

**Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Lancaster Central;  
Lancaster East; Lancaster  
Rural East; Lancaster Rural  
North; Lancaster South  
East;

**The Future of Central Lancaster High School's Post 16 Provision**

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**Executive Summary**

Central Lancaster High School (CLHS) has approached the local authority in relation to the future of its post 16 provision. CLHS has asked the local authority to start the formal statutory process to consult on the proposal to discontinue its post 16 sixth form provision by permanently lowering its age range from 11-18 years to 11-16 years, with effect from 31 August 2018. Under The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, and the Department for Education's "Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools" statutory guidance which was published in April 2016, the local authority must be the proposer for this type of significant change and carry out a statutory process, which includes publication, representation, decision, rights of appeal and implementation. In line with this, the authority is now required to decide whether to publish a Statutory Notice on the proposal to consult on the future of this provision.

**Recommendation**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools is recommended to approve that the authority publishes a Statutory Notice to begin the representation period on the future of the post 16 provision currently delivered by Central Lancaster High School.

**Background and Advice**

Following recent discussions with the local authority, the Headteacher of Central Lancaster High School (CLHS) informed us of their wish to consult on the future of their post 16 provision due to concerns about its financial and educational viability. CLHS has low and reducing student numbers and a small curriculum offer in its sixth form.

When CLHS approached the local authority to discuss the future of its sixth form provision, there were only 62 students in the sixth form, with 24 in Year 12 and 38 in Year 13. The school believes that not all of the students in Year 12 will progress into Year 13. If this is the case, CLHS will ensure that these students have access to strong information, advice and guidance to enable them to make a smooth and sustained transition to another provider. However, any current Year 12 students who wish to continue into Year 13 at CLHS will be able to do so and will be supported by the school throughout the remainder of their programme.

The table below shows the student number and funding allocations CLHS has received from the Education Funding Agency (EFA) since it opened its sixth form in September 2011:

|                 | <b>2011/12</b> | <b>2012/13</b> | <b>2013/14</b> | <b>2014/15</b> | <b>2015/16</b> | <b>2016/17</b> |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Student Numbers | 34             | 60             | 62             | 102            | 100            | 88             |
| Funding         | £160,972       | £276,432       | £300,139       | £455,677       | £442,316       | £380,837       |

The average EFA student number allocations for the school sixth forms and academies in Lancashire were 225 students in 2013/14, 236 in 2014/15, 225 in 2015/16 and 217 in 2016/17. This shows that CLHS's student numbers have been consistently and significantly below the average level.

CLHS is a partner in a Sixth Form Federation with three other school sixth forms in the area: Our Lady's Catholic College, Carnforth High School and Heysham High School Sports College. This federation is not as strong as it once was and only two students access provision at CLHS through this arrangement.

The school has continued to promote its sixth form for 2017/18, through open evenings, adverts on Bay Radio and through the federation schools mentioned above. To date, the predicted applications for the 2017/18 academic year are 24 and the school is not the first choice for a number of these applications. Students from Year 11 at CLHS do not tend to put the sixth form as their first choice.

Of CLHS's 2016 school leavers, only 17% chose to progress into the sixth form. The significant majority, 42.4%, progressed to Lancaster and Morecambe College. Just over 15% progressed to other school sixth forms in the district and the remaining students accessed provision at Kendal College, Myerscough College, Cardinal Newman College, Preston's College and Blackpool Sixth Form College, indicating that young people are willing to travel out of the area to access post 16 provision.

The Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance, Making 'Prescribed Alterations' to Maintained Schools, published in April 2016, sets out the following guidelines which should be considered for proposals to open new sixth form provision:

- School to be rated as Good or Outstanding by OfSTED.
- The quality of pre-16 education must be good or outstanding.
- The proposed sixth form will provide places for a minimum of 200 students.
- The proposed sixth form will, either directly or through partnership, offer a minimum of 15 A level subjects.
- There is a clear demand for the new sixth form (including evidence of a shortage of post 16 places and a consideration of the quality of L3 provision in the area).
- The proposed sixth form is financially viable (there is evidence of financial resilience should student numbers fall and the proposal will not impact negatively on 11-16 education or cross-subsidisation of funding).

As can be seen from the information provided, CLHS would not meet a number of the current criteria for adding a sixth form, as the DfE has strengthened the requirements. CLHS's current provision is significantly different from these requirements in the following areas:

- The minimum number of students – the minimum required under the DfE guidelines is 200 places and CLHS currently has 62 students.
- The need for a clear demand for the provision – the information in this report shows that there is limited interest from students in progressing to CLHS's sixth form and that the provision on offer is available at other local post 16 providers.
- For the sixth form to be financially viable – there is a concern that running courses for a small number of students is not financially viable, with the costs exceeding the income received from the EFA for the sixth form provision.

