

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 7 February 2008

Subject: PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE FOR GREEN PARK COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL, DOVER

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report explains the need to bring forward a proposal to change the age range of Green Park Community School, Dover and to close the maintained nursery unit with effect from 19 October 2008.

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## **Introduction**

1. (1) On 14 March 2007 the Schools Adjudicator approved the proposal to close Melbourne Community Primary School and The Powell School with effect from 31 August 2007 and to establish a newly amalgamated school from 1 September 2007.

(2) The original proposal was that both schools should be consolidated onto the site of The Powell School with effect from 1 September 2007 and that the school would have an age range of 4-11. The proposal therefore encompassed the closure of the existing nursery unit on the Melbourne site.

(3) The Adjudicator modified the proposal published by the Local Authority. The proposal to amalgamate the two schools with effect from 1 September 2007 was approved. However, the Adjudicator determined that the newly amalgamated school should initially operate on split site locations. This was intended to allow time for adaptations to The Powell site to be properly planned and implemented and for the needs of the children with physical disability, including those in the Physical Disability Unit at the Melbourne School to be taken into account.

(4) In consultation between the Local Authority, the headteachers of the two existing schools and the Adjudicator it was agreed that the consolidation onto a single site would be deferred until September 2008. Following discussion with the Local Authority, the Adjudicator therefore made a further modification to the originally published proposal by determining that the age range of the new school should be 3-11 and not 4-11, effectively allowing the nursery unit to continue until the Melbourne site was closed and mainstream provision consolidated on the site of the former Powell School.

(5) Plans are now in place to make appropriate improvements and adaptations to the former Powell site to enable consolidation to take place from September 2008. It is therefore necessary to bring forward a proposal to change the age range of the newly established Green Park Community Primary School from 3-11 to 4-11, thereby closing the maintained nursery on the former Melbourne site.

## **Background**

2. (1) The maintained nursery unit was opened in September 2005. Since that time it has always been significantly under-subscribed. There are currently 14 children occupying part time places out of a potential capacity for the nursery of 52.

(2) With mainstream provision consolidated on the Powell site, it would become difficult to maintain a nursery unit, managed by the school, on the Melbourne site over the long term.

(3) The nursery unit is accommodated in excellent facilities in a detached building on the Melbourne site. The intention has always been that these facilities should remain available as a valuable community resource with considerable amenity value. Over the past few months, consideration has therefore been given to the potential for retaining pre-school provision on the former Melbourne site while addressing the practical implications arising from the relocation of the mainstream school provision onto the former Powell site some 0.7 miles away.

(4) Pre-school provision, including both nursery and full day care provision is already available locally through the provision made by the Umbrella private nursery, which is part of the offer available through the Buckland Children's Centre. The Umbrella provision currently offers morning and full day care provision for up to 45 children. The private provision is currently delivered in St Nicholas Church Hall on the Buckland Estate. The quality of the accommodation and facilities available are inferior to those available within the existing maintained nursery unit. Umbrella have been looking for alternative accommodation. Use of the facilities on the former Melbourne site would meet a pressing community need and enhance the facilities available to local pre-school children.

(5) Preliminary discussions have taken place with Umbrella about the possibility in principle of relocating to the former Melbourne site. These can now be taken further into more substantive and detailed discussions, subject to the potential availability of the nursery building in the light of decisions to be taken by Members. Umbrella has a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with KCC to deliver their part of the Children's Centre offer. This would need to be renegotiated to take account of any relocation.

(6) As part of the discussions to be had with the current Children's Centre provider the Local Authority would secure a guarantee that all pre-school children currently attending the Green Park nursery unit are guaranteed a place if and when the provision comes under the management of a private provider.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) The proposal is to change the age range of Green Park Community Primary School from 3-11 to 4-11 and to close the maintained nursery unit currently operating on the site of the former Melbourne Community Primary School.

(2) The implementation date for the proposal would be 19 October 2008, which is the end of Term 1 in the next academic year. This would allow statutory procedures to be completed and relocation of Umbrella managed effectively.

