

Emails received in response to the consultation paper

Message 1

I would just like to put my opinion forward. If this goes ahead, I know that children already go to Northfield from far parts of Billingham, but their parents had the choice to send them there. I chose not to. I have a 4 yr old who I would also not like to go there. You say we will have the choice of 2 good schools, but really we haven't. As St Michaels takes mainly catholic children. I think if this goes ahead this shouldn't be the case anymore. All children should have an equal right to go to their school depending on location. We chose our house because it was round the corner from the school!!! Also I have a child who is currently in Yr 7 at the Campus. I would like to know that his schooling isn't going to be disrupted in yr 11. Surely teachers will leave and go to other schools, rather than be placed where you put them. Therefore there will be no continuity, and a lot of disruption. This will be his most important year. These are a few of the fears I have. Thank you for reading this. I know you have public meetings, but we gave our opinion at the last one, and it didn't seem to do any good. The reason the people dropped joining the campus, is because all this stuff about closing it came out before the places were allocated. Surely you can see this?

Message 2

I am writing in response to the recently published literature on the above subject, which is open to comment by all that are likely to be affected by the proposals. I have two children a Billingham primary school, and I am fully behind the proposals outlined in the document. I am a school Governor at a Billingham Primary school, and also attended the BSF Presentation given by Ann Baxter at St. Michael's school last November. I understand some of the strong feelings that are inevitable when proposals for change are put forward, especially where children and their education are concerned. However, I believe that the proposals still leave the people of Billingham with a good 'choice' of schools. Obviously there are future pupils of Campus who may decide on Northfield and not St. Michaels and therefore have further to travel, but there will always be some people who will be adversely affected in some way when these changes are put forward. There are already many pupils who travel from the area of Marsh House Avenue to Northfield School, and so it's not as if these pupils would be the 1st to ever have to travel this route. Also, with St. Michaels being the choice of a lot of Catholics from all over Billingham, they too have always had a fair share of pupils travelling relatively long distances to school. Add to this the fact that Campus school pupils/parents are already voting with their feet and migrating to Northfield and St. Michael's anyway. Therefore, although the point is a valid one, I do not see the extended travel for some, as an issue that would stand in the way of this proposal.

The people of Billingham would be left with a choice of two excellent schools, on two separate sites, with one of them being a RC VA school. The presence of a Catholic VA school is obviously a very important issue with myself and my family. I personally, am pleased that we will still be able to send our children to a Catholic school with the reputation that St. Michael's has gained and maintained over a number of yrs now. And I also think it will benefit from new premises, as this was backed by both Joe White and the Diocesan representative at the talk in November of last yr. I therefore give you my full support in the plans you have outlined in the published document.

Message 3

I am writing this e-mail to let you know of my disappointment that the campus will become part of Northfield school. If I wanted my children to go to that school I would have sent them there and not to the campus. When this does happen I am not going to buy a new uniform for my children. My daughter only started campus last year and has already had to have two different uniforms because some idiot of a teacher started their in January and said the children looked scruffy in shirts and ties. Now they wear polo shirts all year and in my opinion they now look scruffy. We are on tax credits and can not afford to change the uniform again last year it cost me an extra

£120.00 pounds even though I had just bought the uniform a couple of months earlier. I have two children in the school and I am not willing to pay out anymore money for another uniform for them if it changes again, as far as I am concerned they can wear the one they have now until it doesn't fit any more. I am not the only parent that feels like this and am sure you will receive a lot more emails and letters about this.

Message 4

I look forward to the changes at the campus but one thing I do not look forward to is paying for another uniform. I had to buy two last year when my daughter was a year seven so I point blankly refuse to buy another one this school year if it is decided to change the uniform this year then I think the school or the education authority should pay I feel that I will not be the only parent who feels this way.

Message 5

I would like to make a few comments regarding the above. My son is due to move into Year 7 in September 2008. Our local school is Billingham Campus. However our choice of school is Northfield School without a doubt or hesitation! It frightens me to think that our son may have to go to Billingham Campus and I can assure you that I know other parents that feel exactly the same. I am deeply concerned about the Campus OFSTED report and follow-up visits. I have visited the Campus earlier this year and the general feeling of the school is not good. The children you see coming and going from the school look unkempt and the children are free to leave the school at lunchtime, which I think is not a good thing at all. I have seen them smoking before leaving the school premises. We were shown "the isolation room" during our visit. Talk about focusing on the negatives of the school!!! That was enough for us to make our decision.

Your proposal to merge the two schools as Northfield School on two sites is fair enough. However, you do not acknowledge in any literature the fact that the teaching standards at Campus are poor. We know this is true because of the OFSTED visits. You state that the follow-up visit in March showed satisfactory progress. I have read this report and it clearly states that there are still major issues with the standard of teaching.

There is nothing in your proposals to encourage people to choose the Campus site. The fact remains that all the staff currently at the Campus will stay there – how, therefore, can standards improve by 2009? Will the high standards and rules seen at Northfield be implemented at the Campus from September 2009? Will the uniform change and will the pupils be made to wear it properly? Will the good discipline rules implemented at Northfield be implemented at The Campus? I will not be choosing the Campus Site because I want my son to perform to his maximum ability by teachers who "teach" to a high level. My son fell in love with the feel of Northfield whereas his visit to the Campus left him feeling very vulnerable and dreading his move to comprehensive school. A bit of honesty would not go amiss, the Campus is failing in a major way and this solution may be seen to be improving the matters but as long as the teaching staff/senior staff remain employed at the Campus then I can't see the Campus improving or become appealing to the parents who want their children to do well.

