

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education and Young People's Services

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

Subject: Proposed alternations to Five Acre Wood School and Holmesdale Technology College

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – 4 December 2013

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Malling North and Maidstone South: Sarah Hohler; Brian Clark in the previous decision for Five Acre Maidstone East, Ian Chittenden was listed with B Clark for Five Acre

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation of proposed changes to Five Acre Wood School (Maidstone) and Holmesdale Technology College (Tonbridge and Malling)

Recommendations: The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to:
- Increase the designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF from 275 to 330 places for 4 January 2016
 - Establish a Satellite provision at Holmesdale Technology College, Malling Road, Snodland ME6 5HS for 70 students with moderate to severe learning difficulties for 4 January 2016.
 - Alter the lower age range at Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF to include nursery provision for 1 September 2016.

And, subject to no objections to the public notice not already considered:

- (ii) Implement the proposals according to the dates identified above
- (iii) Allocate £495,000 from the Basic Need Budget
- (iv) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support in consultation with the Director of Law and Governance to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council
- (v) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council's strategy for children and young people with special educational needs and who are disabled (SEND) identified the need to add capacity across the county. The SEND Strategy shows how we will be creating 209 extra places in special schools and 164 in mainstream schools.
- 1.2 As the strategic commissioner of school provision, the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent. This duty applies to special school provision, as well as mainstream settings. These proposals reflect KCC's aspirations to increase the number of SEN school places across the County, as set out in Kent's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2015-19.
- 1.3 The numbers of children with profound, severe and complex needs (PSCN) is increasing which has resulted in pressure on places in Kent. Equally, the numbers have continued to increase at Five Acre Wood School which indicates strong parental preference. Capacity constraints at the school have restricted its ability to grow. KCC is investing in a significant capital project to update the existing facilities and expand the school. It is intended that the expansion of Five Acre Wood School would happen over a period of three years with the number on roll growing incrementally over this time.
- 1.4 KCC recognises the significant importance given to parent/carer views in the Students and Families Act reforms of SEN and Disabilities which came into force from September 2014 and has looked to ensure they are involved in shaping and influencing strategic decisions that affect their students and young people. Therefore, we undertook a consultation with parents at Five Acre Wood School, Holmesdale Technology College and a full range of stakeholders on the proposals to (i) increase the designated number of places offered by Five Acre Wood School from 275 to 330 places for 4 January 2016; (ii) create a Satellite provision at Holmesdale Technology College for 4 January 2016; and (iii) to alter the lower age range at Five Acre Wood for September 2016.

Proposal to increase the designated number of places offered by Five Acre Wood School from 275 to 330 places from January 2016

- 1.5 In order to enable our two related proposals we need to increase the total designated number of places offered at Five Acre Wood. This does not mean that 330 places will be solely based at the Five Acre Wood School site in Maidstone. These proposals would enable the school to formally operate from three sites in West Kent and increase the offer to its students.

Number of places

Provision	Number of places
4-16 year olds at the Five Acre Wood Maidstone site	230
Nursery provision at the Five Acre Wood Maidstone site	15
Satellite for KS1 & KS2 Pupils at East Borough Primary School	15
KS3/KS4 places at Holmesdale Technology College	30
KS5 places at Holmesdale Technology College	40
Total	330

Proposal to alter the lower age range at Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF to include nursery provision for 4 January 2016

- 1.6 Unlike other district PSCN schools pupils are only able to be admitted to Five Acre Wood School at statutory school age. In order to address this issue and provide early identification and support KCC is proposing to expand the age range to include nursery provision. Five Acre Wood School also provides outreach support to schools in the Maidstone area and thereby increasing the age range of the Five Acre Wood School will provide a broader range of advice and specialist offer.

