

**From:** Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

**Subject:** Proposal to expand The Aspen I Provision

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** Education Cabinet Committee – 4 December 2014

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** Dover North and Dover West

**Summary:** This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to expand The Aspen I Provision for September 2014 by creating a satellite of the provision in Aylesham Primary School.

*Recommendation(s):*

**The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:**

Expand the Aspen I Provision by creating a satellite of the provision in Aylesham Primary School.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 There is growing pressure in Dover for specialist places to meet the needs of primary aged children who have Profound, Severe and Complex Needs (PSCN). Kent's Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) aims to address, amongst other things, gaps in provision. Therefore the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (2013-18) sets out the intention to commission 12 additional places for pupils with PSCN via Dover based provision.

## **2. Proposal**

2.1 It is proposed to expand the Aspen I Provision by 12 places, taking the number of places from 58 to 70. The additional places will be provided in a satellite provision based in Aylesham Primary School.

2.2 On 4 December 2013 Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that a consultation take place on the proposal to expand the Aspen I Provision.

2.3 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 22 April and 20 May 2014. A public meeting was held on 1 May 2014.

### **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 a. Capital – There are no capital costs involved in this project as Aylesham Primary School has sufficient capacity to accommodate the satellite provision.
- b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special Needs Provisions are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. For September 2014 the Local Authority has agreed to purchase an additional 12 places at the Aspen I Provision
- c. Human – Whitfield Aspen School will appoint additional teachers and support staff in the Aylesham satellite as the satellite fills.

### **4. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework**

- 4.1 These proposals 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’.
- 4.2 The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-18 has identified the need for 12 additional places for pupils with PSCN in Dover.

### **5. Consultation Outcomes**

- 5.1 A total of 21 written responses were received, 18 respondents supported the proposal; two did not support the proposal and one was undecided.
- 5.2 A summary of the comments received is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 2.
- 5.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

### **6. Views**

- 6.1 The view of the Local Members:  
Mr Manion welcomes the expansion to Aylesham so long as it delivers quality outcomes for the residents both in this community and the surrounding ones. He hopes that the standard of service is not diminished at all compared to that received at the Aspen I Provision. The concept of placing the service closer to residents is particularly welcome and he trusts the proposal is sustainable.

Mr Lymer has not commented on the proposal..

- 6.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:  
The Headteachers and Governing Bodies of Whitfield Aspen School and Aylesham Primary School are in full support of the proposal.
- 6.3. The view of the Area Education Officer:  
Whitfield Aspen School is a fully inclusive school, judged as Good by Ofsted. The Aspen I Provision is very popular and at full capacity is unable to accommodate more pupils on its current site. Aylesham PS is also a fully inclusive, good school and the head teacher, governing body and staff are very excited about this proposal.

## **7. Delegation to Officers**

7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

## **8. Conclusions**

8.1 This expansion will provide 12 additional PSCN places in the Dover area as identified in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-18.

## **9. Recommendation:**

**Recommendation: The Education and Young People's Services Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:**

Expand the Aspen I Provision by creating a satellite of the provision in Aylesham Primary School with effect from 1 September 2014.

## **10. Background Documents**

10.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/bold-steps-for-kent>

10.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2013-18

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s43253/ItemD3KentEducationCommissioningPlan20132018final.pdf>

10.3 Education Cabinet Committee report – 4 December 2013 – Increasing capacity: creating SEN Provision.

10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

## **11. Contact details**

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## Proposal to expand the Aspen I Provision

### Summary of Written Responses

Printed Consultation Documents distributed: 925  
 Consultation responses received: 21

A summary of the responses received showed:

	In Favour	Opposed	Undecided	Totals
Governors				
Staff	6			6
Parents	11		1	12
Pupils				
Other	1	2		3
<b>Totals</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>21</b>

#### Comments in favour of the proposal:

- I agree it would be good for the community.
- Great opportunity for the school, pupils and community.
- Having additional places locally for children with SEN can only be a good thing.
- This is a fantastic opportunity to spread Whitfield Aspen School's philosophy into another school.
- 12 extra special provision places are very welcome and needed in the Dover District.
- My child has ASD and it is likely he will need this kind of provision when he starts school. I am in full support as there are so many children needing this provision and so few places. This proposal will allow more children to reach their full potential.
- I am in full support as this will benefit so many families to which Aspen is the only suitable school in the area.

