

By: Mr Andy Roberts, Interim Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 26 April 2011

Subject: PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE KINGSMEAD (COMMUNITY) PRIMARY SCHOOL AND DIOCESAN & PAYNE SMITH CE (VOLUNTARY AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL BY CLOSING BOTH SCHOOLS AND ESTABLISHING A NEW 2 FE PRIMARY SCHOOL, WITH MAINTAINED NURSERY UNIT, ON THE CURRENT KINGSMEAD SITE, AS A VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report sets out the results of the joint public consultation undertaken with the Diocese of Canterbury on the proposal to amalgamate Kingsmead (Community) Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith Church of England (Voluntary Aided) Primary School by the closure of both schools, conditional upon the establishment of a new Church of England Voluntary Controlled school on the current Kingsmead Primary School site, to replace both schools

The Canterbury Diocese has been granted exemption from competition by the Secretary of State and therefore this report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on the issuing of a joint public notice. The Local Authority part of the Public Notice will propose the closure of both schools and the Canterbury Diocese part of the Public Notice will propose the establishment of a new 2 FE Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school to replace them.

This paper should be read in conjunction with the report to School Organisation Advisory Board of 9 November 2010

Introduction

1. (1) Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School are both city schools serving the community of Northgate in Canterbury and localities just outside. It is widely acknowledged that the children attending Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and Kingsmead Primary School are badly in need of better accommodation. The possibility of replacing both schools with a new school has been the subject of discussion for several years.

(2) A number of issues need to be addressed urgently:

- The cramped conditions and failing stonework making Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School unfit for 21st Century education.
- The health and safety concerns regarding the Diocesan & Payne Smith's buildings.
- Kingsmead Primary School is housed in accommodation that is desperately in need of refurbishment and reorganisation.
- Both of the existing buildings are very expensive to maintain.
- The need to raise and maintain standards for all pupils.

(3) The Canterbury Diocese wishes to retain a Church designation for the new school, given that with the closure of Diocesan & Payne Smith there would be no other Church school in the city centre. The Local Authority supports the establishment of a new school with an inclusive ethos, serving the needs of the local community. It was therefore agreed that the Canterbury Diocese should seek permission from the Secretary of State to publish a proposal for a new two form entry Church of England Voluntary Controlled primary school outside of a competition. However, it was emphasised at both public meetings, that although the proposal was for a Church school, as a Voluntary Controlled school, the school would adopt the Local Authority admissions criteria, which do not include denominational preference.

Exemption Granted

The Canterbury Diocese received notification from the Department for Education on 18 March 2010 that the Secretary of State has decided to grant consent to the Diocese to publish proposals for a new Voluntary Controlled Church of England primary school. A copy of the letter is attached as appendix 1. The Local Authority will be the decision maker for the closure of both schools and for the establishment of the new school under Section 10 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 (outside of a competition). In certain circumstances the decision could be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is to amalgamate Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and Kingsmead Primary School by closing both schools and immediately opening a newly amalgamated school with effect from 1 September 2012. The new school would be a two form entry Voluntary Controlled school, including a 26 part-time place maintained nursery unit and would be established on the current Kingsmead site.

(2) To achieve a two form entry primary school on the Kingsmead site it is recognised that there would need to be substantial improvements including refurbishment and remodelling of the accommodation and possibly some new build. Feasibility work has already started and has confirmed the viability of establishing a two form entry school on the site. More detailed work will be undertaken in consultation with both schools to determine the best way of using available resources to provide the best possible learning environment for all pupils and to improve the general appearance and ambience of the site.

(3) A shadow governing body would be appointed, consisting of governors from both schools, to plan for the transfer of the schools into the newly refurbished accommodation. Together Kent County Council and the shadow governing body would ensure that any impact on the children's education was kept to a minimum.

The Consultation

3. (1) The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors of both schools, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, Canterbury City Council, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was also posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated via email.

(2) Approximately 650 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. A copy of the public consultation document is attached as appendix 2.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

4. (1) Nineteen responses have been received, of which thirteen are in favour, four are against and two undecided. Letters of response have also been received from both Governing Bodies which are attached as appendices 3 and 4.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as appendix 5.

Public Meeting Responses

(3) A summary of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting is attached as appendix 6

Views of Local Member

5. The Local Member Mr Graham Gibbens views are as follows

'Having considered the arguments put forward for amalgamating the two schools and the potential benefits that this will bring, and having taken account of the responses to the consultation, I support the proposal for the establishment of a new school which will build on the strengths of the two existing schools and provide better facilities for all students. This support is conditional upon the new school having Voluntary Controlled status.'

Views of Local Member of Parliament

6. Mr Julian Brazier, the Member of Parliament for the Canterbury district, has informed us that he has written to Michael Gove in support of the Canterbury Diocese's application for exemption from competition.