Proposal to establish Satellite provision at Holmesdale Technology College, Malling Road, Snodland ME6 5HS for 70 students with moderate to severe learning difficulties for 4 January 2016

- 1.7 It is anticipated that the second part of this proposal will, in part, provide continuity of provision for primary aged children who would have benefitted from the establishment of the Satellite provision at East Borough Primary School. A significant number of Five Acre Wood students have been taught in accommodation at Aylesford School – Sports College. However, this facility does not offer the physical capacity to host Key Stage 3 and 4 provision nor is able to offer any increase in numbers of post-16 students as the demand for Five Acre Wood School increases.
- 1.8 Holmesdale Technology College is recognised as ‘good’ by Ofsted. It is a trust school and technology college which brings a wealth of opportunity to enrich students’ learning. Holmesdale offers a full range of GCSEs and ensures that all its students are well placed to realise their aspirations. KCC undertook a statutory proposal last year to create a Specialist Resource Base Provision (SRBP) for pupils with a Statement of Educational Needs or Education Health and Care Plan for Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The Local Authority recognises that the school has already invested in developing its staff expertise to create an inclusive environment across the whole school.
- 1.9 Creating a Satellite provision at Holmesdale Technology College will provide provision from Years 7 to post-16 from one location. It is anticipated that this proposal will enable KCC to establish a high quality hub which can encompass leadership and management from Five Acre Wood School as well as class bases.

Students currently attending Aylesford School/displaced students

- 1.10 Currently the school’s provision for pupils over the age of 16 is located on the site of Aylesford School, a mainstream secondary school some distance away from the main school. There are 30 pupils that attend this provision. An analysis of transport provision has been undertaken. On average students will be required to travel an additional 2.6 miles from their home address to the proposed provision at Holmesdale Technology College. There are a small number of pupils who will not be eligible for transport as the new provision is less than 3 miles from their home address. Five Acre Wood will work with parents to ensure suitable arrangements are in place.

- 1.11 A statutory proposal was undertaken in 2014 to establish a SRBP for up to 12 children with a statement of SEN or Education, Health and Care Plan equivalent for ASD. The proposals set out in this paper do not affect the SRBP and there are no plans to transfer pupils from the roll of Holmesdale Technology College to Five Acre Wood.
- 1.12 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 18 May 2015 and 19 June 2015. Two drop-in information sessions for parents were held on 4 June 2015 at Holmesdale Technology College and 8 June 2015 at Five Acre Wood School.

2. Financial Implications

- a. Capital – On 27 September 2013 the Education Cabinet Committee received a paper on the Targeted Basic Need projects and the Committee resolved to endorse the decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the proposed decisions to expand and refurbish and build schools in the identified areas. A further decision, number 14/0078 was taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on 11 August 2014 to allocate £1.726 million from the Targeted Basic Need budget and £12million from the Basic Need Budget.

The new proposals to make a further prescribed alternation to Five Acre Wood School and Holmesdale Technology College by creating a secondary Satellite provision for up to 70 students on the Holmesdale Technology College site will require the reconfiguration of existing teaching rooms to make provision for specialist teaching spaces. The works include the refurbishment of all mobiles and the Wolfe Building to provide 5 classrooms, common room with food technology, staff areas, break out space, a care suite and adequate toilet provision. The capital costs associated with this new proposal are in the region of £495,000.

- b. Revenue - The schools delegated budget will be allocated for an agreed number of commissioned places in accordance with the Place Plus High Needs funding methodology.
- c. Human – Five Acre Wood School will appoint additional teachers, as the school size increases and the need arises.

3. Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2015-2020) Policy Framework

- 3.1 These proposals will help to secure our ambition “to ensure that Kent’s young people have access to the education, work and skills opportunities necessary to support Kent business to grow and be increasingly competitive in the national and international economy” as set out in ‘Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council’s Strategic Statement (2015-2020)’
- 3.2 These proposals reflect KCC’s aspirations to increase the number of SEN school places across the County, as set out in Kent’s Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2015-19.

4. Consultation Outcomes

- 4.1 Approximately 1,500 hard copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors of both schools, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, the Borough Councils for the Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling Districts, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was provided.
- 4.2 Following the closure of the consultation period 22 positive responses were received, 6 were negative and 5 were undecided bringing the total to 33 responses. A summary of written responses is attached at Appendix 1.

