



## AGENDA

### SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD

Thursday, 14th June, 2007, at 10.30 am

Ask for: **Geoff Mills/Karen  
Manning**

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County  
Hall, Maidstone**

Telephone **(01622)  
694289/694367**

*Tea/Coffee will be available from 10am outside the meeting room*

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Substitutes
2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 May 2007 (Pages 1 - 6)
3. St John's Church of England (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School, Tunbridge Wells - Proposed Change of Status (Pages 7 - 18)
4. Proposed Amalgamation of Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School, Ramsgate (Pages 19 - 36)

#### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Peter Sass  
Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership  
(01622) 694002

**Wednesday, 6 June 2007**

*Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.*

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**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**SCHOOL ORGANISATION ADVISORY BOARD**

MINUTES of a meeting of the School Organisation Advisory Board held on Wednesday, 16 May 2007 at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Mrs V Dagger (Chairman), Mr W Hayton (Vice-Chairman), Mrs C Angell, Miss S J Carey, Ms A Harrison (substitute for Mr A R Poole), Mr R A Marsh (substitute for Mr R Burgess), Mr M Northey and Mr M Vye.

OFFICERS: Dr I Craig (Director - Operations), Miss C Lay, Area Education Officer, (Sevenoaks/Tunbridge Wells), Mr C Feltham, Head of Additional Educational Needs and Resources, Mrs A Osborne, Area Education Officer (Canterbury/Swale) and Mr G Mills (Democratic Services).

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J D Simmonds , Dr T R Robinson, Mr L B Ridings, Mr R Bristow, Director (Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education) and Canon J L Smith (Rochester Diocesan Board of Education).

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2007**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2007 were agreed as a true record.

**2. Broomhill Bank Community Special School – Proposed Re-designation to a School for Communication and Inter-action (Autistic Spectrum and/or Specific Language Disorder) – Outcome of Public Consultation**  
*(Item 1 – Report by Director (Operations))*

*Mr J A Davies, Mr A J King and Mr P W Lake were present for this item as local County Members.*

*Before the commencement of discussion on this item, correspondence was reported from Mr Greg Clark MP and Mr Alvin Chantler, Chairman of the Board of Governors for Broomhill Bank Community Special School.*

(1) This report presented the results of a public consultation exercise undertaken on the proposal to re-designated Broomhill Bank Community Special School to become a co-educational day school, for 5-16 year olds with communication and inter-action needs (Autistic Spectrum and/or Specific Language Disorder).

(2) In introducing this item, Ms Lay said that there had been an exceptional level of responses to the public consultation. In all there had been some 1,805 responses of which nine were in favour and 1,796 were opposed to the proposal. A full summary of the written responses which had been received was set out in Appendix 5 to the report. The objections primarily focussed around four key themes, these being objection to the removal of single sex status; the proposed removal of 16+ provision; the proposed removal of residential provision and the value of Broomhill Bank as a centre of excellence and expertise.

(3) Mr Davies as the local Member, said that Broomhill Bank was an outstanding school and that the number of responses and the number of local people who were at the meeting demonstrated just how much the local community cared about the school and how much they objected to the proposals. Broomhill Bank was an exceptional school and Mr Davies said that he had asked back in February of this year when the matter was originally put forward for consultation, that these proposals should be referred back to officers. That was so that they could discuss with the Schools Governors and the local Cluster Board, a way forward which would be acceptable to both the school and those who benefited from the education provided by this exceptional school. Mr Davies said that many of the points he had originally put forward when this matter was discussed by the Board in February, had since been repeated and emphasised, both during the consultation period and the recent Parliamentary debate. After the extensive consultation which had been undertaken and the weight of views which had been expressed against the proposals he did not think that the local authority could be anything but moved to consider making amendments.

(4) Mr Davies said as the local Member, he had a responsibility to local residents, but also as a County Councillor he had to look at matters in the wider context. He was concerned that if no changes were made to the proposals being considered by the Advisory Board, then that could lead to the demise of the school because it would not fit the pattern required for the re-organisation of special schools within the county. The school may well have to change but it must not be destroyed as that would be a loss to everybody. There were compromises which could be achieved and these could include allowing boys to enter the school and they would undoubtedly benefit from its wealth of experience and expertise. Going co-educational would not be popular with many parents and the school's governors, but with appropriate safeguards to address their understandable concerns then that option could be made acceptable. Also, in their letter of 13 March 2007, the school governors agreed that the school's cohort was no longer purely MLD and therefore perhaps the school could, with its exceptional wealth of teaching experience become a centre of expertise for those with communication and interaction needs.

(5) Mr Davies also said that Broomhill Bank provided exceptional educational opportunities for young people and it should not be forced to close its doors to pupils at age 16. The school provided outstanding support to these young people and that should continue until they are age 19. As to the residential element, there appeared across the county, less need for such provision, but Mr Davies said he was convinced that the pupils who were resident at Broomhill Bank benefited greatly from the experience and support that provided. The training house in particular, was an essential part of the school's ethos and should be maintained as it provided significant benefits for all those who used it. In conclusion, Mr Davies urged the Advisory Board to take full account of the unquestionable support that the school had and to consider the wealth of evidence that had been put forward by local residents and the school's governors. This should be taken into account and the recommendations amended accordingly.

(6) Mr King said that the consultation demonstrated an overwhelming level of support from the local community for Broomhill Bank Special School. That level of support demonstrated that the council needed to think very carefully and to take fully account of the views expressed by the parents, school governors and local people. Broomhill Bank was a school which was quite special and there was a need to keep the best whilst at the same time finding a way forward which was better than what was being proposed in the report. Mr King urged officers to think again and said that it was rare that a public consultation should engender as much response as this one had.