Message 6

Having spent a lot of time researching and enquiring about your proposal to merge Billingham Campus and Northfield Secondary school I feel compelled to write this e-mail expressing my views. My husband was raised in the Wolviston Court area of Billingham and attended Northfield School himself, I however was raised in Middlesbrough, which until recently was where we were bringing up our children. After researching the league tables and reputations of Nursery's in the areas, right through to Secondary schools, we decided to move to Wolviston Court ourselves to give our son and daughter the best possible chance of a place at Prior's Mill CE then hopefully Northfield. To now discover that your intentions are to merge this school with Campus (which we also researched and disliked) is devastating. We have spent a lot of money ensuring our child's future and to have somebody else take over what should be our decision is infuriating.

The numbers are dropping at Campus for a reason and I suggest you spend your resources looking into that reason and rectifying it, simply changing the name to that of Northfields or placing the pupils into Northfield, is not considering what is in the best interest of Northfield or its pupils. You will in effect eliminate the problems at Campus but possibly create them at Northfield as I am sure, speaking to other parents as well as our in our opinion, that if this takes place children will be dropping out of Northfield. Our children and most importantly their education is of the utmost importance to myself and my husband and we would not be deterred from moving again if it meant their educational and social needs are met to the best of our ability. I hope that all parents' views are taken on board before you make your decision and you put our children and their educations before anything else.

Message 7

I am saddened to hear of the campus closure. What will happen to my son with his choices now Northfield, which is too far for him to travel to from Beamish Road or St Michaels, which as a non-catholic and a child with special educational needs probably won't accept him. I am disillusioned with what is on offer for [son's name] already, he needs specialist maths tuition, we do not have this in the RAPT programme and now we have the added problem of his secondary education. What will happen to him and others like him shipped out to other schools in the borough that have the facilities needed? I welcome some reassurance on my son's future.

Message 8

I am strongly against this proposal as I already have a daughter in year 8 who attends Northfield School and my son will be joining Northfield in 2011. I will be unable and do not wish to have one child at one school and the other at a separate school. I think the changes for him will interrupt his education and provide no stability when he will have to return to Northfield to finish his secondary education. This move will result in my Son having no sibling at the same school to help him through the first years at senior level. Where will all the funding come from? We will have no parental choice! This idea has not been properly thought about. In fact I have no doubt the amount of problems it will cause not only to parents but most importantly the pupils, and we have to remember that secondary education is very important. I also think that the education standard in the Billingham area will slip and then who will be blaming who?

Message 9

My son attends Priors Mill school, he goes into year7 in 2011, will he still be able to attend Northfield School in Thames Road ?

Message 10

Having just attended Northfields information evening, I feel I have to write to express my concerns at exactly what is happening with Billingham Schools.

My daughter currently attends Northfield School in Yr8 and after a rocky Yr7 transition is just starting to feel "settled" in a school that I personally am very proud of, I attended the School as did my husband and we have lived in walking distance for the past 21 years, mainly due to the fact I wanted my children to attend Northfield School - not Northfield School at the Campus Site. I have another daughter who will move to Northfield in 2011 and I wondered if you could answer my queries, as many parents query too, the impact of this change.

What happened to parental choice - My choice, as well as all parents will no longer exist if there is purely one school in Billingham. You cannot include St. Michaels as a choice for my child as neither are baptised catholic and as you know, up to Criteria 6 of the Admissions Policy allows only baptised catholics - St. Michaels may as well be totally out of the equation.. If they insist on 70% catholics how will my child be allowed a choice between **two** schools. I support the idea of a faith school for students of the faith however, feel that my personal choice has gone. From the information booklet sent out - the resulting opinion was that most parents wanted to keep 3 schools on 3 sites in Billingham, again what happens to parents' choice.

If the funding for BSF does not come into affect until 2014 why do anything now. I would be so very angry if I had to transport one child to Campus Site whilst another went to Thames Road site - whilst this would be the least disruption for Northfield School, it would be the absolute most disruption for my child - "Every Child Matters" doesn't come into play here at all.

From the projected figures last night, that I seen, by 2018 the student numbers will be back up to what they are in 2-3 years time - then what happens, does Stockton Council have to build another school - bearing in mind their obligation to provide "from Statutory Guidance from the Secretary of State" :-

School Organisation Planning Requirements

5. LAs are under a statutory **duty** to ensure that there are sufficient school places in their area, promote high educational standards, ensure fair access to educational opportunity and promote the fulfilment of every child's educational potential. They **must** also ensure that there are sufficient schools in their area and promote diversity and increase parental choice.

Also,

14. When considering the closure of any school causing concern and the expansion of other schools in the area, the LA should take into account the **popularity with parents of alternative schools**.

As a parent, I only recently found out that currently 300 students are bussed into Billingham from out of the area and the hope is that once a new "Academy" is built this will reduce. If I lived on Crooksbarne estate and was offered a place for my child at an Academy built at Tilery, I would still choose to send my child to a school I know they would be comfortable and confident in.

As part of the consultation Procedure laid down by Law in Section 15 of the Education and Inspections 2006 Act, I would query massively whether "students" "school staff" or "parents and carers" have been consulted and explained to adequately. Any question asked last night could not be answered, as no-one, it seems knows the answers. Yes there was an open debate but no answers could be given.

CAN ANYONE SAY RIGHT NOW, WHETHER ANY THERE WILL BE ANY DIRECT IMPACT ON MY CHILDS EDUCATION IN 2010 UP UNTIL 2015.

