

By:	Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills
Subject	Decision number: 12/02004 - Proposal to expand St James' Church of England Junior School
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report informs the Cabinet Member of the results of the Public Consultation and seeks agreement to the issuing of a public notice in respect of the expansion of the school.
Recommendations:	The Cabinet Member is asked to approve the issuing a public notice to expand St James' Church of England Junior 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 is one of several proposals in this area.

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 Junior School.

1.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 15 October 2012 and 3 December 2012. A public meeting was held on 17 October 2012.

## **2. The Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to enlarge St James' Church of England Junior School by 22 Year 3 places taking their PAN to 90 (3FE) for the September 2013 intake. Successive Year 3 intakes will offer 90 places each year and the school will eventually have a total capacity of 360 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 The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposal. The concerns 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 site issues and potential loss of existing facilities.*

The site is very tight for space, but feasibility studies have concluded that a physical enlargement to the school is possible. It is anticipated that the building work will necessitate a period when pupils are decanted into temporary accommodation for a period estimated to be less than twelve months. Once building work is concluded, the temporary classrooms would be removed and any hard or soft play areas would be fully restored.

#### *Concern over the potential for a dilution in ethos or standards at the school.*

The responsibility for maintenance of standards at the school is vested in Mr John Tutt, the Head teacher and the Governing Body. Both made it clear during the public meeting that they believed that neither performance standards nor ethos were at risk.

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

The Junior school shares a single access with the Infant school. It is acknowledged that the single entrance to the school will need to be considered as part of any redevelopment of the site and Property Group are factoring this in to their feasibility studies.

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.

#### *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.

### **5.3 Area Education Officer**

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

All primary schools in the Tunbridge Wells planning area were considered and proposals have been put forward for schools. No other schools in the planning area can be enlarged without a full rebuild.

Such rebuilds would be unaffordable using Basic Need funding, as well as a poor return on public funds. It would also likely take much up to two years longer, by which time, the local authority would be at serious risk of failing in its statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.

#### 5.4 Governing Body

The Governing Body of St James' Church of England Junior School are supportive of the proposal subject to certain conditions and caveats over building and funding. The Local authority consider that these conditions are reasonable and will be incorporated into the planning for the school.

#### 5.5 Headteacher

The head teacher of the school has been fully consulted and is supportive, subject to certain conditions and caveats.

#### 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.

### **Education Cabinet Committee**

The Education Cabinet Committee, at its meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> January 2013, considered and endorsed the proposed Cabinet Member decision to issue a public notice to expand

### **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 Cabinet Member is asked to approve the issue of a Public Notice to expand St James' Church of England Junior 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](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>

### **Lead Officer Contact details**

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Appendix 1

## Proposal to expand St James' Church of England Junior, Tunbridge Wells

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 500  
Consultation responses received: 28

A summary of the responses received showed that:

	In Favour	Undecided	Opposed
Governors	1	1	
Staff			1
Parents	15	3	1
Pupils			4
Other		2	
<b>Totals</b>	16	6	6

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- I welcome the fact that the class size will be 30.
- Any plans to increase the intake needs to take into account the inadequate facilities and the increase in traffic/parking problems along Sandrock Road.
- Populations are rising and people are constantly on the move necessitating more places for our children.
- I want to raise my kids on a Christian ethos and believe this school does exactly that.

#### Comments against the proposal:

- I am concerned that more of the 'green space' will be lost.
- Possible loss of green area for building would impact upon the children's already restricted use of the playing area and be detrimental to their health and well-being.
- The premises seems to struggle with the existing number of children attending the school.
- Traffic congestion is another real concern and I am worried about child safety.
- A wider catchment would increase traffic further with a huge impact on the wider community
- There is a bottleneck to exit the school, the pathway unable to cope with the number of parents and children already there.
- I feel that KCC are neglecting the task of improving under-subscribed schools instead of over-loading schools that are seen to be doing well.
- The expansion would inevitable broaden the catchment area of what is supposed to be a community school.

## **Proposal to expand St James Junior School, Tunbridge Wells Summary of Public Consultation**

### **Purpose of the Meeting**

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

Kent County Council is undertaking a public consultation to seek the views of the wider community on the proposal to expand St James' Church of England Junior School increase in Year 3 to 90, taking the proposed total capacity of the school from 272 places to 360.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given by Simon Webb.

