

Title: Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School
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Impact Assessment – Section 9 Academies Act Duty

1. Section 9 of the Academies Act 2010 places a duty upon the Secretary of State to take into account what the impact of establishing the additional school would be likely to be on maintained schools, Academies, institutions within the further education sector and alternative provision in the area in which the additional school is (or is proposed to be) situated.

Background

2. Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School (referred to hereafter as Barrow 1618) is a 4–11, primary school proposed to open in the village of Barrow in Shropshire in September 2012. It plans to open with an intake of 30 pupils from across all year groups. Once the school reaches full capacity it will offer 70 places. The school will be opened on the site of the former Barrow Church of England School which is being closed by the Local Authority in July this year as the result of a local re-organisation due to a combination of falling pupil numbers at Barrow Church of England School and a surplus of school places at schools in the area more generally. Outdoor learning and the natural environment will be embedded across the curriculum with an emphasis on practical ‘land-based skills’ and a ‘Forestry School’ on the site.

3. The proposer group are local parents and community members with a range of skills and a number of links across the community.

Catchment Area, its Characteristics and Admissions

4. The school’s admissions policy is compliant with the School Admissions Code and will take part in Shropshire’s Local Authority coordinated admissions round.

5. When the school is oversubscribed, after the admission of pupils with Special Educational Needs where the school is named in the Statement, priority will be given to those children who meet the following criteria:

- a. Children in public care;
- b. Siblings – children who have a sibling on the school roll at the time of application;
- c. Children who are eligible for the pupil premium;
- d. After the above; a maximum of 50% of the remaining places will be allocated to children who are members of, or who practice, their faith or denomination at a local Church of England.
- e. Children who live nearest to the school (based on straight line distance).

6. Annex B to the Funding Agreement contains a derogation to allow Barrow 1618 to prioritise children who qualify for the Pupil Premium in their oversubscription criteria as

indicated in category c above. Under categories b-e above, in the event that two applications are exactly the same after all other criteria have been taken into account the school would invoke their tie breaking policy. For Barrow 1618 this would be a decision made by the school Governors. It would be based on a random allocation competition by a trusted third party. In the case of twins or triplets from the same address, the school will admit both or all siblings regardless of whether this was to breach the key stage one class size regulation of no more than 30 in a class

7. Barrow 1618 will operate a waiting list for each year group. Where in any year the school receives more applications for places than there are places available, a waiting list will be determined solely in accordance with the oversubscription criteria. Where places become vacant they will be allocated to children on the waiting list in accordance with the oversubscription criteria.

8. The school does not have a self-defined catchment area. For the purposes of the impact assessment, we have created a proxy catchment area. The average distance travelled to primary school in Shropshire is 1.1 miles. The furthest distance travelled to primary school by a significant majority (90%) of pupils in Shropshire is 3.5 miles. We have therefore assessed the impact on all primary schools within a three and a half mile radius of the Free School which also captures some schools within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. It is officials' view that it will be unlikely that schools situated over 3.5 miles away from the Free School will be impacted or will be more than minimally impacted.

9. In the Shropshire district there is currently a 14.2% surplus of primary school places and the primary school population is projected to increase only slightly (2.8%) over the next five years. If no new primary school places were added there would still be a surplus of 11.8% in 2015/16 (see the forecast of places table for Shropshire below).

April 2010 Forecast (places)	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Demand	19,712	19,994	20,075	20,126	20,210
Surplus	3,202	2,920	2,839	2,788	2,704
% Surplus	14.2%	12.8%	12.4%	12.2%	11.8%

10. The village of Barrow and its surrounding areas are rural and under populated; which is reflected in the surplus capacity that exists at a large number of schools across this area of Southern Shropshire.

11. For the neighbouring district of Telford and Wrekin there are currently 15,602 primary places, with 13.7% of these places surplus. The LA is projected to see an increase in pupil numbers of 4.5% over five years which means the surplus will reduce to 9.9% surplus of places if no further primary places were to become available.

Local Authority View

12. Shropshire Council was invited to provide their views on the Free School proposal. They responded to that invitation on the 23 March reiterating their views and recommendation to their Cabinet in July 2011 that the original Barrow Church of England school be closed due to falling pupil numbers and existing surplus in the catchment area.

Their recommendation was for pupils from the closing Barrow school to be offered a place at Broseley Church of England school which has sufficient capacity to accommodate them. Shropshire Council still support this view and are not convinced that there is a need or demand for another school in this area. They also oppose the Free School because they understand one of the criteria to open a school is that it be in a disadvantaged area. They do not believe Barrow falls into this category because of the low number of FSM pupils across the catchment area.