If my child has to move to Marsh House Avenue site for a period of time - how will that be managed - will I have to pay for that ? It is likely that if Yr7 moves, my child will be affected, and I would like to make an informed decision right now, as to whether I decide to send her to a school which may, or may not be expanded or reduced in size ??

Has it ever been considered that many students travel from out of the area to St. Michael's - what happens about the students in Billingham if St. Michaels is full of students out of the area ?

A combined School of 1400 students would be, from a transport view - a headache to everyone living on Thames Road, Billingham - how would that be managed - if BSF money is used to improve the infrastructure of the roads - how much of this "money" will be used to improve the schools.

What happens to the staff at Campus ?? do they have to apply for their jobs at Northfield ??

Standards - what happens to them, surely if Northfield at Thames Road is 60% and Campus is 40% - together they would be 50% ???

What happens about Uniform ? is BSf money going to be used to re-cloth all of the students currently at Campus with a Northfield Uniform ?

The impact on St. Michaels is very minimal - there will be no split site for them, no increase in numbers - why cant St. Michaels stay where it currently is. If numbers are not going to change, what is the point in their move. Yes, the building is ageing but surely its less disruptive to refurbish rather than knock down.

I remember when Brunner and Furness were two schools on the same site - the gang warfare that existed was memorable to say the least. Who will police the "Northfield" and "Campus" Kids. I think its ignorant to say that there will be a united "Northfield" School.

If, as in your consultation paper , the proposal would not save any money for the council what is the benefit of all of this.

In view of the recent "banking" and "credit crunch" will any of this actually happens - or are we all just assuming it will.

Message 11

I would like to protest about the proposed closure of Billingham Campus. The council held public meetings to ascertain the wishes of those concerned. What on earth was the point when those wishes are to be ignored? The head teachers from St Michaels, Northfield and Billingham Campus all favoured the 3 school system and believed it would work. The council has simply ignored the headmasters - how can it be right that bureaucrats make the decision when the opinions of the educators with many years experience are to be discounted.

It is stated that the Campus is shutting for two reasons. Firstly, because of falling numbers. This is a very short-sighted reason as the numbers are predicted to rise in 2018. The second reason is because of the poor Campus results. This year the Campus GCSE results were only 9% behind Northfield, the so called successful school.

I fear however, that the decision has already been made. My daughter is in year 9 at Billingham Campus. I want unequivocal assurances that there will be no detrimental effect on her education. I'm worried that teachers leave because of uncertainty and morale will be low and her GCSE results will suffer as a consequence. In effect my child will be attending a dying school in her two most important years, 10 and 11. I want my daughter to have exactly the same quality of education as those on the Northfield site and also at St Michaels.

Message 12

I am writing to protest most strongly at the proposed closure of Billingham Campus School and the subsequent enlargement of Northfield School. What, I wonder, was the point of the public meetings in Billingham? It was evident that the people of Billingham were in favour of three schools, as were the three Headmasters. It seems that the Council has rode roughshod over those views and ignored the advice of those actually involved in the teaching of children. My daughter left Billingham Campus in 2007 and loved every moment of it. She and I, found the teachers to be enthusiastic and committed in every way and she received an excellent education. She passed all of her exams and exceeded expectations, with an A* and three As being amongst her results. My son is now in Y10 at the Campus and I want the same for him. How can this be the case if he is in a school with no future?

I am very angry that we have been put in this position. Why does the Campus always get the rough end of the deal? After all, GCSE results this year were only 9% behind Northfield. Mr Reach has put great effort into improving the facilities at Campus, only for the Council to want the hallowed St Michael's to take them over. Perhaps the people behind all of this would feel differently if their child went to the Campus. Perhaps then they would not seem to encourage the ridiculous and false bad press the Campus receives and instead allow it to be a successful and

viable school, with pupils attending from all social backgrounds. Please give me an assurance that my son's education will not be sabotaged. Keep the Campus open.

Message 13

I am writing to offer my comments and opinions on the above merger.

I have two children, one aged 14 who is currently in Year 9 of Billingham Campus School and my youngest son is 10 years old in year 6 of Roseberry Primary. I am currently in the process of choosing a secondary school preference for our son. I do have major concerns about the above proposal, both of my children are at a crucial stage of their Education. Next year, when the proposed merger would take place, my Son will begin studying for his GCSEs. Whilst I am aware that it is expected for the site to be used for the next five years, the restructuring of staff would certainly begin to impact before he finishes his Secondary school education in the summer of 2010. As a staffing protocol has been agreed in principal, ringfencing positions this could lead to many of the more experienced staff transferring to the Northfield site and I have concerns about the amount and quality of the staff remaining at the Campus site, teaching my Son in preparation for his exams.

With regard to my youngest Son, I am unable to make an informed decision regarding his Secondary education as Stockton Borough Council are unable to answer specific questions regarding what will happen if the proposal is accepted. The majority of decisions will be made by Northfield School Governors, who are unable to make any plans until the proposal is passed, once it has been passed there will only be a six month period to make massive decisions impacting on the lives and education of hundreds of children. My concern is that were I to send my son to Campus school (which would in effect be Northfield school when he starts next September) there are concerns as to whether there will be a good quality and range of teaching staff by the time he takes his GCSEs in 5 years time. If there is no further intake into the Campus site, where is the Social aspect of my Sons education? There could effectively be only one year group in the school in five years time. How can a full curriculum with split ability classes be facilitated in this case? Surely there will not be 3 teachers for each subject on a site with 170 children? Will he be taking his lessons in the school hall as the rest of the school is deserted? These are all questions which cannot be answered; SBC cannot guarantee that my children's education will not be adversely affected by this hasty merger.

