

By: Director – Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 07 February 2008

Subject: PROPOSED CLOSURE OF AXTON CHASE SCHOOL AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH A GOVERNMENT FUNDED ACADEMY.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on a proposal to undertake a public consultation, in conjunction with the governing body, on the closure of Axton Chase School and its replacement with a government-funded Academy.

Introduction

1. (1) Axton Chase school is an 11-19 mixed (non-selective foundation) high school with a roll of 935 for Years 7 to 11 and 105 post 16 students. Attached as Appendix 1 is a map showing the location of the school.

(2) The school serves both rural and urban communities located in the Dartford district (see Appendix 2 for pupil distribution). The school draws from an area which includes three of the most deprived wards in Dartford, pupils attend from two of them, Temple Hill and Swanscombe.

(3) In Axton Chase school, the socio-economic profile of the student intake is below national and Kent average overall. The proportion of students with a statement of Special Educational Needs is 6%, above the Kent (2.8%) and National average (2.2%). The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is 10%, which is below the National average 13.6%, yet below the Kent average 7.9%.

(4) The vision for the Axtane Academy is that it will develop new first class approaches to education. The Academy will instil a pride in and love of learning, motivating students to aim high, become skilled and flexible learners and develop into socially, emotionally and behaviourally confident citizens, employees and employers. The Academy will have a particular focus on vocational education, creating a mix of academic and vocational experiences.

(5) The Axtane Academy will specialise in Science and the Creative and Expressive Arts, with a bias to technology based programmes. It will also have a specialist centre for students in the autistic spectrum.

(6) Axtane Academy will be part of a hard federation with the Leigh Technology Academy. The Leigh Technology Academy will be the sole legal body responsible for both Leigh and Axtane Academies.

Academy Proposal

2. (1) It is proposed that the Axtane Academy will replace Axton Chase School. The Axtane Academy will be federated with the Leigh Technology Academy, which is the lead sponsor with co-sponsors Kent County Council (KCC) and the University of Kent.

(2) It is proposed that the Axtane Academy will open in September 2008 on the existing site and premises with a Published Admission Number of 180, and a capacity of 900, plus up to 200 post 16 places. The new buildings are expected to be completed in September 2010 on the same site, adjacent to the current premises.

(3) The Academy will be at the core of the community and will be characterised by:

- (a) creating an environment that has high expectations for all
- (b) having the highest standards of behaviour and commitment
- (c) developing an enthusiasm for learning by creating a curriculum that incorporates the Sciences and the Creative and Expressive Arts as a rich stand running throughout all aspects of education.
- (d) creating a culture of continuous improvement
- (e) developing its distinctive approach to creating excellence in education by working in close partnership with the Leigh Technology Academy
- (f) enabling a greater proportion of young people to achieve the knowledge, skills and attributes needed for our knowledge society.

Resource Implications

Capital

3. (1) KCCs contribution is £1 million to the Academy Endowment Fund. This will supplement the funding received from the DCSF.

Revenue

(2) The Academy will receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools.

Human

(3) Consultation will take place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE. Costs of new staffing (TUPE applies to current staff) and costs associated with TUPE, including any valid redundancies of staff who cannot transfer or be deployed elsewhere in Kent schools, are borne by the DCSF.

Transport and Road Safety Implications

4. Early discussions will take place with Dartford Borough Council and Kent Highways. They will be fully consulted as part of the design and development phase of the new Academy and a travel plan will be produced prior to the opening in 2008.

School Improvement Implications

5. (1) The closure of the current school and the setting up of the Academy would allow for new facilities, flexibility of curriculum and recruitment of high quality staff. It is intended that the investment in facilities, curriculum and funding flexibility that the Academy would bring, would have the positive impact on standards that are required for the students of Dartford and for improved life opportunities in the local communities.

(2) Axton Chase school was last inspected in November 2007 when it was found that *'the education provided was satisfactory overall, with particular strengths. The sixth form were found to be confident, purposeful and ready to take on responsibilities both within the school and beyond. The curriculum needs greater breadth and cohesion in order to serve all students well.'*

Views of the Governing Body

6. The governing body of Axton Chase School and the Leigh Technology Academy Board are in full support of this proposal.

Views of the Area Education Officer

7. The Area Education Officer considers that this is an innovative proposal, designed to enhance the life opportunities of young people in the Dartford district. It is, therefore, appropriate to conduct a public consultation for the closure of Axton Chase School.

Proposed Timetable

8. Should public consultation be agreed, the following timetable is proposed:

School Organisation Advisory Board	07 February 2008
Publication of consultation document	12 February 2008
Public meeting	w.c. 25 February 2008
Closing date for responses	24 March 2008
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board	April 2008
Cabinet Member decision	April 2008
Issue public notice	May 2008
End of public notice period	June 2008
Implementation	1 September 2008

9. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on the proposal for a public consultation to be undertaken in conjunction with the governing body on the proposal for the closure of The Axton Chase School and its replacement with a government funded academy.

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Background Papers:

None.