

Statement to Cabinet 25-Nov-10 by Sarah Moore

When you make your decision this evening, I would like to ask you to please take into consideration the following:

- a) During the consultation earlier this year, the Council suggested 2 new schools with combined PAN of 320 pupils (1 North and 1 South), a reduction of 380 places from the original 3 schools, which is only half of the so-called surplus places. The council was clear there were only enough children in the North of the city for 1 school with a PAN of 160. However, you have now retained 2 schools in the North with a combined PAN of 294. This clearly shows that a large number of children are going to be FORCED to travel long distances from the South of the city to fill these places in the North, when Culverhay closes. It was also stated by Children's Services that it is not acceptable for the children in the North to have to travel to schools in the South, so why is it acceptable for the children in the South to have to travel to the North, this is certainly not fair?
- c) We keep being told that only 1/3 of the boys from Culverhay's local community choose to attend Culverhay, this actually equated to 39 boys from the local area in 2009, however, only 28 girls from Oldfield's local community chose to attend it in 2009, with nearly as many again choosing Hayesfield. Combined with the children from South Gloucestershire and Bristol, Oldfield still only managed to reach a total of 135 pupils out of a PAN of 192. So even with it's current Outstanding rating it is not attracting girls.
- d) A lot of people choose to travel long distances on reputations of schools, this will mean there is no evidence to suggest spaces will be freed up at either Beechen Cliff or Ralph Allen and our children will be the furthest distance from these schools than even a large number of children in the North, as admission distances are calculated in a straight line and does not take into account geography. This decision will therefore take away any CHOICE of school our children will have.

St Stephens school on Lansdown is 2.6 miles from Ralph Allen (in a straight line) and St Saviours in Larkhall is 2.5 miles, my postcode in the South West is 3.2 miles, which again gives clear evidence that very few places will be freed up at Ralph Allen for the Children in the South west.

We were told by Tony Parker that they are looking at moving our children out at the end of Year 9, which meant not only will they make GCSE choices at Culverhay for subjects that may not even be covered at the new school, they will have to deal with a transition at the beginning of their GCSE year. Then we were told by Cllr Watt that he was looking at moving the boys at the end of Year 8. So within 3 months of moving they would have to make choices for GCSE and in some cases miss out on subjects they could have otherwise taken at Culverhay because they are not covered at the new school. This clearly shows the transition has not even been properly considered.

I appreciate the decision to close a school is a very difficult one, however, it should only be taken if it is the right decision, and the closure of Culverhay clearly is not the right decision. It is the Authority's inability to address the residents requirements for a co-educational school on the site many years ago that has helped to see the school's intake reduce to the level it is currently at and it is only the Authority that can make the RIGHT decision to keep this school open for the community and see the intake rise significantly over the next few years, with the introduction of girls.