Whilst I appreciate the figures and thinking behind this I fail to see the rush for the merger to go ahead. Surely it would make sense to merge 3 years hence in order for both Governing bodies to put plans into place and ensure the transition is as smooth as possible. There is no immediate rush for this merger to go ahead as BSF funding does not become available for a few years. There has been much discussion around the impact for the staff and governing bodies yet the fate of the children has been left in the balance with no one offering clear guidance or guarantees.

The council cannot guarantee that my children and other children in the same position will not have their education adversely affected by the merger and this should be paramount.

Please allow the two schools to work together to provide safe and constructive planning for our children's futures by delaying the actual merger until 2011/2012. By allowing this it would prevent and alleviate many of the concerns and issues regarding this merger. By closing Billingham Campus school, the council are taking away any parental choice and diversity which according to council legislation MUST be provided for parents and children. St Michaels as a faith school is not a realistic option for the majority of parents in Billingham and the criteria for this school is very strict which leaves no choice at all for Billingham Parents.

We are told that according to statistics, there will not be enough children by 2014 to justify 3 schools but what happens if the statistics are wrong, what if we have an unexpected baby boom. Will Northfield end up as a 1600+ school with children being taught in portacabins? Will we end up with a situation like Hartlepool?

If we are given 3 years before we merge at least the council can judge whether the statistics are following predictions, as Billingham Campus already have more pupils than predicted for this year. What if there is a change of government and BSF is scrapped? This could happen and then there is no £150 million. What about our children then? If the merger must take place then please allow us 3 years to ensure that we can put plans into place to safeguard our children's futures.

Our children are not statistics they are people, that will shape the future of this area and they are also the most precious thing to us as parents. They only have one shot at their education and closing Billingham Campus could ruin their education. If the merger takes place would you want your child to be educated on the Billingham Campus site? There are too many unanswered questions by the council and Northfield head and Governors. It terrifies many parents that their are no straight answers and guarantees for their children's education. Please allow us more time to prepare and safeguard our children's futures.

Message 14

I would just like to voice my concerns about the reorganisation of schools in Billingham.

My first concern is my child is currently a pupil at Billingham Campus School and I would like to know what kind of education he would be getting if teachers start leaving the school. I am told this will not happen but I refuse to believe this as the moral at the school is bound to be low, there is no future planning for them. If the Northfield governors are to run the merged school, they don't know our teachers, would it not be unreasonable to assume they will pick the teachers from Northfield because they know them? The teachers and head teacher at this school are brilliant and this years GCSE results show an improvement.

In your leaflet it is said that the only way three schools could be an option is to make them 750 pupils each, it then goes on about reducing St. Michaels and Northfield numbers, 'places that parents want for their children', I'm sorry but where is my option to leave my child where he is. I do believe the Council has ignored the wishes of Billingham residents. I do not like the idea of a super size school of 1400 pupils or more and am concerned that this number of pupils in one school would not be beneficial. The reason pupil numbers are falling at Billingham Campus is the headline in the newspaper saying the school is closing.

If Northfield School is going to take all Campus School children in the future, what will happen to Thames Road? This must be improved but I can not see how this could happen. If the 'merge' goes ahead, what will happen to the sports clubs, classes? Will there be two teams of each sport? Sport is very important to pupils and I feel this has been overlooked. What happens to the school uniforms, children need a sense of identity, but I can't see which uniform each child will wear especially if both sites are considered to one school. Will there be building work on either site that would disrupt the childrens education?

I don't think it fair that St. Michaels School will get a brand new building on the site of Campus. Will future Campus children have a chance of going to that school if they are not catholic due to the geography of where they live? What if the pupils from Norton still want to go to St. Michaels school, will it be took into consideration that some children from Billingham may not want to go to Northfield. It is quite a long walk for Year 7s.

I do not believe there has been sufficient consultation, too many questions left unanswered and it has all been rushed through. What happens if the proposal is rejected?

Message 15

I am protesting strongly against your proposal to close Billingham Campus School. I have two children attending the school, year 9 and year 7 and I am very worried as to the etrimental effect this will have on their education.

It was quite clear from the public meetings held in the summer, that everyone was in favour of the 3-school system, including the headmasters and teaching staff. I'm confused as to why these meetings were held when the wishes of the parents/teaching staff/governors were clearly ignored.

As much as this is at 'proposal' stage, it feel a decision has already been made and would like your comments and assurances as to how you are going to guarantee my children receive the same education as those on Northfield and St Michael's sites. How can one school on two separate sites work?and when the campus site is given to St Michaels and there is only the Northfield site, how can a school with such high numbers of children work.....surely the children will get lost in the system.

In addition I would like to comment on the Campus School's GCSE results this year, which were only 9% behind Northfield, yet poor results were one of the reasons for closing the school!

Message 16

We would like to put forward our concerns as parents and students about the proposed merger of Billingham Campus and Northfield Schools.

Schools minister Jim Knight has declared that "this government is committed to rebuilding or refurbishing every secondary school". If this is the case why is the proposal to close Billingham Campus being considered. Why not refurbish the school instead.

Of the two options offered to Billingham, option A - retaining the three reduced schools was preferred by the attendees of the Campus consultation meeting and by the majority of the respondents to the analysis conducted by NWA. Therefore the consultation process has deemed option A the most acceptable - yet this option appears to no longer exist !