A full feasibility study will be undertaken but as it is a small school site it is likely to recommend a two storey build across the back of the existing classrooms. Whilst construction work is undertaken the children will be placed in demountable units, possibly utilizing space on the Infant site.

Approval has been given for a 1FE Free School on the West Kent Hospital site which will be run by parents. KCC supports this application as there is identified need for additional school places in the area, giving greater parental choice.

There are two stages to the consultation process, this one which is purely as far as the school is concerned followed by stage two, involving the wider community and results once the planning process begins.

### **Statement from Chair of Governors, Stephen Francis**

KCC has identified the need for additional school places in Tunbridge Wells Town Centre and has approached St James Junior about expansion. This consultation is being held without the benefit of a feasibility study so the details are very abstract. The school have been assured that funding is available and that the building will be fit for purpose.

The Governors can see the advantages and are in favour, conditional to:

- No increase in footprint of the building and that outdoor space isn't decreased
- On completion of building works in subsequent years class sizes remain at 30
- Size of classrooms at least statutory minimum
- Existing non classroom teaching rooms are retained for current purposes
- Non teaching areas, i.e. hall, staffroom, kitchen, toilets increase in size proportionally
- Adequate provision made for teaching the children whilst building works continue
- Whole school compliant with statutory requirements, DDA regulations

### **Statement from Headteacher, John Tutt**

Feel it could be very positive for the school. Classes could be managed more effectively. The infants already have a PAN of 90 and under strong leadership and management deliver an outstanding level of education and I am sure the Junior School

can do the same.

Have yet to see further details as a feasibility study has not been carried out so am unsure where the extra classrooms will go but envisage we may need to build a second storey. Not sure how it will impact on the local residents and children but the school, with the support of the local authority, will try to keep disruption to a minimum. Without seeing detailed plans it is difficult to give support. I support this proposal in principle but this will depend entirely on the details, as stated by the Chair of Governors.

The County Council shares the school's determination to continue producing outstanding standards for both the Infant and Juniors schools here.

A further meeting can be arranged for the parents once detailed feasibility plans are available which the local authority would support, if required.

Unfortunately the local authority cannot guarantee that class sizes will remain at 30 in subsequent years as both schools are outstanding and parents may seek to appeal to gain entry into the schools.

Question	Response
<p>The access and road outside the school is a real concern. Am concerned about the safety of the children and want to know whether a reduction in speed limit has been considered. Are there any examples of where expansion has taken place that we could look at?</p>	<p>The highways and road network will be looked at as part of the planning consultation process. Speed limits can be reduced to 20mph around schools so pressure from the local community/residents would help.</p> <p>In Dartford &amp; Gravesham there have been a number of schools that have gone from 2FE to 3FE which have been successful. The local authority offered to give details of the governing bodies and headteachers so the parents (or school) could discuss the incremental growth and how the schools' have managed.</p> <p>Advantages of a 3FE school include; larger class rooms; extra staff offering a wider range of expertise; workload can be shared; additional resources and more funding are a few.</p>
<p>Obviously the accommodation of the children has the highest priority but as a member of staff I am concerned that with the extra staff there will be limited parking for us, so just want to ensure that it will be a consideration.</p>	<p>The local authority were confident that during discussions with KCC Highways, Planners and Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, there will be a requirement for the car park to be enlarged, if deemed necessary.</p>
<p>I am concerned about the level of SEN support after expansion.</p>	<p>The headteacher and governors are responsible for any children with additional educational needs and how the resources allocated. If the school enlarges to a 3FE it gives more flexibility in managing the school's budget.</p>

