarantees about terms and conditions into the future for any school. The potential sponsors that the Council has been in dialogue with, including those already announced, are committed to maintaining the same conditions of service for staff as in other schools in Oldham. This is set out in the principles we have established.

2.1.4 Issue: Trades Union recognition

Response:

The Council will add to the principles for any academy sponsor that it will recognise and work with the established trades unions.

2.1.5 Issue: Concern about the sponsors and their motives

Response:

The Council will soon be in a position to name all the preferred sponsors for the academies. All the potential sponsors with whom the Council has been in dialogue are charitable, voluntary or faith organisations committed to improving opportunities for all the young people of Oldham. We have not been in dialogue with any private companies and the faith organisations are ones committed to working in partnership with other faiths to further community cohesion. The principles for academies set out in the consultation booklet are a safeguard in this process and received support during the consultation process.

2.1.6 Issue: Concerns about selection and levels of exclusion

Response:

The principles for academies include a commitment to take pupils of all abilities and to abide by the Oldham admissions policy and the national guidance, "Code of Practice on Admissions". Academies must operate within the same statutory framework for exclusions as other schools and will be expected to co-operate with locally agreed arrangements. The levels of exclusion can and do already vary between schools at different times. All the potential sponsors with whom the Council has been in dialogue are strongly committed to inclusive approaches.

2.1.7 Issue: Make up of the Governing Body

Response:

All the potential sponsors with whom the Council has been in dialogue are committed to appointing mainly local people as sponsor governors and are committed to having both staff and parent governors. The LA will continue to have representation on the governing body. The precise composition of the Governing Body will be agreed with the Council as part of the funding agreement.

2.1.8 Issue: Academies are unproven

Response:

The evidence on the performance of Academies at this early stage is mixed but overall encouraging:

- two independent bodies, Ofsted and the National Audit Office provide, on balance, positive reports;
- results in academies are rising faster than other schools and the schools they replaced;
- the majority of academies are popular with parents and oversubscribed;
- academies have not generally found difficulty recruiting or retaining staff.

Some of the less successful academies are where the schools they replaced were severely underperforming and were imposed on the LA. In Oldham we are establishing academies in the context of improving schools and with the LA taking the lead in the process. We are determined to use the opportunity to build schools that are part of the LA family and provide a further impetus to the trend of improvement

2.2 Other Key issues

2.2.1 Issue: Size of Schools

Response:

The size of schools planned for Oldham of between 1200 and 1500 are around the average for new secondary schools across the country. Some Authorities are now building schools of 2000 pupils and more. We believe that 1500 is probably the optimum size to benefit from economies of scale and secure effective provision.

The evidence on the relationship between school size and performance is inconclusive. There are many examples of both large and small schools which are highly successful and others which are far less so. Overwhelmingly the evidence suggests that the leadership and management of the school, combined with the skills and experiences of the staff are more important than size in determining effectiveness.

We are working closely with schools to develop a more personalised approach to learning and the curriculum within the context of our commitment to 'every child matters'. Such approaches will be at the heart of the new schools so that each individual young person receives high quality provision tailored to their particular needs and circumstances. The achievement and the well being of each child will be of paramount importance in all of our schools.

2.2.2 Issue: Staff security and terms and conditions

Response:

There is significant experience of managing staff change in Oldham schools. We are committed to working closely with the recognised trades unions and professional

associations and with headteachers and senior managers in schools at each stage of the process. We will seek to protect staff terms and conditions and avoid or minimise any job losses in discussion and consultation with key stakeholders and partners. We have built national pay and conditions into the principles for academies and all the potential academy sponsors with whom the Council has been in dialogue have indicated their support for this position. BSF is now a standing item on the consultation agendas of Teachers Consultative Group (TCG) and Departmental Consultative Group (DCG) as well as secondary head teachers forum. Already, work has commenced with secondary head teachers to look at collaborative ways of working across the secondary sector on staff appointments creating career opportunities, shared roles and promotion opportunities through workforce planning. We will ensure open and transparent dialogue with staff throughout the process. OMBC is currently working on the revised redundancy and redeployment policies and will consult fully on these as they affect staff.

