

MATTERS TO BE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 18 PROPOSALS FOR ALTERATIONS TO SCHOOLS

Extract of Schedule 2 to The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2013 (as amended)

1. Contact details

The proposal to discontinue the post 16 sixth form provision delivered by Central Lancaster High School, Crag Road, Lancaster, LA1 3LS, by permanently lowering its age range from 11-18 years to 11-16 years with effect from 31 August 2018, is published by Lancashire County Council, the relevant local authority. Central Lancaster High School is a community school. The local authority can be contacted at the following address: Sarah Hirst, Skills, Learning and Development Service, CCP Ground Floor, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD, Lancashire.

2. Description of alteration and evidence

This proposal is for the closure of Central Lancaster High School's (CLHS) sixth form by permanently lowering its age range from 11-18 years to 11-16 years. The school will remain open and unchanged for secondary school provision.

Participation in Education or Training

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 in 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:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
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. Of the applications received to date, the school is not the first choice for a number of these. Students from Year 11 at CLHS do not always 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.

Educational or Training Achievements

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.

Range of Educational or Training Opportunities Available

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 currently 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 7 miles from CLHS. With regard to OfSTED ratings, three are 'Outstanding', two are 'Good', two are 'Requires Improvement', and one is 'Inadequate'. There is capacity at these providers should any students from CLHS wish to progress into post 16 education or training with them.

From reviewing the data of where the students who attended CLHS's sixth form in 2015/16, the majority were from the following wards in Lancaster: Bulk, John O'Gaunt and Scotforth East. Young people from these wards not attending the sixth form at CLHS accessed post 16 provision at a range of providers, consisting of seven school sixth forms and seven colleges. The main providers being accessed were Lancaster and Morecambe College, Lancaster Royal Grammar School and Ripley St Thomas C of E Academy. As can be seen from the paragraph above, these are within reasonable travelling distance from CLHS so young people will be able to easily access alternative post 16 provision.

Conclusion

As the number of 16-19 year olds attending CLHS is low and reducing and there is a wide range of alternative post 16 providers in the local area offering comparable provision, the local authority does not believe that there will be an adverse impact on participation should CLHS not offer sixth form provision in the future.

3. Objectives

The objective of this proposal is to permanently lower the age range of the school from 11-18 years to 11-16 years with effect from 31 August 2018, through the closure of the sixth form.

There is limited interest from young people in attending the sixth form, which has a small curriculum offer and low and reducing student numbers. There are also concerns around the quality and performance of the sixth form, which has the lowest value added of the eight school sixth forms in Lancaster for A level, Academic and Applied General qualifications and which did not meet the minimum standards for academic or vocational subjects in 2015.

As the secondary element of the school is unaffected by this proposal, the number of young people accessing the sixth form is reducing, and the wide range of alternative providers in the district, the closure of the sixth form is not expected to have an adverse impact on the community.

4. Effect on other local education institutions

As the proposal is to close the sixth form provision at CLHS, there is not expected to be any adverse impact on other local post 16 providers.

There will be sufficient capacity in the local area for all young people to be able to access post 16 provision within a reasonable travelling distance. The closest alternative post 16 providers measured by a car journey from CLHS are:

Lancaster Royal Grammar School	0.8 miles
Our Lady's Catholic College	1.1 miles
Lancaster Girls' Grammar School	1.4 miles
Ripley St Thomas C of E Academy	1.6 miles
Lancaster and Morecambe College	2.3 miles
Morecambe Community High School	3.8 miles
Heysham High School Sports College	5.6 miles
Carnforth High School	7.1 miles

5. Project Costs and Value for Money

The final DfE criteria for opening a new sixth form is for it to be financially viable. There is a concern that the reducing number of students in the sixth form at CLHS mean that it is not financially viable and keeping the sixth form open does not demonstrate value for money. 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.

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.

6. Implementation

It is proposed to close the school's sixth form on 31 August 2018.

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 in year 13 at CLHS will be able to do so and will be supported by the school throughout the remainder of their programme.

7. Procedure for responding to the consultation

Following publication of this proposal on 29 March 2017, any person may respond, support, object to or make comments on the proposal by posting them to Sarah Hirst, Skills, Learning and Development Service, CCP Ground Floor, PO Box 100, County Hall, Preston, PR1 0LD. Responses can also be emailed to sarah.hirst@lancashire.gov.uk. To be considered as part of the decision making process to determine the proposal, responses must be received no later than 31 May 2017.