

Received 7/12

# Draft Education Renewal Recovery Plan

## Proposed merger of Gilberthorpe School and Yaldhurst Model School



## Gilberthorpe School Consultation Report

## Executive Summary

Gilberthorpe School is a Decile Two school within the Hornby Learning Cluster. At present it provides an educational environment and set of programmes that meets the needs of its students and families very well. This includes programmes such as Breakfast in Schools, Books in Homes, Fruit in Schools and Kids Can. This is highly valued, treasured and appreciated by the school community.

The Ministry of Education has proposed to merge Gilberthorpe School with Yaldhurst Model School on the Gilberthorpe School site and create a Year 1-6 school. Feedback has been sought from the community through a consultation process.

Many options, based on initial feedback, were considered. Some options were considered but not taken any further as they were not seen as viable or fair. This included ideas such as merging with Hornby Primary School or closing Yaldhurst Model School. Ultimately three options were identified as the most viable and relevant to take forward for further analysis. They were;

- Merge as a Year 1-6 school with Yaldhurst Model School (current ministry proposal)
- Maintain the status quo – Gilberthorpe to remain as a school on its own
- Merge as a Year 1-8 school with Yaldhurst Model School

The next step in the consultation process asked the community to consider each of the three options. They provided feedback on the positives for each option, the issues or concerns for each option and the conditions that would be need to be met if each option were to be successful. Lastly, the community were then asked to state their order of preference for these options.

The community as a whole do not support the current proposal of a Year 1-6 merger. Not one respondent (0%) chose this option as their preferred choice, while 67% chose it as their least preferred option. Many of the reasons given for this acknowledged socio-economic and cultural differences between the schools and had concerns that the current values within the school would be compromised. These were seen as possible stumbling blocks to a successful merger. Another significant issue raised was the effect that a change in decile rating would have as a result of the merger. There was concern that it would jeopardise the school's ability to continue to provide the programmes currently in place to support their community. Many of the programmes being run at Gilberthorpe School are only available for lower decile schools and a change of decile rating would mean the school would no longer qualify. While the needs of students and families would still be present, the school's ability to support their learner's would be hindered.

The most popular option was for a Year 1-8 merger. This would retain the Year 1-8 option currently available at Yaldhurst Model School, which would be lost in a Year 1-6 merger. A Year 1-8 merger would also provide more than one option for students in the northern region of the Hornby Learning Cluster. Under the current proposals, the only Year 7-8 option for students from the merged school would be Hornby High School.

Maintaining the status quo also received strong support from the community. If this option was chosen an alternative plan for Yaldhurst Model School would be required. Part of the conditions of this option would be to ensure that the proposed upgrade of classrooms would not be compromised. The support for this option shows how highly the community values the way the school is currently run and the way it supports its learners.

In summary, the school community does not support the current proposal but would consider the option of a Year 1-8 merger. If that was not viable the community would prefer the status of Gilberthorpe School to remain the same.

## Gilberthorpe School – Background Information

Gilberthorpe School is a Year 1-6 school within the Hornby area. It is a Decile 2 with a current roll of 104 students. It is currently on a three year review cycle with ERO, having last been reviewed in 2010.

The school's vision statement is:

At Gilberthorpe School we will provide a caring, family atmosphere for lifelong learners. Our students will be enthusiastic thinkers, positive interactors, self-managers and effective communicators.

The caring, family atmosphere has certainly been identified as a key component of the school during the consultation process.

The school provides a quality education supplemented by other programmes to support its community of learners. These programmes are highly valued and appreciated by the school community. They include

- Books in homes
- Duffy theatre
- Duffy role model
- Social Worker in Schools
- Breakfast club
- Kids Can
- Swimming lessons – swim for life
- Dancing like stars
- Food for lunches
- EOTC trust trips
- Fruit in schools

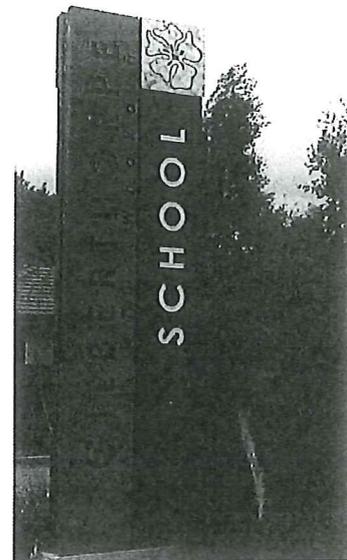
Gilberthorpe School has a strong bond with the students and parents of the school and it works hard to nurture and maintain a holistic family oriented approach to learning.

