

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 5 November 2008

Subject: PROPOSED CLOSURE OF PARK FARM (FOUNDATION) PRIMARY SCHOOL AND ITS REPLACEMENT AS A PRIMARY SCHOOL WITHIN THE FOLKESTONE ACADEMY.

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report seeks the views of the School Organisation Advisory Board on a proposal to undertake a public consultation, in conjunction with the governing body, on the closure of Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School. The school would be replaced by a new primary provision within the Folkestone Academy.

Introduction

1. (1) Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School in Folkestone admits 60 boys and girls per year. Its age range is 4-11 years. As of January 2008 it had 416 pupils on roll. Attached as Appendix 1 is a map showing the location of the school. The school site adjoins KCC land which was formerly part of the Channel School. In turn this land adjoins the Folkestone Academy site.

(2) The school serves a local urban community (see Appendix 2 for pupil distribution) of which the majority of pupils live in eastern Folkestone and the remainder travel in from the surrounding Folkestone area and Hawkinge. The school's Mosaic profile indicates that Park Farm Primary is the 9th most challenged school out of 18 primaries in the Local Children's Services Partnership area.

(3)¹ The proportion of students with a statement of Special Educational Needs is 0.5% while the average in Kent is 1.1% and nationally is 1.4%. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals¹ at Park Farm is 15.4%, which is above the Kent average of 11.0%, but below the National average of 15.6%.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is that the Local Authority ceases to maintain Park Farm School (i.e. closes the school), and the Folkestone Academy enters into a new/amended funding agreement with the Secretary of State enabling it to deliver education to pupils aged 4-18 years, rather than the current 11-18 years (i.e. extend its age range). It is proposed that the Park Farm Primary School buildings will be replaced by new provision. These new buildings may be located on Kent County Council's surplus land adjoining The Folkestone Academy. This land was formerly part of the Channel school site (see appendix 3). This would free up the existing Park Farm site for disposal. In effect this may be a land "swap" between the County Council and the Governing Body of Park Farm Primary School.

(2) The Folkestone Academy will become an "All-age" school. It will admit 60 pupils per year group in its primary phase, and 240 pupils in the secondary years. It will continue to offer 250 post 16 places.

Footnote:

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¹ Data for Park Farm Primary and Kent is from the May 2008 Census (most recent data we hold), data for National is from January 2008 Census (most recent data available).

(3) The all-age school concept intends to ensure continuity of education for pupils. While it is envisaged that the primary and secondary elements of the school will be discrete, with separate identities, opportunities exist for expectations and structures to be common throughout, thereby supporting transition through the phases. Crucially, the all-age school has the ability to take the best practice from the primary sector into the secondary sector and vice versa. This affords significant benefits to help raise standards for all pupils. This practice and expertise would need to be shared and developed with other feeder primary schools in order to raise standards across the area and ease transition from primary to secondary school for all pupils. An all-age school offers enhanced development opportunities for staff, and increased flexibility to support personalised learning. It also affords possibilities to share resources and reduce costs which can be diverted to support pupil learning.

Resource Implications

Capital

3. (1) KCC's capital programme includes £1.4m for investment in Park Farm School to replace its Key Stage 1 building. This funding will instead be contributed to the cost of rebuilding Park Farm School as part of the Folkestone Academy. The DCSF have already committed £1m toward the developments. Further funding will also be contributed from Roger De Haan (sponsor of The Folkestone Academy) and from the capital receipt of the Park Farm site.

Revenue

(2) The Academy will receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent schools, plus an allocation to cover central LA costs. A corresponding amount will be deducted by DCSF from KCC's Dedicated Schools Grant.

Human

(3) The Governing Body are the employers of staff at Park Farm School. The Folkestone Academy Trust are the employers of staff in The Academy. Consultation with Park Farm's staff will take place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE. Discussions are ongoing with DCSF regarding funding for TUPE costs and funding for any necessary redundancies.

Transport and Road Safety Implications

4. (1) Park Farm Primary School is accessed from Park Farm Road. The proposed site is about one quarter of a mile from the current primary site and has better access. There is no reason why the relocation should alter pupils' mode of travel to school. Early discussions will take place with Shepway District Council and Kent Highways. They will be fully consulted as part of the design and development phase of the new school and a travel plan will be produced prior to the opening.

School Improvement Implications

5. (1) The closure of Park Farm School and its inclusion in the Academy would allow for new facilities, flexibility of curriculum and the recruitment and

retention of high quality staff. These plus the efficiency savings that the proposal would bring are expected to have the positive impact on standards.

(2) Park Farm School was last inspected in March 2008 and was found to be satisfactory.

Views of the Governing Body

6. (1) The governing bodies of Park Farm School and the Folkestone Academy are in full support of this proposal.

Views of the Local Member

7. (1) Mr Richard Pascoe, Member for Folkestone North East, is fully supportive of the proposal and the intention to consult.

Views of the Area Children's Services Officer

8. The Area Children's Services Officer considers that this is an innovative proposal, designed to enhance the life opportunities of young people in the Shepway district. Therefore it is appropriate to conduct a public consultation for the closure of Park Farm Primary School.

Proposed Timetable

9. Should public consultation be agreed, the following timetable is proposed:

School Organisation Advisory Board	5 November 2008
Publication of consultation document	14 November 2008
Public meeting	w.c. 1 December 2008
Closing date for responses	19 December 2008
Report to School Organisation Advisory Board	8 January 2009
Cabinet Member decision	January 2009
Issue public notice	21 January 2009
End of public notice period	20 March 2009
Decision by Local Authority	End of March 2009
Implementation	31 August 2009

Recommendation

10. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought on the proposal for a public consultation to be undertaken in conjunction with the governing body on the proposal for the closure of Park Farm Primary school, and its replacement as part of The Folkestone Academy.

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The Local Member is Richard Pascoe.

Background documents: None