

By:	Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member, Education, Learning and Skills Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director, Education, Learning and Skills
To:	Education Cabinet Committee, 12 September 2012
Subject	Amalgamation of Walmer Science College (Community School) and Castle Community College (Academy)
Classification:	Unrestricted

Summary:	This report describes a proposal from the governing bodies of Walmer Science College and Castle Community College, together with Kent County Council, to bring together the two secondary schools to form one school for the Walmer/Deal community.
Recommendations:	The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider the proposal and to support a recommendation to go forward with a public consultation.

1. Introduction

1.1 The proposal concerns the two secondary schools serving the areas of Walmer and Deal in the Dover District. The schools have been the subject of earlier consultation in 2009, when a proposal was made to amalgamate them. At that time there was Member endorsement of the two governing bodies' proposal to establish a new Trust school, with accommodation funded through the Building Schools for the Future programme. (Appendix 1). This proposal was not implemented because:

- (i) the "Building Schools for the Future" project was withdrawn following a change of government.
- (ii) Castle Community College, as an outstanding school became an Academy.
- (iii) there were changes in the leadership at both schools.

1.2 The need to consider the provision of secondary education in Walmer and Deal areas remains a priority and the governing bodies of both schools now wish to renew the proposal to amalgamate, under the new conditions which now prevail. To do this, Walmer Science College would merge with Castle Community College which is an Academy, and the technical means of achieving this would be to produce a Public Notice which would in effect close Walmer Science College.

2 Background

2.1 The two secondary schools provide for local pupils and do not recruit from other areas to any extent. Maps showing the home locations of pupils attending each school are given in Appendices 2 & 3. The schools serve the same catchment area and are located 1.18 miles apart.

- 2.2 (i) Walmer Science College (with specialist status in Science and Mathematics) is a smaller than average non selective 11-18 secondary school located in a residential area. The school currently has fewer girls than boys and a slightly lower-than-average proportion of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is very small. The proportion supported by "school action plus" or with a statement of special educational needs is almost twice the national average. The majority of these pupils have behavioural, social and emotional issues, or moderate learning difficulties. The school has resourced provision for 24 students with special educational needs and/or disabilities that specialises in dyslexia. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking is 47 (out of 99 Kent schools).
- (ii) The school has a published admission number of 143 but in 2011 admitted only 48 pupils to year 7. The current year 11 cohort (2011) is 112 and the sixth form roll is 39 year 12 and 36 year 13. The sixth form is run jointly with Castle Community College.
- (iii) The school failed its Ofsted inspection in June 2011 and was placed in special measures. There have been extensive changes in leadership and organisation, and to the curriculum, resulting in a removal from the category of special measures in June 2012. The overall effectiveness of the school is now judged as satisfactory and rapidly improving.
- (iv) In 2011, 38% of pupils achieved 5+ GCSE, A*-C grades including English and Maths. Estimated attainment for GCSE 5+ A*-C grades, including English and Maths in 2012 is 39% (FFT D).

Walmer Science College Targets 2012-2013

- 71% 5 + GCSEs at A*-C
 - 42% 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and Mathematics
 - 95% 5+ GCSEs at A*-G
 - English 3 levels progress 65%
 - Maths 3 levels progress 56%
- (v) The decline in the roll of the school over recent years has meant cuts in staffing in 2011; these reductions will continue in future years. The curriculum offer will also be affected as the school shrinks. The current roll (2011/12) of 526 plus 75 6th form is not expected to increase significantly and as smaller year groups move through the school, the ability of the school to maintain appropriate provision decreases. At best, the rolls would be:

TABLE 1

These numbers are based on pupils resident in the locality. There are also small numbers from outside the immediate area.

	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	TOTAL
2011	48	97	135	134	112	526
2012	76?	48	97	135	134	490
2013	66?	76?	48	97	135	422
2014	81?	66?	76?	48	97	368
2015	71?	81?	66?	76?	48	342
2016	81?	71?	81?	66?	76?	375

? = estimated numbers.