While it is appreciated that student admissions at Billingham Campus are declining - it has been documented that admissions are expected to rise post 2017. How will Northfield be expected to cope with this increase? Surely access to Northfield via Thames Road will become a bigger problem for students, residents and motorists the bigger the school gets.

If the two schools are to merge - why can't the children from Northfield move onto the Billingham Campus site which is geographically better positioned to cope with the increased size of the school. The Campus site is more central in Billingham, more accessible by foot and car via Marsh House Avenue and Neasham Avenue, is on a major bus route and close to the sixth form college. Could St Michaels then take on the Northfield site, as a number of children travel from outside of the Billingham area anyway.

With regards to the BSF many of the projects are behind schedule. How is this going to impact on the future? Also with the current financial difficulties facing the government is this funding guaranteed?

Would it not be more beneficial to everyone concerned, especially the children, to merge these two schools at a date in the future when the funding has been received and all the necessary extensions or refurbishments have been completed and the children can then move onto their new site with minimal disruption to everyone?

As a parent of children who are currently achieving very well at Billingham Campus - I am very concerned that this proposal will undoubtedly disrupt their education and I think that it is very unfortunate that the hard work undertaken by our headmaster David Reach in securing the new buildings on the Campus site will be forgotten.

Message 17

We currently have a child in Northfield School (Year 7) and our second child will go into Northfield School in September 2014. As Parents of Children in Billingham we are extremely concerned regarding the future education of children in this area from 2014 onwards.

We feel that Stockton Borough Council have not been forthcoming with all the relevant details regarding the amount of places that may be needed by 2016-2018. Most parents of children in Billingham who will be directly affected by decisions made have not seen the figures that clearly show and increase in the number of places need from 2016. Until this week we were unaware and had been led to believe that we were looking at 1200 places. Two information evenings have been held by Northfield and Campus Schools and Governors clearly show the current decline until 2016 when we begin to see an increase. Therefore we feel that SBC have neglected to look beyond the 7 years. A representative from SBC tried to assure me that Northfield will only increase to a 1200 place school (currently already over 1100 and bursting at the seams).

I am not convinced that by 2016 we will remain at 1200 there is a real danger of a steady increase which will result in the school becoming too big to provide a good standard of education and facilities for all children attending.

St Michaels School has indicated that they wish to retain the 70/30 ratio. As a non-catholic it is extremely difficult to gain a place at this school. No one has been able to say how many applications are refused each year I know many people who have been refused a place. If you live in Northfield catchment and put St Michael's school as your 1st choice you were running a big risk as failure to gain a place meant you didn't get into Northfield either so many parents played safe and put them off applying in the first place. A SBC representative has said that St Michaels will increase the non catholic intake if need be he also went on to say that if people preferred St Michaels the authority could have St Michaels offering 1200 places and Northfield going down to 900 he made it sound easy as if the authority only has to ask and everyone concerned will agreed to this. These are empty words

We are also concerned about road safety many roads are narrowed by parked cars Sheer volume of traffic going to /from Northfield is already a problem. Local children walk to school and need to be able to cross the road safely on all roads not just Thames Road. SBC do not seem overly concerned as again they consider the overall increase to be so small we won't even notice it. We already notice it today.

Whilst nothing will happen for several years 2000 eco friendly homes will be built opposite Wynyard. This has not been taken into consideration as it is too far off. This could dramatically change the future figures (along with any future development that we don't know about).

It seems extremely negative and short-sighted to make such major changes to cover the next 7 years. Will there be funding available if we haven't got enough school places and who will ultimately be responsible? May be it doesn't matter we will simply build another school meanwhile children's education will suffer. The children are the most important part of this whole process and I think that has been forgotten.

Message 18

My concerns are they may end up having more than 1200 pupils at Northfield which is well above the guidelines. I think it would be better to have an even split between St Michaels and Northfield, then there would be more places for pupils who live near St Michaels and the campus to attend a school nearer to where they live, so they have a choice.

Message 19

I am a parent of a child going into Year 7 in September 2009. I would like to put my objection forward regarding closing Billingham Campus school.

School Site

My daughter has been attending Billingham Campus School throughout Year 5. She feels really comfortable in attending Billingham Campus. This would be her catchment school, it is less than 5 minutes walk without crossing any busy roads from Home. Northfield School is about 25 minute walk crossing quite a few main roads. We are unable to take her in the car because her youngest sister still attends Bewley Juniors and we need to get her to school. If she got the bus it would be two buses to get to school on a morning and she would have to set off very early to get to school.

School Buildings

My daughter is wanting to become a chef when she finishes school and after visiting Northfield, Billingham Campus and St Michael's Schools, Billingham Campus has a practically brand new Technology Suite which includes a very good Home Economics Section both of the other schools do not have new facilities. My daughter also play the cornet and the Campus has a very good music room again neither of the other school do. The Campus has a newly refurbished Gym and Sports Facility which includes a swimming pool. None of the other schools have a swimming pool.

Why can't the Campus stay on this site and build the new school for Northfield and move St Michael's onto Northfield's Site? The Campus is situated on a main road with easy access. Northfield's entrance is also on a main road but it is terrible road because of the houses directly on the road cars are parked both side and it is really difficult to access the school early morning or when school finishes this will get worse when all of the Campus pupils move onto the site. Why should St Michael's get the benefit of the Technology Suite, the CLC and the Gym? Why can't the Campus and Northfield get the benefit of these especially when Northfield School is a Sports School? The only thing lacking is the Gym that Northfield has but then the Campus has a swimming pool.