13. Shropshire Council also believes that were Barrow 1618 to fill the 70 school places; this could potentially have an impact on the viability of neighbouring schools which already offer good education provision. However, they did confirm that they had not had sight of detailed plans about whether Barrow 1618 intended to offer alternative curriculum provision, though this information was available on the Barrow 1618 website as part of their own statutory public consultation. As Barrow 1618's proposed educational approach is different; celebrating the natural environment and focussing on outdoor learning as much as possible to deliver the curriculum, the Free School will enhance educational choice for local parents.

Representations

14. The public consultation process on the proposal to open Barrow 1618 Church of England Free School in September 2012 started on Monday 20 February and concluded on Friday 30 March. A total of 97 questionnaires were received via post and online.

15. The Academy Trust identified pupils, parents, staff and governors at the existing Barrow Church of England Primary School, together with other local parents, pre-school and secondary providers, local politicians, faith groups and the local community as significant stakeholders to the project, who should be sent information directly and invited to take part in the consultation.

16. A media release was prepared and sent to local press announcing the consultation process and the drop-in meeting. A second press statement was issued mid-way through the consultation process in response to a local newspaper interview. In the interview Broseley Town Council went on record saying they did not support the proposal and that they would not provide funding to the school. In response the Academy Trust issued a brief press notice stating that it felt it that it was important for public confidence to clarify that the Town Council had no role whatsoever in relation to funding the school. A third and final press release was issued to announce the results of the consultation.

17. The consultation showed that respondents' support for the school was two thirds to one third in favour; demonstrating strong support for the proposal, with a majority of respondents agreeing that the school should open in September 2012. This was echoed in the answer to the question of whether the school should enter into a Funding Agreement with the Secretary of State for Education, where again two thirds were in support of this.

18. While some argued that it was not unique, 86 per cent of respondents supported the school's proposed educational approach through which the natural environment is celebrated and outdoor learning is used as much as possible to deliver the curriculum.

19. While there was also some vocal opposition from Broseley Town Council to the proposal, this did not build any significant momentum during the consultation period. It is

clear that the educational approach promoted by the Academy Trust is widely supported, even amongst those who oppose the school itself. The same applies to the wraparound care offer.

20. Funding was one of the key themes of the consultation, with some stakeholders believing that existing local schools and Free Schools are in competition for the same funding pot. The Academy Trust worked hard throughout the period to clarify the issues around funding. They are also keen to work closely with other local schools and a priority will be to show how Barrow 1618 is a beneficial addition to the local family of schools, rather than a threat.

21. A questionnaire response rate of close to 100, particularly with such a small stakeholder group, is excellent and was principally due to the Academy Trust's ability to generate local awareness of the school. Representations from the local community outside of the consultation process have also been positive. This early demonstration of interest and support for Barrow 1618 is an encouraging sign in terms of its longer term sustainability.

Impact on other schools

22. We have considered the impact the Free School may have on all schools within an approximate 3.5 mile radius of the proposed site for the Free School. Below is a discussion of the likely impact on the nearest ten primary schools to the proposed site. Five of the schools fall within the responsibility of Shropshire Council (though one of these is closing, the existing Barrow CE School) and the remaining five fall into the authority of Telford and Wrekin Council. The table below shows that opening the Free School is likely to have a minimal impact on 9 schools and a moderate impact on 1 school. In considering the impact on other schools it is important to note that 29 of the 30 places available at the Free School this September will be taken by pupils attending the current Barrow school. Therefore, any impact on neighbouring schools would be felt only in the longer term. The immediate area around the location of the Free School is particularly rural (Barrow is a small hamlet with approximately 8 houses) so the school will need to draw from beyond this community to be viable. However, it is planned to have an intake of only 10 pupils per year, making it much smaller than all but one of the neighbouring schools. The table below provides summary information about the local schools.

Schools where the impact has been assessed as being minimal/moderate					
School name	Distance from Free School	Impact rating	Capacity	Pupils on roll	% of Y6 pupils attaining Level 4 in English and maths in 2011
Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Church of England Primary School	2.35 miles	Minimal	210	209	88
Buildwas Primary School	3.13 miles	Minimal	84	75	83

Barrow CE Primary School	0.00 miles	N/A	70	29	N/A
John Wilkinson Primary School	1.57 miles	Minimal	175	152	100
Broseley CE Primary School	1.62 miles	Moderate	252	195	88
Much Wenlock Primary School	2.21 miles	Minimal	168	126	68
William Reynolds Primary School	3.01 miles	Minimal	237	188	83
Woodlands Primary School	3.09 miles	Minimal	432	362	72
John Fletcher of Madeley Primary School	3.16 miles	Minimal	240	199	73
Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School	3.39 miles	Minimal	360	271	74

(a) Coalbrookdale & Ironbridge Church of England Primary School

23. This is an outstanding school with a full pupil roll and high attainment is therefore unlikely to be threatened by the Free School. Indeed, the school, as a neighbouring Church of England school, is working in partnership with the Free School. It has demonstrated its support for the Free School by becoming its education partner, and its Head Teacher has become an effective mentor for the new PD; providing advice and guidance on education planning and designing the new curriculum. We have therefore assessed the impact on this school as minimal.