- 2.3 (i) Castle Community College is a smaller than average-sized 11-19 school, located in a residential area. The school converted to Academy status in October 2010 as part of the Government's 'fast track' policy for outstanding schools. It has high performing specialist status in sport. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals is above average. Most pupils are of White British heritage. There are more looked after children than is usual in most schools, including unaccompanied refugees. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, including those with a statement of special educational needs, is above average. Most needs relate to behavioural, emotional and social issues or moderate learning difficulties. The Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking is 37 (out of 99 Kent schools). The school provides accommodation for adult education, and a privately run nursery operates on the site.
- (ii) The school has a published admission number of 120 though the accommodation could provide for a higher intake number. In 2011 it admitted 108 Year 7 pupils. The current year 11 is 104 and the sixth form roll is 56 Year 12, 57 Year 13 and 13 Year 14. The sixth form is run jointly with Walmer Science College.
- (iii) The Academy was inspected by Ofsted in June 2011 and found to be an outstanding school, where students achieve well. A key factor was seen to be an outstanding curriculum which made learning highly relevant to students' experiences. The upward trend in academic achievement was noted as better than the rate of improvement nationally and the report described pupil progress as also outstanding.
- (iv) In 2011, the academy results at GCSE 5+ A*-C including English and Mathematics were 41%. Estimated attainment at GCSE 5+ A*-C including English and Maths in 2012 are 43% (FFT D).

Castle Community College Targets 2012-2013

- 86% 5+ GCSEs at A*-C
- 39% 5+ GCSEs at A*-C including English and Mathematics
- 98% 5+ GCSEs at A*-G
- English 3 levels progress 62%
- Maths 3 levels progress 50%

- (v) The Academy intends to form a multi-academy trust with the addition of Warden House Primary School from January 2013.
- (vi) The roll at Castle Community College is relatively stable though most years groups are below the admission number of 120. The current roll (2011/12) of 536 plus 126 6th form is not expected to increase significantly although the September 2012 Year 7 entry is likely to achieve the published admission number of 120. An estimate of the potential numbers, again of locality based students, is as follows:

TABLE 2

These numbers are based on pupils resident in the locality. There are also small numbers from outside the immediate area.

	Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	TOTAL
2011	108	121	96	107	104	536
2012	120?	108	121	96	107	552
2013	111?	120?	108	121	96	556
2014	120?	111?	120?	108	121	580
2015	110?	120?	111?	120?	108	569
2016	120?	110?	120?	111?	120?	581

? = estimated numbers.

3 Proposal

3.1 The governing bodies of both schools recognise the need to consider whether the demand for secondary education in the area will, in future, support two separate schools. The idea of joining the schools to form one larger and more sustainable organisation has been debated for several years. In 2009 the governing bodies wished to amalgamate the schools, but the proposal was put into abeyance because of external factors. The Governing Bodies and the Local Authority now wish to bring forward the proposal again.

3.2 The reasons for the proposal are:

- a) The projected low number of secondary pupils will make both schools vulnerable.
 - If one school takes more of the available pupils, the other will have less. This potential see-saw effect will damage both schools.
 - Currently there are 2090 secondary age pupils aged 11-16 resident in the area of whom 1062 attend the two schools (50.8%). 607 pupils attend the three grammar schools in Dover district and 307 attend Sandwich Technology College. There are also small numbers attending other Dover schools including St. Edmunds Catholic School (Appendix 4). This pattern of parental preference has not seen marked change over time. There is very little projected increase in demand for school places in Sandwich so that pupils from Walmer/Deal can continue to access places at Sandwich Technology College. Increased demand from housing development in Sandwich is likely to be insignificant over the next 14 years.

- The combined roll of the two schools is 1263 (662 Castle and 601 at Walmer) including a joint sixth form of 201 (Yrs 12-14). The joint intake numbers overall (Year 7) have fallen from 241 in 2008/9 to 156 in 2011/12 (108 at Castle and 48 at Walmer) and are projected at approximately 200 pupils per year over the next 10 years, with slight variation up and down over that period (Appendix 5).

TABLE 3

Historic rolls Year 7-11 (September census)

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11
Castle	529	555	575	560	536	496	510
Walmer	752	742	696	670	675	677	647
TOTAL	1281	1297	1271	1230	1211	1173	1157

- New housing development in a locality can influence pupil numbers though these are always estimates of future demand. Projections for housing development in Walmer and Deal are given in table 4.

TABLE 4

New Houses	2012-16	2016-21	2022-26	Total
	651	398	24	1073
Pupil Product Yr 7-11 + 6th form	103	64	4	171

- There is a total potential growth in demand over the next 14 years of 171 secondary pupils across 7 year groups. This produces an approximate rise in demand of 24 pupils per year group over 14 years which is less than 2 per year, if demand is evenly spread.