2.2.3 Issue: Support for pupils and schools in the interim

Response:

We have already stated our commitment to protecting the interests of the existing pupils and schools during the period of transition to the new system. We now have a team of staff working on how we manage this transition most effectively in conjunction with headteachers across the Borough. This has focused on secondary schools to date but will increasingly involve working with primary schools as well.

2.2.4 Issue: Community Cohesion

Response:

We are committed to using BSF as one of the vehicles for promoting community cohesion. We recognise that simply building new schools on new sites will not in itself produce the outcomes we desire. We are working on a number of fronts to promote cohesion at all levels of the system, with a particular emphasis on younger children. It is our firm intention to involve young people in helping to plan for the new schools and to work with them in preparation for schools with more mixed intakes. This will include further twinning arrangements at primary level, mediation programmes, the shared futures leadership programme and curriculum work with Peacemaker. In securing sponsors for the new academies a commitment to this work will be an essential part of the dialogue and agreement.

2.2.5 Issue: Sites and facilities

Response:

We fully recognise that parents and others need more information about the proposed sites and facilities for the new schools. We have now published the sites that are currently under consideration and hope to be in a position to firm these up in the coming weeks. All the new sites under consideration will meet the minimum DfES requirements for facilities including a range of both indoor and outdoor sports facilities on site. In some cases it may be necessary to have additional detached

outdoor playing facilities but it is not anticipated that these would need to be used for the regular curriculum.

2.2.6 Issue: Faith schools

Response:

For our existing faith schools we are working closely with the Diocesan authorities and will be undertaking further dialogue with governing bodies to secure agreement on how best these schools can contribute to the overall vision of our programme in a way which builds on and enhances their distinctive ethos and values. For any academy sponsor with a faith dimension, we are seeking a commitment to working in partnership with other faiths to further community cohesion.

2.2.7 Issue: Post-16 provision

Response:

It is our intention to use BSF to build upon the success to date of A-level provision and the excellent progress made since the establishment of the 6th form college and to enhance vocational and alternative provision as part of a coherent and collaborative strategy for 14 to 19.

A-level provision will continue to be delivered by the two colleges and the school sixth forms at Crompton House and Bluecoat. We are considering the rationalisation of other post 16 provision in order to ensure efficiency and viability.

In partnership with the academy sponsors and a business sponsor, dedicated 14-19 vocational pathways will be established. The post –16 element would be delivered in partnership with existing post -16 providers.

We anticipate the Academies having specialisms, aligned to the Centres of Vocational Excellence within The Oldham College. The Academies will offer vocational options, as part of 14 to 19 collaborative arrangements. For Academy students the 16-18 element of this provision would then be delivered in partnership with local post-16 providers.

2.3 SPECIFIC SCHOOL ISSUES

2.3.1 Issue: Why not rebuild existing schools on the same sites?

Response:

Government approval of the BSF programme and the funding to implement it requires us to address issues of falling pupil numbers. It would therefore not be possible to simply rebuild all the existing schools. We are committed to using BSF as one of the vehicles for promoting community cohesion. We do not believe that this would be best served by simply rebuilding schools on their existing sites.

2.3.2 Issue: Preferences for rebuild rather than refurbishment

Response:

The decision as to whether to rebuild or refurbish Hathershaw, North Chadderton, Royton & Crompton and Saddleworth will largely be a matter of funding and affordability. Ideally we would like to undertake as much rebuild as possible, although we need to consider issues of value for money where we have good, recently built facilities already in existence. We are still looking at options for a new site for Saddleworth, should the decision be made to rebuild the school.

2.3.3 *Issue: New Bridge co-location*

Response:

The Council acknowledges that any decision to close Kaskenmoor and not to rebuild on that site will have an impact on New Bridge. We remain committed to the concept of co-location and to strengthening the links between special schools and mainstream. We believe it is possible to develop the role of New Bridge in such a way that it enhances these links. In addition, we will include resourced provision for particular needs in the new schools.

2.3.4 *Issue: Catholic school issues*

Response:

We are working closely with the Catholic Diocese on the issues raised in relation to the proposed new Catholic school. The proposed new Catholic school would not be an academy. We remain committed to the school playing a key role in the transformation programme.

2.3.5 *Issue: Church of England school issues*

Response:

We will be working closely with the CE Diocese and the two schools on the issues raised in relation to Blue Coat and Crompton House. We remain committed to the schools playing a key role in the transformation programme.