#### Concerns raised:

- My son is settled and doing well where he is. I think if this proposal goes ahead it will put him back to square one in terms of development and social interaction.
- My granddaughter does not want to go to the new satellite. We had to tell her about it and she is now so upset we have had to inform our doctor. We think she is better off at Aspen's.

**Public Consultation Meeting**

**Thursday 1 May 2014**

Panel: Chair – Leyland Ridings (KCC Member)

In Attendance:	David Adams	DA	Area Education Officer – South Kent
	Jason Cook	JC	Headteacher – Whitfield Aspen School
	Cole Andrew	CA	Head of Unit - Aspen 1 Provision
	Abigail Birch	AB	Executive Headteacher – Colliers Vale Federation
	Roger Knight	RK	Chair of Governors - Whitfield Aspen School

**Purpose of the Meeting**

David Adams explained the proposal in detail with the aid of a power-point presentation.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
CoG Whitfield Aspen - I support this proposal. I know the capabilities of the staff here at Whitfield Aspen and I know that Aylesham PS is a very good school too. I would like some re-assurance that this is not a short term fix. How will the rebuild of Aylesham PS work? Can you confirm how the funding will work? Most people would like some reassurance.	<p><b>DA responded</b> – this proposal follows a statutory process. A similar statutory process would be needed to undo the change. A Memorandum of Understanding between both schools will set out the commitment to KCC, the arrangement between the two schools, financial arrangements, how parental complaints would be dealt with etc. This will continue to evolve. Currently there is sufficient accommodation at Aylesham PS. The new build will be funded by the Priority Schools Build programme.</p> <p><b>AB responded</b> - We have sufficient classrooms to accommodate the proposed satellite provision. We have approximately 200 children on roll, the new build will cater for 420 but this will grow slowly as new housing comes on line. The new build is planned for 2017.</p> <p>Both schools are inclusive and work together as part of the Samphire Learning Hub. We have a brilliant relationship and we know we can build on that. We have a range of children, all with very different and individual needs. There is a real sense of community, parents are extremely supportive and we all have aspirations for the children.</p> <p>We are passionate about the progress children make and believe the levels of progress should be the same. There will be integration opportunities.</p> <p><b>DA responded</b> – the funding remains exactly the same for a youngster on the roll of Whitfield Aspen; funding has to follow the child.</p>
Grandparent - This has all been very quick, up and running by September. Surely this has taken longer than this,	<b>DA responded</b> - It has been a fast process and colleagues and governors would probably agree with that. The Kent Commissioning Plan sets

Question	Response
<p>somebody must have known sooner? This almost sounds to me as though it is a fait accompli.</p>	<p>out over a 5 year period what we need to do; The first iteration was weighted to mainstream provision. The Plan released in Sep 2013 has a more detailed SEN section. KCC has moved forward with its strategy to support youngsters with SEN and is going to consultation on a number of proposals. All new schools will have their own specialist resource provision. This in turn will provide provision where it is needed and avoid the need for travel. KCC was fortunate that Aylesham PS was keen to be part of this proposal. This will help pressures at the bottom end, but not all pressures have been identified, more are coming forward.</p>
<p>Grandmother - What happens if a child doesn't want to go?</p>	<p><b>DA responded</b> – Staff will be looking at friendship groups and cohorts and talking to families. Parents and grandparents will all be a fundamental part of any decision.</p>
<p>CoG – Whitfield Aspen</p>	<p>There has been pressure on the school to take extra children but only so many places are available. Housing development creates pressure on all schools. It makes sense to start making provision outside of these four walls. We welcome working with Aylesham PS and KCC to give the best education for our children, mainstream children as well. All governors will support this. <b>CA responded</b> – anyone involved with Whitfield Aspen will know the strong culture of inclusive education. We constantly evaluate how we teach our children as groups and individuals. The proposed satellite will just be an extension of that. Children might go and come back; it's about what they need most. We will evaluate and reflect on progress. Annual review meetings will continue. This process will not stop. I am very keen that the satellite provision should be at Aylesham PS.</p>
<p>Parent Governor – Whitfield Aspen - Roger Knight started this school with my brother. Teachers have a fantastic way with the children. All 7 schools in the hub have the same ethos. Aylesham PS has the same mentality; our children will feel at home there. The teachers train together, they all know each other. Everything is geared to progress your child from one level to the next level.</p>	
<p>Parent - Will Aylesham PS have all the same facilities?</p>	<p><b>DA responded</b> – classrooms are being refurbished to a high standard. The</p>