Gilberthorpe School has strong links to its Maori and Pasifika communities. The school's Maori name (Ara Tū Whakatā) was gifted by the local Iwi as the site was a significant refreshment point for Ngai Tahu while travelling across the Canterbury Plains. It can be interpreted as a place of nourishment.

The integration of a Hibiscus flower on the school signage was a deliberate act to recognise and welcome local Pasifika families to the school.

## Proposal

On 13 September the Minister of Education announced many proposed changes to the education system in Christchurch. One of the proposals was to merge Gilberthorpe School with Yaldhurst Model School on the current Gilberthorpe School site and create a Year 1-6 contributing school.



## Consultation Process

As a result of this proposed merger Gilberthorpe School has undertaken a number of activities in order to consult with the community. This has included a questionnaire, a consultation evening, a preference vote, opportunities for voluntary oral and written feedback and the opportunity to participate in a meeting with the Education Minister, Hekia Parata. The staff have also discussed and analysed the merger proposal with the students of the school. This process has provided clear feedback and opinion from the school community. The following report information will be based on this data.

## Consultation feedback

During the process several options were developed by the school community. The objective focus was to focus on solutions for Gilberthorpe School. Therefore, alternative solutions for Yaldhurst Model School were not considered. As a result of this process many options were considered. The main options put forward were:

**1. Merge with Yaldhurst Model School Year 1-6**

This is the current proposal from the Ministry of Education and would involve a merger between Gilberthorpe and Yaldhurst Model Schools.

**2. Maintain the status quo**

This would mean that Gilberthorpe School would stay as it is. Yaldhurst Model School would either have to be retained or alternative options for that school would need to be sought.

**3. Merge with Yaldhurst Model School Year 1-8**

This is similar to the ministry proposal but would include the option of Year 7 and 8 education within the school. While Gilberthorpe School is only a Year 1-6 school, Yaldhurst Model School currently caters for Year 7 and 8 students.

**4. Close Yaldhurst Model School**

This option would see Yaldhurst Model School close and Gilberthorpe be the continuing school. While this is a viable option it was felt that the chances of developing a cohesive community would be lessened through this process.

As a result of this process the first three options were considered for further analysis during the consultation period. The analysis required the community to look at each option for possible positive outcomes, issues and concerns and then consider the 'non-negotiable' aspects if each of the options were to go ahead. The following information records the substantial feedback under themes. The items at the beginning of each section in bold indicate that these are significant and important points.

## Merger option: Merge with Yaldhurst Model School Year 1-6 or Year 1-8

### *Possible positive outcomes*

#### Infrastructure and facilities

- **It would provide a new school which would enable a fresh start for both communities**
- **The creation of better teaching spaces**
- The ability to update and upgrade technology
- Have new buildings and a school that would be visually more appealing
- Ability to 'rebrand' the new school
- Develop a better playground
- Have the opportunity to create school/community hall
- Create specialist rooms such as an Arts room

#### Students and community

- **It may provide greater opportunities for students**
- **A new school would be attractive to parents and create the opportunity for growth**
- A Parents Teachers Association (P.T.A.) could be established
- Greater opportunity for fundraising
- A chance to bring the whole community together
- Potential for more students
- A wider community would provide the school with fresh ideas
- New friends and families for both students and parents
- Big schools are still able to create the same community feel

#### Teaching and Learning

- With more teachers there is more potential to have innovative and creative teaching programmes
- It would be an opportunity to restructure and re-programme the school day
- Both schools could merge their teaching resources
- Interactive learning tools may become available

