

Public Consultation

Proposal to close The Bradbourne School and The Wildernesse School, and to replace with an Academy



Kent County Council would like to hear your views on this proposal.



Children, Families & Education Directorate



Kent County Council (KCC) is considering a proposal to close The Bradbourne (Foundation) School and The Wildernesse (Foundation) School, Sevenoaks, in order to open a new Government funded Academy. We want to know what you think about it.

This document introduces the proposal and invites you to a Public Meeting to share your thoughts and to ask questions. It is written mainly for parents/carers, governors, staff, students and other people who have an interest in education and services for young people and the community in the Sevenoaks area.

There are two strands to this consultation process. This one, led by the County Council, is about the need to close the Bradbourne and Wildernesse schools in order to make way for an Academy. The second strand, led by Project Management Consultants on behalf of the sponsors and appointed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), is a separate but linked consultation about the opening of an Academy.

This is because academies are state funded schools but independent of the County Council and so consultation about them must be led independently. We work very closely with the Project Management Consultants, however, and attend each others' consultation activities. Appleyards, a local Sevenoaks based consultancy, has been appointed to lead the Academy project in Sevenoaks and will be present at the Public Meeting publicised in this document.

Please note that there is a Reply Form at the back of this document for you to return your comments if you would like to. No decisions will be made until this consultation process is completed and your views will inform the outcome.

The Bradbourne School

The Bradbourne School is a well subscribed, all-ability, high school for girls aged 11-18, with a current roll of 841, against a net capacity of 858. It is located in Bradbourne Vale Road, off the A25, and serves a wide community in Sevenoaks, as well as drawing students from across West and North West Kent and from across county borders.

The proportion of students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and being eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) is broadly in line with county and national averages. In 2008, 60.5% of students gained 5 or more GCSEs, with 46.3% achieving this benchmark when including English and Maths.

The school enjoys specialist status in the Visual Arts and a recent Ofsted inspection found it to be Good overall, and Outstanding in its specialist area.

The Wildernesse School

The Wildernesse School is an all-ability, high school for boys aged 11-18, with a current roll of 511, against a net capacity of 812. It is located off Seal Hollow Road to the north-east of the town centre and is approximately one mile from The Bradbourne School. The two schools have a joint sixth form. As with The Bradbourne School, most of its students live locally but a smaller proportion come from further afield.

Numbers of students with SEN are almost double the Kent average at 41.3% (2008 Student Census). In 2008, 46% of students gained 5 or more GCSEs, with only 31.7% achieving this benchmark when including English and Maths. Whilst this represents an improvement on previous years' results, the school continues to be included in the DCSF 'National Challenge'.

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first-class, free education to local students of all abilities. Each Academy is unique, able to provide local solutions for local needs, drawing on the expertise of sponsors to deliver a distinctive ethos. They have the flexibility to be creative in their curriculum, timetabling, organisation and governance arrangements. All offer a broad and balanced curriculum, consistent with national curriculum requirements and focus on one or more specialisms.

Successful Academies share specialist skills and facilities with other primary, secondary and special schools, together with the local community. In this way they play their part in the social cohesion of communities, providing a focus for learning and for raising aspiration.

They are all-ability schools established by sponsors from a range of backgrounds including business, further and higher education, independent schools, faith or voluntary groups, working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government, Local Authority and multi agency partners. The DCSF meets the running costs for Academies in full.

What does this proposal mean?

The proposal is that The Bradbourne School and The Wildernesse School would be closed on 31 August 2010, with an Academy opening in their place on 1 September 2010, exploring the provision of single sex teaching in core subjects within a mixed environment. The Lead Sponsor for the Academy would be Gordon Phillips, Chairman of the Glen Care Group. Co-sponsors would be Sevenoaks Independent School and Kent County Council. Each sponsor has a distinctive contribution to make to the success of the Academy.

If, following public consultation, KCC Members and DCSF Ministers agree to proceed with a September 2010 opening, the Academy would open in existing accommodation, with current cohorts continuing to be taught as single sex cohorts, based in their current school accommodation, but benefitting from coherent strategic leadership and management across the two and also from the range of opportunities that would flow from this.

New 'state of the art' buildings would be expected to be completed for September 2012 and would be built on the current Wildernesse site, subject to full consultation procedures around planning permission.

The Academy would be an 11-18 school for boys and girls of all abilities and would admit up to 240 students in each year group, with 350 places available in the sixth form. This means that the total roll might be 1,550 by 2012. All current students of the two schools would automatically become students of the Academy.

The Academy would specialise in Languages (with a focus on English as a first language) and the Expressive Arts. It would be a high performing institution, with a strong community focus that would provide an outstanding education for students of all abilities. It would build upon the strengths of the existing schools, supported by its co-sponsor, Sevenoaks School. The opportunity for single sex teaching of some national curriculum subjects would be explored as a key feature of the Academy.



Why is this change being proposed and how will it improve education?

The need for this Academy is simple – to provide a 21st century school that can deliver a 21st century curriculum and learning environment for Sevenoaks' students in Sevenoaks.

Collectively, the sponsors are able to draw upon considerable skills and expertise in the fields of social care, school leadership and new learning technologies. The involvement of Sevenoaks School would bring considerable benefits to the Academy, making a significant impact on standards of teaching and learning. Many of the school's successful educational principles and practices might be modelled when developing the Academy's unique ethos and learning framework, necessary for meeting the needs of a broad range of learners' aptitudes and abilities from across the Sevenoaks community.

Currently the majority of students from Sevenoaks town and its surrounding villages travel out of the area to go to school. A key objective for the Academy would be to retain local students who might otherwise attend other Kent or out-of-county schools. It would work within the West Kent Learning Federation of secondary schools to complement existing specialist choices available.