- b) one combined school could offer a much broader curriculum. Retention of two schools will mean that one or both will need to reduce curriculum choice. There are significant curriculum strengths in both schools and both provide creative opportunities designed to meet the individual needs of their pupils. In Walmer Science College, for example, the Ofsted inspection of June 2012 commented:-

"with characteristic enterprise, the college's leadership and management are setting up a maritime studies programme which will incorporate mainstream elements such as science, mathematics, geography and technology, and connect students with local and national organisations and employers".

At Castle Community College, Ofsted remarked on:-

"An impressive programme of vocational and work-related learning at key stage 4 raises aspirations and helps students to develop confidence and make informed choices. This results in very strong progression to further study...."

However, the expectation at both national and local level, is that schools are able to offer their pupils an excellent education, including a curriculum to suit a broad range of ability and aspiration. Students should also be able to choose from a wide range of vocational subjects. A school of under 700 pupils will have difficulty in maintaining this necessarily broad curriculum and will fail to attract students. Bringing the two schools together will offer the opportunity for pupils to enjoy an excellent education with the required curriculum breadth and coherence.

- c) the financial effect of sharing the available pupils and therefore the funding for them will mean staffing cuts in one or both schools and will make planning very difficult.

Currently the two schools have separate budgets and must work within those to deliver education in the two schools. The budget relates to the number of pupils on roll and therefore reduces or rises, with pupil number fluctuations. The estimate of the impact at Walmer Science College is that without action, there will be a revenue budget shortfall of £700K by 2014/15. At Castle Community College the shortfall is estimated at £400K by 2014/15. Alignment of the two budgets will offer the opportunity to make economies in expenditure and avoid some of the staffing and curriculum cuts which would otherwise be necessary.

- d) the introduction of the Priority Schools Building Programme (in place of Building Schools for the Future), which includes Castle Community College, will allow for future secondary provision on one site.

If the two schools are to merge to ensure that secondary education in the area is of excellent quality for all pupils, it would be very beneficial to accommodate all pupils on one site. Castle Community College has been successful in its application for funding through the Department for Education's Priority Schools Building Programme. The bid was for the proposed capacity of the rebuilt school to be 1,300 pupils including 6th form. No further information is yet available, except that the rebuild/refurbishment is expected to begin in 2014. The project will be procured by DfE under a private finance arrangement.

Realisation of this project would eventually enable secondary education for the locality to be delivered on one site. However, it will be necessary to retain both sites until the rebuild/refurbishment is completed.

4 Financial Implications

- 4,1 (a) Capital: While we do not yet have details of the financial allocation under the Priority Schools Building Programme, we anticipate that there will be no capital costs for Kent County Council within this proposal. Both sites will continue to operate using both sets of school buildings, until the Priority Schools Building Programme project funded by Department for Education is fully delivered. Continued use of the Walmer site will be arranged between Kent County Council and Castle Community College Academy Trust through either a "tenancy at will" agreement for a specified period, or a short lease. The level of funding for the rebuild at Castle Community College is not yet known. The Department for Education will undertake a feasibility study to confirm the

details. Funding is predicted to be set at a level to achieve buildings similar to those at Campsmount Technology College which was seen as a 'pilot' after it was rebuilt following a fire. The type of building can be viewed at: <http://www.campsmount.com/category/new-build/>

- (b) Revenue: The two schools, on merger to one Academy, would attract revenue funding from the Education Funding Agency according to the number of pupils on roll. This funding would support the re-organised academy. The consequence of all pupils moving to one Academy will be an increased top slice on Kent County Council's Dedicated Schools Grant funding. There is a Memorandum of Understanding between Kent County Council, Castle Community College and Walmer Science College, for the 2012/13 academic year, to support a collaborative partnership between the schools. In particular, the leadership and management of both schools will be undertaken by the Executive Principal of Castle Community College and costs borne by Kent County Council and Castle Community College. This one-off joint funding will expire on 31st August 2013 should the schools merge. The funding for the period April to August 2013 may require some base budget injection as the result of new Education Funding Agency funding rules. These prohibit central retention of some budgets. However, some funding will be delegated to the schools themselves.
- (c) Human: As part of the proposed amalgamation, there would be a revised staffing structure for the single academy, from September 2013. Some redundancy or salary protection costs for staff at Walmer Science College would be borne by Kent County Council in these particular circumstances. If Government proposals to delegate further funding to schools is implemented by the Schools Funding Forum in respect of redundancies and salary protection costs, Walmer Science College would be required to meet these costs, at least to the minimum funding delegated to them.