#### Staffing

- Permanent staff able to be retained under a merger proposal
- New support staff able to be employed

### *Possible negative outcomes*

#### Infrastructure and facilities

- **Change of school name**
- **The construction of new buildings will cause disruption to the current school**
- Loss of school ground space
- An increase in the roll would create further issues around parking availability
- Road safety issues
- An increase in maintenance issues

#### Students and community

- **The identity, culture and special character of Gilberthorpe School will be lost.**

- **Clash of cultures between both school communities**
- **Socio economic differences and the issues that can cause for students**
- **Being judged by other parents**
- **Behavioural issues**
- **Competition between existing schools**
- **Cost of a new uniform for parents**
- **Bullying between students**
- **Bullying between parents**
- **Increase in school fees**
- **The changes would create insecurity and uncertainty for many in the community**
- **Things won't change i.e. a merger will not create a merger in the minds of both communities**

#### Teaching and Learning

- **A merger will create an overall change in decile rating by the Ministry of Education. This will impact on the opportunity to access funding and services that are currently available to the Gilberthorpe School community.**
- **Loss of the holistic, family based values that are currently in place at Gilberthorpe School**
- **It would require the complete renewal of values, visions, mission statements etc.**
- **Not able to hold onto school traditions or identity**

#### Staffing

- **Loss of staff in non-permanent positions**
- **Changes to staff**
- **Support staff issues**
- **The amalgamation of the staff from both schools will be complex and create difficulties.**

#### *Issue and concerns*

- **What if many or most of the students from Yaldhurst Model School do not come to the school as a result of the merger? This is quite probable and will create a meaningless merger.**
- **The diversity within the school after a merger will make it more difficult for the school curriculum to reflect school needs.**
- **Loss of support services to the current community**
- **Class sizes**
- **School policies, procedures, curriculum will need to be completely rebuilt**
- **The extra work, hours, time and energy required of staff to create a successful merger**
- **The current school will be placed in limbo with regard to direction, appointments and building improvement**
- **Re-naming of the school means Gilberthorpe School will lose its identity**

#### *What does the community view as non-negotiable aspects of a Year 1-6 merger?*

- **A whole new school – not just additions to the current buildings. The current buildings already require substantial work to meet the 'Sheerin' core standard.**
- **Retain the current services and programmes available to the school and community**
- **The school must continue to have access to a social worker.**

- A renamed and rebranded school must retain the Maori name (Ara Tū Whakatā) that was gifted by local iwi.
- An enrolment zone would need to be established
- A clear timeline for the changes would need to be established
- Put entrance and location of the new school on Buchanan's Road. This would include a drop off bay, lower speed limits outside the school gates. (see picture below)



- A bully free school
- Retain the current BoT
- Retain the current permanent staff
- The values of the merged school reflect the whole community
- Retain and improve the current school pool facilities
- BOT funded PI programmes to help raise achievement levels
- Currently the BoT supports the school community by providing student subsidies for trips and camps. A new BOT in a merged setting may have less empathy for this type of support

## Preservation option: Maintain the status quo

### *Possible positive outcomes*

#### Infrastructure and facilities

- It would enable the school to retain the spacious grounds it currently has available.
- Modern teaching spaces. Existing buildings will require a major upgrade to meet Sheerin Core modern learning environment standard

#### Students and community

- **The following programmes could be retained**
  - Duffy Schools
  - Breakfast Club
  - Kids Can
  - Food in schools
  - Duffy Role Model Programme
  - Camp is heavily subsidised so that families can afford it. This is done by accessing charities funds. This could continue this if the school remains as it is.
  - Dancing to the Stars
  - Sports cluster
  - Sponsored trips to Ferrymead and Orana Park
  - The Hornby Network Learning Community is a successful voluntary partnership between schools in the Hornby area that is already in place. It has an advantage over the proposed cluster as it has been self-generated.
- Students have security in their own known environment
- Ability to maintain the special programmes that cater for individual needs
- Continuity and familiarity for students with the current school
- There are currently sports uniforms for all students

#### Teaching and Learning

- Current school initiatives will be maintained and developed further including the school based curriculum
- The hard work of developing the core values, beliefs and curriculum of Gilberthorpe School will not be lost

### *Possible negative outcomes*

#### Infrastructure and facilities

- New technology cannot be accommodated in the current school environment. (This may change if the buildings were upgraded)

#### Students and community

- 33% of the students at Yaldhurst Model School live within a kilometre of Gilberthorpe School. Maintaining status quo will not change the school's ability to attract these families to enrol at the school.
- Students have to move on at Year 6 and have few Year 7 and 8 options.