(b) Buildwas Primary School

24. Buildwas primary school is another high performing school with a good Ofsted rating. Whilst as a very small school any loss of pupils could have a potentially significant impact, it is unlikely that many parent who would otherwise select Buildwas would select the Free School instead. This is because of the relatively high standards at Buildwas, the fact that it is a considerable distance away from the Free School (over 3 miles) and because as a non-faith school some parents wanting to send their children to it may not be interested in a faith Free School. We have therefore assessed the impact on this school as minimal.

(c) John Wilkinson Primary School

25. John Wilkinson Community Primary School is in Shropshire, 1.57 miles from the proposed site. It has capacity for 175 pupils (25 pupils per year group). There was a surplus capacity in this school of around 13% in 2010/11. The school was rated as outstanding by Ofsted in its last inspection in November 2011.

26. The school has excellent attainment at Key Stage 2, with 100% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and maths – well above the national average of 74%.

27. The school is located just over a mile and a half from the proposed Free School and there is a risk it will lose some pupils to the Free School. However, it seems unlikely that John Wilkinson will lose a significant number of pupils to the Free School, given its

outstanding Ofsted grade and excellent attainment. Additionally it is a non-faith school so some parents wanting to send their children to it may not be interested in a faith Free School. So, overall we assess the impact on this school to be minimal.

(d) Broseley CE Primary School

28. Broseley is a Church of England voluntary controlled Primary School that is 1.62 miles from the proposed site. It sits within the Shropshire boundary. The school has capacity for 252 pupils and had a surplus capacity of around 23% in 2010/11. The school was rated as good by Ofsted in its last inspection in September 2007. It received an interim inspection statement in May 2011 confirming the school had sustained its performance and therefore the next inspection has been delayed until at least summer 2012. The LA had originally intended that pupils from the closing Barrow CE School would be transferred to this school.

29. The Free School is located only 1.62 miles from Broseley CE Primary so may be attractive to parents who would otherwise select Broseley. In addition, both schools are CofE faith schools but some parents may prefer the Free School because of its innovative curriculum and learning approach. Against that, parents may prefer to select Broseley on the basis of its existing track record, rather than risk selecting a Free School that is as yet unproven. Moreover, as a larger primary school than Barrow 1618, Broseley, is likely to be able to remain viable even if it lost some pupils to the Free School. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on Broseley as moderate.

(e) Much Wenlock Primary School

30. Much Wenlock Primary School is a Community School and is 2.21 miles from the proposed site. It sits within the boundary of Shropshire. The school has capacity for 168 pupils and had a large surplus of around 25% in 2010/11. The school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in its last inspection in October 2009.

31. The school has below average attainment at Key Stage 2, with 68% of pupils achieving the expected level in English and Maths in 2011 compared with 74% nationally. Parents may therefore be attracted to an alternative, especially as the Free School is only 2 miles away. However, Much Wenlock is a non-faith school so some parents wanting to send their children to it may not be interested in a faith Free School. Furthermore, given that Much Wenlock is a significantly larger school than Barrow 1618 any loss of pupils to the Free School is unlikely to affect its long term viability. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on Much Wenlock as minimal.

(f) William Reynolds Primary School

32. William Reynolds Primary School is a Community School that is located 3.01 miles from the proposed site. It falls within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. William Reynolds Infant School and William Reynolds Junior School merged in November 2011 and the School now has capacity for 237 pupils. It had a surplus of 21% in 2010/11. The junior school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in its last inspection in September 2009.

33. The school has a good level of attainment at Key Stage 2 at 83% and has been continually improving since its last Ofsted inspection in 2009. Following the merger of the

infant and junior school; it had a recent survey inspection report on Mathematics in November 2011 and received a good rating.

34. William Reynolds is over 3 miles away from the proposed site and is located in a different borough from the Free School (and hence will be part of a different co-ordinated admissions round), which reduces the likelihood of the Free School drawing pupils away or encouraging significant numbers of potential pupils to choose the Free School. It is also showing progressive signs of improvement from a satisfactory to a good rating, making it increasingly attractive to parents. Furthermore, as a non-faith school some parents wanting to send their children to this school may not be interested in a faith Free School. Finally, given that William Reynolds is a significantly larger school than Barrow 1618 any loss of pupils to the Free School is unlikely to affect its long term viability. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on William Reynolds as minimal.