(7) Mr Lake said that Broomhill Bank was a beacon on excellence and provided a safe and supportive environment to its pupils, many of which at sometime or another in their earlier lives, had been at risk or placed in a vulnerable situation. The school was forward thinking and therefore not afraid of change but the wellbeing of extremely vulnerable girls with learning difficulties and some with child protection histories needed to be taken into consideration. He was therefore glad to see that the local authority was taking these issues very seriously. Mr Lake also spoke about the school taking pupils from outside Kent and said that should be allowed to continue as there were examples of reciprocal arrangements whereby some Kent children went to schools outside the county. As for the boarding element, Mr Lake said that for some children this was a vital ingredient to their long term success. The school's OfSTED report for last year was highly favourable and said that the sixth form helped its students to achieve both academic and personal development and to leave as mature young people. With regard to the MLD designation, Mr Lake said that could be broadened but if change was to take place then that could take some children ie those with Downs Syndrome out of the system. In conclusion, Mr Lake read to the meeting a letter from a parent who said that since their daughter had joined the school she had thrived in its unique and special environment. Therefore, Mr Lake said changes may be made at the school but what was essential was not to destroy something which was helping children come from behind to end up in front.

(8) Mrs Dagger then read to the meeting a letter from Mr Greg Clark MP which further emphasised the points which was made in his earlier letter and was included in Appendix 9 of the report. In the letter's conclusion, Mr Clark urged the Board to advise the Cabinet Member to reject the proposals as they stand and guide him towards retaining the 16+ provision; retaining the residential unit and rejecting the proposed cut in the designated pupil number from 92 to only 56 pupils on site – a number that, if accepted, would signal the beginning of the end of the school.

(9) The Advisory Board then discussed in detail the proposals set out in the report by the Director of Operations. Following lengthy discussion and debate, Mr W Hayton proposed and Mr M Northey seconded that:-

- (i) paragraph 21 (b) of the report be amended so that the age range 5 to 16 be changed to read 5 to 19 year olds.
- (ii) the school role should be 80 pupils on site and 24 on outreach, with the retention of the independent living house.

(10) Mr M Vye proposed and Mrs C Angell seconded that the residential element at Broomhill Bank should be retained.

(11) On being brought to the vote the proposal by Mr Vye was lost there being 3 for and 5 against.

(12) On being put to the vote the proposal by Mr Hayton was agreed unanimously.

(13) The recommendation of School Organisation Advisory Board to the Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement and the Cabinet Member for Children and Family Services was:

- (a) a Public Notice be issued for the re-designation of Broomhill Bank Community Special School to a co-educational day school for 5-19 year olds with Communication and Interaction needs (Autistic Spectrum and/or Specific Language Disorder), with effect from April 2008;
- (b) subject to approval of the proposal, following the close of the period for representations to be made, the resources necessary to implement the proposal being provided on the basis identified in this report and in line with the Implementation Plan; and,
- (c) The total role of Broomhill Bank Community Special School should be 80 pupils on site, with 24 on Outreach with the retention also of the independent living house.

### **3. Planning Shepway Schools for the Future – Primary Phase – Outcome of Public Consultation**

*(Item 2 – report by Director – Operations) (Apologies for this part of the meeting were received from Mr Hayton, Mr Vye and Canon Smith).*

*Mr A D Crowther was present as a Local County Member.*

- (1) This report set out the results of the public consultations on detailed proposals for each First School and for St. George's CE Middle School.
- (2) Mrs Osborne said that at present there are 7 first schools on Sheppey and these cater for pupils aged 4-8 years. In addition there is already one all through primary school catering for pupils aged 4-11 years and 3 middle schools catering for pupils aged 9-12 years. In the change to a 2-tier system the middle schools could become part of the primary phase or the secondary phase. There is at present no primary provision on the eastern end of the island (Warden Bay/Leysdown area). Children from these localities must be transported to first schools at least 3 miles away. The nearest first school is Eastchurch CE School.
- (3) During the consultation process approximately 4,560 copies of the documents were circulated and public meetings were held in Sheppey schools as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report. In total, for all the individual school proposals, 107 responses were received, of which 86 were in favour, 20 opposed and 1 undecided. The overarching proposal was to establish all through primary schools located in appropriate centres of population, of the right size to meet their community's needs. Each first school would be subject to some change and it was proposed St. George's CE Middle School would change from middle to primary.
- (4) A key issue was the provision of primary education for the east of the island. A significant proportion of the intake to Eastchurch CE Primary School lived at least 3 miles away. There was support for the provision of a primary school at Warden Bay to meet that need and also support for the alternative of enlargement of Eastchurch CE School. However, enlargement would require acquisition of land from Swale Borough Council currently used as a community cricket ground. That option would also mean continuance of travel for a large number of pupils. Provision of a new school at Warden Bay would require acquisition of land but it would better meet community needs. There was however strong preference from the community for federation of any new school in the Warden

Bay/Leysdown area with Eastchurch CE Primary School to ensure that the high quality of teaching and learning ethos was maintained in any new setting.

(5) Mr Crowther as the local County Member said that the eastern end of Sheppey was one of the most deprived and neglected parts of Kent. Provision of a primary school at Warden Bay or Leysdown had been a suggestion for many years and he fully supported the building of a new school at Warden Bay. Mr Crowther also supported the new school being linked to Eastchurch Primary School but because of the possible workload wondered felt consideration should be given to appointing two head teachers, one to operate in each school. Mr Crowther also said the new school building at Warden Bay should be opened at the same time as the other changes in relation to primary school provision on Sheppey take place.

(6) During discussion Ms Harrison proposed and Mrs Angell seconded that the issuing of a Public Notice should be approved and that primary school provision be developed on the Warden Bay site with that provision being linked to Eastchurch CE Primary School.

(7) Dr Craig said that if a new school at Warden Bay was to be linked to that of Eastchurch then that would raise some issues which would have to be explored with the DfES, such as how places would be allocated. In answer to a question regarding St. George's Church of England Middle School Dr Craig said that the Chief Inspector of Schools had just completed a review of the academy proposals and this was due to be submitted to Lord Adonis at the end of the month. This review would help inform the shape of secondary provision on the Isle of Sheppey and that may in turn affect St. George's. However that situation would need to be looked at and therefore the issuing of any public notice would be delayed until the outcome of the review of the academy proposals was known.

(8) Miss Carey said that although unable to attend the meeting Mr Vye had asked her to say on his behalf that he supported the detailed proposals as presented in the report. Miss Carey also placed on record her appreciation to officers for the way they had progressed and developed these proposals during the course of the consultation period.

