

By: ROSALIND TURNER, MANAGING DIRECTOR FOR CHILDREN,
FAMILIES AND EDUCATION

To: SARAH HOHLER, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND
EDUCATION

Subject: Proposed closure of Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided)
School and its replacement with an Academy

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The Cabinet Member is requested to agree to issue a public notice to
close the Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School on 31
August 2010 subject to its replacement with a government funded
Academy, to open on 1 September 2010

Introduction

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 8 January 2009, supported a recommendation to consult on the proposal to close Linden Grove (Community) Primary School and Ashford Chris Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School, in order that they may be replaced with a government funded all-age Academy.

(2) Unfortunately, due to funding issues it has not been possible at this stage to incorporate a primary element in the proposed Academy and therefore the closure of Linden Grove has not been included in the Consultation.

(3) A report was circulated to the School Organisation Advisory Board members on 17 December outlining the results of the consultation and asking for their support for the proposal. The board fully supported the proposal and recommend that a Public Notice be issued.

Background

2. (1) Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School is a co-educational secondary modern school in South Ashford with an age range of 11-16 years.

(2) The school is one of the government's National Challenge Schools as less than 30% of its Y11 students achieved the Government Floor Target in 2007. The school is judged to be at high risk of failing to reach the floor target by 2011 – the deadline set within the National Challenge.

(3) The school has lead school designation for pupils with Physical Disabilities, for pupils with Hearing Impairment and for pupils with Speech & Language difficulties. These designations will be retained in the Academy.

The Proposal

3. (1) The proposal is that the school would close on 31 August 2010, with an Academy opening in its place on 1 September 2010. Initially the Academy will occupy the existing school

buildings and move into its new buildings by 1 September 2013. It would be an Academy with a religious character (Church of England) for boys and girls of all abilities, aged between 11 and 19 years. It is proposed that the Academy would cater for 1050 secondary school aged pupils (11-16 years) and 250 post 16 pupils (16-19 years).

(2) Lead Sponsor for the Academy is the Canterbury Diocesan Board of Education. Co-sponsors are Canterbury Christ Church University, Benenden School and Kent County Council.

School Improvement implications

4. Creation of an Academy to replace Ashford Christ Church will help raise standards. With the support of the Sponsors, the Academy will:

- Expand the curriculum offer, particularly in vocational areas, to ensure students can access learning opportunities appropriate to their interests and future career pathways
- Specialise in Mathematics and Technology
- Work closely with other local schools and business partners to develop opportunities for young people, and to help link the acquisition of knowledge directly to the experience of the world
- Promote personalised learning
- Design the replacement buildings to maximise the curriculum flexibility and offer, and to promote a positive learning environment
- Utilise the freedoms available to the academy in staffing and curriculum to the advantage of young people's learning
- Promote a comprehensive and innovative range of extra curricular activities to encourage higher achievement and build a strong sense of community
- Have a relentless focus on high achievement in all aspects of a young person's development, and promote a culture of high expectations

The Consultation

5. (1) A Public Consultation Document was widely distributed. Hard copies were provided for all parents/carers, students, staff and governors of Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School and Linden Grove (Community) Primary School. In addition, hard copies were provided for year 6 pupils of feeder primary schools and local Early Years providers. Hard copies or links to the electronic copy on the County's website were distributed to all schools in the area, Local Members, Cabinet Members, SOAB Members, the local Member of Parliament, Ashford Borough Council, the Diocesan Boards, local libraries, key colleagues in the Children, Families and Education Directorate and others.

(2) Approximately 3,000 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

6. 224 responses have been received, of which 87 are in favour, 84 are opposed and 53 are undecided.

Views of Local Members

7. Jim Wedgbury is broadly in support of the Academy but does have concerns about the disruption the building works will have on existing pupils. He would also like to see a representative of the community on the governing body (eg parish or borough councillor), as the current representation seems too remote from the community they supposedly represent.

Views of Local Member of Parliament

8. None have been received.

Views of Ashford Borough Council

9. None have been received.

Views of the Parish Council

10. The parish council are alarmed at the apparent lack of representation from the local community in its proposed governance arrangements. They believe that a number of long standing local community representatives need to have seats on the top trustee executive board where the key decisions will be made. If the local community has an effective say, they will feel part of the new Academy School and thereby enhance the prospects of its success.

Views of the Diocesan Authorities

11. Canterbury Diocese is the lead sponsor and is fully supportive of the proposal.

Views of the Learning and Skills Council

12. The LSC submitted a letter of support for the Academy proposal at the Expression of Interest stage. No formal response has been received to the consultation.

Views of the Governing Body

13. The Governing Body is in support of the proposal.

Views of the Local Children's Services Partnership Board

14. The views of the Partnership Board are awaited.

Resource Issues

Capital

15. (1) The Academy team at the DCSF are being consulted on the costs of the new building. There is no Capital implication for the County Council, although KCC will lose the land value from its portfolio.

(2) KCC will incur administrative and development costs in the period leading up to the opening of the Academy. These include the costs of the appointed consultants. These costs will be met out of the DCSF budget for the Academy.

Revenue

(2) The Ashford Academy will receive its funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools, plus it will have a proportional share of the central Local Authority budget.

Human

(3) Consultation is currently taking place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings, Protection of Employment, Regulations 1981). Costs of new staffing (TUPE applies to current staff) and costs associated with TUPE, including any valid redundancies of staff that cannot transfer or be deployed elsewhere in Kent schools, will be negotiated with the DCSF on a case by case basis, but are usually borne by the DCSF.

View of the School Organisation Advisory Board

16. A report was circulated to the School Organisation Advisory Board members on 17 December 2009 outlining the results of the consultation and asking for their support for the proposal. The board unanimously supported the proposal to issue a public notice to close the Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School on 31 August 2010 subject to its replacement with a government funded Academy, to open on 1 September 2010. A copy of the report is attached at Appendix 1-a.

Recommendation

18. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education is asked to agree to issue a Public Notice to close the Ashford Christ Church CE (Voluntary Aided) School on 31 August 2010 subject to its replacement with a government funded Academy, to open on 1 September 2010.

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The Local Member is Jim Wedgbury

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board - 8 January 2009

School Organisation Advisory Board (circulated to members) 17 December 2009
interested parties.