

By: Rosalind Turner, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 4 November 2009

Subject: PROPOSAL TO RE-DESIGNATE FOXWOOD SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR PROFOUND AND SEVERE LEARNING NEEDS AND HIGHVIEW SCHOOL AS A SCHOOL FOR COMPLEX LEARNING NEEDS; RELOCATE BOTH SCHOOLS ON TO THE SITE OF BROCKHILL PARK PERFORMING ARTS COLLEGE; AND REMOVE THE BOARDING PROVISION AT FOXWOOD SCHOOL.

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on undertaking a public consultation to relocate and redesignate Foxwood and Highview schools and to remove the boarding provision from Foxwood School.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) Foxwood School currently provides for pupils aged 3-19 years with a combination of Severe Learning Difficulties and/or Autism. The school has specialist status for Cognition and Learning. The current designated number is 122 (42 of which could have residential placements). There are currently 106 pupils with statements of SEN on roll, five of which are residential. The school provides support for seven children in the early years who are not on the roll of the school. Attached at appendix 1 is a dot map showing the home location of pupils.

(2) Highview School currently provides for pupils aged 5-16 years with Moderate Learning Difficulties. The current designated number is 141. The school currently has 117 pupils with Moderate and Complex Learning Needs. The school has Creative Partnership Change Schools Status and will submit a bid for specialist status for Cognition and Learning in January 2010 with a view to achieving status in September 2010. Attached at appendix 2 is a dot map showing the home location of pupils.

[3] The two schools federated on 1 November 2008. They have a joint governing body, joint leadership team meetings, are developing a shared vision for the future when the schools share a site, and are working towards a joint leadership team model. They also run a joint Outreach Service – Integrated Specialist Inclusion Services (ISIS).

## **Background**

2. (1) The County Council has been moving forward with a planned programme of redesignation of its special schools in order that it has a pattern of provision which

can meet the future needs of pupils, and to ensure that appropriate provision is as local to the children's homes as possible. The principles upon which the County's Special School Plan is based were widely consulted upon at the time.

(2) The Plan identified the need to provide more places in the following categories of need: Autism; Behavioural Difficulties; Severe Behavioural, Emotional and Social Needs; and Complex Medical Needs.

(3) The Plan also provided for each District to have a "District Special School" with the intention that this school would provide for the full range of needs for primary aged pupils, with provision for secondary aged pupils becoming more specialised.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) In 2004 the Local Authority moved forward with an amalgamation proposal for Foxwood and Highview Schools. This was rejected by the Adjudicator. Since this time the Local Authority has worked with the two schools to develop an alternative approach which still delivers the District Special School concept but within a federated school model.

(2) The proposal is to re-locate Foxwood and Highview Schools to a shared building on the Brockhill Park School site. Foxwood School would be re-designated to provide for pupils with Profound and Severe Learning Needs. Highview School will re-designate to a school for pupils with Complex Needs. Therefore, between the two schools in the federation the full spectrum of Profound, Severe and Complex Needs will be delivered within the District. Between them the two schools will offer 282 places for pupils aged 3 to 19 years. The shared building will be designed to enable either school to admit a greater number of pupils if demand arises and the other school is not full. In addition to providing, on a district basis, for the needs of pupils with Profound, Severe and Complex Needs, together the schools will provide, on an area basis, for secondary aged pupils who have Severe Communication and/or Interaction Needs associated with a combination of Autism and learning difficulties, and pupils with specific language impairment and/or Autism. This provision will build on the specialist status of Cognition and Learning of both schools.

(3) Foxwood School currently has residential designation. The number of pupils accessing this provision has reduced over the last 5 years and the last five residential pupils leave in December 2009. It is proposed to remove the residential designation from Foxwood School in June 2010.

(4) The proposal involves the construction of a new building on the site of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College. Within the new building each school will retain its individuality, although there will be opportunities during the design process to include some shared accommodation and resources. There will also be opportunities to co-locate the delivery of health-based services and family support and a new purpose-built training and development centre. Site plans for all three schools are attached at Appendices 3,4 and 5.

(5) Co-location with Brockhill Park would offer access to a wider range of facilities, resources and experiences, whilst retaining specialist teaching and support. It will promote high levels of pupil integration, especially socially and in sport, music, drama, art and vocational courses.

(6) Pre-school pupils currently attending the Children's Centre at Foxwood School will continue to be supported within the school through appropriate transition arrangements. It is proposed that this Centre relocates with Foxwood School.

