

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 14 November 2007

Subject: ROWHILL SCHOOL, WILMINGTON – PROPOSAL TO ENLARGE AND RELOCATE TO THE OLD WEST KENT HOSPITAL SCHOOL SITE AND RELOCATE THE WEST KENT HEALTH NEEDS EDUCATION SERVICE AND THE PHOENIX CENTRE ONTO THE ROWHILL SITE.

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on a proposal to relocate Rowhill School onto the old West Kent Hospital School site, enlarge Rowhill School to 120 places and relocate the West Kent Health Needs Education Service and The Phoenix Centre onto the old Rowhill site.

This report also asks for SOAB approval to initiate a Public Consultation on the proposal.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) Rowhill School is a school for boys and girls aged five to sixteen years who have Behaviour and Learning (B & L) Difficulties. Attached as Appendix 1 is a map showing the current pupil distribution.

(2) The West Kent Health Needs Education Service (Formerly the West Kent Hospital School Service) is an education service provision run by Kent County Council for children who are unable to attend their home school because of illness.

(3) The Phoenix Centre is a Pupil Referral Unit for 14–16 year old boys and girls excluded from mainstream schooling.

(4) The current site at Main Road, Longfield which currently holds the Phoenix centre, and prior to the fire, the West Kent Health Needs Education Service, was the site of the old Woodview School.

(5) The Milestone Special School Nursery provision which is sited separately to the Phoenix Centre and West Kent Health Needs Education Service, is to remain on site.

## **The Proposal**

2. (1) To relocate Rowhill School to the old site of the West Kent Hospital School at Main Road, Longfield, Dartford (site plan attached as Appendix 2).

(2) To enlarge the school buildings to increase capacity from 96 places to 120 places.

(3) Relocate the West Kent Health Needs Education Service onto the old Rowhill site in Stock Lane, Wilmington (site plan attached as Appendix 3).

(4) Relocate The Phoenix Centre onto the old Rowhill site in Stock Lane, Wilmington (appendix 3).

### **Background and Accommodation Issues**

3. (1) (a) Rowhill is a Special School, currently situated in Stock Lane, Dartford, Kent, DA2 7BZ and is a member of the Dartford West Cluster. It was to be re-housed in new purpose built accommodation on the present site.
- (b) The local authority has endeavoured over the last 18 months to extend the Rowhill Special School footprint. However due to the restrictions placed on the school site by its Green Belt status, this has not proved possible. The local authority has therefore been active in seeking an alternative site appropriate to the needs of the school.
- (c) The current designated pupil number is 96 and they have 105 children on the roll, although this number fluctuates. There are three times as many boys as girls, and very few pupils are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The overwhelming majority of pupils come from areas of social deprivation.
- (d) Rowhill Special School was re-designated in September 2004 as a consequence of the outcome of the Special School review to provide for pupils with Behaviour and Learning difficulties from across the whole of West Kent. During the transition stage, the school's pupil numbers were planned to fall to 96 by 2008.
- (e) There has been considerable pressure on places for Behaviour and Learning (B & L) provision in the West Kent area. The local authority considers it more likely that the pressure will increase from its current designation and therefore seek this opportunity to increase the provision from 96 to 120 by relocating Rowhill School.
- (f) Rowhill Special School received its last Ofsted inspection on 20 January 2006. The report awarded the school the overall status of "Good" with two "Outstandings".
- (2) (a) The West Kent Health Needs Education Service at one time occupied a site adjacent to the Phoenix centre on Main Road, Longfield. The school buildings were severely damaged in a fire in November 2005 and the school was decamped in its entirety to Raynehurst Primary School site in Gravesham.
- (b) The provision may include education at home (home tuition), education at a base or education in hospital depending on the illness or needs of the child.
- (c) The current capacity is 40 on site and an undefined amount on home tuition. Currently they have 19 children on the roll, although due to the nature of the service they provide, this number fluctuates.
- (d) The building at Main Road has now been rebuilt. The rebuild was funded by the insurance settlement.

- (3) (a) The Phoenix Centre PRU currently occupies the Woodview Site, Main Road, Longfield. The Centre is currently using some of the newly rebuilt facilities.
- (b) The Centre has a capacity of 32 and also caters for a number of children on home tuition. Currently they have 22 children on the roll with 8 being tutored at home.
- (c) The Centre provides an education for children who have been excluded from mainstream education. The Centre will provide the education service for any exclusions that continue for more than the 6<sup>th</sup> day.
- (d) The Phoenix Centre received its last Ofsted inspection on 17 October 2006. The report was very positive and awarded the school the overall status of "Good".

## **Resource Implications**

### *4. Capital*

(1) The existing West Kent Hospital School site has been rebuilt but it is not sufficient to accommodate the Rowhill School and its enlargement. The funding to construct the buildings will come from within the existing Special School Review Fund. The estimated cost for the outfit and enlargement is £5,455k.

(2) The existing Rowhill site is of an acceptable standard. To ensure that the buildings are fit for purpose for the Phoenix Centre and the West Kent Health Needs Education Service, we will allocate a further £80k. This funding will also come out of the Special School Review Fund.

(3) There are no capital receipts, as both sites will remain in Children, Families and Education use.

### *Revenue*

- (4) There are no anticipated immediate increases in revenue costs.