Mr Brazier said "I am fully behind the project to amalgamate the two schools, as I think it is an excellent way both of securing new buildings for both current schools, but also of moving the Diocesan & Payne Smith school out of their current site, which they have clearly outgrown. I hope the merger goes ahead, on the lines proposed, as I expect it will also demonstrate how successful co-operation by Church and Local Authorities can lead to excellent education results for pupils".

Views of Canterbury City Council

7. (1) The leader of Canterbury District Council is Mr John Gilbey who has responded as follows:

It is with pleasure that I comment within the consultation on the possible amalgamation of Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan and Payne Smith CE Primary School.

I can see and would forecast a very bright future for the amalgamated schools. Funding is generally restricted these days to say the least and in both cases I am sure that the buildings of the two separate schools are in need of repair and both are expensive to maintain. A new school, refurbished and brought up to date, with much lower maintenance costs would provide a warm, welcoming and sensible new environment for the pupils. (Presumably) a combination of staff and new appointees will lead to dynamic and progressive opportunities for both the teachers and pupils to not quite start again but to reinvigorate the atmosphere and ethos of the two schools, now one. I am wholly in support of the proposal to merge, believing it to be clearly in the interests of the children and the teachers. I do not see negative impacts rather that there is great opportunity to look forward to a new era for the two schools working and progressing together.

(2) The Chief Executive of Canterbury District is Mr Colin Carmichael who has responded as follows:

The City Council has supported the amalgamation of the schools for some time and as you may know tried to provide a new site for a new school on the field next to the Riverside Children's Centre. Sadly economics ruled that out.

The advantages are clearly better use of scarce accommodation, the removal of DPS from an area of poor air quality, and an upgrading of Kingsmead, in an area which is one of the most deprived in our District.

Views of the Diocesan Authorities

8. (1) Dr Wadman, Director of Education, Archdiocese of Southwark responded to consultation via an email saying "we have no objections to this proposed amalgamation".

(2) As a joint proponent of the proposal to establish a new school to replace Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and Kingsmead Primary School, the Canterbury Diocese is in favour of the amalgamation as long as the resulting school is a Church of England school.

Views of the Governing Bodies

9. (1) Attached as appendix 3 is the written response received from the governing body of Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School.

(2) Attached as appendix 4 is the written response received from the governing body of Kingsmead Primary School.

Views of the Pupils

10. (1) Attached as appendix 7 is a response received from Diocesan & Payne Smith's school council.

(2) Attached as appendix 8 are comments received from Kingsmead following discussions held by pupils in Years 2 to 6.

Views of the Area Education Officer

11. (1) If implemented the proposal would produce a number of significant benefits to pupils and their communities.

- All students at both schools would benefit from much better facilities than they currently enjoy.
- The merger of the two schools would create a new school which has the critical mass of students and staff to provide greater organisational and curriculum flexibility.
- The school would be both educationally and economically more robust and viable, securing the long term future of educational provision within and for the Northgate community.
- Maintenance costs would be substantially reduced.
- New facilities, greater operational flexibility, long term security and the opportunity to combine the strengths of both schools should have a positive effect on standards.

(2) While recognising that all change brings with it a degree of uncertainty and anxiety, there is every reason to believe that this proposal, if realised will bring about substantive and substantial long term change which will benefit all students and the communities from which they come.

Resource Issues

Capital & Revenue

12. (1) The refurbishment and any new build on the Kingsmead site would be funded by a contribution of up to £2m from KCC (funding previously ring fenced for acquisition of a new site) and the proceeds of the capital receipt from the sale of the Diocesan & Payne Smith site which would be contributed by the Canterbury Diocese (approximately £1m).

(2) The new school would be eligible for a one off amount of approximately £87k to support the transition.

(3) Redevelopment and refurbishment of the Kingsmead site would reduce maintenance costs over the medium-long term.

Human

(4) The new school would have a single governing body and a single headteacher. The shadow governing body would appoint the headteacher designate who would then work with the shadow governing body to establish a staffing structure for the new school.

(5) Staff from the existing schools who are in post at the point at which the new school comes into being would have the right to transfer to the new school under the provisions of TUPE. At this stage it is not possible to specify the precise implications for existing staff which are dependent on decisions yet to be made by the headteacher designate and the shadow governing body.

Proposed Timetable

13.

Cabinet Member decision (to issue a joint public notice with the Canterbury Diocese) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Closure of both schools• Establishment of the new school	April/May 2011
Public Notice period	23 May to 4 July 2011
Decision by Cabinet Member and appeal period	July 2011
Implementation	September 2012

Recommendation

14. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on:
- (a) the amalgamation of Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School, and
 - (b) the issuing of a joint public notice with the Canterbury Diocese to include the closure of both schools and the establishment of a new 2 FE Church of England Voluntary Controlled school on the Kingsmead site.

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The Local Member is Mr Graham Gibbens

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board – 9 November 2010