

**The Amalgamation of Walmer Science College (Community School)  
and Castle Community College (Academy)**

**Summary of written responses**

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 2,500  
Responses received: 491

|                                   | Support   | Against    | Undecided | Total      |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Parents/Carers – Castle           | 13        | 20         | 0         | <b>33</b>  |
| Parents/Carers – Walmer           | 0         | 54         | 1         | <b>55</b>  |
| Parents/Carers – unspecified      | 5         | 12         | 0         | <b>17</b>  |
| Students – Castle                 | 1         | 3          | 0         | <b>4</b>   |
| Students – Walmer                 | 20        | 284        | 1         | <b>305</b> |
| Students – unspecified            | 0         | 5          | 6         | <b>11</b>  |
| Governors                         | 2         | 0          | 0         | <b>2</b>   |
| Members of staff – Castle         | 11        | 1          | 0         | <b>12</b>  |
| Members of staff – Walmer         | 0         | 5          | 0         | <b>5</b>   |
| Members of staff – unspecified    | 0         | 3          | 0         | <b>3</b>   |
| Interested parties                | 5         | 38         | 1         | <b>44</b>  |
| <b>Total responses received *</b> | <b>57</b> | <b>425</b> | <b>9</b>  | <b>491</b> |

A survey carried out by the Kent Messenger Group was forwarded to Alison Osborne which contained 96 responses; 85 against the proposal, 4 for the proposal and 7 undecided.

Mr Mike Whiting, Cabinet Member for ELS was presented with a petition when he met with the Dover Mercury newspaper on 31 October. The petition was signed by 640 people opposing the proposal, approximately 400 of whom indicated that they lived in the Deal/Walmer locality

A petition was received at Clover House addressed to Alison Osborne from the 'Save Walmer Science College Group' with 2000 plus signatures opposing the proposal. Presented with the petition was an alternative proposal disagreeing with the evidence provided during the public consultation on the predicted number of pupils coming forward in the future. It proposed that Walmer Science College should be allowed to continue to operate under a new structure with a new headteacher, seeking sponsorship, possibly becoming an academy, allowing the continuation of choice for parents. A copy of this

proposal and any of the responses, are available for Members to see in the Members lounge.

### Response from Deal Town Council

Deal Town Council strongly objects to the proposal on the grounds that sufficient information has not been provided and concern that any future failure of the expanded academy could result in it being passed to another managing body. The Council also raised concerns about the future of the Walmer site should the proposal go ahead and sought reassurance that the site would continue to be used for educational purposes.

### Response from Walmer Parish Council

Having considered both sides of the argument, listened to local residents and the personal experiences of councillors themselves, Walmer Parish Council is of the opinion that it is against the closure of any educational facility in Walmer.

## **Parents**

### In support of the proposal

- This proposal will bring increased chances and a wider variety of opportunities for the young people in Deal/Walmer.
- Bringing the two schools together will put a stop to the 'them and us' mentality in the area.
- The proposal should go ahead to raise standards for all students in Deal and Walmer.
- Walmer Science College is currently not fit for purpose.
- There will be some, very regrettable but inevitable, disruption in the short to medium term but the alternatives would create an even more desperate situation for the pupils attending Walmer Science College
- The staff of Walmer Science College deserves the opportunity to prove, that, with the right leadership, they can perform to the standards which the pupils deserve.
- Another main entrance would be needed for Castle Community College when the school is rebuilt. A bigger entrance in Brunswick Terrace /Hamilton Road.
- I would prefer that the resources are targeted towards maintaining an already outstanding school and making it even better.
- The new school must have the capacity to accommodate future increases in pupil numbers long term, as one would hope that the school's success will also attract more pupils whose parents may have previously looked out of the immediate Deal area.

### Against the proposal

- The situation is due to change in the next five years or so as the very large intake currently stretching primary schools to the limit will feed through.
- Parents in Deal and Walmer have for decades been able to exercise choice between the two schools and it is plainly wrong that this should be withdrawn.
- Parents should have a choice between Castle, doing sports and drama and Walmer, a maths and science college.
- Walmer Science College should be allowed to go it alone as an Academy if it is not possible to leave it just as it is.
- A federation arrangement could be made with other schools allowing Walmer to remain intact and with a great degree of autonomy.
- I feel if the school becomes bigger the individual care these children need will be overseen because they will be numbers in a vast school.

- We value what is here right now and we want investment to be in the two sites, not in creating one large new school.
- Bigger is not always better! Surely with co-operation between the two schools it should be possible to continue to offer a good range of subjects across the two sites without the need to merge the schools.
- The students would be working in an unsettled and difficult environment, which will lead to a drop in performance.
- The prospect of our child's secondary education being undertaken on a huge building site, together with an over populated pupil intake is not one that we would wish to be part of.
- If this happens there will be animosity and conflict between the students of the two schools leading to bullying.
- Walmer Science College has had a lot of money spent on it recently improving the school and facilities, including the Maritime Centre. Will this not be a complete waste if this goes ahead?
- The new courses to do with seafaring are probably long overdue in this area and there is no doubt that they will attract pupils, increasing numbers especially for sixth form. Viability of the Walmer Science College would then not be in question.
- Our children have already had to go through a primary school merger and we do not want to put our children through this again.
- Walmer Science College has improved dramatically in the last year and should be allowed to continue to do so.
- This proposal is all about saving money.
- I am very concerned that the merger will jeopardise the small school values and standards that are so very much cherished by us.
- It wasn't that long ago that Walmer was the school of choice. The main reason numbers have dropped is due to the failings in the school and not a lack of children in the area.
- This proposal will already affect Walmer Science College with the ability to recruit and retain staff and attract new students for future intakes. This in turn will affect curriculum development and the opportunities available.
- When the new housing projects start, where are all of the children going?
- As parents have to pay travel expenses for their children to go to the grammar schools and St. Edmund's, possibly more children will have to go to the Deal schools, because some parents will not be able to afford the charges.