5 Equality Impact Assessment

5.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed.

6. Member Opinion

6.1 Mr Kit Smith is a County Councillor for Deal. He wishes to comment as follows:

"I had heard in 2009 the arguments for an amalgamation as proposed then and was pleased that there had been a real opportunity for local interested parties to express their views at two open public meetings held at both schools as well as being able to send in written submissions.

I attended both of the meetings, one held at Castle Community College on 17 November 2009 and a similar meeting at Walmer Science College on 18 November. At both of these we heard the argument and information in favour of amalgamation from Martyn Doole and other speakers and well argued and at times passionate speeches from a wide range of people. These were both well run and well attended meetings. Everyone present had a full opportunity to participate. There was good and fair press coverage in the local papers and the meetings were well advertised.

My conclusions at that time from those meetings and having talked to parents, teachers, governors and learners is that on balance it would have been to the advantage of learners if there had been an amalgamation as had been proposed, both in the short and long term.

Since 2009 Castle School has converted to a successful Academy and Walmer School has found it difficult to progress satisfactorily. However I am delighted that Walmer has recently shown big improvement due in large part to the very useful collaboration between the two schools.

Building on that last consultation and the collaboration shown, I would support the recommendation to go to consultation, and I look forward once again to an open, frank and honest consultation".

6.2 Mrs. Julie Rook is a County Councillor for Deal. She wishes to comment as follows:

"I fully support the amalgamation of Walmer Science College and Castle Community College. Both boards of governors meet regularly and have been working together already for many years to deliver shared Post 16 education across both sites and can both see the value of a full merge. Amalgamation will improve sharing of best practices and cost savings through economies of scale as well as further raised academic standards across the board as the school will aim to excel. Being the Kent County Councillor for the division of Deal, I of course want the best for Deal, and believe that this project will meet my aspiration and that of the community. I honestly do believe that Deal does not need two secondary schools, but I wonder about capacity. This proposal will take away choice but it would be a disaster if the remaining school did not have enough capacity for everyone who wanted to go there.

The people of Deal need to have access to a broad range of educational provision at 11-18 and beyond, providing the educational attainment skills and training to keep local people in local jobs. It will bring business and money into the town and into the wider district and would most definitely put Deal on the map.

I do have grave concerns regarding sufficient road infrastructure at Castle Community College and wish to make this concern known to the Education Cabinet Committee.

I do realise that there may be differing views on this proposed amalgamation and wholly approve of the Council seeking to consult."

6.3 Mr Leyland Ridings is the County Councillor for Sandwich and has commented as follows:

"I am delighted to support the general principle of bringing the two schools together and feel it is a positive proposal for the future of secondary provision in the area. In the short to medium term both sites would be needed for the amalgamated school and I would wish to see the Walmer site retained for educational use in the future. I believe that the Walmer site should house the 6th form. I am hopeful that the amount of funding available through the

successful bid by Castle Community College to the Capital Priority Programme will enable a total rebuild of the school".

7. Area Education Officer Opinion

7.1 This long standing proposal would ensure effective high quality provision for the communities of Deal and Walmer. The schools cannot continue as separate institutions without significant risk to the quality of education available, the breadth of the curriculum offer and the financial viability of the schools. The opportunity for a rebuilt school located on one site is of great assistance to this proposal.

8. The Views of The Schools

8.1 Both schools have discussed the proposal over a considerable time. Both are fully committed to the proposal which is presented jointly by the two governing bodies and Kent County Council.

9. Recommendations

9.1 Members are asked to consider the proposal to merge Castle Community College and Walmer Science College to form one Academy from September 2013, and to recommend a public consultation on the proposal.

9.2 The timetable for consultation and decision would be:

Education Cabinet Committee Meeting (to agree public consultation)	12 September 2012
Consultation period	4 October to 15 November 2012
Public meetings at both schools	w.c. 15 October 2012
Report back to Education Cabinet Committee Meeting on outcome of public consultation	21 November 2012
Decision by Cabinet Member to issue a Public Notice	December 2012
Public Notice period	17 January to 28 February 2013
Decision by Cabinet Member	By end of March 2013
Appeal period	By end of April 2013
Implementation	September 2013

10. Background Documents

Report to School Organisation Advisory Board: 8th October 2009

Report to School Organisation Advisory Board: 7th January 2010

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