(9) The Advisory Board then considered the proposal by Ms Harrison, seconded by Mrs Angell that the issuing of a Public Notice be approved and that primary school provision be developed on the Warden Bay site with that provision being linked to Eastchurch CE Primary School. This was agreed unanimously.

(10) The School Organisation Advisory Board agreed to:-

- the issuing of a public notice to establish the primary phase of education on the Isle of Sheppey;
- primary school provision being developed on the Warden Bay site with that provision being linked to Eastchurch CE Primary School; and
- subject to approval of the proposal following the end of the objection period, the resources necessary to implement the scheme be provided on the basis identified in the report.

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By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 14 June 2007

Subject: ST JOHN'S CHURCH OF ENGLAND (VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED) PRIMARY SCHOOL, TUNBRIDGE WELLS – PROPOSED CHANGE OF STATUS

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board, on the Governing Body's proposal to seek Foundation status. Members' views will advise the Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement when he formally responds, on behalf of the County Council, to the school's consultation process.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) The 'School Standards and Framework Act 1998', established the following categories of maintained school:

Community  
Foundation  
Voluntary (comprising Aided and Controlled)  
Community Special  
Foundation Special

(2) The Act made detailed arrangements for the allocation of schools to categories when it came into force. Subsequent Regulations, (the 'Education (Change of Category of Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2000') provided for all maintained mainstream and special schools to change from their current category to another. This is provided they are not subject to a Formal Warning or have not been placed in a formal category of concern by Ofsted.

(3) A new streamlined route for schools seeking Foundation status was introduced in 2005. Initially this route only applied to secondary schools, but since August 2006 it has also been available to primary schools. There are five key stages: -

- a) Consultation with parents/carers, the Local Authority (including other local schools) and other interested stakeholders
  - b) Publication of statutory proposals
  - c) A four week period for representations
  - d) Decision by the Governing Body
  - e) Implementation Period
- (4) The streamlined process provides for the Governing Body of any maintained

school seeking Foundation status, to determine the outcome of the proposal, without reference to independent adjudication, subject to adherence to the prescribed process set out above.

## **Background**

2. (1) St John's is a large 3FE CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School located in the St John's area of Tunbridge Wells. A location map and a site plan are attached as Appendices 1 and 2. It is a popular and successful school that is consistently over-subscribed. It currently has a roll of 659 against a net capacity of 640. A dot map showing its current distribution of pupils is attached as Appendix 3.

(2) Prior to September 2002, St John's operated from separate Infant and Junior departments, located over a mile apart. A major building project provided for the school to consolidate onto the Junior site, from September 2002. There was concern, at the time, about disadvantage, in terms of admission to the school, for parents/carers living closer to the site of the old Infant department.

(3) Following considerable local discussion, a Variation to the Local Authority's 'Ease of Access' criterion, then included in admission arrangements for community and voluntary controlled primary school across Kent, was agreed. The St John's Variation assumed a notional catchment area around the original Infant and Junior departments, giving priority entry to Reception classes to families who lived within it. Appendix 4 shows the notional catchment area.

(4) This Variation remained in place until Cabinet, in March 2006, and following annual consultation processes, determined that 'Ease of Access' should be removed as an over-subscription criterion with effect from September 2007. The consultation had noted Ombudsman criticism about use of an 'Ease of Access' criterion believing it to be confusing to parents/carers, and recommended its removal.

(5) The Authority is aware of only 3 Kent schools, including St John's, Tunbridge Wells, that made routine use of the criterion. These schools objected to its removal but Cabinet determined that clarity and transparency for parents/carers in respect of admission arrangements to all community and voluntary controlled schools should outweigh those concerns.

(6) As a Foundation school, St John's would be able to set its own admissions criteria and re-instate their Variation, subject to other admission authorities not lodging objections with the Adjudicator, and the Adjudicator supporting it, if s/he so determined. The earliest possible implementation date would be September 2009 as the school is now bound by the determination already made in respect of admission arrangements, for September 2008.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) In accordance with the streamlined route guidance, referred to in 1 (3) above, the Governing Body of St John's is consulting on its proposal to seek Foundation status. A copy of the consultation document, published on 27 April 2007, is attached as Appendix 5 and features on the school's website.

(2) Following a Public Meeting, held on the 8 May 2007, and the close of the consultation, on 26 May 2007, and taking account of all responses received, the Governing Body will determine whether to publish a statutory Public Notice. This would run for a minimum period of four weeks and must be published in a local newspaper, as

well as being displayed at the school and in other prominent places within the local community, such as at a community centre or post office etc.

(3) Following the expiration of any Public Notice, the Governing Body must meet within six months to determine whether to proceed with the change to Foundation status. This decision is final and, if made, the Governing Body then organises a reconstitution process.

### **Views of the Governing Body**

4. The change to Foundation status is the Governing Body's proposal, driven by a belief this change will enable the school to re-instate its Variation to an 'Ease of Access' criterion and so serve its traditional catchment area.

### **Views of the Local Member**

5. The Local Member, Mr Bullock, is a governor at the school and, in the circumstances, supports the proposal.

### **View of the Rochester Diocese**

6. The Rochester Diocese supports the school's proposal for Foundation status.

### **Views of the Cluster Board**

7. The Cluster Board remains undecided about this issue. There are a number of reservations about the possible implications for future admission patterns in the town, that are unresolved.

### **Views of the Area Education Officer**

8. The Area Education Officer understands the reasoning behind the school's proposal.

### **Resource Implications**

#### *Capital*

9. (1) If Foundation status is secured, a greater responsibility for funding capital projects will rest with the school, within the increasingly 'levelled playing field' context of successive Local Management of Schools' legislation.

(2) Any land on which the school stands and which is used for the purposes of a maintained school will be transferred to the Governing Body at the point of implementation.

#### *Revenue*

(3) All maintained schools are funded by formula under Local Management of Schools legislation and so there are no direct revenue implications when a school moves to Foundation status.