### *Human*

(5) There are no anticipated immediate increases in staffing costs, however once the Rowhill School has been enlarged, there will be an increase in staffing. This will be met through the schools delegated budget.

## **Views of the Governing Body**

5. (1) The Governing Body of Rowhill is supportive of the proposal and has approved the plans for the enlarged building in Longfield.

(2) The West Kent Health Needs Education Service and the Phoenix Centre are KCC PRUs and do not have governing bodies.

(3) The Governing Body of Raynehurst Primary School is supportive of the proposal.

## **Views of Local Member(s)**

6. (1) The Local Member of the ward where the school is currently sited is Mrs Ann Allen. Cllr Allen has been informed of the proposal. No response has yet been received.

(2) The Local Member of the ward where it is proposed to re-site the school is Mr Bertie Bassam. Cllr Bassam has been informed of the proposal. No response has yet been received.

## **Views of the Health Authority**

7. The Health Authority has not yet been consulted. There will of course be extensive dialogue during the consultation period to ensure that the level of provision at the school and PRUs is sufficient.

## **Equality Issues**

8. (1) Rowhill and West Kent Health Needs Education Service are special schools that provide a service for pupils who cannot easily enter mainstream education.

(2) PLASC 2006 for Rowhill records a low percentage of pupils with an ethnicity that is not White English or Other White British. *Assessment: Low.*

(3) The Phoenix Centre has a low amount of pupils with an ethnicity that is not White English or Other White British. *Assessment: Low.*

(4) The West Kent Health Needs Education Service has a fluctuating roll and ethnicity is primarily White English or Other White British. *Assessment: Low.*

## **Views of Cluster Board**

9. The Cluster board has been informed of the proposal and are supportive.

## **Views of District Council**

10. Dartford Borough Council has not yet been informed of the proposal, but will be fully informed if the proposal does go out to public consultation.

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

11. I fully support this proposal. It provides a robust and cost effective solution to some of the location and capacity issues facing two schools and two PRUs.

## **School Improvement Implications**

12. The schools have very specialised roles with a very small tranche of special needs children. Significant improvements to performance are difficult to quantify, although it is hoped that with purpose built facilities, the performance of all three provisions will show some improvement.

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

13. (1) (a) Rowhill has the largest roll and is therefore the school that is most affected. In addition, most of the children are transported to the school by hired minibus or taxi. It is impossible to supply an exact breakdown of potential travel costs, as this would require a complete tender process to be done.
- (b) The breakdown of location at Appendix 4, shows that the majority of pupils come from the North West Kent area, specifically the Dartford and Gravesham areas. The pupils that travel from further afield (Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells, Edenbridge, Maidstone or Rochester) might have slightly reduced transport costs.
- (c) Overall, it is not envisaged that there will be a huge increase in transport costs for Rowhill pupils.
- (2) (a) The West Kent Health Needs Education Service is in a similar transport situation to Rowhill in that they take in pupils from all over West Kent.
- (b) Therefore the transportation issues and cost expectations are likely to be similar.
- (3) The Phoenix Centre has less reliance on KCC funded transport. Moving the centre to Dartford might make it considerably easier for pupils from Dartford.
- (4) All three provisions will receive advice and support from KCC to produce a new travel plan prior to the relocation.
- (5) The distance between the two sites is five miles. Due to the special nature of all three provisions admission issues are not a factor.
- (6) On balance, although more remote, the Woodview site is more easily accessible for large numbers of hired KCC transport. The residents of Stock Lane would benefit from the reduced amount of traffic in their area during schools peak hours.

## **Links to the School Organisation Plan**

14. This proposal is consistent with the aims, principles, policies and priorities within the School Organisation Plan.

## **Proposed Timetable**

15. It is proposed that building work will commence after a decision has been reached.

Nov 2007	SOAB
Dec 2007	Start of Consultation
Dec 2007	Public Meeting
Jan 2008	Close of Consultation

Feb 2008	SOAB
Feb 2008	Cabinet Member Decision
Feb 2008	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member
Apr 2008	End of Statutory Representation Period
	Enlargement work begins at Longfield site
Sep 2009	Rowhill opens on Longfield site
	The Phoenix Centre moves to Stock Lane
	West Kent Health Needs Education Service decamps from Raynehurst and moves to Stock Lane

### **Recommendation**

16. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on going out to public consultation:

- (a) to approve in principle the enlargement of Rowhill Special School to its pre-2004 size;
- (b) to approve in principle the relocation of Rowhill Special School to the West Kent Hospital Site on Main Road Longfield;
- (c) to approve in principle the relocation of The Phoenix Centre to the Stock Lane site; and
- (d) to approve in principle the relocation of The West Kent Health Needs Education Service to the Stock Lane site.

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The Local Members are Ann Allen and Bertie Bassam

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*Background documents:*

None

**Appendix 4**

Table showing the home locations of Rowhill School Pupils

GEOGRAPHICAL AREA	NUMBER OF PUPILS
Dartford	27
Gravesend	23
Swanley	10
Swanscombe	9
Tunbridge Wells	8
Tonbridge	7
Greenhithe	4
Longfield	2
Sevenoaks	2
Snodland	1
Rochester	1
Maidstone	1
Edenbridge	1
Cranbrook	1