Consultation

I don't think we have been given enough information about this reorganisation it seems quite a few parents haven't received all the documentation about the proposals and the public meetings. I have only just found out after attending the meeting held by Billingham Campus school on Tuesday that there was a meeting in July I didn't know about and I have been asking my friends and family who live in Billingham and they hadn't heard anything about a second consultation. Also the meeting you arrange seem to be arranged for during the day. In this day and age most parents work so why have meeting arranged for during the day. This seems as though you don't want parents to actually turn up to meetings and have their say about what is going to happen to their child's education. I also want to ask has anybody actually consulted with the students about what they would like to happen to their schools after all doesn't every child matter. My daughter was definitely not consulted about the changes and I know none of my friends children have either. After the meeting on Tuesday I know that neither of the Head Teachers, Governors, Staff and Children want this closure to happen so why has this been suggested.

September 2009 and beyond.

We were told on Tuesday night that it would be too short a time to take on board all of the changes in September and my daughter would attend the Campus if that was our choice, but after that the each lot of Y7 could go to Northfield. What I don't want to happen is my child's year group being the only year group left in the school when she comes to her final year. I am worried about staff moral, staff leaving, also my child not getting the full curriculum taught to her. I know nobody has any answers. My youngest daughter will be going into secondary school in 2012. Will this still be ongoing and will my youngest daughter attend Northfield.

It has been a difficult decision to make when you are wanting us to choose which school to send my daughter to when we do not know what will happen to the schools until February 2009.

I understand about why these changes are being put forward, about falling school rolls but who is to say in 10 years time the rolls start to increase and there is not enough places in the two school to cope with the increased rolls and then a new school will need to be built. You are toying with so many children's education and I don't think you have actually spoke to many of the parents in Billingham and this is all about saving Stockton Borough Council money and not about the Children's Education. Please think very carefully about the education of the children in Billingham. They are our future.

Message 20

I should like to make some comments on the school changes proposed for the Norton and Billingham area. I understand these comments will be forwarded to the appropriate body and should be displayed somewhere on the LEA website, or where members of the public can see them.

- 1) Having attended the first meeting at Northfield school with the LEA representative regarding Building schools for the future I can still see no reason why the LEA feels that there has to be change for ALL schools in the area. Northfield is deemed a good school and should not be being forced to change just for the sake of change. The publicity for this meeting was not satisfactory.
- 2) I object to the proposal to merge Billingham Campus school into Northfield school starting in Sept 2009. Whilst appreciating that there is expected to be a declining roll at Campus for the next few years by 2018 the pupil numbers are predicted to rise again which could lead to Northfield school eventually having at least 1,400 pupils. By the LEAs' own admission this is too large for a successful school so the area should not be forced into this. There also appears to be several sets of projected figures all different and which may or may not turn out to be accurate in reality. Other than the fact that ALL schools have to change (for no apparent reason) there does not appear to be any logical objection to retaining three schools of around 800 pupils each (or three schools of 900, 800, 700 pupils). If this happened and the pupil numbers rise again the schools could cope with enlarging again.
- 3) By reducing the number of the schools in both the Billingham area to one non faith school, and if the proposed academy is built in Norton reducing the Norton area to one school, the LEA has completely removed any parental choice for all parents from both the Billingham and Norton areas. This would be compounded by the fact that the number of Norton pupils currently attending Billingham schools has been completely discounted in the current proposals on the principle that if Norton builds an Academy parents will choose this option. As a result there is unlikely to be any places available in Billingham schools as they will already be full so parental choice is non existent. As a parent from Norton I feel it is highly unlikely that I would chose an academy school, especially if it built on the proposed Tilery site and object to the fact that effectively we will have no choice over which school a child from Norton or Billinghams can attend.
- 4) Whether or not a school is deemed a good school by parents is determined as much by the ethos of the school and not just by the exam results that school attains. At present Billingham has three schools which all have a very different ethos, but this allows parents to choose the

school that will suit their child. Merging Northfield and Billingham will undoubtedly change the entire nature of the school which is likely to be detrimental to Northfield school however hard the staff try and manage the change.

- 5) Given the current economic and political climate it seems highly likely that either because of a change in government or to lack of finances that there will not in fact be the monies available in 2114 to finance the Building schools for the future plans this might mean the planned changes to the buildings are not implemented. If the phased merger of Northfield and Billingham Campus is allowed to go ahead from 2009 this could ultimately be a disaster for the LEA and for the children of Norton and Billingham as with only one non faith school available the LEA could end up with either too few school places available for the pupil roll or with a school on the Northfield site far too large to be successful in building that are unsuitable. However if the planned merger was not undertaken now but was planned to happen in one stage in 2114 and the financial or political situation changes (which can happen very drastically and very quickly as demonstrated over the last few weeks) with two schools plus the faith school still in existence the LEA would be much more able to manage the situation and change the proposals if they need to. This would also remove many of the problems that will happen with the proposed phased merger and which will occur however skilled the staff are at managing the change.
- 6) The traffic problems created for a larger school on the Northfield site would be severe as the road infrastructure would be overwhelmed.
- 7) The times set by the LEA for parents to attend the school to voice concerns were totally unacceptable for the vast majority of parents as they finished at 6pm on weekdays which is before most parents can get to the after work. If the LEA really wanted to know the opinions of parents from the area there should have been some evening sessions and possibly weekend sessions. The very first meetings on the Building schools for the future plans were not published properly as was admitted at the time and the timing of these recent meetings, together with the fact they have been held so close to the closing date for comments just adds to the feeling that it is a fait accompli and that the LEA have no intention whatsoever of listening to parental or any other points of view.