Question	Response
	<p>professionals will ensure we have the right facilities available for pupils. Children will move if parents, grandparents and the school all agree.</p> <p><b>CA responded</b> – students based at the satellite unit may come here to use the therapy pool. Learning resources will all be available at the satellite unit. All students will be here for things like sports days, achievement assemblies – this won't stop.</p> <p><b>RK responded</b> – Whitfield Aspen is operated to give the best quality of education and support to all children. Staff will dedicate all of their time, wherever they are - that's a guarantee.</p> <p><b>JC responded</b> – Teachers and staff work tirelessly for the children. The two schools have the same ethos, I hope other schools will operate in this way, it is all about inclusion. This proposal may have come as a shock to you, your children have been safe, secure and loved here and the idea of them moving is daunting. We know there is concern about your children but that's good, that's the conversations we will have.</p>
<p>Grandfather – Gentlemen, yes you need a satellite. We appreciate the care will be the same. The fly in the ointment is the children; my grandson loves this school. Keep the youngsters here and start the satellite with children just starting out. Has funding got something to do with this? How many classes will there be? My grandson needs to be at this school from a personal point of view. I feel it's cheap to move certain children to Aylesham PS and it needs more investment. Have you got the money for this until the new school is built? Will this really happen? How much money will be put in, will it be a bigger unit or one classroom?</p>	<p><b>DA responded</b> – It should be about your child. The school is working with the families to identify the right provision – if it is not right for your grandchild it won't happen. We know we have pressures at the bottom end but they won't necessarily be the right children, they may need to be here. What we put in place now must be right. A manageable size is crucial. Whether the Provision grows in size will be a debate for the future. We all know the state of the public purse, the rebuild of Aylesham PS will create some uncomfortable and difficult questions along the way, but we have to live within our means at this moment in time. I don't honestly know if the satellite will be bigger.</p>
<p>Parent - I feel that my son is part of an experiment. I might feel better if I thought this was going somewhere, a big project for the future. Whitfield Aspen is overcrowded and I am worried that my son will be seen as a pupil more capable of moving, and because of this he will be moved. I have every confidence in this school and the satellite is a good thing, I just have concerns about which children</p>	<p><b>DA responded</b> – I understand that you think it's an experiment but this proposal follows a statutory process and there is no quick and easy way back from it. There are some pragmatic decisions we have had to make, we can't cater for the whole ability range, but let's start where we can. Investment may need to be found over the course of time. The youngsters will remain Whitfield Aspen pupils. We must place our trust in the professionals.</p>

Question	Response
are going over there. If there is not so much equipment at Aylesham PS this will help decide which children move and frankly, that's not good enough.	
Grandmother – My granddaughter just hits her head when you talk about moving schools, she wants to stay here. I want her to stay here.	<b>CA responded</b> – I can promise you that no discussions have taken place with the children at all. We will be talking with parents and grandparents about which children move to the satellite and it won't happen unless we are all agreed.
TA Whitfield Aspen - I am asking on behalf of a parent who would like to be re-assured about transport issues.	<b>DA responded</b> – The school's own transport may be used but this is still being debated.

David Adams reminded everyone how they could respond to the consultation and that any comments should be received by 20 May 2014.

Leyland Ridings thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

20 people attended the meeting.