## **Site Issues**

4. (1) Foxwood School currently has a large open site on a hillside with a range of buildings of moderate quality. The topography of the site is entirely inappropriate given the needs of its pupils. Highview School currently has a more restricted site but with many different levels due to the sloping nature of the site. Both schools would benefit from new buildings.

(2) Brockhill Park Schools site is expansive, and in comparison with the two existing school sites, is flat. It is not yet decided where on the Brockhill Park site the special schools will be located, and this will be subject to necessary planning consents.

## **Resource Issues**

### *Capital & Revenue*

5. (1) The new building would be provided as part of the Building Schools for the Future programme.

(2) Under the formula funding arrangements two schools in a federation delivering for Profound, Severe and Complex needs, receive more revenue funding than a single school delivering the same service, because some elements of schools' budgets are based on a per school allocation or minimum funding level. We propose to seek the agreement of the Schools Funding Forum to amend the funding scheme to counter the financial advantage that these 2 schools would otherwise enjoy over other Profound, Severe and Complex schools in Kent and moving ahead with this proposal would be contingent upon this approval.

### *Human*

(3) Foxwood School is currently engaged in restructuring following the reduction in residential pupil numbers, and the planned transfer of its remaining residential pupils to other schools. The residential staff have received their redundancy notices. Correspondingly there has also been some reduction in the number of Teaching Assistants employed in the school to support these children during the school day. Further proposals for restructuring to bring about economies of scale across the federation will be brought forward by governors. These will occur during the period leading up to and following the relocation in to the new buildings. It is hoped that natural staff changes occurring in the federation will facilitate this process.

## **Views of the Local Members**

6. Views of the following local members:

(1) Richard Pascoe (Highview) - Mr Pascoe is aware of the proposal and his views are being sought.

- (2) Christopher Capon (Foxwood) – supports a public consultation being taken.
- (3) Susan Carey (Brockhill) – supports the undertaking of a public consultation and will want to be assured that an appropriate solution will be found to any traffic issues.

### **Views of the Governing Body**

7. The Governing Body is positive about the proposal, and has worked with the Local Authority to develop it. A new purpose-built building for both schools will better support the pupils' learning and the care that can be provided to children with increasingly complex medical needs. A shared building will provide the space to enable collaborative working practices to develop further and will improve the lives of pupils and staff.

### **Views of the Partnership Boards**

8. View from the Partnership Boards will be sought during the consultation period.

### **School Improvement Implications**

9. (1) The federation enhances the capacity of both schools to move students through their personalised learning and will mean that they can meet need effectively across a wide spectrum. By sharing a building best practice from both schools can be utilised with teachers acting flexibly across both settings as facilitators / coaches / mentors where appropriate. The new building will allow for more creative use of space to enhance the development of students' emotional intelligence. There will be significantly more sophisticated use of the new technologies available.

(2) The schools propose to utilise funding under the "Smile Centre" model to provide a new purpose built training and development centre on the new site.

(3) All opportunities will be taken to develop and co-locate children's and communities services on the new site, with integrated teams (where appropriate) to serve the communities of Marsh, Hythe and Folkestone.

### **Equality Issues**

10. The new building will provide students with access to their full educational entitlement in purpose-built facilities.

### **Transport & Environmental Impact, Including Community Implications**

11. Transport arrangements for pupils will continue. It is possible, when the schools are in one building, that there will be opportunities for combining some services, which may realise savings.

## **Proposed Timetable**

12.	Consultation Starts	7 December 2009
	Public Meeting	w/c 11 Jan 2010
	Consultation Closes	31 Jan 2010
	Report back to SOAB	17 March 2010
	Cabinet Member Decision	9 April 2010
	Public Notice published	15 April 2010
	Cabinet Member Decision	11 June 2010
	Implementation:	
	Removal of Residential	June 2010
	Redesignation	September 2010
	Relocation	September 2013

## **Recommendations**

13. Members are asked to recommend that a public consultation be undertaken on the proposal to re-designate Foxwood School as a school for profound and severe learning needs and Highview School as a school for complex learning needs and to relocate both schools on to the site of Brockhill Park Performing Arts College; and remove the boarding provision at Foxwood school.

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The Local Members are Richard Pascoe, Christopher Capon and Susan Carey.

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*Background Documents:*

*None*