### *Human*

(4) Schedule 3 to the 'Change of Category Regulations' provides for all rights, powers, duties and liabilities to transfer from the Local Authority to the Governing Body. In effect, all employment rights and responsibilities would transfer from the Local Authority to the Governing Body and staff would be directly employed by the Governing Body. As a Voluntary Controlled school, the Governing Body has personnel powers devolved to it, under Local Management, but the Local Authority, as the employer, retains the ultimate responsibilities

(5) Where a Governing Body is seeking to transfer to Foundation status it must also consult under the 'Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006' (the TUPE regulations). These Regulations require that employee representatives be informed:

- That the transfer is to take place, when it is to happen and why
- Of the legal, economic and social implications of the transfer for affected employees
- Whether the employer envisages taking any action, such as reorganisation, in connection with the transfer, which will affect the staff, and if so, what action is envisaged

### **Equality Issues**

10. There are no equality issues in terms of ethnicity, gender or disability discrimination with particular regard to this proposal.

### **Transport and Environmental Impact including Community Implications**

11. As a hugely popular school, St John's currently draws the vast majority of its school population from within the local community. Re-introduction of use of the St John's Variation to an 'Ease of Access' criterion could disadvantage parents/carers who do not enjoy the priority afforded to parents/carers living further away but within the notional catchment area drawn around the former Infant department building. This could potentially lead to increased car movements at peak periods of the day, over those necessary under a strict proximity to school criterion that will be in place from September 2007.

### **School Improvement Implications**

12. The proposal carries no particular school improvement implications. It is expected that St John's would continue to be a high performing school.

### **Links to the Primary Strategy**

13. There are no particular links to the Primary Strategy inherent in this proposal.

### **Proposed Timetable**

14. To be in line with the Governing Body's published time-scale.

15. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought as to what view the County Council, as a consultee, should express in response to the Governing Body of St John's CE (Voluntary Controlled) Primary School's proposal to seek Foundation status.

Chris Lay  
Area Education Officer  
(Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells)  
Tel: (01732) 525107

The Local Member is Mr Roy Bullock.

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Background Documents:

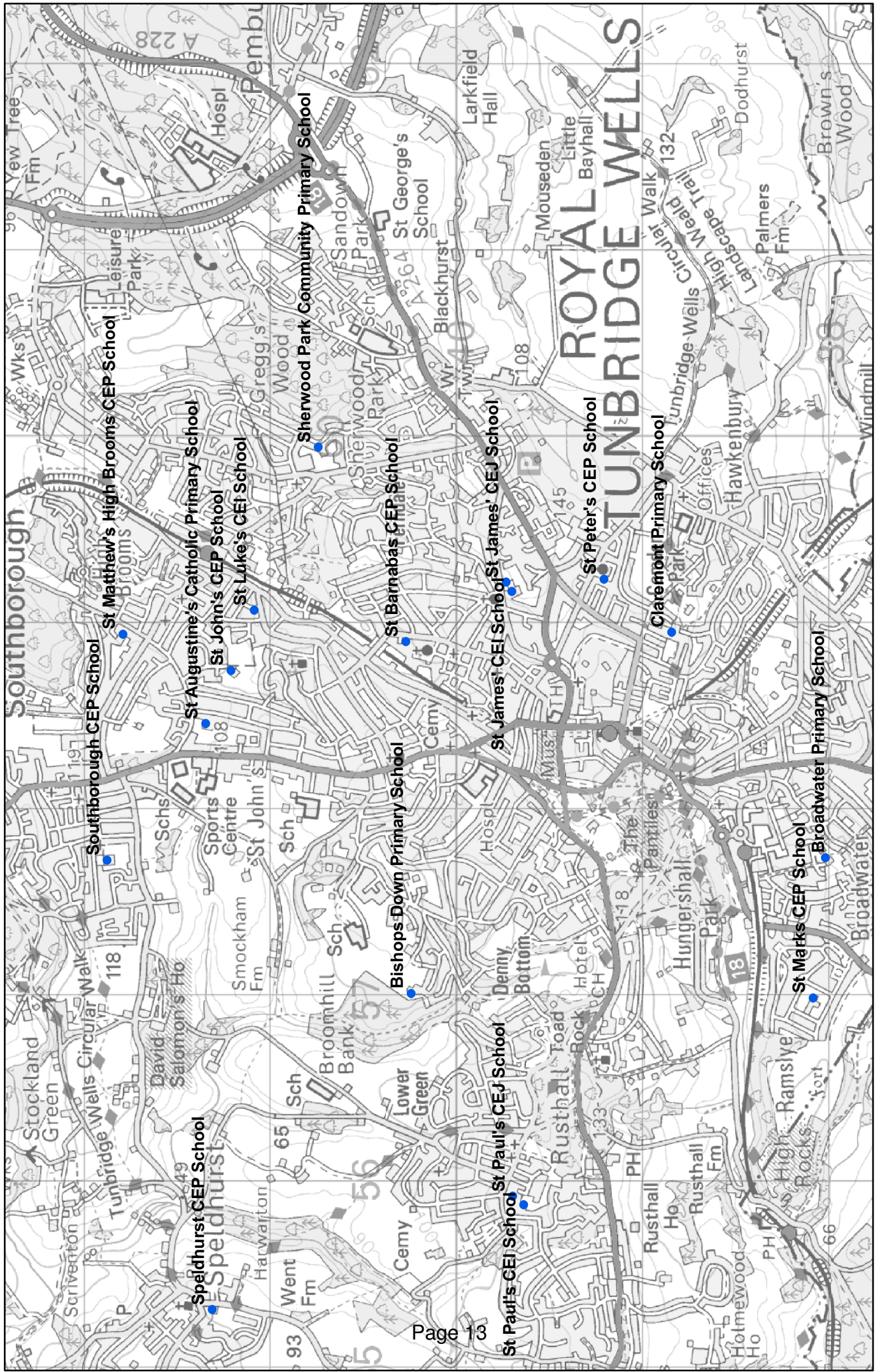
*None*

Other Sources of Information:

*DfES – Streamlined Route to Foundation Status Guidance*

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# Location of St. John's CE Primary School, Tunbridge Wells



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By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 14 June 2007

Subject: PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ELLINGTON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AND THE HERESON SCHOOL, RAMSGATE

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on whether to go to public consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School, Ramsgate with effect from 1 September 2008.

