

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee – 18 January 2013
Subject	Decision number: 12/02005 - Proposal to expand St James' Church of England Infant School (Aided)
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report seeks to inform members of the results of the Public Consultation
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand St James' Church of England Infant School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

1. Introduction

1.1 The Tunbridge Wells District section of the Kent Commissioning Plan 2012-17 indicates a need to commission additional primary school places in the Tunbridge Wells area. This proposal is one of several in that district.

1.2 On 12 September 2012, Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills that a consultation takes place on the proposal to expand St James' Church of England Infant School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 1 October 2012 and 19 November 2012. A public meeting was held on 4 October 2012.

2. The Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge St James' Church of England Infant School (Aided) by 20 Reception Year places taking their PAN to 90 (3 FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive Reception year intakes will offer 90 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 270 pupils.

3. Bold Steps and the Kent Commissioning Plan

3.1 This proposal will help to secure our ambition "to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places" as set out in 'Bold Steps for Kent'.

3.2 The Tunbridge Wells section of the Kent Commissioning Plan indicates a need to commission additional primary capacity in the Tunbridge Wells planning area.

4. Outcomes of the Public Consultation

4.1 A significant majority of respondents were in favour of the proposal. The concerns and questions raised at the public meeting are explored in paragraph 5.2 below.

4.2 A summary of the comments received during the consultation period are given at appendix 1.

4.3 A copy of the questions, comments and responses made during the the public meeting are given in appendix 2.

5. Views

5.1 Local Member

The Local Member is Mr James Scholes who has not yet indicated whether he supports the proposal.

5.2 The following issues were raised at the public consultation meeting

Concern over the potential for a dilution in standards or the spiritual ethos of the school.

The responsibility for maintenance of standards and the spirituality of the school is vested in the Head teacher, and the Governing body. The Headteacher made it clear in her speech during the public meeting that she believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk and that she had full confidence in her staff.

Concern over the potential for an increase in traffic or local parking issues.

It is acknowledged that the single, shared entrance to the school may need to be considered as part of any redevelopment of the site and Property Group have factored this in to their feasibility studies. It must be pointed out, however, that the infant school has between 85 and 90 pupils in all three year groups, so there will no practical increase in traffic generated by the infant school.

A new traffic survey will be sought in parallel to the planning process in order to clearly define the impact (if any) of additional traffic resultant from this proposal is needed and an off-road drop-off/pick-up area may be favoured. Once full information is available, the School Travel Plan will be updated.

Concerns about disruption to learning during build.

Where possible, disruptive building work will be limited to times when the school is closed. The head teacher will maintain complete control over any work being done, particularly if it is felt that health and safety may be compromised.

The build at St James' Church of England Infant School is likely to be limited to the adaptation and updating of facilities and access routes. The teaching areas are likely to be largely unaffected by building work.

Concerns over staff parking.

There is limited capacity on the site and an increase in car parking spaces is an issue. One solution offered was to look into off-site parking and to explore the possibility of staff sharing their journeys.

5.3 Area Education Officer

Notwithstanding the above, the AEO Simon Webb fully supports this proposal and, having considered other commissioning options, is of the belief that this enlargement is not only necessary, but is the most cost-effective and sustainable solution to increased demand in the immediate area.

5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of St James' Church of England Infant School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding. The kitchens need to be redesigned as they provide for both the infant and junior schools. Infrastructure adaptations are likely to be needed and will be considered during the planning processes. The AEO believes that these conditions are reasonable and can be incorporated into the planning for the school.

5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is fully supportive.

5.6 Diocese

The Diocese of Rochester has been consulted and are happy to support the enlargement of church schools.

5.7 Pupils

The pupils of the school have been consulted and their views are included in this report.

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. No comments were received and no changes needed to be made to the Equality Impact Assessment following the consultation period.

7. Recommendations

7.1 The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and either endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills on the decision to expand St James' Church of England Infant School by issuing a public notice to expand the school

8. Background Documents

Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities,_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx

Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2012-2017

[https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20\(Sept-2012\).pdf](https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/education-and-learning/plans-and-consultations/strategic-plans/Commissioning%20Plan%20for%20Education%20Provision%20Kent%202012-17%20FINAL%20(Sept-2012).pdf)

Education Cabinet Committee report – 12 September 2012 – Primary Commissioning – Tunbridge Wells District

<http://kent590w3:9070/documents/g4880/Public%20reports%20pack%2012th-Sep-2012%2010.00%20Education%20Cabinet%20Committee.pdf?T=10>

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**Proposal to expand St James' Church of England (VA) Infant,
Tunbridge Wells**

Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 500
 Consultation responses received: 39

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors			
Staff	2		
Parents	30	3	4
Pupils			
Other	1		
Totals	33	3	4

Comments in favour of the proposal:

- It is easier to teach just one school year!
- Hope to see expansion of Junior School to enable smooth transition.
- Enquire if all new development work is granted subject to fairly hefty Section 26 payments targeted specifically at the increased education requirements that will be created.
- Consideration for additional access to infant school possibly by forging more paths through the woods.

