

The John Loughborough School

Questions and Answers for a parents and carers meeting on Monday 28 January 2013 – held at The John Loughborough School

	Question	Council response
1.	<p>Is this really a consultation or have the Council already made up its mind. 80 per cent were in opposition to the closure notice of the school and if that was the case why are the council pursuing this. Are the council only going through legalities or could the concerns and questions raised sway the council's position.</p>	<p>The Department for Education (DfE) sets out five statutory stages for the proposed closure of a maintained school – Consultation, Publication, Representation, Decision and Implementation. As is required by the DfE, at the end of the consultation stage we (as the proposer) considered the views expressed during the consultation stage before reaching our decision on whether or not to publish statutory proposals.</p> <p>We published our notice on 7 January 2013 and the current 6 week statutory representation period enables anyone to submit representations, which can be objections as well as expressions of support for the proposals. It is the final opportunity for people and organisations to express their views about the proposals and ensure that we can take them into account when reaching our final decision.</p> <p>Engagement with stakeholders as part of this process is a genuine and open dialogue with all stakeholders. Cllr Kober was clear at the meeting that the current representation period is directed at how to go about the closure rather than whether or not the closure will happen (the final decision on whether or not to close the school will be taken by our Cabinet following their consideration of a comprehensive report prepared by officers - as part of that report all representations received as a result of this representation period will be detailed within the report and responded to). The reason for this is because of successive poor Ofsted inspections including placing the school into special measures in 2009 and again in 2011. Cllr Kober was clear: closure is not an inevitability. Possible closure of the school was raised last April 2012 when a review into the future of the school began. The review concluded that there were two</p>

		options; closure or finding an Academy sponsor. While no suitable sponsor has, to date, been secured, there is still time between now and April 2013 (the Cabinet decision date on whether or not to close the school) to secure a sponsor. While it is not too late for the school to secure a sponsor we cannot continue to maintain the status quo at the school. The school has already had a generation of young people who have been adversely affected by poor standards – this is clear from Ofsted inspections and from exam results for the school over a sustained period. Cllr Kober was clear and has publicly stated that she cannot stand by as Leader of the Council and allow this to continue.
2.	Academic success is very important to parents and carers but, as a Seventh Day Adventist (SDA), the school shares equal importance with that of the church; it is not just academic achievement that is important for parents and carers but also the spiritual guidance and ethos of the school.	The future for pupils at John Loughborough School (JLS), including their faith, well-being and educational achievements, will be placed at the centre of our decision making.
3.	The pupils, parents and staff don't want the school to close, and so why do the Council want it to close?" What time has been given to find an academy sponsor? Two months or less? Why does the Council want to close the school so soon? There is an issue for Year 10 pupils. Why not keep them here and give them the help they need?	Work on securing a sponsor (led by the South of England Conference) has been ongoing since April 2012. There are examples locally and nationally of schools securing sponsors within a shorter time frame than three months. We have no role in choosing a sponsor or determining if a sponsor is adequate. However, the challenges facing the school means a sponsor would need particular skills and experience to support it and to overcome these challenges. We understand that a sponsor did come forward but the DfE decided that it did not have the capability to take this challenge forward.
4.	Does the Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) take account of the full ethos and beliefs of the SDA religion?	The EqIA, a working document, sets out the school's ethos and religion, faith and values. The EqIA will look at how we can take account of these matters in arriving at a final decision on the school's future. The EqIA will remain as a live document if the school closes to track the outcomes of pupils who have left the school to finish their education in an alternative setting.
5.	How will the council support the children through any closure process?	If we agree to close the school application forms will be given to parents and carers to help find them places at another school (inside or outside the borough). As provided by the normal admissions process there will be an opportunity to give six preferences for each pupil, with a deadline for submission and this will be followed by offers being made. Offers will

		<p>be made in writing for all year groups. We will look very carefully at current Year 10 pupils and will look at how we can support each and every child. Applications would be open to all secondary schools in the borough and beyond. The Head of Admissions has reassured parents that they will have the opportunity to come and talk about the needs of their child. These needs and what parents want will inform the EqlA. There will be a deadline for applications of transfer and the local authority will work with parents to identify what is needed to ensure that their child can achieve the best they possibly can.</p>
6.	<p>While the school is small, so are many others. Will the council support the school financially?</p>	<p>There are so few pupils nominating the school as one of/their first choice(s) and so few pupils joining the school that it is proving difficult to sustain it financially. An Academy sponsor will look at the same issues regarding financial viability. Also the school is not reaching the GCSE standards and required educational outcomes which presents poor value for money for the school.</p> <p>DfE data shows that of nearly 20,000 secondary schools in England John Loughborough ranks as the 15th smallest of those open throughout 2012-13. The majority of the smaller schools are in rural areas that receive additional sparsity funding that can be passed on to schools. Despite Haringey not receiving this funding the per-pupil amount of £7,577 received by John Loughborough is above the average of £7,343 for this group of schools.</p>
7.	<p>Why were the school proposing closure during Y11 exam time?</p>	<p>DfE sets out guidance on how to close a school including five statutory steps for how the closure should take place and within a recommended timeframe. Implementation of that timetable means that the process cannot be completed in a shortened period such as over a summer holiday. We are very mindful of the impact and uncertainty that this process introduces but we have sought to limit this impact and uncertainty by working very efficiently to the timeline outlined for the statutory process. The school has been struggling for some time, evidenced by exam results and Ofsted inspections. While the impact of this action is acknowledged, the alternative – to take no action – can no longer be countenanced.</p>

