

## Appendix 1 to the Cabinet Member Decision

Item No: B4

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 10 January 2008

Subject: TUNBRIDGE WELLS COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL – PROPOSED CHANGE OF AGE RANGE TO REMOVE THE SIXTH FORM FROM THE SCHOOL'S FORMAL DESIGNATION

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: This report presents the results of a public consultation exercise undertaken on a proposal to regularise the position regarding the suspension of sixth form provision at Tunbridge Wells Community High School, by changing the designated age range from 11 to 19, to 11 to 16 years only.

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### **Introduction**

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 17 October 2007, supported a proposal to undertake public consultation on changing the designated age range of Tunbridge Wells Community High School, from the current 11-19, to 11-16 years of age.

(2) Members noted that the School Organisation Regulations 1999 define 'the upper age limit' for individual schools as being 'the highest age of pupils for whom education is normally provided at the school'.

(3) Tunbridge Wells Community High School is currently designated as a school for students aged 11-19 years, but the school's Sixth Form was suspended from September 2005 on grounds of viability. School Organisation Regulations do not, however, provide for temporary changes to the age range of a school. This proposal has, therefore, been brought forward to regularise the position and to bring it into line with legislative requirements.

(4) In these circumstances, Members agreed to a more limited public consultation exercise than is normal practice within the county when the outcome of a proposal would normally lead to a change in provision for pupils. In this case, the change would be in formal designation only.

(5) Appendix 1 comprises the consultation letter distributed to all key stakeholders on 2 November 2007. This report summarises the outcome of the consultation process.

### **Background**

2. (1) Tunbridge Wells Community High School is a small non-selective secondary school located to the east of Tunbridge Wells. A location map and a site plan are attached as Appendices 2 and 3.

(2) The roll was 436 (January 2007 pupil census) and is forecast to remain relatively constant over the next few years. It does not have sixth form students currently on roll, and has not done so since the sixth form arrangements were suspended from September 2005. Post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High have been successfully transferring to alternative courses, sometimes at other local sixth forms but, mostly, to West Kent College which works in close partnership with the school.

(3) Numbers in the Sixth Form at Tunbridge Wells High had always been quite small and, in latter years, very small. Table 1 below details historic roll figures for main school and Sixth Form numbers from 2000 to 2005.

**Table 1**

<b>Year</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>Total 11-16</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>Total 16+</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2000</b>	85	88	86	107	99	465	29	17	7	<b>53</b>	518
<b>2001</b>	108	92	93	89	107	489	36	15	5	<b>56</b>	545
<b>2002</b>	106	111	94	100	86	497	29	25	4	<b>58</b>	555
<b>2003</b>	97	102	112	88	86	485	20	15	3	<b>38</b>	523
<b>2004</b>	105	91	103	101	81	481	19	10	1	<b>30</b>	511
<b>2005</b>	91	105	94	109	89	488	2	0	0	<b>2</b>	490

(4) The school's post-16 focus, since 1998, had been on vocational courses at 16+, offering a limited range of options, covering Performing Arts, Art and Design, Travel and Tourism and Business Studies.

(5) Over a number of years, as Table 1 demonstrates, the school's post-16 roll gradually fell, reflecting the challenges faced by a high school in an area surrounded by popular and successful selective and church schools, offering a wide range of post-16 options. The addition of single sex secondary school options, in nearby Tonbridge, and of comprehensive schools, less than ten miles away in East Sussex, meant that maintaining a Sixth Form was no longer viable.

(6) By 2003/04 the numbers of students in the Sixth Form had fallen to 30. The only way sixth form provision could continue would have been by using a cross-subsidy using formula funding intended for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. This was not considered justifiable. In order to secure the school's budget, governors were obliged to suspend the operation of the Sixth Form with effect from September 2005.

(7) The school believes it has benefited from the suspension of the Sixth Form in as much as skilled teachers, who previously taught at 16+, have been re-deployed to Key Stage 3 and 4 classes. This has contributed to an upward trajectory in results at the end of Key Stage 4 and to an outstanding performance as indicated by Contextual Value Added, validated by Ofsted in February 2005 and again in a 'themed inspection' of science provision, in December 2006.

(8) In summary, suspension of the school sixth form was necessary and there have been real and significant ways in which the school has made a virtue of that necessity.

## **The Proposal**

3. (1) The proposal is to change the designated age range of Tunbridge Wells Community High School, from co-educational provision for students aged 11 to 19 years, to co-educational provision for students aged 11 to 16 years.

(2) This will consolidate the already established partnership for post 16 progression routes with West Kent College and other local sixth forms. A closer working relationship with nearby West Kent College has been developed, so that all Tunbridge Wells High students have ready access to the vast range of post-16 opportunities at the College. These are jointly promoted by school and by college staff.