In summary I should like to record my objections to Stockton LEA proposal to merge Northfield and Billingham Campus, and move St Michaels to a new school on the current Campus site.

Message 21

I feel the whole reorganisation process has been a forgone conclusion from the outset. Stockton Council always wanted to close Billingham Campus in order to reduce pupil places in Billingham and save the significant cost of turning around a failing school. Below I set my reasons:

1. In the initial consultation booklet closing Billingham Campus was suggested as one of the only 2 options. Suggestions like these have a tendency to become self fulfilling prophecies.
2. The consultation suggested residents could put forward alternative suggestions for the reorganisation. This is a ridiculous suggestion as only the Council would have the necessary figures and knowledge to propose a viable solution.
3. The council postponed the publication of the Billingham Campus OFSTED report by launching an appeal against the OFSTED conclusions which put the Billingham Campus into Special Measures. The appeal was foolhardy and highly likely to fail; based on previous appeals and the fact the best that could be realistically hoped for is lifting the school from Special Measures into Serious Weaknesses, still a failing category. The only reason I can see for the appeal was to delay the publication of the OFSTED report until after the consultation process was complete.
4. The reason that delaying publishing the Billingham Campus OFSTED report is so significant is that from the Council Cabinet minutes (Appendix 1) it states that the OSC would expect the 4 failing schools in the Borough to close and reopen as academies. Council Officers must have known this (unless they were negligent in their research) and

- would I believe be duty bound to inform councillors. Billingham residents at 3 public meeting, Secondary Head Teachers, Billingham Town Council & the Billingham Partnership, all said they wanted to retain all 3 secondary schools in Billingham. So delaying the publication of the Billingham Campus OFSTED report meant that this Fact did not have to be disclosed to the residents of Billingham- suspicious
5. When I asked the 7 Labour councillors if they would support the case for keeping Billingham Campus open all but one would not declare either way – suspicious for a group usually only too eager to express an opinion. Barry Woodhouse who did support Billingham Campus staying open was promptly removed from the council education committee – highly suspicious
 6. The council proposed making Billingham Campus an academy. However when the case was put to government it was rejected. It didn't meet all the criteria. Council officers knew the criteria. Why would they submit a weak case unless they wanted it to be rejected.- very suspicious
 7. Stockton Council then proposed a Federation. From the initial consultation it was abundantly clear the necessary co-operation between the schools would not have been forthcoming. So why pursue this avenue? The governing bodies of both schools duly rejected the suggestion.
 8. Why did the council speak in such a disparaging way about Billingham Campus in the local press unless they wanted to poison the minds of readers against retaining the school? Councils have a duty to support their schools. They should be not condemning them.
 9. We are now faced with a merger of two schools which results in the loss of a secondary school in Billingham. The very thing the residents of Billingham expressly said they did not want. The main reason for the merger seems to me to be that the Council wanted to close Billingham Campus all along. They wanted to close Billingham Campus to reduce secondary places in Billingham and save the expense of having to invest a significant amount of money over a number of years to turn around a school that OFSTED said was failing. Billingham Campus would always struggle to match the other secondary schools in Billingham and meet National standards for exam results because of its high proportion of children from a poor academic and financial backgrounds. OFSTED do not take enough account of this when coming to their conclusions.
 10. The latest publication to Billingham parents entitled "Reorganisation of Secondary school in Billingham" shows how little regard Stockton Council have for the Residents of Billingham. First, the paper is not on council Headed paper as you might expect of an official document. Second, it says the "Majority of residents" at the public meetings were in favour of retaining three Secondary schools in Billingham. In fact this is being economical with the truth, as all Billingham residents at the public meeting wanted to retain three secondary schools. Not one resident spoke against three schools or in favour of any other option. Third, the paper almost suggests that two Billingham primary schools may close. This is not the case. On this point, instead of reprinting the paper to make this point clear, the Corporate Director of children, Education and Social Care inserts a letter of clarification on official headed note paper. I would term the letter more an apology than clarification. Why upset staff governors and parents of two primary schools and then clarify or apologise when there is no need. In my opinion this comes close to showing contempt for Billingham residents.
 11. I do not believe that it is just coincidence that Billingham Campus was the School where the last public meeting was held, and is the last school to have a drop in session. Both the public meeting and the drop in session were and are deliberately at the end of the periods of consultation – very suspicious. It is a way of limiting the backlash that will result from the proposals.
 12. Why hold drop in sessions rather than a public meeting as before. I believe it is yet another way to minimise the backlash from the residents of Billingham.

13. Throughout the period of consultation it appears to many residents that Stockton council have sought to close Billingham Campus, minimise opposition to the closure option and stifle discussion between Billingham residents and the council
14. In a conversation at the public consultation meeting at Billingham Campus last year I asked for the comments of Lionel Danby & David Reach on the recent poor OFSTED report. I was told "That is not public knowledge yet" and was asked not to make comment on it during the meeting. However, when I suggested to both, that closing Billingham Campus would provide Stockton Council with a convenient solution to reducing secondary places and save the expensive of having to turn around a failing school, Mr. Danby said in front of David Reach as a witness, "We (the council) have no intention of closing Billingham Campus." Less than a year later that is exactly what they are going to do.
15. At a Low Grange Residents committee meeting when asked about the future of Billingham's three secondary schools, which the residents want to keep open, Alex Cunningham said "Don't worry, with 7 Labour Councillors in Billingham we are more than able to look after education in Billingham." What a shame they didn't.