(g) Woodlands Primary School

35. Woodlands Primary School is a large Community School located 3.09 miles away from the proposed site. It falls within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. The school has capacity for 432 pupils and had a surplus of 16% in 2010/11. The school was rated as satisfactory by Ofsted in March 2011.

36. The school has a lower than average key stage 2 attainment level at 72%. Attainment in English is below average but Maths and Science are close to the national average. It's a school that is rapidly improving and for this reason, it is likely to retain pupils and attract new ones.

37. Given the below average attainment at Woodlands it is possible that some parents who would otherwise select it may find the Free School more attractive. However, against that the school is improving, is relatively far from the location of the Free School and in a different borough (meaning it will be part of a different co-ordinated admissions round), thereby reducing the likelihood of the Free School drawing pupils away or encouraging significant numbers of potential pupils to choose the Free School. Furthermore, as a non-faith school some parents wanting to send their children to this school may not be interested in a faith Free School. Finally, given that Woodlands is a large primary school and Barrow 1618 will only have an annual intake of 10 pupils any loss of pupils to the Free School is unlikely to affect its long term viability. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on Woodlands as minimal

(h) John Fletcher of Madeley Primary School

38. John Fletcher of Madeley Primary School is a Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary school located 3.16 miles away from the proposed site. It falls within the borough of Telford and Wrekin. The school has capacity for 244 pupils and was experiencing a 17% surplus in 2010/11. The school was rated satisfactory by Ofsted in June 2010.

39. The school's key stage 2 attainment for English and Mathematics is below the national average at 73%. There was a further Ofsted inspection report undertaken in December 2011 and demonstrates that the recent merger with the infant school and taking on a new Head and Leadership, sustained improvements are being made. Pupil's

attainment is still low but on track to achieve 79% at Key Stage 2.

40. The poor relative standards at this school may lead parents who would otherwise select it to apply for a place at the Free School instead, especially as the 2 schools share the same faith ethos and the Free School is offering an innovative curriculum and learning approach. This impact will be mitigated, however, by the fact that John Fletcher is located relatively far from the Free School, 3.16 miles, and is part of the Telford, not Shropshire, admissions round. Finally, given that John Fletcher is a significantly larger school than Barrow 1618 any loss of pupils to the Free School is unlikely to affect its long term viability. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on John Fletcher as minimal.

(I) Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School

41 Sir Alexander Fleming Primary School is a large community school located 3.39 miles away in the borough of Telford and Wrekin. The school has a capacity for 360 pupils and had a 25% surplus in 2010/11. The school was rated by Ofsted as satisfactory in June 2010.

42. Key stage 2 attainment in English and Maths at the school is at 74%. Improvements are being made particularly in English, as shown by the Ofsted survey report completed in October 2011 which rates this area as good.

43. The poor relative standards at this school may lead parents who would otherwise select it to apply for a place at the Free School instead. Any such impact will be mitigated, however, by the fact that John Fletcher is located relatively far from the Free School, 3.39 miles, and is part of the Telford, not Shropshire, admissions round. In addition, as a non-faith school some parents wanting to send their children to this school may not be interested in a faith Free School. Finally, given that Sir Alexander Fleming is much larger school than Barrow 1618 any loss of pupils to the Free School is unlikely to affect its long term viability. Overall, therefore, we have assessed the impact of the Free School on Sir Alexander Fleming as minimal.

Impact on Secondary Schools, Special Schools, Alternative Provision and FE institutions

44. Barrow 1618 will be a school admitting children of primary age. It will begin with an intake of 34 pupils across all year groups and will build up over subsequent years admitting 10 each year. It will provide SEN provision with the commitment to fully support the needs of pupils where the school is named in their statement of SEN. As such, it is unlikely to have any direct impact on local secondary schools, Special Schools, alternative provision and even less likely to impact post-16 and FE institutions.

Conclusion

45. Although there are surplus places locally, it is not expected that Barrow 1618 will impact significantly on other local schools, given its very small size and because, initially, its pupils will all come from the current Barrow school. It will boost choice in the area by offering parents a distinct education option and will provide some minimal competition to local schools in the longer term.

46. Any negative impact is likely to be outweighed by the positive impact that the Free School will have in providing added competition that can be expected to encourage other local schools to improve and innovate. Despite some local opposition to the Free School, it is apparent that there is a good level of support for Barrow 1618 from within and around the community. It would be the first Free School in Shropshire and is considered by some as an exciting venture. The innovative curriculum that is being proposed is appealing and well understood and an appreciation has been demonstrated for the additional choice and facilities that would be made available by the school. We therefore recommend that Ministers enter into a Funding Agreement with Barrow 1618 Free School.