

By: Andy Roberts, Interim Corporate Director, Education, Learning & Skills

To: Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

Subject: PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ALDINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Classification: Unrestricted

Reference: 11/01680

Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation on the proposal to expand Aldington Primary School from 140 places to 210 places.

Introduction

1. A report was presented to the School Organisation Advisory Board at its meeting on 7 September 2011 asking for their comments on the proposal outlined below. The report is attached as appendix 1.

The Proposal

2. The proposal is to expand Aldington Primary School by 10 places per year, bringing the total capacity to 210 places, to provide one form of entry, with up to 30 places per year group. The expansion of the school will be gradual with the additional places being created annually. It is proposed that the school formally expands for September 2012.

The Consultation

3. (1) A consultation document, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 1 was circulated. This circulation includes local Members, Ashford Borough Council, the Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Education Boards, head teachers in the Ashford district and local residents. The school had enough copies for all staff, governors, parents and carers. Approximately 300 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses.

(2) A public meeting was held at Aldington Primary School on 27 June 2011. Mrs Valerie Dagger, KCC Member, chaired the meeting. In attendance were Mr Andrew Wickham, Member for Ashford Rural East and Mr David Adams, Area Education Officer; Approximately 40 people attended.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

4. 31 responses have been received, of which 22 are in favour, and 9 opposed.

Views of Local Member

5. (1) Mr Andrew Wickham, Member for Ashford Rural East is supportive of the expansion of Aldington Primary School. It is rated as a good school by Ofsted and he has always been very impressed with it.

(2) Mr Wickham is aware of the problems regarding traffic and since the public consultation meeting has been working with the Parish Council and Kent Highway Services to try to resolve both the current problems and in anticipation of a future possible expansion of the school.

(3) With regard to parking, an informal arrangement has been made with the village hall management committee which allows parents to park in the village hall car park when there is no function at the village hall. Mr Wickham has approved a grant to pay for signs indicating that.

(4) He likes the idea that children at the school will be taught in their year groups and not in mixed age groups as they are at the moment and also feels it is important to provide primary school places for all those children who live in the village who wish to go there, the expansion will help allow this.

Views of Local Member of Parliament

6. The local Member of Parliament, Mr Damian Green, has been consulted on the proposal.

Views of Ashford Borough Council

7. Ashford Borough Council has been consulted on the proposal.

Views of the Parish Council

8. Aldington and Bonnington Parish Council support the proposal to expand the school subject to the parking issues being resolved.

Views of the Governing Body

9. The Governing Body support the proposed expansion to accommodate the increasing number of primary age children in the local community. The Governing Body believes that primary education should be delivered locally and therefore children who live in Aldington village should not be required to travel to another school which would potentially be the case if the expansion is not approved.

Views of the Local Children's Trust Board

10. The Local Childrens Trust Board fully understand the pressure on local services and schools caused by the rapid expansion of Ashford. The Board has always understood the need for additional pupil places in certain parts of the District and acknowledge the Area Education Officer would have researched all possibilities and concluded that Aldington PS was one of the most appropriate schools to alleviate this pressure.

Views of Highways

11. Kent Highway Services are working with the Parish Council and the local Member to look at current issues in the vicinity of the school and throughout the village.

Views of the Area Education Officer

12. (1) This is a popular and successful school, located in a village where housing development is taking place. Expansion is necessary to ensure sufficient school places for local children.

(2) A single age structure offers advantages in curriculum delivery, stability of friendship groups and extends the range of skills within the staff group as numbers increase.

Resource Issues

Capital & Revenue

13. (1) Two classrooms will need to be provided, together with additional toilet provision and hard play space. £94,000 is available from Developer Contributions towards the costs of additional accommodation; the remainder would be made available from the Capital Budget. The school will not need additional accommodation until September 2012.

Human

(2) Additional teaching and support staff will be required. The school's budget will increase annually in line with the increase in pupil numbers. The school will also receive one-off reorganisation funding of £7,041 for each additional class for furnishing.

Views of the School Organisation Advisory Board

14. At its meeting on 7 September 2011 the Schools Organisation Advisory Board member unanimously supported the proposal to issue a public notice to expand Aldington Primary School from 140 places to 210 places.

Recommendation

15. The Portfolio Holder for Education, Learning and Skills is requested to agree to issue a public notice to expand Aldington Primary School from 140 places to 210 places.

David Adams
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The Local Member is Andrew Wickham.

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board report - 20 May 2011

School Organisation Advisory Board report – 7 September 2011