

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

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

Subject: Proposal to redesignate Furness School

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – 4 December 2013, 14 March 2014

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Swanley

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to redesignate Furness School from a school for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs to a school for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder for September 2014.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to:

Redesignate Furness School from a school for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs (BESN) to one for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent's Strategy for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) aims to address, amongst other things, gaps in provision. The Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (2013-18) sets out the intention to commission 96 additional places for pupils with ASD. This proposal will provide 60 ASD places in North Kent.

2. Proposal

2.1 It is proposed to redesignate Furness School, Swanley from a day and residential school for 60 BESD pupils to one for 60 ASD pupils (day and residential). Furness has 35 pupils on roll; only 7 of whom have BESN. Redesignating Furness will provide additional ASD places in an area where demand is high. The pupils with BESN who are currently in Year 10 will continue their education at Furness School. Two Key Stage 3 pupils will be affected by the changes and their SEN caseworkers will work with their parents/carers to make appropriate alternative arrangements for them.

2.2 This proposal is linked to a proposal to expand Goldwyn School by 55 places, taking the number of places from 60 to 115. Expanding Goldwyn will effectively replace the unfilled BESN places lost at Furness but in an area where BESN places are needed.

2.3 On 14 March 2014 Education Cabinet Committee recommended to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform that a consultation take place on the proposal to redesignate Furness School.

- 2.4 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 23 April and 20 May 2014. A public meeting was held on 12 May 2014.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 a. Capital – There are no capital costs involved with this proposal.
b. Revenue - The school will receive increased funding through the Delegated Budget. Special schools are funded using the DfE Place Plus funding methodology for High Needs Pupils. For September 2014 the Local Authority has agreed to purchase 50 places at Furness School.
c. Human – There will be no changes to current staff numbers.

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 identified the need for 96 additional places for pupils with ASD.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 No written responses were received.
- 5.2 A summary of the views and comments given at the public consultation meeting is attached at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 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 Member:
Mr Brookbank welcomes this proposal as it will help fulfil the growing need for those children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders. Over the last few years the school has suffered from Behavioural problems both inside and outside and Mr Brookbank hopes that it will now settle down.
- 6.2 The view of the Headteacher and Interim Executive Board:
The Headteacher and Interim Executive Board of Furness School are in full support of the proposal.
- 6.3. The view of the Area Education Officer:
This proposal serves the dual purpose of providing ASD places in North Kent giving us the opportunity to use the BESN places not required at Furness School in an area where they are very much needed. Redesignating Furness School to better suit its current pupil population can only benefit the school’s standards going forward.

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 The proposed redesignation from BESN to ASD will provide additional ASD places in North Kent and is linked to the proposal to expand Goldwyn School which will provide 55 additional BESN places in South Kent. Both proposals will need to be considered together.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to:

Redesignate Furness School from a school for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs (BESN) to one for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) 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 – 14 March 2014 – Re-designation of Special Schools across Kent.

- 10.4 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment.

11. Contact details

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Public Consultation Meeting

Proposal to redesignate Furness School from BESN to ASD.

Monday 12 May 2014

Panel: Chair – Leyland Ridings (KCC Member)

In Attendance:	David Adams	DA	Area Education Officer – South Kent
	Jill Howson	JH	Principal – Furness School
	Julie Ely	JE	Head of SEN

Introduction

Cllr Ridings welcomed parents, staff and members of the public to the meeting.

Purpose of the Meeting

The meeting is being held to discuss the change of designation of Furness School from a school for pupils with Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs (BESN) to one for pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD).

- This allows the local authority to explain the proposal
- It gives members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment.
- Allows the local authority to listen to views and opinions.

A short presentation outlining the proposal for expansion was given by David Adams.

KCC is proposing that Furness School is re-designated from a school offering 60 day and residential places for pupils with BESN to a school offering 60 places for high functioning children with ASD.