### Staffing

- The small roll does not create many hours for teacher aides at present. A larger merged school would provide the opportunity for greater hours and greater likelihood of retaining staff.
- The development of school values, curriculum and culture takes years to develop. This process may push these processes along at an unacceptable pace for staff to cope with.

### *Issue and concerns*

- In order to be able to serve the community best an enrolment zone would need to be put in place so that the school is able to retain its local students, develop and serve its local community well.

### *What does the community view as non-negotiable aspects if the status quo was maintained?*

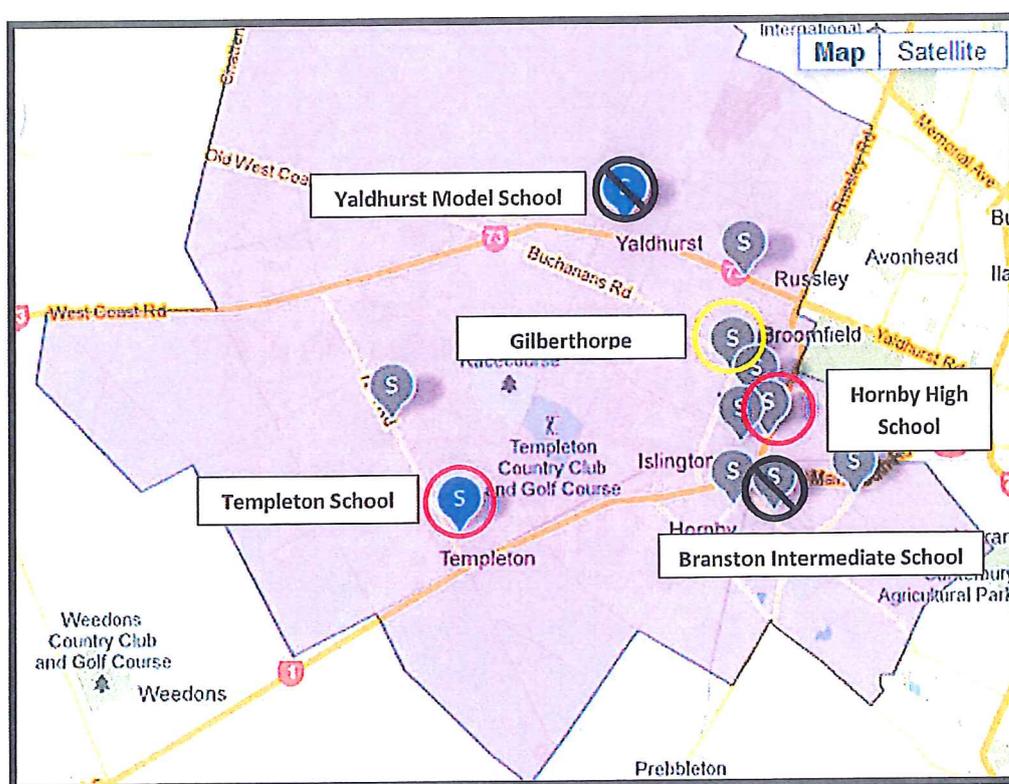
- Either new or extensively upgraded classrooms that are earthquake strengthened and adhere to Sheerin Core modern learning environment standard

## Merge with Yaldhurst Model School – Concepts specific to the Year 1-8 option

### Rationale for a Year 1-8 merger

There are currently 3 schools that provide Year 7 and 8 education within the Hornby cluster – Yaldhurst Model School, Branston Intermediate School and Templeton School. With the proposed changes there would only be two providers of Year 7 and 8 education in the cluster – Hornby High School and Templeton School. As Templeton School is located in the south area of the cluster and Hornby High School in the central area, a Year 1-8 merged school on the Gilberthorpe site would provide a Year 7/8 option for the northern area of the cluster – currently provided by Yaldhurst Model School. A Year 1-8 merged school would enable students to stay at one school for their entire primary education.

