

Wigan Council has put forward proposals to radically change the physical and hierarchical structures of many of our surrounding schools because of falling pupil numbers. They wish to close and merge schools because Central Government have made our money available for this latest educational idea. Having huge new shiny schools may seem fine in the short term but they come with their own unique problems. Wigan Council seems to have skimmed over the problems in their glossy brochures to parents.

Firstly, large schools are impersonal places and have to be managed extremely carefully to prevent discipline problems inside and outside the classroom. Anyone who has moved from a village community to a large town will realise that knowing each other can deter some criminal actions. This is because the risks of being seen, identified and receiving the consequences are high. The same can be said of schools, teachers can remember many pupils, but a changing set of fifteen hundred pupils will prove much more difficult for the memory than a school of 900 pupils. Vandalism will be more **difficult to control. Pupil's personal and educational problems will be harder to pick up and monitor.**

The second problem is one of access. On average, pupils will have to travel further to school if schools are merged. In one case, four schools are being merged onto one new site. If this proposal goes ahead there will be around two thousand pupils from 0 to 16 travelling to one site twice a day. Teaching and support staff will also have to make the same journey. This flies in the face of any **'Walk/Cycle to School' policies currently in place. Making pupils and parents walk further has never** been an incentive for leaving the car at home. Surrounding roads up to half a mile away will become increasingly congested.

The third problem is one of future proofing. Closing down school sites and merging them to new grassy fields will free up the old school sites for house building. Old colliery sites may also be earmarked for housing. House building may not happen straight away but it will happen soon. Wigan Council says the number of children within this area is in decline; this may not be true for long. Already new accents are being heard in this locality. New housing tends to attract new families with young children into the area. New families need new schools. More grassy fields will be found as the old school sites will have been built on. Worse still, the Council will have to extend existing huge schools because there are no grassy fields left. Welcome to the educational hypermarket.

Please think about these radical reforms carefully. They will affect your children and grandchildren, **your road use and our natural resources. Why can't money be made available to improve existing schools?** Wigan Council needs to be a lot more transparent and tell us why other options are not part of the consultation process.

Mrs L Brown