Background

We regularly review our school provision to ensure there are sufficient places in the right areas so that children can access appropriate, local, good quality schools. Within the Kent Commissioning Plan there is an identified need for additional places for pupils with ASD, Speech & Language Communication Needs (SLCN) and BESN.

Furness currently has 35 pupils on roll, 28 of whom have a primary need of ASD, seven are BESN. This proposal will ensure that not only will the designation better match the current pupil profile but will increase capacity to meet pressure for ASD pupils.

This proposal is linked to a proposal to expand Goldwyn School, Ashford from 60 BESN places to 115 BESN places by creating a satellite school in Folkestone. This extension will replace the unfilled BESN places lost at Furness.

The local authority wants to reassure parents that their child's continuing educational needs will be met.

- Children with ASD will stay at Furness
- Current Year 10 BESN students will remain as Furness pupils until the end of Year 11
- Discussions will take place with parents of KS3 BESN pupils about the most appropriate onward pathway for their children

This proposal will impact on transport arrangements for some pupils so the school will work closely with the SEN Transport Team to ensure any changes will be as smooth as possible.

Question	Response
<p><u>Local Resident:</u> I live in Home Hill, Hextable, which is in sight of these buildings and fields. My question, I hope, is relevant to the discussions but I am concerned and hopeful having been a local resident for over 30 years that the school will continue into the longer term. I am not sure if this is the right platform but the statistics show that doubling the numbers should perhaps give me that confidence, is that correct? The school is currently under new management that I believe expires within 12 months.</p> <p>So in a way there is continuity in the longer term?</p>	<p><u>DA:</u> Yes, the position that we are in, is that we are re-designating one need type to another.</p> <p><u>DA:</u> Yes, there was a standards issue. Lilac Sky is a school improvement company working in conjunction with KCC and the school to help raise standards and attainment. If the proposal is implemented in September 2014 the school will continue as a 60 place provision for high functioning children with ASD.</p> <p><u>DA:</u> Yes.</p>
<p><u>Parent:</u> I am very worried and want to know if boarding is to continue as our son is a residential pupil and it is important to us that it does. When are you hoping for the increased numbers to come into the school as there are not a lot of children boarding here so am concerned about the future of the residential provision? Is it going to continue and if so, how will it be sustained with so few pupils? If this proposal is accepted, is it going to go through as if it isn't what happens then?</p> <p>So when do you think that the numbers of the school will start to increase.</p>	<p><u>DA:</u> The proposal being put forward is for residential to continue for children coming into the system that have high functioning ASD. We have similar provision elsewhere in the County but that is under pressure. The proposal at the moment is to continue to provide residential provision dependent on how demand changes.</p> <p><u>DA:</u> If the proposal didn't go through at this stage then it would stay as it is – which is a school for pupils with BESN. Reality is that we have less BESN referrals coming into this part of Kent which is why I think it is important to re-designate. Clearly we are in a consultation phase so it is difficult to anticipate what is going to happen. However, if tonight's consultation is anything to go by and that of Goldwyn School, there doesn't appear to be any opposition. If this proves to be the case then there is no reason why KCC cannot continue with the proposal.</p> <p><u>JE:</u> We cannot refer sets of papers we have sitting back in the office to the school until we are confident that we have matching designation. I am sure that once we get the formal designation of ASD for this school more parents will come forward to send their children here. I think children living on the Bexley / Bromley border will be interested in Furness as regional gaps become open to children with ASD. There is a technicality around where we can send children with statements as school need to be formally designated before we can</p>

Question	Response
<p>I would just like to add that our son is very happy and settled in this school.</p>	<p>send referrals here. If we change the designation we can ask headteachers to consider whether these children are a match to what is currently being offered.</p> <p><u>JH</u>: We have received papers for new students who are classed as ASD but parents are not comfortable sending children here as we are not formally designated as an ASD provision. We have low pupil numbers but obviously we are looking to increase provision and I think once we are formally designated we would expect a rise in September and January.</p>

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

The meeting closed at 7.20pm