## Introduction

1. (1) The overall long-term decline in pupil numbers in the secondary sector in Thanet is set to continue over the next few years. In January 2007 the net capacity of Thanet secondary schools was 9884. At that time there were 9207 pupils in Thanet secondary schools producing a surplus capacity of 677 pupils (6.8%). Over the next 7-8 years rolls will continue to fall as the significant and sustained drop in primary rolls feeds through into the secondary sector (see Appendix 1). By 2015-16 it is estimated that there will be 8179 pupils at secondary schools in Thanet producing a surplus capacity of 1705 (approximately 17.3%) across the district.

(2) In addition to the challenges of falling rolls, schools are facing the need to respond to the 14-19 agenda which places greater emphasis on innovative curriculum development, providing enhanced vocational provision, personalised learning and developing collaborative strategies to deliver a broader range of learning opportunities at a local level. In Thanet, the secondary schools have a good track record of collaboration and this is already delivering enhanced benefit for learners.

(3) Thanet has been identified as an early beneficiary from the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) Programme. This should deliver major capital investment in the physical infrastructure of secondary provision by 2010/11.

(4) Within the context of BSF, discussions have been taking place for some time with secondary headteachers in Thanet about the secondary provision which is required to meet the needs of the district over the long term. The plans which emerge from these discussions will need to inform submissions to the BSF programme and will also need to address the organisational challenges facing secondary schools, including the impact of falling rolls.

(5) This proposal seeks to reduce high school capacity in Ramsgate in line with the projected long-term need for the area and to consolidate high school provision on a single site enabling both boys and girls age 11-16 to have access to the excellent facilities which are soon to be available to Ellington School for Girls following the relocation of that school to the new Pysons Road site from June 2007.

## **Background**

2. (1) Roll projections based on historic patterns of pupil distribution and taking account of demographic factors and local development suggest a long-term need in Ramsgate for a 4FE high school intake in Ramsgate, or an annual intake of 120 pupils.

(2) Currently each of the two Ramsgate high schools has a nominal 4FE intake but is actually admitting significantly below its published Admissions Number (PAN) of 120 (see Appendix 2).

(3) Appendix 2 shows the year group roll data for both schools and the number of places allocated at each school for September 2007. Over the medium-long term neither school would be viable without a substantial and sustained increase in its annual intake. This is not a realistic prospect given the long-term roll projections for the district.

(4) Ellington school for Girls is being relocated onto a new purpose built site at Pysons Road. This has been delivered as part of a Private Finance Initiative (PFI). The new Ellington buildings provide first-class accommodation for up to 600 pupils (11-16) which would enable the school to admit an annual intake of 120 pupils (4FE). It is clear from the significant reduction in Year 7 admissions over the last two years and the continuing decline in secondary pupil numbers across Thanet that realistically neither Ellington nor The Hereson will be able to achieve or sustain this level of intake by themselves.

(5) Secondary schools of less than 4FE encounter significant challenges in organising and delivering the National Curriculum. If, as is predicted, both Ellington and The Hereson School were to become 2FE schools over the medium-long term they would no longer be viable educationally in their own right.

(6) Both Ellington and The Hereson are good schools with considerable strengths and strong community links. Realistically, the best way of securing sustainable good quality high school provision within Ramsgate over the long term is to amalgamate the schools retaining the strengths of each within a viable 4FE school, providing excellent facilities for all. The new site of Ellington School for Girls suitably adapted, offers the opportunity to realise this goal.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) The proposal is to amalgamate Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School by closing both schools and immediately opening a newly amalgamated school with effect from 1 September 2008, creating a new 4FE school with a PAN of 120 serving both boys and girls age 11-16.

(2) At the point of amalgamation in September 2008, there would be an estimated 783 pupils on the combined roll of both schools. The roll will reduce naturally over a 2-year period as the larger year groups at the top end of the school are replaced by smaller year groups coming in at Year 7.

(3) It is therefore proposed to manage the amalgamation in a phased and sensible way by adopting a 2-year transition period from 2008-2010. The new Year 7 plus years 8 and 9 at The Hereson would move onto the Ellington site in September 2008. The Hereson year groups 10 and 11 would stay on the existing Hereson site, thereby providing stability for the critical GCSE year groups. This would mean that the combined numbers on the new Ellington site would remain well within the physical capacity of the new accommodation.

## **Accommodation Issues**

4. (1) The availability of the new Ellington site at Pysons Road provides an opportunity to improve the quality of the learning environment for students of both schools while addressing the urgent implications of falling rolls.

(2) The new school would provide the capacity for a 4FE high school which is the projected long-term need. It is however, recognised that adaptations to the new buildings would be required to enable the school to cater for both boys and girls. Subject to the proposal being approved adaptations would be undertaken so that the new buildings could cater for a mixed intake from September 2008. A detailed feasibility study will be undertaken to ascertain exactly what work would need to be undertaken.

(3) If the proposal is not implemented Ellington School for Girls faces the prospect of an uncertain future with falling rolls, reduced funding, excess surplus capacity and difficulty in delivering the National Curriculum, which will threaten standards.

(4) Many of these challenges would also face The Hereson School. In terms of accommodation, without the prospect of relocating to the Ellington site The Hereson School would be dependent on securing funding through the Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme in order to secure significantly better buildings and facilities. BSF funding will become available to Thanet secondary schools over the next 2-3 years. However, all BSF proposals are subject to rigorous internal and external scrutiny to ensure that they meet Value for Money (VFM) criteria. It is difficult to see how a robust VFM case could be established in the context of falling rolls with an uncertain future for The Hereson School. The school would not be viable long term as a stand alone 2FE institution.

## **Views of the Governing Bodies and Headteachers**

5. Both governing bodies have adopted a realistic and positive approach to the challenges facing the two schools. The headteachers have also recognised the potential benefits of amalgamation and have written to parents explaining the context of the early discussions which have taken place about the possibility of amalgamation and the timescale which could be followed.

## **Resource Implications**

### *Capital*

6. (1) Over the medium-long term the consolidation of high school provision in Ramsgate onto the Pysons Road site offers the most cost-effective solution to the challenges facing the locality. There would be a modest cost to adapt the existing site to cater for boys as well as girls. This cannot be quantified precisely in advance of a feasibility study.

(2) By 2010 when the consolidation onto Pysons Road is completed, The Hereson site could be released to realise a capital receipt.

