

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

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 4 November 2009

Subject: THE PROPOSED RELOCATION OF LALEHAM GAP (COMMUNITY SPECIAL) SCHOOL

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report proposes the relocation of Laleham Gap (Community Special) School, Margate to a site at Pysons Road, Broadstairs adjacent to the new Ellington and Hereson School, in a new building to be provided through BSF funding. The report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on undertaking a public consultation on the possible relocation of the school.

Introduction

1. (1) Thanet is an early beneficiary of the Building Schools for the future (BSF) programme. Under Wave 4 of the programme, secondary and special schools in Thanet will benefit from substantial capital investment, with the potential to deliver exciting and innovative design solutions to meet current and future learning needs.

(2) The relocation of Laleham Gap School to a site at Pysons Road, Broadstairs will enable the existing split site provision to be consolidated on a single site. The BSF team will work with the school on 'visioning' for their new school building to provide the best possible learning environment for students.

(2) The proposed location for the new build is more than 2 miles away from the existing sites and statutory public consultation is therefore required.

Background

2. (1) Laleham Gap School was established in April 2005 as the County's specialist provision for high functioning pupils aged 3 to 16 years with Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or Speech and Language disorders. The new school was established from the amalgamation of Laleham School in Margate and Gap House School in Broadstairs and since 2005 has continued to operate across both sites.

(2) Secondary age students are located in the former Laleham School site which is situated in a residential area in Margate with grounds, close to local amenities and within reach of the sea front. It is on this site that the school's residential provision for pupils (across the age range) is located.

(3) Primary age students are currently located in the old Gap House buildings in Broadstairs which comprise an Edwardian House and buildings in close proximity to the sea.

(4) Currently there are 180 pupils on roll at the school. Eight pupils are Looked After Children, three of whom are in the care of other Local Authorities.

(5) Attached as appendix 1 is a map showing the two current sites of Laleham Gap School and the proposed new site. Attached as appendix 2 is a dot map showing the home location of pupils attending the school as at Spring 2009. Attached as appendix 3 is a plan of the Pysons Road site.

The Proposal

3. (1) The Building Schools for the Future programme will enable the complete rebuilding of the school to a design of the highest quality. It will mean that for the first time the school can be consolidated on a single site with enhanced opportunities for cross phase association, more efficient timetabling and access to state of the art facilities.

(2) The proposed location of the new school buildings is on greenfield space which currently forms part of the campus occupied by The Ellington and Hereson School.

Site Issues

4. (1) The existing split site accommodation poses significant challenges in terms of the efficient management of the two sites. The accommodation is limited and outdated. Consolidation will facilitate the more efficient deployment of staff and resources.

(2) The proposed site at Pysons Road is large and was always envisaged as being suitable for up to 3 schools. Ellington School for Girls merged with The Hereson School in September 2009. Under existing transition plans Hereson students will transfer to the site in phases between September 2009 and 2010/11. This will create a single school, ultimately of approximately 600 students age 11 to 16.

(3) The relocation of Laleham Gap School, adjacent to the new Ellington & Hereson School would realise the site's optimum potential. The two schools would occupy separate and distinct buildings and each would be self sufficient in terms of learning space and facilities. The possibility of deriving added value from sharing some sports facilities, etc, will be explored carefully.

(4) There is a public right of way running through the proposed location of the new building. Careful consideration will be given to this to ensure that the footprint of the new buildings makes optimum use of available space.

(5) There is a need to review access to the site to ensure that the particular transport needs of Laleham students can be accommodated satisfactorily while minimising any collateral traffic impact.

Resource Issues

Capital & Revenue

5. (1) The new school building will be funded through BSF. The intention is to sell the existing Laleham site and to use the capital receipt to support KCC's contribution to the broader BSF programme. The existing site at Gap House will be adapted for use by Stone Bay Special School as the centre for its residential provision.

(2) Maintenance and other premises related costs are likely to be reduced with consolidation and new build facilitating more efficient use of space with modern heating, lighting and utilities.

Human

There will be minimal human resource implications beyond some potential efficiencies arising from the use of a single site. Most staff will transfer to the new location.

Views of the Local Members

6. (1) The Local Members are Michael Jarvis and Chris Wells for the current Laleham Gap location and Elizabeth Green and John Kirby for the proposed Pysons Road site in Broadstairs.

(2) Mr Kirby supports the proposal to relocate Laleham Gap School to the Pysons Road site adjacent to the The Ellington & Hereson School, provided both schools retain their independence.

(3) The views of the remaining members are currently being sought and will be available at the meeting.

Views of the Governing Body

7. The governing body is resolved that the relocation represents the best available option for the school and that it will deliver enhanced facilities for students.

Views of the Partnership Board

8. At their meeting on 14 July the Thanet 1 and 2 Partnership Boards discussed the proposal and fully supported this opportunity for Laleham Gap School to be relocated to the Pysons Road site in purpose built accommodation.

School Improvement Implications

9. The new facilities available to Laleham Gap students will transform the learning environment for all. It is envisaged that in the future there would be the opportunity for Laleham Gap School and The Ellington and Hereson School to form a close working relationship enabling the Laleham Gap students to have access to a wider curriculum. There would also be the opportunity for Laleham Gap School to support the Dyslexic provision at The Ellington and Hereson School through pupil support and staff training.

Equality Issues

10. The very specific and individual needs of all students at Laleham Gap will be catered for within the context of this proposal.

Transport & Environmental Impact, Including Community Implications

11. (1) A full traffic assessment will be carried out and appropriate access arrangements made. Health and safety issues will have the highest priority.

(2) The residential provision for up to 60 students at Laleham Gap School will have implications for the degree of community access to the school's facilities. However within that context consideration will be given as to how to optimise community use of the facilities on site.

Proposed Timetable

12. The following timetable would apply, subject to the proposal going forward to public consultation.

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| Report to SOAB | |
| Seeking views on public consultation | 04 November 2009 |
| Public consultation period | 16 November 2009 to 11 January 2010 |
| Public meeting | week commencing 30 November 2009 |
| Report back to SOAB | 25 February 2010 |
| Public Notice issued (subject to Cabinet Member decision) | 22 April 2010 |
| Public Notice expires | 03 June 2010 |
| Determination by Local Authority | End June 2010 |
| Adjudication (if required) | July/August 2010 |
| Building work commences | Late 2010 |
| Implementation | April/September 2012 |

Recommendations

13. Members re asked to express their views on whether there should be a public consultation on the possible relocation of Laleham Gap Special School from its existing split site locations in Margate and Broadstairs to the site in Pysons Road, Broadstairs adjacent to the new Ellington and Hereson School.

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The Local Members are

Michael Jarvis, Chris Wells, Elizabeth Green and John Kirby

Background Documents:

None