### **Quality and Post 16 Provision Offer at the College**

CLHS was last inspected by OfSTED in December 2012 and the outcome for Overall Effectiveness was 'Good'. Whilst the inspection report was generally positive about the sixth form, it acknowledged that it was newly opened and it was too early to determine the impact in some areas. Since the inspection took place over four years ago, the quality and provision offer in the sixth form has declined.

To support the inspection arrangements, OfSTED and the DfE have developed an inspection dashboard. An early extract of the 16-19 inspection dashboard for CLHS, which was published on 25 January 2017, shows that the school has not met the 16-18 minimum standards for academic qualifications. The data used in the dashboard is currently unvalidated/provisional and the summary strengths and weaknesses are not yet available. However, the strengths and weaknesses for 2015 were as follows:

- Minimum standards not met for academic or vocational subjects.
- Progress in academic subjects (A and AS level) identified as a weakness; particularly the case for pupils with GCSE C and B grades.
- Girls are also identified with low progress in vocational subjects.

- GCSE Maths improvement identified as a strength for disadvantaged pupils with key stage 4 grade D but weaknesses identified for pupils with grades E and F.

Using the most recent information from the DfE's 2016 Performance Tables, there are a number of issues with the quality of provision being delivered through the sixth form. In terms of the value added performance measures, CLHS has the lowest performance of the eight school sixth forms in Lancaster for A level, Academic and Applied General qualifications. The students accessing this provision at CLHS, made less progress, on average, than students across England who got similar results at the end of key stage 4.

The proposed curriculum offer for the sixth form in the 2017/18 academic year consists of nine A levels and 10 BTECs. Additional courses can be accessed through the federation mentioned above but, of the Year 12 students in this academic year, only three chose to access provision at one of the federation schools.

The school has confirmed that, based on current financial projections for 2017/18 admissions, only two subjects areas would be able to offer financially viable courses.

All but one of the courses offered by CLHS are available at the alternative providers in the district. The course not available in the district is A level Law. Seven students undertook this course at CLHS in 2015/16 and other young people from Lancaster travelled to Cardinal Newman College to access this course.

The alternative providers within the district are as follows: Lancaster and Morecambe College; Carnforth High School; Heysham High School Sports College; Lancaster Girls' Grammar School; Lancaster Royal Grammar School; Morecambe Community High School; Our Lady's Catholic College; and Ripley St Thomas C of E Academy. These providers are between less than a mile and seven miles from CLHS. With regard to OfSTED ratings, three are 'Outstanding', two are 'Good', two are 'Requires Improvement', and one is 'Inadequate'.

## Consultation and Statutory Requirements

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 state that the alteration of an upper or lower age range by one year or more, including the removal of a sixth form, is a statutory process. For a local authority maintained community school, the local authority is the proposer and also the decision maker. The statutory process follows four stages and these are set out in the table below, along with the suggested timeline for this proposal:

| Stage   | Description                                  | Timescale               |
|---------|--|-------------------------|
| Stage 1 | Publication of Statutory Notice and Proposal | 29 March 2017           |
| Stage 2 | Representation (formal consultation)         | 29 March to 31 May 2017 |
| Stage 3 | Decision                                     | July 2017               |
| Stage 4 | Implementation                               | 31 August 2018          |

To ensure that the process remains within the statutory requirements, the local authority must ensure that the timescales outlined above are adhered to.

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

Under section 15ZA and 18A of the Education Act 1996 (as inserted by the Apprenticeship, Skills, Children and Learning Act (2009)), local authorities have a statutory duty to secure sufficient and suitable education and training provision to meet the reasonable needs of all young people in their area by influencing and shaping provision through local partnerships and by identifying gaps, enabling new provision and developing the market. The young people covered by this statutory duty are those aged 16-19 and those aged 19-24 who have either a learning difficulty assessment (LDA) or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP).

As the number of 16-19 year olds attending CLHS is minimal and there are several other post 16 providers in the local area, the local authority does not believe that there will be an adverse impact on participation should CLHS permanently lower its age range from 11-18 years old to 11-16 years old.

### **Financial Implications**

Should the outcome of the consultation be to remove the sixth form provision at CLHS, there would not be an adverse financial impact on the local authority in terms of post 16 funding as this is provided by the EFA and the authority merely makes the payments on its behalf.

The overall financial position of the school would be improved by permanently lowering its age range from 11-18 years old to 11-16 years old. At present, the 11-16 part of the school is providing a financial subsidy to the sixth form as it is not financially viable on its own. The reducing student numbers in the sixth form going forward will only exacerbate this position.

### **List of Background Papers**

N/A