With comments like these, which prove to be false promises, from both Council Officers and Councillors, is it any wonder that there is a large section of Billingham residents who feel they can no confidence or trust in either the Council or its Councillors .

My reasoning may not be exactly right (because I don't have the ear of the Stockton Labour party or Council Officers) but the events lead to the inexorable conclusion that Stockton Council wanted to close Billingham Campus School from the start. They would want to do this to reduce secondary places in Billingham and to save money. Building Schools for the future gave Stockton Council the means to achieve this end.

Message 22

I would like to take this opportunity to put forward my objection to the proposed closure of Billingham Campus School and the merger with Northfield.

This proposal must not be actioned. I believe that insufficient public consultation has been made. Only 2 in 10 people wanted this merger to go ahead and 4 in 10 people opposed this. The required public consultation since publishing this proposal has not been undertaken. The decision has been made by the council, and not the people of Billingham, that the schools will be merged. There are no alternative plans and this is not acceptable.

I strongly believe that there is no guarantee that the BSF money will be forthcoming. Merging the two schools at the moment is complete madness. The merger of two schools will make Northfield a very large school. I believe that this will not be in the best interest of the children attending.

If, in the unlikely event that it is proved to be in the best interest of Billingham students, and the schools do merge, the location of Northfield School is not ideal. I believe the present site of Billingham Campus to be much more appropriate, as it is far more central.

If the proposal goes ahead and the two schools merge, I am at a loss as to why Northfield School Governors and Staff will take over the running of the school with no input from the Governors and staff at Billingham Campus. Surely the best interest of the children would be a merged management structure

I have asked for assurances that the education of the children at Billingham Campus will not be affected if the planned merger takes place. I have not been reassured by the replies. I feel that these plans will disadvantage the children at Billingham Campus. I feel that whilst the children at Northfield will not really be affected by the situation, at least until the schools merge into one site, the children at Billingham Campus will suffer from the inevitable and detrimental effects of both staff and pupils attending a school that is winding down. The practicalities have not been decided and it is my understanding that this will not be decided until after the merger has been approved. Plans to merge the two schools have been rushed, with representatives of both of the affected schools being unable to answer very basic questions on the implications of running a

split site school and the impact that this will have on both staff and students. This is unacceptable.

I feel that student numbers at all three schools should be adjusted with spaces shared fairly. The results at Northfield have remained fairly steady over the past few years, whilst the results at Billingham Campus are rising, and they are striving to improve standards. If the two schools merge I will not be reassured that the present Northfield staff and governors will be able to provide adequately for the vastly increased student numbers and the more diverse social mix that the merger of the two schools will provide.

The most important factor in this whole process is the education and welfare of the children in Billingham. They are not just numbers to be calculated, they are very real people with very real needs. The needs of these children must be held most important. I feel that a proposal without real solutions and real clarification as to the standard and means of education provided over at least the next five years cannot be approved until clarification is made. At the moment my feeling is that this proposal has been hastily rushed together so as to not to miss the deadline for the BSF money which – in truth – may not be forthcoming in the future anyway.

Message 23

I am writing to offer my comments and opinions on the above merger

I do have major concerns about the above proposal, both of my children are at a crucial stage of their Education. Next year, when the proposed merger would take place, my Son will begin studying for his GCSEs. Whilst I am aware that it is expected for the site to be used for the next five years, the restructuring of staff would certainly begin to impact before he finishes his Secondary school education in the summer of 2010. As a staffing protocol has been agreed in principal, ringfencing positions this could lead to many of the more experienced staff transferring to the Northfield site and I have concerns about the amount and quality of the staff remaining at the Campus site, teaching my Son in preparation for his exams.

I am unable to make an informed decision regarding my younger sons Secondary education as Stockton Borough Council are unable to answer specific questions regarding what will happen if the proposal is accepted. He is due to start secondary education next year.

If the proposal is passed there will only be a six month period to make massive decisions impacting on the lives and education of hundreds of children.

Were I to send my son to Campus school (which would in effect be Northfield school when he starts next September) there are concerns as to whether there will be a good quality and range of teaching staff by the time he takes his GCSEs in 5 years time. If there is no further intake into the Campus site, where is the Social aspect of my Sons education? There could effectively be only one year group in the school in five years time. How can a full curriculum with split ability classes be facilitated in this case? Surely there will not be 3 teachers for each subject on a site with one year group of children? Will he have to make do with whatever the Northfield Governors can offer? SBC cannot guarantee that my children's education will not be adversely affected by this hasty merger. Surely it would make sense to merge 3 years hence in order for both Governing bodies to put plans into place and ensure the transition is as smooth as possible.

There is no immediate rush for this merger to go ahead as BSF funding does not become available for a few years. Please allow the two schools to work together to provide safe and constructive planning for our children's futures by delaying the actual merger until 2011/2012. By allowing this it would prevent and alleviate many of the concerns and issues regarding this merger

By closing Billingham Campus school, the council are taking away any parental choice and diversity which according to council legislation MUST be provided for parents and children. What if there is a change of government and BSF is scrapped? This could happen and then there is no £150 million. What about our children then? If the merger must take place then please allow us 3 years to ensure that we can put plans into place to safeguard our children's futures.

Our children are not statistics they are people, that will shape the future of this area and they are also the most precious thing to us as parents. They only have one shot at their education and closing Billingham Campus could ruin their education.

If the merger takes place would you want your child to be educated on the Billingham Campus site? There are too many unanswered questions by the council and Northfield head and Governors. It terrifies many parents that there are no straight answers and guarantees for their children's education. Please allow us more time to prepare and safeguard our children's futures