(3) The relocation of the Umbrella pre-school provision would not technically form part of the statutory proposal. However, subject to the consultation proceeding, discussions would be developed with this alternative provider to ensure continuing use of the excellent facilities available for the benefit of the local community.

## **Site Issues**

4. (1) The mainstream provision will be consolidated onto the site of the former Powell School with effect from 1 September 2008. Plans have been drawn up to adapt and enhance the site accordingly.

(2) From that time, the existing site of the former Melbourne School will be surplus to requirements and potentially available for alternative community use or for disposal depending on decisions to be made by elected Members. The nursery building is detached from the mainstream school site and continuing use of the nursery facility should not in anyway impede alternative use/development of the school site.

(3) There is insufficient space and accommodation on the former Powell site to house a maintained nursery unit. There is also a private provider (Kidease) with 40 places located next to the former Powell site.

(4) The current minimum age for admission to the maintained nursery unit is 3 years old. Umbrella need to offer provisions for babies and younger children, if they are to fulfil the requirement as the Children's Centre provider. Currently, they cannot offer places to this very young age group, given the restrictions imposed by their existing accommodation. Relocation to the maintained nursery unit site would provide them with suitable accommodation. Modest adaptations to accommodate baby changing facilities etc. would be required. The costs would be met from the Sure Start Sustainability Funds.

## **Resource Issues**

### *Capital & Revenue*

5. (1) Retention of the physical infrastructure of the nursery unit within Local Authority ownership has ongoing implications for maintenance of the building. However, it is proposed that any agreement entered into with an alternative provider would generate a regular income sufficient to offset these costs.

### *Human*

(2) Green Park School is currently working with Schools Personnel Service (SPS) to address the staffing issues at the school which will need to include the implications of a future closure of the nursery unit.

## **School Improvement Implications**

6. Maintaining continuity of provision through an alternative provider should ensure that there are no adverse implications for school improvement.

## **Equality Issues**

7. Continuing access to high quality provision on the former Melbourne site should avoid any detrimental impact.

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

8. Continuing access to on-site provision should avoid adverse impact on the environment, the community and any adverse transport implications.

## **Proposed Timetable**

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|----|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 9. | SOAB 1 Seeking permission to consult | 7 February 2008             |
|    | Public Consultation Period           | 25 February to 7 April 2008 |
|    | Public Meeting                       | w/c 10 March                |
|    | SOAB 2 Report back on consultation   | 7 May 2008                  |
|    | Cabinet Member decision              | End of May 2008             |

### *If not called into Scrutiny*

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|--|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
|  | Public Notice issued                | 6 June 2008     |
|  | End of Public Notice period         | 18 July 2008    |
|  | Determination by Local Authority    | 25 July 2008    |
|  | End of four week period for appeals | 22 August 2008  |
|  | Implementation from                 | 19 October 2008 |

### *If called into Scrutiny*

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|--|-------------------------------------|-------------------|
|  | Public Notice issued                | 4 July 2008       |
|  | End of Public Notice period         | 15 August 2008    |
|  | Determination by Local Authority    | 22 August 2008    |
|  | End of four week period for appeals | 19 September 2008 |
|  | Implementation from                 | 19 October 2008   |

## **Views of the Local Members**

### *Mr Newman's Views*

10. (1) Mr Newman has been consulted over the proposal and has agreed to forward his views to the Area Education Officer who will table these at the meeting on 7 February.

### *Mr Cowan's Views*

- (2) Mr Cowan has been consulted over the proposal and has agreed to forward his views to the Area Education Officer who will table these at the meeting on 7 February.

## **Recommendations**

11. Members are asked to give their views on whether there should be a consultation on the possible change of age range of Green Park Community School, Dover and the closure of the existing maintained nursery unit on the former Melbourne site with effect from 19 October 2008.

Martyn Doole  
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The Local Members are Mr Bill Newman and Mr Gordon Cowan.

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*Background Documents:*

None