

By: Ian Craig Director - Operations

To: Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills, CFE

Subject: PROPOSAL TO ADD A SIXTH FORM TO THE NORTH (COMMUNITY) SCHOOL, ASHFORD.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation exercise undertaken on the proposal to add a sixth form to The North School, Ashford.

Introduction

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 8 January 2009, supported a recommendation to consult on the proposal to add a sixth form to The North (Community) School, Ashford.

(2) This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place in January and February 2009.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is to add sixth form provision to The North School for 185 pupils. It is believed that through extending the age range of the school the quality of provision, for the 11-16 age group will improve. Pupils will have onsite older students to act as role models, and access to new curriculum pathways to keep them engaged in education and training beyond the age of 16 years. The wide range of courses will enhance the learning experiences of pupils and enhance their future employment prospects.

(2) Under the current PFI rebuild of The North School capacity was increased slightly to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate 240 pupils per year. The rebuild has been completed in phases. In September 2008 the published admissions number was 200, accounting for the incomplete building works. The works have recently been completed.

(3) The proposal is to increase the PAN for pupils aged 11-16 to 215, leaving 125 places for post 16 provision. Added to this will be the 60 places in the planned vocational centre (funded by the school – Hadlow College), giving 185 places in total.

(4) There is (19 surplus places) a paucity of places in school sixth forms in Ashford (forecast for the 16 plus age groups can be found in the consultation document attached as appendix 1). These indicate a 539 place deficit by 2014-15. Currently accommodation used for statutory aged pupils and mobile classrooms (for example at Towers School) is to be used to accommodate post 16 pupils.

(5) The North proposes to offer Diploma courses for the 14-19 age range within the following subject areas:

- Environmental and Land Based
- Applied Science
- Technology and ICT
- Retail
- Art & Design
- Creative & Media
- Sport

(6) The school will continue to build on its specialist areas (i.e sports) and continue to deliver Land Based studies (due to its farm) in conjunction with Hadlow College. Both of these areas would complement, rather than compete, with existing provision. It is proposed that the above courses would run in close collaboration with other providers in the Ashford 1 Partnership.

(7) It is proposed that the school will offer 'A' Level Geography, which would link into the Environmental and Land Based framework. Arrangements would be made for those pupils to move to other institutions at age 16 (ie neighbouring school sixth forms, the FE sector or work based learning) as appropriate to access courses and qualifications that meet their needs.

(8) Final decisions about the qualifications and courses offered will be made following discussion with the Learning Skills Council.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

3. (1) The consultation process began on 26 January 2009 and ended on 27 February 2009. As at the close of the consultation 316 responses were received, of which 297 were in favour, 16 were opposed and 3 were undecided.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 2.

Public Meeting Responses

(3) Summaries of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting are attached as Appendix 3.

Views of Local Member

4. (1) The Local Member for The North School, Mrs Elizabeth Tweed is supportive of Sixth Form provision at the school, which will give young people in the Ashford district real choice. In these difficult times, it is more important than ever for students to access the courses which will best equip them for their working lives.

(2) In supporting this however, Mrs Tweed would like to be assured that sufficient parking space on site will be provided for any students arriving by car, and they should be encouraged to use the improved public transport.

Views of the Local Member of Parliament

5. The Local Member of Parliament, Mr Damien Green provided the following comments “I am in principle in favour of the creation of a 6th form at the North School, as I am sure it would allow the school to develop its range of courses, and to make it more attractive to future staff. My only caveat is the effect on plans for a Learning Campus in Ashford.”

Views of the Governing Body

6. The Governing Body is supportive of the proposal. It is recognised that there are gaps in the choices available to 16 to 19 year olds in the Ashford area. The North School has the facilities and expertise to provide a number of those required additional curriculum opportunities. The proposal is good for the school, good for Ashford and good for Kent.

Views of the Partnership Board

7. The Ashford 1 Partnership Board support of the proposal.

Resource Implications

Capital & Revenue

8. (1) There are no capital implications for the LA. The school and Hadlow College will fund the vocational block. The vocational centre has received planning approval. Building works started at the end of November 2008.

(2) Revenue funding is provided by the Learning and Skills Council via a formula process.

Human

(3) The proposal may require the school to increase its staffing.

Views of the School Organisation Advisory Board

9. At its meeting on 12 March 2009 the majority of the School Organisation Advisory Board supported the issuing of a public notice to add a sixth form to The North (Community) School, Ashford.

Recommendations

10. The Cabinet Member is requested to AGREE:

To the issuing of a public notice for the addition of a sixth form to the North School.

David Adams
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The Local Member is Mrs Elizabeth Tweed

Background documents:
'Education & Inspection Act' 2006

Previous Committee Reports:
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board 8 January 2008
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board 12 March 2009