

By: Andy Roberts, Interim Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills

To: Sarah Hohler, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills

Subject: PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE KINGSMEAD (COMMUNITY) PRIMARY SCHOOL AND DIOCESAN & PAYNE SMITH CE (VOLUNTARY AIDED) PRIMARY SCHOOL BY CLOSING BOTH SCHOOLS AND ESTABLISHING A NEW 2 FE PRIMARY SCHOOL, WITH MAINTAINED NURSERY UNIT, ON THE CURRENT KINGSMEAD SITE, AS A VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The Cabinet Portfolio holder for Education, Learning and Skills is requested to agree to;

- (a) the amalgamation of Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School, and
- (b) the issuing of a joint public notice with the Canterbury Diocese to include the closure of both schools and the establishment of a new 2 FE Church of England Voluntary Controlled school on the Kingsmead site

Introduction

1. At its meeting on 9 November 2010 the School Organisation Advisory Board considered a proposal to undertake a public consultation to amalgamate. The School Organisation Advisory Board supported the proposal to consult on a possible amalgamation. Subsequently the decision was taken in consultation with the Cabinet Member to go to public consultation on this issue. This report sets out the results of the public consultation which was undertaken in December 2010 and January 2011.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is to amalgamate Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and Kingsmead Primary School by closing both schools and immediately opening a newly amalgamated school with effect from 1 September 2012. The new school would be a two form entry Voluntary Controlled school, including a 26 part-time place maintained nursery unit and would be established on the current Kingsmead site.

(2) To achieve a two form entry primary school on the Kingsmead site it is recognised that there would need to be substantial improvements including refurbishment and remodelling of the accommodation and possibly some new build. Feasibility work has already started and has confirmed the viability of establishing a two form entry school on the site. More detailed work will be undertaken in consultation with both schools to determine

the best way of using available resources to provide the best possible learning environment for all pupils and to improve the general appearance and ambience of the site.

(3) A shadow governing body would be appointed, consisting of governors from both schools, to plan for the transfer of the schools into the newly refurbished accommodation. Together Kent County Council and the shadow governing body would ensure that any impact on the children's education was kept to a minimum.

The Consultation

3. (1) The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors of both schools, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, Canterbury City Council, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was also posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated via email.

(2) Approximately 650 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

4. Nineteen responses have been received, of which thirteen are in favour, four are against and two undecided. Letters of response were also received from both Governing Bodies.

Views of Local Member

5. The Local Member Mr Graham Gibbens views are as follows
'Having considered the arguments put forward for amalgamating the two schools and the potential benefits that this will bring, and having taken account of the responses to the consultation, I support the proposal for the establishment of a new school which will build on the strengths of the two existing schools and provide better facilities for all students. This support is conditional upon the new school having Voluntary Controlled status.'

Views of Local Member of Parliament

6. Mr Julian Brazier, the Member of Parliament for the Canterbury district, has informed us that he has written to Michael Gove in support of the Canterbury Diocese's application for exemption from competition.

Mr Brazier said "I am fully behind the project to amalgamate the two schools, as I think it is an excellent way both of securing new buildings for both current schools, but also of moving the Diocesan & Payne Smith school out of their current site, which they have clearly outgrown. I hope the merger goes ahead, on the lines proposed, as I expect it will also demonstrate how successful co-operation by Church and Local Authorities can lead to excellent education results for pupils".

Views of Canterbury City Council

7. The leader of Canterbury District Council is Mr John Gilbey who has responded as follows:

It is with pleasure that I comment within the consultation on the possible amalgamation of Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan and Payne Smith CE Primary School.

I can see and would forecast a very bright future for the amalgamated schools. Funding is generally restricted these days to say the least and in both cases I am sure that the buildings of the two separate schools are in need of repair and both are expensive to maintain. A new school, refurbished and brought up to date, with much lower maintenance costs would provide a warm, welcoming and sensible new environment for the pupils. (Presumably) a combination of staff and new appointees will lead to dynamic and progressive opportunities for both the teachers and pupils to not quite start again but to reinvigorate the atmosphere and ethos of the two schools, now one. I am wholly in support of the proposal to merge, believing it to be clearly in the interests of the children and the teachers. I do not see negative impacts rather that there is great opportunity to look forward to a new era for the two schools working and progressing together.

(2) The Chief Executive of Canterbury District is Mr Colin Carmichael who has responded as follows:

The City Council has supported the amalgamation of the schools for some time and as you may know tried to provide a new site for a new school on the field next to the Riverside Children's Centre. Sadly economics ruled that out.

The advantages are clearly better use of scarce accommodation, the removal of DPS from an area of poor air quality, and an upgrading of Kingsmead, in an area which is one of the most deprived in our District.

Views of the Diocesan Authorities

8. (1) Dr Wadman, Director of Education, Archdiocese of Southwark responded to consultation via an email saying "we have no objections to this proposed amalgamation".

(2) As a joint proponent of the proposal to establish a new school to replace Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and Kingsmead Primary School, the Canterbury Diocese is in favour of the amalgamation as long as the resulting school is a Church of England school.

Views of the Governing Bodies

9. The views of the governing body of Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School and the governing body of Kingsmead Primary School can be found in appendix 1.

Resource Issues

Capital & Revenue

10. (1) The refurbishment and any new build on the Kingsmead site would be funded by a contribution of up to £2m from KCC (funding previously ring fenced for acquisition of a new site) and the proceeds of the capital receipt from the sale of the Diocesan & Payne Smith site which would be contributed by the Canterbury Diocese (approximately £1m).

(2) The new school would be eligible for a one off amount of approximately £87k to support the transition.

(3) Redevelopment and refurbishment of the Kingsmead site would reduce maintenance costs over the medium-long term.

Human

(4) The new school would have a single governing body and a single headteacher. The shadow governing body would appoint the headteacher designate who would then work with the shadow governing body to establish a staffing structure for the new school.

(5) Staff from the existing schools who are in post at the point at which the new school comes into being would have the right to transfer to the new school under the provisions of TUPE. At this stage it is not possible to specify the precise implications for existing staff which are dependent on decisions yet to be made by the headteacher designate and the shadow governing body.

Views of the School Organisation Advisory Board

11. At its meeting on 26 April 2011, the School Organisation Advisory Board supported the proposal to issue a public notice to amalgamate Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School, and issue of a joint public notice with the Canterbury Diocese to include the closure of both schools and the establishment of a new 2 FE Church of England Voluntary Controlled school on the Kingsmead site.

Recommendation

12. The Cabinet Portfolio holder for Education, Learning and Skills is requested to agree to;
- (a) the amalgamation of Kingsmead Primary School and Diocesan & Payne Smith CE Primary School, and
 - (b) the issuing of a joint public notice with the Canterbury Diocese to include the closure of both schools and the establishment of a new 2 FE Church of England Voluntary Controlled school on the Kingsmead site.

Martyn Doole
Area Education Officer – East Kent
(01227) 284407
Martyn.doole@kent.gov.uk

The Local Member is Mr Graham Gibbens

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board – 9 November 2010

School Organisation Advisory Board – 26 April 2011