### *Revenue*

(3) Amalgamation would reduce revenue costs over the medium-long term. The precise implications cannot be quantified in advance of decisions which would be taken by the interim governing body in relation to the staffing needs of the new school.

## *Human*

(4) A new staffing structure would be required for the newly amalgamated school and a single headteacher would need to be appointed. The precise implications for staff would depend on decisions to be taken by the interim governing body. However, the potential threat to job security comes from a continuing decline in pupil numbers rather than the prospect of amalgamation, as schools seek to manage the financial and staffing implications of reduced rolls.

## **Equalities**

7. (1) Neither school has large numbers of pupils from religious or ethnic minorities. Potentially, the significant implication for all pupils in terms of equality is the issue of perceived loss of single-sex high school provision.

(2) Some parents would undoubtedly argue for the maintenance of single-sex provision in the interests of diversity and choice. However, this potential demand has to be considered within the context of pupil numbers, cost effective use of resources and educational viability. Within this context there is no realistic option for maintaining autonomous single-sex high school provision in Ramsgate.

(3) In terms of the impact on educational standards, research findings are both variable and inconclusive. There is no definitive evidence that single-sex schools achieve better results overall than schools catering for both boys and girls.

(4) Nevertheless, there is some evidence that some pupils do better in some subject areas when single-sex teaching is available. Moreover, the issues of choice and diversity must be addressed. Within the context of a mixed annual intake of c.120 pupils it would be possible to organise the curriculum in a way which retained both diversity and flexibility enabling single-sex teaching where appropriate according to the professional judgement of the headteacher. Although this must remain a management issue for the school itself, the local authority would strongly support and encourage this development.

## **Transport and Environmental Impact including Community**

8. (1) The dot maps attached at Appendices 3 and 4 demonstrate that the two schools serve virtually the same geographic catchment. The Pysons Road site is approximately 1.3 miles from The Hereson site and 1.5 miles from the former Ellington site. A newly amalgamated school would continue to serve the same community, maintaining viable high school provision within Ramsgate for local people.

### *Transport and Environmental Implications*

(2) The overall number of pupils who would be located on the new Pysons Road site would be no more than was originally envisaged for the Ellington Girls School, that is 4FE, approximately 600 pupils.

(3) The Hereson School is actually closer to the new site than the existing Ellington School. Initial consultations with the Highways and Transport Integration Unit suggest that there would be minimal implications for non-public service transport. Over the 2-year transition period it may be necessary to consider the rescheduling of existing bus services to accommodate the phased migration away from The Hereson School to the Pysons Road site. Given the close proximity and modest number of pupils it is anticipated that these arrangements would be both manageable and unproblematic. Further detailed work is planned subject to public consultation proceeding.

## **School Improvement Implications**

9. (1) Both schools have had positive Ofsted inspections within the last twelve months and both schools perform well above the national average in value-added terms which takes account of pupil progress through the secondary phase of education.

(2) Bringing the two schools together would create a school which is viable and sustainable in educational terms. The risk to standards is in not proceeding and allowing the two schools to wither on the vine as numbers and funding reduce, leading to consequential cuts in staffing, reduced organisational flexibility and ultimately severe restrictions on curriculum delivery and the quality of provision.

## **Secondary Strategy**

10. (1) The proposal is entirely compatible with the main tenets of the Kent Secondary Strategy, the key elements of which are published within the Kent School Organisation Plan. The overall aim of the Secondary Strategy as set out in the plan is to “transform secondary education, to enable schools to develop according to their individual ethos, special character and areas of specialist expertise”.

(2) A key element of the plan is the development and implementation of a strategy for 14-19, whereby schools will offer a broader range of subject choice embracing vocational options and equipping young people with the skills and knowledge needed for continuation of their learning, employment and adult life. Without consolidation of high school provision in Ramsgate, Ellington and The Hereson schools would find it impossible to deliver the varied curriculum offer required by the strategy, as rolls continue to decline and organisational and curriculum flexibility become increasingly restricted.

(3) Ellington School for Girls has recently secured accreditation as a specialist school in the Humanities. This accreditation takes effect from September 2007. The accreditation is transferable to the new school which would therefore be well placed to build on and develop existing strengths, enriching diversity and choice at a local level.

(4) The Hereson School has a special unit currently catering for 9 pupils with specific learning difficulties. Special units attached to mainstream schools are currently the subject of a separate County-wide review. However, subject to the outcome of that review there is no reason why the newly amalgamated school could not retain the existing specialist provision potentially catering for both boys and girls.

(5) The consolidation of high school provision in Ramsgate within a viable 4FE school would over the medium-long term improve the potential for recruitment and retention of staff, given that staffing structures may be planned on the basis of relatively stable pupil numbers rather than the management of decline on a year by year basis.

(6) Securing the viability of local high school provision for the long-term also supports the notion of developing community schools serving local people and being responsive to local need.

## **The Education and Inspection Act 2006**

11. The School Organisation and Inspection Act 2006 introduces a number of new provisions and regulations which affect the decision making process and the potential

timescale for securing a decision in relation to school organisation proposals. The key elements of the Act which impact upon this proposal are:

- (a) Kent School Organisation Committee (KSOC) is abolished w.e.f. 25 May 2007.
- (b) Any proposal to establish a new school requires the promoter (in this case KCC) to publish a competition proposal – effectively an invitation to any interested parties to run the new school. This notice has to run publicly for 4 months to determine whether or not any other provider is able and willing to assume this role.
- (c) The Local Authority can apply to the Secretary of State for an exemption to the need to go to external competition.
- (d) Before the Local Authority publishes a statutory proposal for the establishment of a new community school it has to apply to the Secretary of State for permission to do so.
- (e) Where the Local Authority is itself the promoter of a proposal to establish a new community school, the final determination has to be made by the independent Schools Adjudicator.