## **Students**

### In support of the proposal

- It would be better for our education.
- It will be good to get to see our old friends again.
- I agree, but please keep the Maritime Studies open as it is a brilliant opportunity.

### Against the Proposal

- We need two schools within this area as it gives both parents and students an option as to where they would like to study.
- There will be lots of fighting because Walmer and Castle students have always been rivals.
- The intake at Walmer will be a lot higher in 2013 due to our Maritime Studies Centre and new facilities which are much better than Castle's.
- There will be many staff redundancies – this will cause big problems and will have such a negative effect on peoples' lives.

- Please listen to the students and not only put Kent First, but Kent's Youth.
- Walmer Science College managed to come out of special measures in one year, so the school must be doing something right.
- The staff has worked very hard to improve Walmer.
- The transport and new uniform will cost our parents a fortune.
- I have grown comfortable in Walmer and sometimes refer to it as my second home.
- If the proposal goes ahead there will be too many pupils in a class.
- This will interfere with our GCSE's because of the stress of moving around and learning new things.
- I am worried about how this will affect my education as teachers that have planned my courses would have to leave.
- When we were visited by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne, she was very pleased with our school and the students but mostly the new Maritime Centre.
- It is good to have the two separate schools if only you would give us a chance. Just give us a couple of more years as we are on the path to becoming great again.
- Walmer is offering lots of new opportunities to try to bring students in. Why can't the proposal wait to see if this works?
- If the merger does happen, please don't allow the school to have the Castle name and uniform.
- With planned new housing in Sholden, the population of Deal is only going to rise.
- There will be vast amounts of disruption and larger classes, especially whilst the new proposed building is under construction.
- You may 'promise' that there are no plans for the Walmer site to become a housing estate but we cannot believe there is no ulterior motive.
- The Maritime and Engineering courses might stop if the merger goes ahead.
- As Year 10 and 11 students are doing their GCSEs, having to merge with another school where the students may have already learned different things, we may end up missing a bit of the course, which may jeopardise pupil's chances of passing.

### **Other comments**

- I don't mind joining but I just don't want all the hassle of having to move and most of the teachers losing their jobs.

### **Staff**

#### **For the Proposal**

- Walmer Science College is not financially viable and cannot offer the standard of education to which students and parents are entitled.
- When the opportunity for success at one small school is shrinking and at the other soaring, it is against good judgement for the merger not to happen.
- It will provide the community with fantastic opportunities in the future.
- I have seen the benefits of bringing the two schools together for the sixth form and the students have integrated without issue.
- The proposal offers equal opportunities for all young people of Deal.
- Better facilities will be provided for staff and students and there will be a further feel of "community".

#### **Against the Proposal**

- Staff will lose their jobs.
- Small schools are better, less children in classes.
- Reduced staffing will mean that class sizes will increase significantly.
- Taking choice away is a big negative for the community.

- The access to Castle is appalling, with increased numbers of pupils, this can only cause massive disruption and congestion to traffic.
- Losing staff from one school and not at the other doesn't seem fair.
- The pupils at Walmer have had enough disruption over the last few years, and have come through it admirably, but they don't deserve any more.
- Very short-sighted, with not much thought for staff or students at Walmer.

## **Governors**

### **For the Proposal**

- We know that if we do not act now the school will eventually become unviable.
- The results at Walmer were extremely disappointing for students, how many students did not achieve their full potential.
- Walmer Science College is in a critical position.

## **Other Interested Parties\***

### **For the Proposal**

- Neither of the current schools is educationally viable and even with a future increase of pupil numbers coming through from the primary phase, one, properly staffed and equipped secondary school will meet the town's needs far better than two small schools.
- The Academy system is going to offer the opportunity for greater funding.
- The reduction in student numbers leads to loss of money and the reduction in the ability to hire a truly good headteacher. The calibre of this person defines the quality of the school.
- The expanded Academy must offer a strong programme in Maths, Sciences and Technology to balance the Arts bias presently at Castle Community College.

### **Against the Proposal**

- Reducing to one school leaves no room for major expansion or allowance for an increase in school population.
- Merging the two schools will create problems in Mill Road and become unbearable for people living in the road.
- Both small schools should be kept, as a small school can help foster an understanding and appreciation between teachers and pupils and supports the well disciplined and courteous behaviour of the students.
- Creating one school definitely deprives parents of choice.
- With an academy there will be no controls of the syllabus or administration of the school.
- Suggested option if the merger goes ahead: Year 7 and 8 should be sited at Castle – where the children could be given greater pastoral care and be nurtured more. Year 9 onwards should be sited at Walmer – where they will have grown wings to fly, offering a wide range of courses and activities.

*\*These parties cannot be attributed to individuality as this contravenes the Data Protection Act 1998*