

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 17 October 2007

Subject: TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL – PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE TO REMOVE THE SIXTH FORM FROM THE SCHOOL'S FORMAL DESIGNATION

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on a proposal to regularise the position regarding the suspension of sixth form provision at Tunbridge Wells Community High School and to change the age range from 11 to 19, to 11 to 16 years only.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) The School Organisation Regulations 1999 defines 'the upper age limit' for individual schools as being 'the highest age of pupils for whom education is normally provided at the school'.

(2) Tunbridge Wells Community High School is currently designated as a school for students aged 11 to 19 years. The school's Sixth Form was suspended from September 2005, on grounds of viability. School organisation regulations do not, however, provide for temporary changes to the age range of a school. This proposal has, therefore, been brought forward to regularise the position and to bring it into line with legislative requirements. The proposal seeks to make a formal change to the age range of the school to provide for students aged 11 to 16 years only.

## **Background**

2. (1) Tunbridge Wells Community High School is a small non-selective secondary school located to the east of Tunbridge Wells. A location map and a site plan are attached as Appendices 1 and 2.

(2) The roll is 436 (January 2007 pupil census) and is forecast to remain relatively constant over the next few years. It does not have sixth form students currently on roll, and has not done so since the sixth form arrangements were suspended from September 2005. Post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High have been successfully transferring to alternative courses, sometimes at other local sixth forms but, mostly, to West Kent College which works in close partnership with the school.

(3) Numbers in the Sixth Form at Tunbridge Wells High had always been quite small and, in latter years, very small. Table 1 below details historic roll figures for main school and Sixth Form numbers from 2000 to 2005.

**Table 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Total 11-16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Total 16+</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2000</b>	85	88	86	107	99	465	29	17	7	<b>53</b>	518
<b>2001</b>	108	92	93	89	107	489	36	15	5	<b>56</b>	545
<b>2002</b>	106	111	94	100	86	497	29	25	4	<b>58</b>	555
<b>2003</b>	97	102	112	88	86	485	20	15	3	<b>38</b>	523
<b>2004</b>	105	91	103	101	81	481	19	10	1	<b>30</b>	511
<b>2005</b>	91	105	94	109	89	488	2	0	0	<b>2</b>	490

(4) The school's post-16 focus, since 1998, had been on vocational courses at 16+, offering a limited range of options, covering Performing Arts, Art and Design, Travel and Tourism and Business Studies.

(5) Over a number of years, as Table 1 demonstrates, the school's post-16 roll gradually fell, reflecting the challenges faced by a high school in an area surrounded by popular and successful selective and faith schools, offering a wide range of post-16 options. The addition of single sex secondary schools options, in nearby Tonbridge, and of comprehensive schools, less than ten miles away in East Sussex, meant that maintaining a Sixth Form was no longer viable.

(6) By 2003/04 the numbers of students in the Sixth Form had fallen to 30. The only way sixth form provision could continue would have been by using a cross-subsidy using formula funding intended for students at Key Stages 3 and 4. This was not considered justifiable. In order to secure the school's budget, governors were obliged to suspend the operation of the Sixth Form with effect from September 2005.

(7) The school believes it has benefited from the suspension of the Sixth Form in as much as skilled teachers, who previously taught at 16+, have been re-deployed to Key Stage 3 and 4 classes. This has contributed to an upward trajectory in results at the end of Key Stage 4 and to an outstanding performance as indicated by Contextual Value Added, validated by Ofsted in February 2005 and again in a more recent 'themed inspection' of science provision, in December 2006.

(8) In summary, suspension of the school sixth form was necessary and there have been real and significant ways in which the school has made a virtue of that necessity.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) The proposal is to change the designated age range of Tunbridge Wells Community High School, from co-educational provision for students aged 11 to 19 years, to co-educational provision for students aged 11 to 16 years.

(2) This will consolidate the already established partnership for post 16 progression routes with West Kent College and other local sixth forms. A closer working relationship with nearby West Kent College has been developed, so that all Tunbridge Wells High students have ready access to the vast range of post-16 opportunities at the College. These are jointly promoted by school and by college staff.

(3) Data from Connexions show that a higher than ever percentage of Tunbridge Wells High students are progressing at 16+ into education or employment with training. As collaboration continues to develop between partner institutions in the area, this trend of developing the right pathways for students will continue.

## **Consultation**

4. (1) There is no prescribed consultation process that must be followed in order to secure a change of age status for a school. However, guidance from the DCSF suggests that it is good practice to seek the views of all stakeholders likely to be affected by the proposal.

(2) The school will therefore write to appropriate stakeholders, to inform them of the proposal contained within this report. It will be sent to all parents/carers of current students, staff, to other schools and colleges in the West Kent Learning Federation, to neighbouring local authorities and to the Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway.

(3) This consultation will take place during term 2 of this academic year. The views of stakeholders will then be reported back to SOAB at its January 2008 meeting. Following this a public notice will be issued in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 which will propose that the age range of the school be amended formally, with effect from September 2008.

## **Views of the Governing Body**

5. The Governing Body of the school, having taken the decision to suspend the Sixth Form arrangements in 2005, is fully supportive of the proposal to formally re-designate the age range of students at the school.

## **Views of the Local Member**

6. Mr Kevin Lynes, the Local Member fully supports this proposal.

## **Views of the Cluster Board**

7. The Tunbridge Wells Cluster Board fully supports the proposal to regularise the position at the school.

## **Views of the Learning and Skills Council**

8. The Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway has been fully involved in developing partnership arrangements to secure appropriate progression routes for post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High and so fully supports this proposal.

## **Views of the Area Education Officer**

9. The Area Education Officer fully supports this proposal.

## **Resource Implications**

### *Capital*

10. (1) There are no capital resource implications.

### *Revenue*

(2) As the school currently does not make use of its designation to educate sixth form students there are no revenue implications.

*Human*

(3) No staff are currently employed in connection with the school's designation to educate sixth form students. Therefore, no changes to staffing arrangements are envisaged by the proposal.

### **Equality Issues**

11. There are no equality issues particular to this proposal.

### **Transport and Environmental Impact including Community Implications**

12. There are no transport, environmental, or community implications now arising from this proposal. Post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High will continue to transfer to a range of post-16 education, training and employment pathways, as they have been since September 2005.

### **School Improvement Implications**

13. The proposal provides for more effective and efficient progression routes at post 16.

### **Proposed Timetable**

14. It is proposed that the results of the consultation exercise be reported back to the January meeting of SOAB. A Public Notice would then be issued in February 2008, with an implementation date of September 2008.

15. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on going out to public consultation regarding revising the designated age range of students educated at Tunbridge Wells Community High School from 11-19, to 11 – 16 years of age.

Chris Lay  
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The Local Member is Mr Kevin Lynes.

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*Background Documents:*

None