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Swinton ACADEMY

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Swinton Academy Significant Change Consultation Response

Proposal: To decrease the academy capacity from 1000 to 900 students

Trust response is highlighted in blue.

Respondent Summary

Stakeholder Group
- Staff members: 16
- Parents/Carers: 8
- Wider community: 2
- Total responses received: 25

One respondent identified as both a parent/carer and a member of the wider community.

Key Themes Raised

1. Support for Reduction Due to Falling Pupil Numbers
Most respondents felt that reducing capacity better reflects current and projected pupil numbers, declining birth rates and local demographics. Several noted that the school has been operating well below 1,000 places for some time.

2. Smaller Class Sizes Would Benefit Students
Many respondents believed that a lower capacity could lead to smaller class sizes, improved teacher-to-student ratios, better behaviour management, increased individual support and fewer classroom distractions.

Class sizes will be determined through the school's annual curriculum and financial planning processes, taking account of available funding, staffing levels and the teaching spaces available within the building. These decisions are made using established curriculum financial planning models that are widely used across the education sector to ensure the efficient use of resources, deliver best value for money and maintain teacher-to-student ratios that are consistent with national benchmarking.

The proposed reduction in capacity is intended to align the school's published capacity with projected pupil demand and the design of the new building, rather than to reduce class sizes.

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Any future decisions regarding class organisation will be determined by the Principal based on educational, operational and financial considerations.

3. Concerns About Future Demand and School Growth

A significant theme among those not in favour was concern that future birth rates or local demand could increase. Respondents questioned whether reducing capacity may restrict admissions and limit future growth.

The concern that future birth rates or local demand may increase has been noted. However, local demographic projections provided by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, together with discussions with both the Local Authority and the Department for Education, indicate that birth rates within the local area are continuing to decline, reflecting the national trend.

The proposed capacity of 900 students has been determined following consideration of these demographic forecasts and is considered sufficient to meet the projected demand for secondary school places within the local area over the medium to long term. The revised capacity also aligns with the design and operational requirements of the new school building.

4. Questions About the New Building Being Smaller

Several respondents questioned why the replacement school is being built smaller than the existing site and whether this would restrict future expansion.

It is proposed that the new building will be smaller in size to meet the demographic need in the local areas. Should demand for school places increase beyond current forecasts in the longer term, and additional teaching accommodation be required, the Local Authority would consider appropriate growth funding to support the provision of additional classrooms. Based on current demographic evidence and student projections, there is no identified need for additional accommodation beyond that proposed as part of this application.

5. Concerns About Staffing and Resources

Some respondents expressed concern that a reduction in capacity could lead to fewer teaching or support staff, reduced curriculum choice, or fewer extracurricular opportunities.

Staffing is determined through the school's annual curriculum and financial planning processes, taking account of pupil numbers, available funding and educational requirements. These decisions are made using established curriculum planning models to ensure the efficient use of resources while maintaining high-quality teaching and learning.

The proposed capacity of 900 students has been informed by local demographic projections and is considered sufficient to support a broad and balanced curriculum, together with a wide range of enrichment and extracurricular opportunities. The purpose of the proposal is to align the school's capacity with forecast demand and the design of the new building, rather than to reduce educational provision.

6. Facilities and SEND Provision

A number of comments highlighted accommodation constraints within specialist provision, suggesting that lower numbers would better match available space, improve safety and reduce overcrowding.

The proposed new building will be designed and constructed in accordance with Department for Education (DfE) guidance and relevant design frameworks, which are based on nationally recognised formulas for school accommodation and capacity. The building footprint will be developed to reflect these standards while also responding to the physical constraints of the site.

The proposed accommodation will therefore be planned to provide appropriate, safe, and functional spaces for specialist provision, taking account of student needs, operational requirements, and statutory design guidance. Capacity has been determined through the DfE's established methodologies, ensuring that the facilities are fit for purpose and capable of supporting the intended level of provision without compromising safety or the quality of the learning environment.

Overall Support for the Proposal

Including all 25 responses:
• In favour: 17 (68%)
• Not in favour: 6 (24%)
• No clear view/no comment: 2 (8%)

Excluding the two responses with no expressed view:
• In favour: 17 (73.9%)
• Not in favour: 6 (26.1%)

Conclusion

A clear majority of respondents supported reducing the academy's capacity from 1,000 to 900 places. The key concern raised by those opposed to the proposal was the potential impact on future admissions capacity and the academy's ability to accommodate increased demand in future years.

Executive View

Swinton Academy has operated significantly below its published capacity for the past 10 years. Local demographic projections indicate that pupil numbers are expected to decline further over the coming years, in line with wider national trends.

The proposed reduction in capacity will better align the school's published capacity with projected demand and the operational requirements of the new building. It will also support the Academy's current needs by reducing the level of in-year admissions and student mobility, which place significant pressure on staffing, curriculum delivery and school resources. High levels of in-year mobility are recognised as a risk to the quality and continuity of teaching and learning and can reduce the efficient use of resources. Aligning capacity with forecast demand will support greater stability within the school while ensuring resources are deployed effectively.

The Executive **supports** a reduction in capacity to 900.

Decision to be made: reduce Funding Agreement capacity to 900