<p>Understand the priority for Kent County Council is to increase the number of places at St James', either by temporary accommodation or permanent. School is concerned that if proposal to expand is agreed, we will be forced to accept temporary classrooms for several years whilst the permanent expansion can be accommodated. What impacts will the temporary accommodation have on the existing infrastructure?</p>	<p>If the expansion proposals do not go ahead the school will have demountables and they could be for a long period of time. The local authority need to provide additional places and have the resources to carry this out. The feasibility report is not available yet but parents have the local authority's assurance that the money is in place for permanent enlargement. It was agreed that the feasibility report would be available to parents before any final decisions made.</p>
<p>The local authority are consulting with 7 schools in Tunbridge Wells, do they need all 7 schools? The Wells Free School is being built on West Kent Hospital site, how many places will it provide?</p>	<p>The Wells Free School has first stage approval from the DfE and will open in September 2013 with 24 spaces in YR, Y1 and Y2. It will naturally suck out spaces from some of the surrounding schools.</p> <p>Yes, the local authority need to enlarge all of the 7 schools in Tunbridge Wells town centre.</p>
<p>The school does not have extra floor space available so how will the classes be managed during the disruption?</p>	<p>The children will be displaced into demountables. These are steel framed, self contained units with toilets, heating, and air conditioning included and far superior to some of the existing accommodation at the school.</p>
<p>Where will the demountables be placed? Will the school playing fields be utilized to take the pressure?</p>	<p>School playing fields are for educational use only and Sports England is adamant about that. It is hoped that agreement between the two schools can be reached to accommodate them.</p>
<p>Would it be possible to hold another meeting for both sets of parents to attend so we can be updated as to the proposals?</p>	<p>Governing Bodies of both schools were in agreement.</p>
<p>What about the noise and disruption, who will be responsible for managing?</p>	<p>The school will be liaising closely with the contractors and project managers to ensure minimal disruption. The construction area will be fenced off and managed in accordance with health &amp; safety regulations but it will be done to the headteacher, staff and governors to manage the site in conjunction with the contractors.</p>
<p>I am confused as to how funding allocated to the school.</p> <p>Is it funding per pupil or based on infrastructure at the school.</p> <p>Also I am appalled to think that there are classrooms in this school without doors</p>	<p>Revenue funding is provided per pupil. Capital funding is based on the number of classrooms.</p> <p>How the funding is allocated is the responsibility of the headteacher and governors.</p> <p>The enlargement proposals may present an opportunity for the school to rectify those issues.</p>

and walls.	
Am concerned about the practicalities at the moment. Where will the modular units be placed? Am concerned that the outdoor space will be affected and if school hall out of action there will be no communal space for worship and lunch.	Until the full feasibility has been carried out the placement of demountables cannot be decided. Health & safety requirements will need to be met as current legislation dictates the units cannot be placed on hard surface play areas. Perhaps the school could liaise with the infants to stagger lunch and breaks.
There are no plans available yet regarding the expansion proposals – I assume the architects will look at the whole school footprint to bring in line with current curriculum requirements to ensure top quality build. When is feasibility report likely to be available? Priority for the local authority should be to address imbalance throughout the school to bring the building up to a first class standard.	Feasibility studies will be undertaken shortly. The local authority understands the concerns of the parents and acknowledges the comments made here tonight regarding standard of the buildings. Unfortunately there is no money available to build a new school so it will be up to the schools senior management team to work closely with the contractors to ensure best value through value engineering and make savings wherever possible.
I taught at a school that went from 3FE to 4FE and it meant a huge amount of work for the staff on a practical level, so what will the local authority do to support the staff at St James' with the extra workload?	Have previously identified schools where expansion has been successful so could put the school in touch with them to see how situation managed. It is hard work but results have shown well worth it.
The consultation ends in December but when the decision be made to continue with the process?	The Public Consultation closes in December, after which all views received will be reported to the Education Committee. The Cabinet Member then decides whether to continue with the proposal. If so, a Public Notice will be placed in a local newspaper, at the school and in the public library. Implementation is likely to be in March 2013.
The local authority are spending a lot of money on both St James Infant and St James Junior schools, have the local authority considered amalgamating the two schools?	Can understand the thinking behind this but the local authority feel amalgamation would not be a consideration for these two outstanding schools. Amalgamation usually occurs where one of the headteachers wishes to leave or school is failing.
What happens if expansion plans go ahead in the Infant School but not the Juniors? What will happen to children expecting to come to the Juniors?	There are variables for the three year groups through put. At the end of the process if the junior school decides not to enlarge, demountables will be required to cater for extra children from the infants as it is right of passage.

40 people attended