(3) Data from Connexions show that a higher than ever percentage of Tunbridge Wells High students are progressing at 16+ into education or employment with training. As collaboration continues to develop between partner institutions in the area, this trend of developing the right pathways for students will continue.

## **Consultation**

4. (1) There is no prescribed consultation process that must be followed in order to secure a change of age status for a school. However, guidance from the DCSF suggests that it is good practice to seek the views of all stakeholders likely to be affected by the proposal.

(2) Accordingly, the school wrote to all appropriate stakeholders on 2 November 2007. Appendix 1 comprises the consultation letter that informs them about this proposal. It was sent to all parents/carers of current students and to the governors and staff of Tunbridge Wells Community High School. Also included in the circulation were the Tunbridge Wells Cluster of Schools, the West Kent Learning Federation and the Kent and Medway Learning and Skills Council.

(3) Attached to the consultation letter was a Reply Form for respondents to express their views before the closing date of 14 December 2007.

## **Responses to the Public Consultation**

5. (1) 57 responses were received, of which 52 were in favour, and 5 were against the proposal.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 4.

(3) In the circumstances, a Public Meeting was not deemed necessary.

## **Views of the Governing Body**

6. The Governing Body of the school, having taken the decision to suspend the Sixth Form arrangements in 2005, is fully supportive of the proposal to formally re-designate the age range of students at the school.

## **Views of the Local Member**

7. Mr Kevin Lynes, the Local Member, fully supports this proposal.

## **Views of the Cluster Board**

8. The Tunbridge Wells Cluster Board fully supports the proposal to regularise the position at the school.

## **Views of the Learning and Skills Council**

9. The Learning and Skills Council for Kent and Medway has been fully involved in developing partnership arrangements to secure progression routes for post-16 students from Tunbridge Wells High, and so fully supports this proposal.

## **Views of the Area Education Officer**

10. The Area Education Officer fully supports this proposal.

## **Resource Implications**

### *Capital*

11. (1) There are no capital resource implications.

### *Revenue*

(2) As the school currently does not make use of its designation to educate sixth form students there are no revenue implications.

### *Human*

(3) No staff are currently employed in connection with the school's designation to educate sixth form students. Therefore, no changes to staffing arrangements are envisaged by the proposal.

## **Equality Issues**

12. There are no equality issues particular to this proposal.

## **Transport and Environmental Impact including Community Implications**

13. There are no transport, environmental or community implications now arising from this proposal. The school has a Transport Plan in place. Post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High will continue to transfer to a range of post-16 education, training and employment pathways, as they have been since September 2005.

## **School Improvement Implications**

14. The proposal provides for more effective and efficient progression routes at post 16.

## Links to the School Organisation Plan

15. This proposal is consistent with the aims, principles, policies and priorities within the School Organisation Plan, with specific reference to Section 4 and Section 5 (5.1-5.3.1 and 5.3.4) and Section 6 (6.1-6.3, 6.14, 6.20).

## Proposed Timetable

16. If it is decided that a Public Notice should be issued in respect of this proposal, the following could apply as follows:

Cabinet Member Decision	February 2008
Issue of Public Notice	February 2008
End of Statutory Objection Period	April 2008
Cabinet Member Decision	June 2008
Adjudication (if necessary)	July/August 2008
Implementation, if agreed	September 2008

## Recommendation:

17. The views of the School Organisation Advisory Board are sought:

- (a) on the issuing of a public notice to change the designated age range of Tunbridge Wells High School from 11-19, to 11-16 years only.

Chris Lay  
Area Education Officer  
(Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells)  
Tel: (01732) 525107

The Local Member is Mr Kevin Lynes.

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*Background Documents:*

None

Headteacher  
Graham Smith B.A.(Hons)  
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email: twhs@mail.twhs.kent.sch.uk  
www.twhs.kent.sch.uk

twhs

Hppenda 1

**Tunbridge Wells  
High School**

Blackhurst Lane,  
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4PY

To: All Parents/Carers of Students  
at Tunbridge Wells High School  
Cc: All Governors and Staff at  
TWHS  
Tunbridge Wells Cluster of  
Schools  
West Kent Learning Federation  
The Learning and Skills Council,  
Kent & Medway

Date: 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2007

Dear Parents /Carers

**Tunbridge Wells High School – Proposed Change of Age Range to Remove Sixth Form from Formal Designation**

I am writing to seek your views on the need to formalise the school's age range to 11-16 only, the age range the school is currently providing for, while its formal designation is for 11-19 years.