The map below provides a view of current and proposed year 7 and 8 options within the Hornby Learning cluster.



The following is specific feedback on the Year 1- 8 option only.

### Possible positive outcomes

#### Infrastructure and facilities

- The opportunity to incorporate some specialist areas such as an Arts room in the school design.

#### Students and community

- The inclusion of Year 7 and 8 in a full primary setting works well for students and families
- It would create an option for Year 7 and 8 students in the Northern region of the Hornby learning cluster.

- It would give parents more than just the one option (Hornby High School) for Year 7 and 8 schooling. (Templeton currently has a zone, is some distance away and is therefore not a viable option).
- Having eight full years at one school will give students and families a real sense of belonging.

#### Teaching and Learning

- The opportunity for real leadership opportunities for students in Year 7 and 8

#### *Issue and concerns*

*(There were no issues or concerns related specifically to the Year 1-8 option)*

#### *What does the community view as non-negotiable aspects of a Year 1-8 merger?*

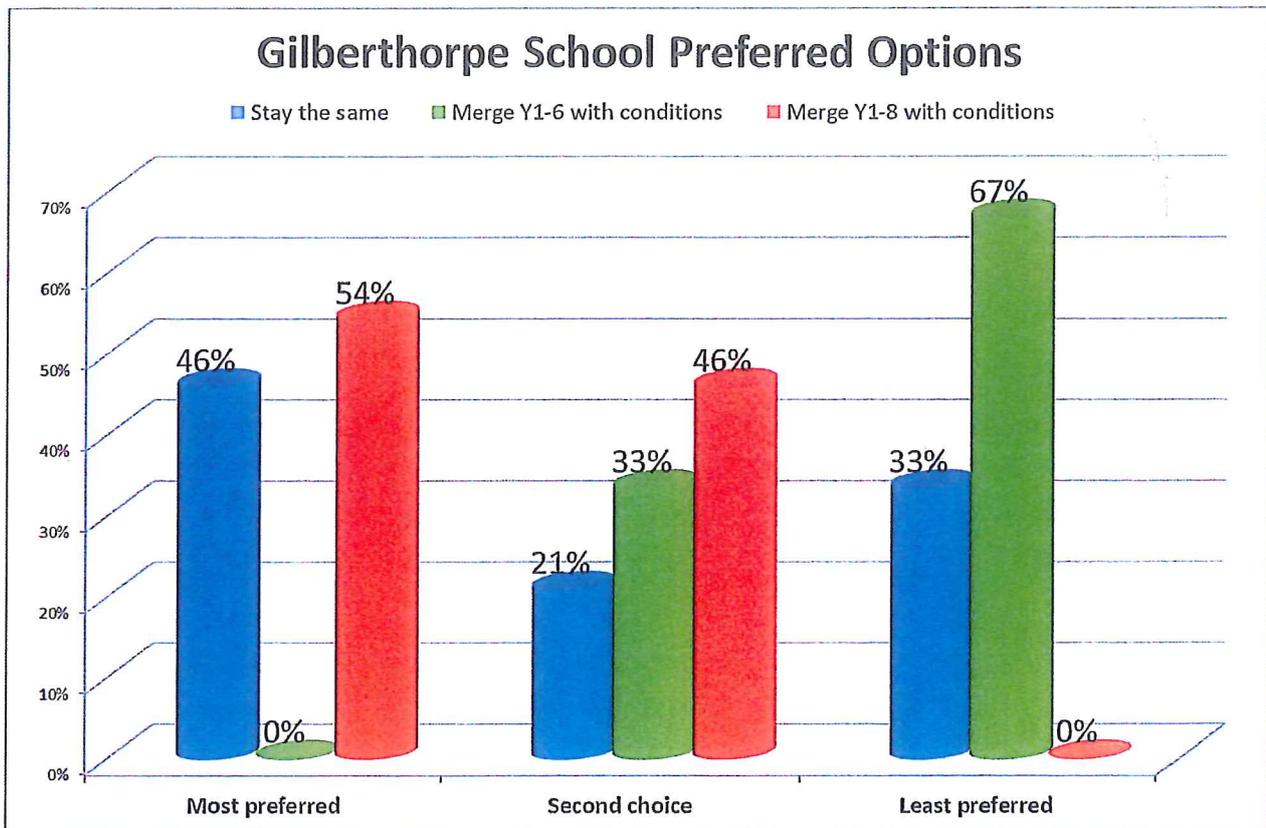
- The inclusion of specialist rooms such as Art and Technology