## Timetable

12. (1) Given the need to address the issue of falling rolls as a matter of urgency and taking account of the availability of the new Ellington school building, there is a need to move ahead as quickly as possible with this proposal. It is proposed therefore to submit an application for exemption from the need to go to external competition. Depending on whether such an exemption is granted there would be two possible timetables for moving the proposal forward. These are set out below:

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| SOAB (1)   | 14 June     |
| Public Consultation begins   | 15 June     |
| Application for Exemption from Competition Regulations submitted to Secretary of State | 25 May      |
| Public Meeting   | 2 July      |
| Public Consultation ends   | 27 July     |
| Decision by Secretary of State on Exemption from Competition                           | End of July |
| SOAB (2)   | 5 September |

If exemption from competition is granted the following timetable would apply:

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Cabinet Member Decision to issue Public Notice subject to S.O.S. approval           | September 2007       |
| Application to Secretary of State for approval To Publish Proposal for a New School | September 2007       |
| Public Notice Issued  | 7 September 2007     |
| Public Notice Expires   | 19 October 2007      |
| Referral to External Adjudicator  | By End October 2007  |
| Adjudicator Determines Proposal   | By End November 2007 |

If exemption is not granted re: the competition regulations then the timetable would be:

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| Cabinet Member Decision to Proceed to Competition | September 2007 |
|---|----------------|

|  |                   |
|--|-------------------|
| First Competition Notice Published<br>(subject to Cabinet Members agreement)         | 28 September 2007 |
| Competition Notice Expires   | 28 January 2008   |
| Responses to the competition notice<br>evaluated against the published specification | February 2008     |

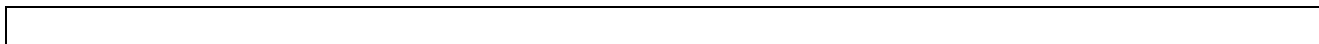
*Arrangements have yet to be agreed for evaluating proposals received in response to the competition notice. Further guidance is awaited.*

|   |   |
|---|---|
| Second competition notice published<br>Including all proposals submitted in<br>response to the first notice and any KCC<br>proposal – subject to KCC Members agreement. | Early March – Mid April<br>2008 (6 weeks) |
| Referral to adjudicator   | Mid April 2008                            |
| Outcome of adjudication   | By Early June 2008                        |

Clearly if the exemption from competition is not granted, a final decision cannot realistically be anticipated until late May/early June 2008. This would mean that the implementation date for the amalgamation would have to be postponed to September 2009. This would therefore be the published date in the first competition notice.

## **Conclusion**

13. The proposed amalgamation of Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School would secure high quality, sustainable high school provision for the local community over the long-term. All pupils would have access to high quality facilities and the new school would have the critical mass of human and financial resources to offer a diverse range of flexible learning opportunities responsive to local need. Within a single amalgamated school it would be entirely possible to retain elements of single-sex provision where appropriate. The new school would therefore build on the strengths and traditions of the two existing schools while offering first class facilities and opportunities for local learners.



14. Members of SOAB are asked to express their views on moving to public consultation on the proposed amalgamation of Ellington School for Girls and The Hereson School in accordance with the proposal and timescale set out in this report.

Martyn Doole  
Area Education Officer, Dover & Thanet  
Telephone: 01227 284407  
Internal: 7679 4407

The Local Member is Elizabeth Green

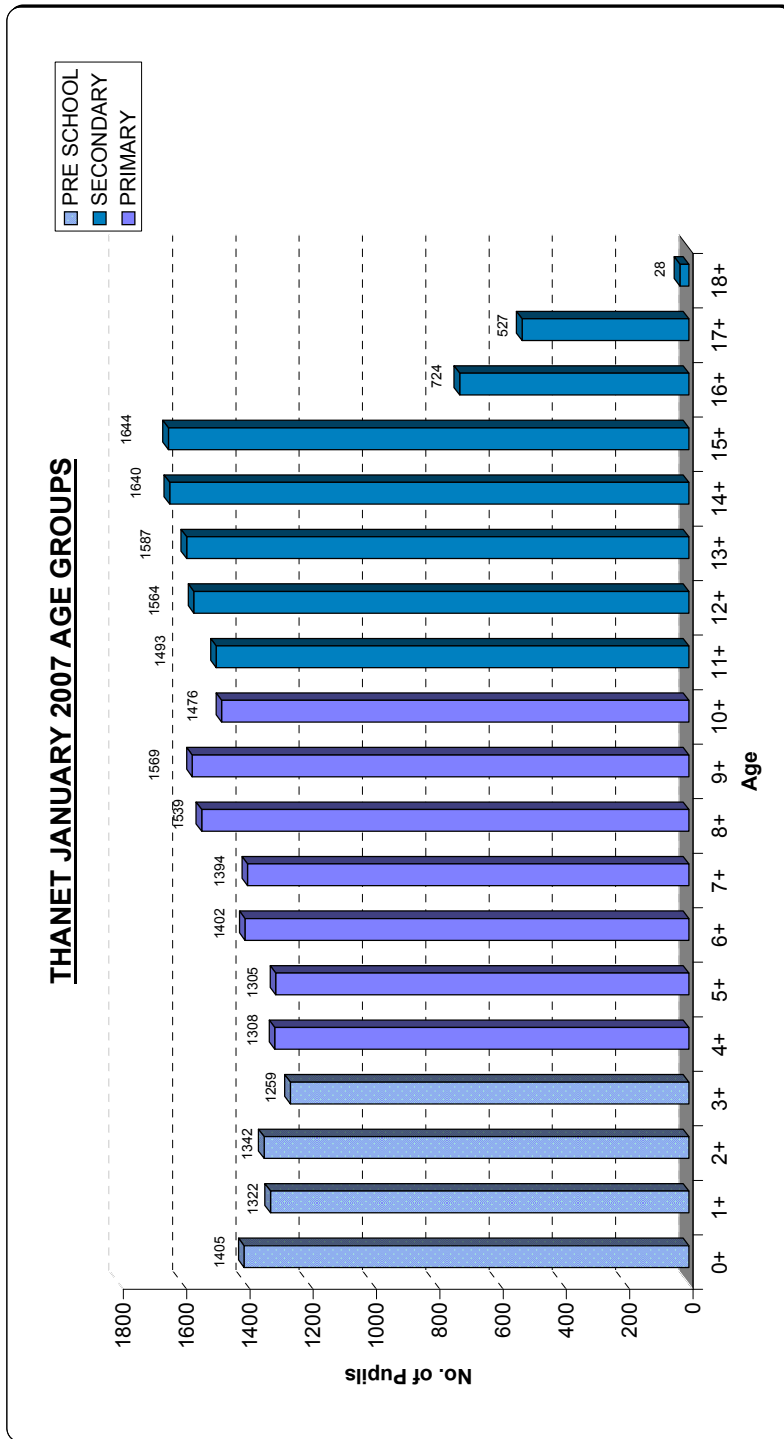
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Background Documents:

*None*

THANET DISTRICT

|            | 0+   | 1+   | 2+   | 3+   | 4+   | 5+   | 6+   | 7+   | 8+   | 9+   | 10+  | 11+  | 12+  | 13+  | 14+  | 15+  | 16+ | 17+ | 18+ |
|------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|
| PRE SCHOOL | 1405 | 1322 | 1342 | 1259 | 1308 | 1305 | 1402 | 1394 | 1539 | 1569 | 1476 | 1493 | 1564 | 1587 | 1640 | 1644 | 724 | 527 | 28  |
| PRIMARY    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      | 1476 |      |      |      |      |      |     |     |     |
| SECONDARY  |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |     |     |     |
| TOTAL      | 1405 | 1322 | 1342 | 1259 | 1308 | 1305 | 1402 | 1394 | 1539 | 1569 | 1476 | 1493 | 1564 | 1587 | 1640 | 1644 | 724 | 527 | 28  |



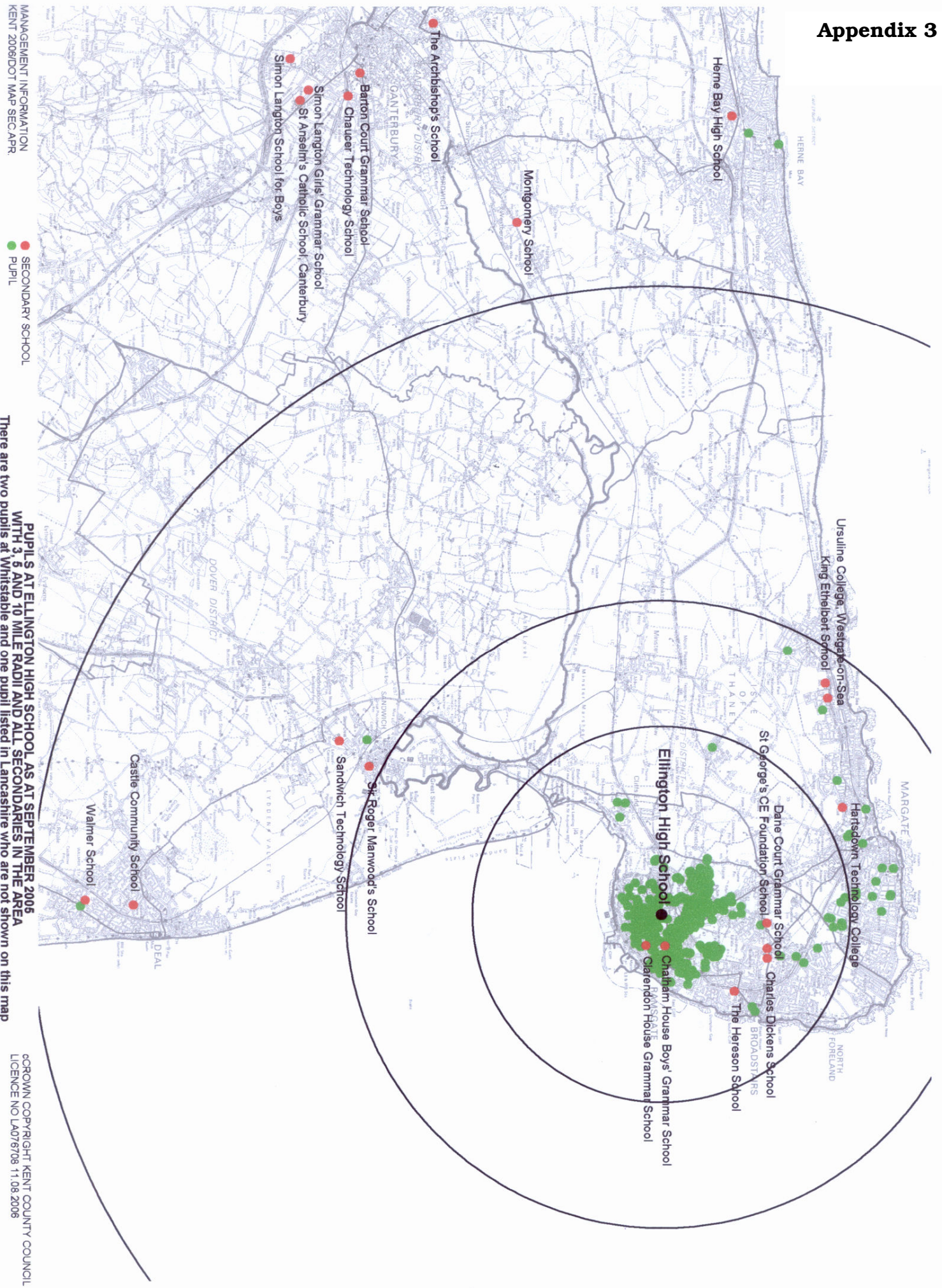
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**Ellington & The Hereson Rolls January 2007**

|                             | PAN        | Net Cap     | 7          | 8          | 9          | 10         | 11         | Total      | Surplus/<br>Deficit | %<br>Surplus/<br>Deficit |
|-----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| Ellington School for Girls  | 120        | 426         | 60         | 77         | 91         | 98         | 86         | 412        | 14                  | 3.29                     |
| Hereson School (The) (Boys) | 120        | 686         | 80         | 116        | 125        | 126        | 124        | 571        | 115                 | 16.76                    |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>240</b> | <b>1112</b> | <b>140</b> | <b>193</b> | <b>216</b> | <b>224</b> | <b>210</b> | <b>983</b> | <b>129</b>          | <b>11.60</b>             |

60 pupils have been allocated to Hereson and 55 to Ellington for Year 7 in September 07.  
 Ellington had 32 first choices and Hereson 38.

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