The school's Sixth Form was suspended from September 2005 on grounds of viability. School organisation regulations, however, do not provide for temporary changes to the age range of a school to be made permanent without a formal process of re-designation. This proposal has, therefore, been brought forward to regularise the position and to bring it into line with legislative requirements. The proposal seeks to formally change the age range of the school to provide for students aged 11 to 16 years only.

Tunbridge Wells Community High School, as you know, is a small non-selective secondary school located to the east of Tunbridge Wells town. The roll was 436 against the January 2007 Pupil Census, and currently stands at 417. It is forecast to remain relatively constant over the next few years. The school does not have sixth form students currently on roll, and has not done so since the sixth form arrangements were suspended from September 2005. Post 16 students from Tunbridge Wells High have been successfully transferring to alternative courses, sometimes at other local sixth forms but, mostly, to West Kent College which works in close partnership with the school.

Numbers in the Sixth Form at Tunbridge Wells High had always been quite small and, in latter years, very small, reducing from 53 in 2000 to just 30 in 2004. The school believes it has benefited from the suspension of the Sixth Form in as much as skilled teachers, who previously taught at 16+, have been re-deployed to Key Stage 3 and 4 classes. This has contributed to an upward trajectory in results at the end of Key Stage 4 and to an outstanding performance as indicated by Contextual Value Added (Raiseonline, 2006) and again in a more recent 'themed inspection' of science provision, in December 2006.

In summary, suspension of the school sixth form is seen as being necessary and there have been real and significant ways in which the school has made a virtue of that necessity.

This proposal will consolidate the already established partnership for post-16 progression routes with West Kent College and local sixth forms. A closer working relationship with West Kent College has been developed, so that all Tunbridge Wells High students have ready access to the vast range of post-16 opportunities at the College. These are jointly promoted by school and by college staff.

Data from Connexions show that a higher than ever percentage of Tunbridge Wells High students are progressing at 16+ into education or employment with training. As collaboration continues to develop between partner institutions in the area, this trend of developing the right pathways for students will continue.

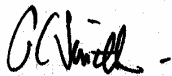
There is no prescribed consultation process that must be followed in order to secure a change of age status for a school. However, guidance from the DCSF suggests that it is good practice to seek the views of all stakeholders likely to be affected by the proposal, hence this letter to you.

The Local Authority's School Organisation Advisory Board met on 17 October and agreed the need to consult on this matter. There will be a report back on the outcome of this consultation exercise at their meeting on Thursday 10 January 2008, in the morning.

May I invite you, please, to complete the Reply Form below to indicate any views you may have. It should be returned direct to the school, or to the Area Education Office, as detailed on the Reply Form.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely



Mr G. Smith  
Headteacher

## Tunbridge Wells High School Proposed Change of Age Range to Remove Sixth Form from Formal Designation

Summary of Written Responses, as at close of consultation:  
14 December 2007

	<b>Support proposal</b>	<b>Against proposal</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Parent/Carer</b>	28	4	32
<b>Pupil/Student</b>	0	1	1
<b>Member of Staff</b>	6	0	6
<b>Governor at School</b>	4	0	4
<b>Other interested party</b>	14	0	14
<b>Total</b>	52	5	57

### Comments in Favour of the Proposal

- Welcome for the school's continued close working with West Kent College
- Pleasure in supporting Tunbridge Wells High School in its actions in the best interests of the school's students
- Support for the school's wish to change its age range
- Understanding and acceptance of the case put by the Headteacher of TWHS that the change is in the best interests of the students
- Needs of Sixth Form students are well met in other local secondary schools
- Many young people who want to continue formal education actually prefer to go to a different location at this age
- Preference for own children to continue higher education at West Kent College as it offers a wider variety
- Happiness for the proposed changes to go ahead
- The school runs well as it is and pupils can still gain the education they may need at 16+ at West Kent College
- Some regret but support for Graham Smith's position, although an onsite Sixth Form is what many parents of Year 6 children look for when selecting a school at the end of Key Stage 2
- Support but concern for how this might affect the school in the future now there is possibility of 'Academy' and the introduction of 14-19 Diplomas. Might need to again change status?



## Comments Against the Proposal

- Absolute shame that the Sixth Form was removed. It would have proved significantly easier for many students to have remained post 16
- TWHS should provide education options until a child is 18, especially when government proposals to make this compulsory are in the pipeline
- A lot of children would prefer to stay at TWHS in preference to other local sixth forms
- The school should just be kept as it is.

<b>Summary of Written Responses</b>	<b>Number of Respondents</b>	<b>% of Total Responses</b>
In favour of the proposal	52	91%
Against the proposal	5	9%
Number who just ticked a box	32	56%