

By: Andy Roberts, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

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

Subject: PROPOSAL TO EXPAND CHALLOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Classification: Unrestricted

Reference: 11/01681

Summary: The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Education, Learning and Skills is requested to issue a public notice to expand Challock 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 Challock 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. It is proposed that the school formally expands for September 2012.

The Consultation

3. (1) A consultation document 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 Challock Primary School on 11 July 2011. Mrs Valerie Dagger, KCC Member, chaired the meeting. Mr Simon Webb, Area Education Officer was in attendance. Approximately 70 people attended.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

4. 67 responses have been received, of which 38 are in favour, and 29 opposed.

Views of Local Member

5. Mr Richard King, Member for Ashford Rural West is supportive of the proposal. He feels it makes sense for the school to be 1fe as, apart from the shortage of places in Ashford, it will help establish the viability of the school.

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. The Parish Council are in support of the proposal and are committed to help find a solution for the parking. They are working with both the residents and the school to make the situation as best as it can be. The Highways representative for Ashford will be visiting Challock in September to assist with this.

Views of the Governing Body

9. (1) The Governing Body unreservedly support the proposed expansion. The school is popular and the senior management team are excellent. The Governing Body wishes to thank the authority for having the confidence to include Challock in its plans to address the shortfall of places.

(2) The school is extremely keen to teach the pupils in their discrete year groups and feel that this would be of greater benefit to the children both educationally and socially. Socially, remaining with their peer group is far better for the children. The current split classes can cause demoralisation and upset for some children that do not move “up” with the rest of their class mates. Becoming a one form entry school will alleviate this unnecessary stress.

(3) Whilst the Governing Body recognises that there are ongoing issues within the local community about stresses resulting from the increased flow of traffic at specific times of the day, the actual/real impact of these as a result of expansion in comparison with the present situation will be minimal. Measures are in place to address and manage these matters and these are being reviewed and improved all the time. The Governing Body’s contention is that these matters will not prove an impediment or a persistent barrier against expansion.

Views of the Local Children’s Trust Board

10. The Local Children’s 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 Challock Primary School was one of the most appropriate schools to alleviate this pressure.

Views of Highways

11. Kent Highway Services are working with Ashford Borough Council regarding additional parking restrictions in the vicinity of the school. These will be advertised and residents will be consulted in due course.

Views of the Area Education Officer

12. (1) This is a popular school and regularly oversubscribed. Expansion is in line with the expectation of expanding popular, successful schools.

(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.

(3) It is clear from the public meeting that there were concerns from many local residents that enlarging the school would cause them additional concerns. Some of the current parents appear to be inconsiderate, in the manner in which they utilise the single road entry into the school, at the start and end of the school day.

(4) Within a short distance there is a village hall which has ample parking to ensure that parents could park and walk their children to and from school. There are two 'walking buses' which are very successful, it is expected a third will be developed as a result of the enlargement.

(5) The school will need to address these issues through the production of a school travel plan, where responses to the completion of the document with local residents, staff and pupils will be required.

(6) The Area Education Officer for Mid Kent has agreed to liaise closely with both the Headteacher and Governors to ensure that the School Travel Plan will be robust.

(7) There were many positive comments in respect to the quality of teaching and learning at Challock Primary School and parents felt that by expanding the school to 1FE (210 places) that this would secure the future of the school. This was echoed by both the headteacher and Chair of Governors.

Resource Issues

Capital & Revenue

13. (1) Two classrooms will need to be provided, together with additional toilet provision and hard play space. The school has been asked to admit 30 pupils into year R in September 2011 and would need one additional classroom by that date. It is sensible therefore to provide both classrooms at this point. The estimated costs are £160,000 and provision can be made in the current Capital Budget from funding to be set aside to meet the urgent need for pupil places.

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 unanimously supported the proposal to issue a public notice to expand Challock Primary School, Ashford from 140 places to 210 places

Recommendation

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

Simon Webb
Area Education Officer
West Kent
01233 898547

The Local Member is Mr Richard King

Background Documents: None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board report – 7 September 2011
School Organisation Advisory Board report - 20 May 2011