

By: Director - Operations

To: School Organisation Advisory Board – 23 April 2009

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 presents the results of a public consultation on the proposal to close Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School and replace it with a primary phase within the Folkestone Academy.

This paper should be read in conjunction with the report to School Organisation Advisory Board of 5 November 2008.

Introduction

1. (1) The School Organisation Advisory Board, at its meeting on 5 November 2008, supported a recommendation to consult (in conjunction with the governing body of Park Farm Primary School) on the proposal to close Park Farm Primary School, and replace it as part of the Folkestone Academy.

(2) This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place in February and March 2009.

The Proposal

2. (1) The proposal is that the Local Authority ceases to maintain Park Farm School, and the Folkestone Academy enters into a new/amended funding arrangement with the Secretary of State enabling it to deliver education to pupils aged 4-18 years, rather than the current 11-18 years (ie 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 Academy. This land was formerly part of the Channel School site. 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. Attached as Appendices 1, 2 and 3 are maps showing the location of the school and pupil distribution.

(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 year groups. It will continue to offer 280 post 16 places.

(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 professional 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.

The Consultation

3. (1) A consultation document, a copy of which is attached as Appendix 4 was circulated according to the County Procedures for Review. This circulation included Local Members, Shepway District Council, the Member of Parliament, the Learning and Skills Council, South Kent College, the Canterbury diocese and head teachers within a radius of 3 miles. Park Farm School and the Folkestone Academy had enough copies for all staff, governors, parents and carers to receive one. Approximately 4,000 copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. Unusually this was a joint consultation with the Academy.

(2) A public meeting was held at The Folkestone Academy on 9 March 2009. Mr Robert Burgess, KCC Member, chaired the meeting. In attendance were Mr David Adams, Area Children's Services Officer; Mr Ian Johnson, Principal of Marlowe and Spires Academies; Mr Trevor Minter, Trustee of the Folkestone Academy Trust and Mr Michael Pearce, Chair of Governors of Park Farm Primary School. Approximately 115 people attended. A summary of the main issues raised is attached as Appendix 4.

Responses to the Public Consultation

Written Responses

4. (1) 37 responses have been received, of which 23 are in favour, 2 are unsure, and 12 are opposed.

(2) A summary of written responses is attached as Appendix 5.

Public Meeting Responses

(3) A summary of the points, questions and comments made at the public consultation meeting is attached as Appendix 6.

Views of Local Members

5. (1) Mr Richard Pascoe, Member for Folkestone North East is supportive of the proposal as it will be of great benefit to the primary school, good for the Academy and good for the pupils.

Views of Local Member of Parliament

6. The local Member of Parliament, Mr Michael Howard has been consulted on the proposal. A response is awaited.

Views of Shepway District Council

7. Shepway District Council has been consulted on the proposal. A response is awaited.

Views of the Parish/Town Council

8. Folkestone Town Council has been consulted. No comment has been received.

Views of the Learning and Skills Council (if appropriate)

9. The Learning and Skills Council have been consulted on the proposal. However, as this proposal does not alter provision for children aged 14 plus, it is not expected that the Council will comment.

Views of the Governing Bodies

10. The governing bodies of Park Farm School and the Folkestone Academy are the driving forces of this proposal and brought it to the Local Authority. They are in full support.

Views of Headteacher

Park Farm

11. (1) I am very keen to see the merger go ahead. This will provide a once in a lifetime opportunity to make a difference to the life chances of children this school serves in Folkestone.

(2) Park Farm has a clear aspiration to become an outstanding school. I see the merger as a way to make rapid improvements in the standards of education we provide and so meet our aspirations to be outstanding.

(3) The merger will also provide a much more child-centred transition process from the primary into secondary age phases of education. It will go a long way to eradicating the dip in performance and progress that children go through when they move to their secondary school.

(4) This can happen whether or not we get a purpose built, state of the art new school building. However, if this is achieved, such a building will provide a significant boost and improvement to the learning environment for our children.

Views of the Pupils

12. Pupils of Park Farm Primary School and The Folkestone Academy have been consulted on the proposal. The Park Farm Primary School student council have gathered the views of the pupils. The majority (72%) are in favour of the proposal.

Views of the Partnership Board

13. The Shepway 1 Partnership Board welcome this consultation on the proposal to open an all age Academy in Folkestone. We feel it would offer parents greater choice of

provision on age 11 transfer as well as providing continuity of support for pupils. Primary schools in the partnership would be willing to work alongside the Academy to ensure quality of provision across all schools.

Views of the Area Children's Services Officer

14. (1) The proposal has been generated by the schools involved because they are confident that it is in the best interests of their pupils. I support this view.

(2) The enhanced learning opportunities available to pupils will be significant, the cross fertilisation of professional practice will benefit learners and the good practice developed will support pupils in other primary and secondary schools.

Resource Issues

Capital

15. (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 development. 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 the 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 is the employer of staff in the Academy. Consultation with Park Farm's staff has taken place in accordance with the requirements of TUPE. Discussions are ongoing with the DCSF regarding funding for TUPE costs and funding for any necessary redundancies.

Proposed Timetable

16. If it is decided that a public notice should be issued in respect of this proposal, the following timetable is likely to apply:

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| Issue public notice | wc 11 May 2009 |
| End of representation period | wc 22 June 2009 |
| Decision by Kent County Council | July 2009 |
| Implementation (earliest date) | 1 September 2009 |

Recommendation

17. The views of the School Organisation Board are sought on the issuing of a public notice to close Park Farm (Foundation) Primary School, subject to the replacement within Folkestone Academy.

David Adams
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The Local Member is Mr Richard Pascoe

Background Documents:

None

Previous Committee Reports:

School Organisation Advisory Board – 5 November 2008