8.	How will the authority support pupils currently in Y10 in terms of exam and course work – exam board changes etc – through the closure?	An assessment of the subject and exam board syllabuses being offered at JLS will be undertaken to ensure that pupils are placed in schools where at least the same if not greater choice can be offered. JLS is the smallest secondary school currently operating in the borough, so it is likely that other settings will offer a wider variety of options at GCSE level.
The following questions were asked after the meeting finished and parents, carers and pupils were invited to remain and let us have any outstanding questions that had not been asked.		
9.	When a school closes down sometimes a group suffers. No group should suffer or be made a scapegoat. Is this Right?	The evidence is clear and publicly available to show that pupils at the school are not achieving at anywhere near the borough or national average; and Ofsted inspectors have set out their concerns about the school over several inspections dating back to 2007. Any decision to close would be based on seeking to improve the outcomes for all pupils and groups within the school.
10.	Please consider the individual successes of pupils not just the average. How will you do this?	We know that there are many examples of individual pupils succeeding at the school. However we cannot keep a school open based on the successes of a number of individuals. In 2012 34% of pupils achieved 5 or more A* - C (including English and maths) GCSEs. This is in comparison to a Haringey average of 58.6% and a national average of 59.4% for the same period. We plan to ensure that those pupils who would have achieved at JLS will do just as well - if not better - in an alternative school
11.	As a parent I only want my child to go a Seventh Day Adventist School. Why do other faith schools get preferential treatment?	Recommendations on the future of the school have been made following a review of the school in spring of 2012. The review was carried out after a sustained period of low GCSE results, well below the borough and national average, and followed a number of Ofsted inspections that placed the school in special measures or judged it to be unsatisfactory. Other faith schools have performed at a considerably higher level and have not attracted the same level of concern.
12.	I am the parent of a child in year 7 at JLS. I have the right to choose a school for him – why close the school at this present time of the year?	DfE sets out guidance on how to close a school including five statutory steps for how the closure should take place and within a recommended timeframe. Implementation of that timetable means that the process cannot be completed in a shortened period such as over a summer holiday. We are very mindful of the impact and uncertainty that this process introduces but we have sought to limit this impact and uncertainty by working very efficiently to the timeline outlined for the statutory process. The school has been

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13.	Think of the new Year 7s, they have just come to a new environment, and to think to go to a new one just like that! Think of the psychological problems they will have, their futures placed in someone else's hands. What if their new schools don't have a GCSE subject they want to do?	We will handle any changes as carefully, empathetically and sensitively as possible. An assessment of the subject and exam board syllabuses being offered at JLS will be undertaken to ensure that pupils are placed in schools where at least the same if not greater choice can be offered. JLS is the smallest secondary school currently operating in the borough, so it is likely that other settings will offer a wider variety of options at GCSE level.
14.	Please Haringey, I plead the blood of Jesus on your decision. Finally, in a nutshell, I am a Seventh Day Adventist and my faith being unfairly taken away, it's not just about the Year 10s; it's about the whole school..... The whole of tomorrow.	The final decision on whether or not to close the school will be taken by Cabinet in April 2013. The future for pupils at JLS, including their faith, well-being and educational achievement will be placed at the centre of our decision making.
15.	My Name is [name removed] (yr 7). This is the best school. Why close the school when we do very good in this and we did very good in PE and Science?	Recommendations on the future of the school have been made following a review of the school in spring of 2012. The review was carried out following a sustained period of low GCSE results, well below the borough and national average, and also as a result of a number of Ofsted inspections that judged the school to be 'inadequate' or placed the school in special measures. Other faith schools have not performed at this standard over a sustained period and have not drawn the same level of concern.
16.	My name is [name removed] , I am a Year 10 student. I would like to know what you would do with the students from Year 10, How will our GCSE results be affected, and what plans do you suggest to deal with this situation?	An assessment of the subject and exam board syllabuses being offered at JLS will be undertaken to ensure that pupils are placed in schools where at least the same if not greater choice can be offered. JLS is the smallest secondary school currently operating in the borough, so it is likely that other settings will offer a wider variety of options at GCSE level.