## Community Opinion – Ranking the options

As part of the consultation process the school community were asked to rank the three main options from most to least preferred. The options they were given were:

- Option 1      Stay the same
- Option 2      Merge Year 1-6 with conditions
- Option 3      Merge year 1-8 with conditions

Below is a graphical representation of the results.



This data indicates that there is no clear favoured option. The votes were split between staying the same and merging as Year 1-8 school. However, there is clearly little support for the current ministry proposal of merging with Yaldhurst Model School as a Year 1-6 school.

The most popular overall option, when combining both first and second choices, is the Year 1-8 merger. It was the most popular first choice, while no one selected it as the least preferred choice.

## Summary of Findings

The feedback clearly shows that the community has great pride and belief in Gilberthorpe School. The values, education and supplementary programmes it provides its learners is respected and appreciated by the community. This is not a school that needs to change what it is doing or how it is doing it. It appears to be completely aligned and responsive to the needs of its community. The relationships between students, teachers, parents and the wider community are very supportive and positive. The school is proud of its links to Maori heritage and is extremely welcoming and supportive to its Pasifika communities.

The merger with Yaldhurst Model School has perceived difficulties as the communities are from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This is a concern to many in the Gilberthorpe community. The values and spirit in the school will be difficult to replicate in a merged school. The natural increase in decile rating as a result of a merger will make it difficult to cater for the needs of students and families from Gilberthorpe School. Many of the supplementary programmes presently in place are only accessible by low decile schools. The needs that will remain within the school will be hidden by the creation of a more socioeconomically diverse school population.

However, merging as a Year 1-8 school has received the most support from the community. The current proposals from the Ministry of Education will provide families from Gilberthorpe School with only one viable Year 7 and 8 option – Hornby High School. Yaldhurst Model School currently caters for Year 1-8 so a merger between both schools would provide a solution for all current students and offer a Year 7 and 8 option in the northern region of the cluster. The school grounds have the capacity to cater for the 250 students (approx.) a Year 1-8 merger would generate.

The feedback from the community consultation indicated that if a merger was to take place there would need to be conditions put in place. One such idea was to rebuild the school on the other side of the school. This would be beneficial as it would cause less disruption to the school during the building and orientate the school to have a Buchanan's Road entrance. This would also make it more accessible to the 33% of Yaldhurst students that currently live within a kilometre of Gilberthorpe School. This would be a positive beginning for a newly merged school.

The Maori name for Gilberthorpe School (Ara Tū Whakatā) would also need to be retained as it is highly significant to the current school site and was gifted by local iwi to the school.

In summary, the community of Gilberthorpe School is not in favour of the Ministry of Education's current proposal to merge Gilberthorpe and Yaldhurst Model schools as Year 1-6 school. Not one respondent chose this as the preferred option for the future of the school. Almost half of the community would like to see the school remain the same, which would mean finding an alternative solution for Yaldhurst Model School. However, there is support for a merger to take place if a Year 1-8 option is considered. Over half of the respondents chose this as their preferred option, while all respondents (100%) chose this as their first or second choice. This option would see the current Year 1-8 status of Yaldhurst Model School be retained and would provide a Year 7 and 8 alternative to Hornby High School in the northern region of the Hornby Learning Cluster.

 Penny Osborne 7/12/12