The Academy would operate at the heart of its local community, providing a hub for services to young people and their families, within the context of Children's Trust arrangements in Kent. These would include programmes of sporting, cultural and family activities, as well as life-long learning opportunities, aimed at life enrichment and social cohesion across Sevenoaks town and the surrounding area.

An Academy in Sevenoaks

Sponsors intend the Academy to provide a first class education, establishing it as the school of choice for local students of all aptitudes and abilities. The Academy would expect to attract a larger critical mass of able teachers and so provide a broader, richer curriculum than is currently possible across the existing schools.

The dual specialisms of Languages and the Expressive Arts are proposed after careful consideration of the possible options. Sponsors are determined to focus on improving literacy within the Languages specialism, so providing access to an enhanced curriculum offer. The Academy would operate in partnership with local language-based and arts industries and practitioners to secure a learning experience that develops independence, curiosity, self-esteem, risk taking and responsibility. The focus on these specialisms would be set within a general curriculum which develops young people's confidence and life skills, recognising that strong literacy and numeracy skills are keys to success in life.

The Lead Sponsor, Gordon Phillips, has a keen interest in the emotional well being of young people and in the provision of intensive literacy support for those who have yet to gain that 'currency for life'. He recognises the potential for the academy programme to transform radically life chances for young people in the Sevenoaks area.

Co-Sponsor, Sevenoaks School, is a centre of academic excellence with a national and international reputation. Its creativity and innovation in teaching and learning and emphasis on co-curricular enrichment, its strong ethos and international dimension would all have a significant impact on the Academy.

How much would it cost?

Capital

The capital costs of the Academy would be borne by the DCSF. In the unlikely event that any parts of the existing sites were to be sold, then a contribution from the capital receipts would be required from KCC towards the capital costs.

Revenue

The Academy would receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It would be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools.

Human

In these circumstances, legislation concerning transfer of staff (known as TUPE) is considered to apply and consultation will take place in accordance with these requirements.

Transport and Road Safety Implications

Ensuring that students travel to the Academy using sustainable methods of transport is also at the heart of this proposal. With the increase in numbers envisaged as being on site over time, a school travel plan would be developed by the Academy. Students would be encouraged to take advantage of schemes such as the Kent Freedom Pass which is being introduced in Sevenoaks in June 2009. The Kent Freedom Pass provides unlimited bus travel to all Kent students in Years 7 to 11, for £50 per year.

This consultation document is also available at

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-learning/about-education-service/consultations>

CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

8 January 2009	Kent County Council's School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider a Public Consultation.
27 March 2009	Start of Consultation
28 April 2009	Public Meeting
15 May 2009	Close of Consultation
21 May 2009	School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider issuing a Public Notice, following Public Consultation
5 June 2009	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member
17 July 2009	End of Statutory Representation Period
End August 2009	Final Decision made
31 August 2010	Bradbourne and Wildernesse Schools close and an Academy opens 1 September 2010

What Happens Next?

- All the views received, either in writing, by email or at the Public Meeting, will be reported to the School Organisation Advisory Board of KCC on **21 May 2009 at County Hall, 10.30am. This is a Public Meeting, open to the public. Reports to it are available on request: Tel: 01622 694289 or 694297**
IF following a Cabinet Member decision, KCC determines to take the proposal forward, a Public Notice would be published in the local newspaper, at the schools, and in public places like the local library. The Public Notice would run for six weeks, during which time anyone could make a Statutory Objection or a Representation about the proposal.
IF no one objects, KCC can close the schools.
IF there are objections, the Schools' Adjudicator may be required to make a final decision.
Concurrently, there would be consultation on the Academy proposal itself, led by Appleyards, Project Management Consultants, appointed by the DCSF, on behalf of sponsors.
- NO** decisions will be made until your views are known.

HOW TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

- ▶ **Complete and return the Reply Form**
Send to:
Ms Chris Lay
Area Children's Services Officer,
(Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells)
17 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent ME19 4UL
Fax: 01732 525223
(Your comments must reach us by Friday 15 May 2009)
- ▶ **Come to a Public Meeting**
At:
Sevenoaks Primary School
Bradbourne Park Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 3LB
Tuesday 28 April 2009 at 7pm.
*** Parking will also be available at The Bradbourne School**
An elected member of Kent County Council will chair this meeting. You will be able to ask questions and tell us what you think regarding the school closure process. Officers from the Local Authority and representatives from the sponsors will also be present to tell you more about the proposals to open an Academy.
- ▶ **Email your comments to**
school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

(We will note all you say, but will not be able to respond individually to Reply Forms, letters or emails)

Grahame Ward, Director of Resources
Children, Families and Education, Kent County Council
27 March 2009

Public Consultation Reply Form

Proposal to close The Bradbourne School and The Wildernesse School and to replace with an Academy

To: Ms Chris Lay
Area Children's Services Officer, Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells
17 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill, West Malling
Kent, ME19 4UL
Fax: 01732 525223

You can also email your views to: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN FRIDAY 15 MAY 2009

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes **No** **Undecided**

I am (please tick as appropriate)

The parent/carer of a student
at Bradbourne/Wildernesse
(please delete as appropriate)

A member of staff at
Bradbourne/Wildernesse
(please delete as
appropriate)

A governor of Bradbourne/
Wildernesse (please delete as
appropriate)

A student at Bradbourne/
Wildernesse (please
delete as appropriate)

Other interested party

Name of other interested party:
.....

Name:

Address:

Kent County Council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will comply with the requirements of the Act at all times. We will ensure that your personal information is processed fairly and lawfully and in this instance used only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.

PLEASE WRITE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OVERLEAF

My comments are as follows

Please continue on another sheet if necessary