Comments against the proposal:

- Inadequate parking and access problems will be exacerbated.
- Bigger catchment/bigger intake has led to more traffic/parking problems and unhappy neighbours. The inevitable increase in traffic would cause chaos to a major road into Tunbridge Wells.
- Increased intake will also impact on Junior School and be detrimental to pupils being taught in overcrowded classrooms. Suggestion to combine Infants and Junior and build across the link way between the schools creating communal areas, i.e. auditorium, gym, music room, science.
- Increasing class sizes will be detrimental, especially children requiring more attention.
- Will extra funding be available for additional teachers and equipment?
- Is expansion going to be counteracted by building new classrooms or using a part of the school that isn't used?
- Loss of space surrounding schools.
- Mobile classroom taken up most of infant playground, large chunk of paying field now used up for a hard surface area to compensate.
- Already have a negative impact of accepting 90 children for the last 3 years – Please no more. It will have a further detrimental impact on current children.
- More information required on building works and possible disruption to the children.
- Catering capacity is insufficient, i.e. multiple sittings. Some pupils have to eat packed lunches in the class room.

Proposal to expand St James CoE (VA) Infant, Tunbridge Wells

Summary of Public Consultation Meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to expand St James CoE (VA) Primary School.
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment.
- To listen to views and opinions.

The local authority are currently undertaking a public consultation to seek views on the proposal to enlarge St James' CoE Infant School by 20 places, taking the PAN from 70 to 90. The proposed new capacity for the school will increase from 210 to 270 pupils.

Statement from the Headteacher, Melanie Shackleton

An additional 20 children joined through appeal process and although communal space limited school had managed well. Now up to staff and governors to consider new proposals.

Statement from Edward Peacock, Chair of Governors

Governors have agreed 'in principle' to the proposed increase. Feasibility study would be scrutinized once received as it impacted on both schools.

Statement from Rochester Diocesan Deputy Director of Education, John

Constanti, Diocese would want to support all church aided schools in their development but local circumstances need to be considered.

Question	Response
Can either school refuse?	As St James' Infants is a church aided school they can refuse. St James' Junior is a LA controlled school and so authority could insist they enlarge.
Concern over standards as resources stretched further. Sought reassurances from the local authority that this would not be the case.	Each school receives funding (APU) equivalent to the number of children on school roll. Headteacher & governors decide how money apportioned.
Will anyone be able to see the consultation responses?	LA assured parent that both the Governing Body and Diocesan will be able to view consultation responses.
What will Basic Need Funding mean in terms of improvements at the school?	Improvements will be sympathetic to the existing school buildings but are likely to be made to toilets, staff room and school hall facilities.
There is concern over access to school site.	Feasibility Study will have to include elements such as a Travel Plan.

<p>Will staff be involved in the details of the permanent build? Also, if building works are due to start in summer holidays how will they impact on children.</p>	<p>There are areas of concern within the school which need to be addressed, including the hall, kitchen and integration of mobile classrooms with main school building. Have to ensure that the building is fit for purpose and disruption kept to a minimum so it does not impact on education of children.</p>
<p>Both Governing Bodies have decisions to make that will impact on the schools for the next 10-15 years so how can parents, governors and staff be involved in the process.</p>	<p>Local authority assured governors that consultation will be clear and transparent and contact can be made to Deputy Cabinet Member, County Councillor or Area Education Officer if need be.</p>
<p>How were people notified of meeting as many residents/neighbours were unaware?</p>	<p>The local authority has followed due process and circulated details to all the schools included in the expansion proposals along with the statutory consultees. It is not required to consult with neighbours.</p>
<p>Will the children be consulted regarding proposed expansion plans?</p>	<p>The children have every right to comment and the local authority would be pleased to receive their views.</p>
<p>Could children be involved in the design of new school, perhaps they could meet Architect and give a wish list.</p> <p>Will the After Schools Club be factored into new proposals?</p>	<p>Local authority agreed this would be possible.</p> <p>Governors at the school will make the decisions.</p>

45 people attended