5. Views

- 5.1 The Local Members for Maidstone South, Malling North and Malling Rural North East have been consulted about these proposals. Mrs Hohler, Member for Malling North has expressed her full support.

The View of the Headteacher and Governing Body of Five Acre Wood School

- 5.2 The Governing Body of Five Acre Wood School, unanimously support the proposals outlined in the public consultation because:
- The provision of a KS3 and KS4 satellite at Holmesdale will offer continuity of provision for the pupils attending the KS2 satellite provision at East Borough Primary School. This enables Five Acre Wood to offer increased opportunities for pupils and students. The move to Holmesdale will also accommodate the growing 6th Form, as our numbers increase, which Aylesford Sports College are unable to accommodate.
 - As the only PSCN school currently without an Observation and Assessment/Nursery provision in Kent, this provision will ensure equality across all Kent areas for children with disabilities.
 - The increase in pupil numbers will mean that more children within the Maidstone area are able to access Specialist Provision

The view of the School Principal and Governing Body of Holmesdale Technology College

- 5.3 The Principal at Holmesdale Technology College (HTC) has given her full support for the Five Acre Wood (FAW) satellite as described in the current consultation documentation. She supports the proposal because it further develops the inclusive nature of HTC. The HTC site has capacity for the students to have a separate provision due to the departure of Adult Education and the Grange Park 6th form provision. She recognises the potential for wider school networking and staff training due to FAW's success already with students with moderate and severe learning difficulties.

The Governing Body of the Malling Holmesdale Federation (which includes Holmesdale Technology College) met on Wednesday 20th May 2015 to discuss the proposals outlined in the public consultation and approved the proposal. The Governing Body are fully supportive of the proposal because:

- HTC students would benefit ultimately through shared teaching practice strategies across the 2 schools which may support SEN students within the host school.
- There would be advantages for the SENCO and ASD students attending the HTC ASD provision
- FAW students would benefit from accessing a mainstream school for specialist teaching resources
- FAW students would retain the support of their own trained staff in the designated area of the Wolfe Centre.
- HTC would benefit from additional income for a fixed period at which point provision may be assessed and analysed from impact within both schools prior to further renewal.
- Due to departure of 2 tenants; Adult Education and Grange Park 6th form there is space to offer a designated area within the HTC site for diversifying the community again within the school site.

The View of the KCC Head of SEN Assessment and Placement

- 5.4 Through their children's individual assessments and discussion about placements, a number of parents and carers have asked the Council to provide the broadest range of provision so that they have a choice of a local school. They also wish to ensure the staff in the school have received the training and support needed to understand what can act as a barrier to learning. Where we have already developed satellite provision for some primary aged pupils from Five Acre Wood, this investment has already increased choice for families. We want to further increase this and offer continuity at secondary provision, through post 16 education. Partnership working between mainstream and special schools enables both schools and their pupils to benefit from greater expertise, improving outcomes for all learners with special educational needs.

The View of the Area Education Officer:

- 5.5 The Area Education Officer for West Kent fully supports this proposal to provide high quality places for students with special educational needs in the Maidstone/Malling area. Holmesdale Technology College has an inclusive and welcoming ethos. Five Acre Wood is recognised for its expertise in providing outreach support to mainstream schools. There are clear benefits to both schools through this partnership.

6. Proposal

- 6.1 These proposals are set out in accordance with Section 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that Kent County Council intends to make prescribed alterations to:
- Increase the designed number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF from 275 to 330 places for 4 January 2016

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6.2 The proposed alterations to Five Acre Wood School and Holmesdale Technology College are subject to KCC statutory decision making process and planning.

6.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of the consultation. To date no comments have been received and no changes are required to the Equality Impact Assessment.

7. Delegation to Officers

7.1 The Officer Scheme of Delegation; under Appendix 2 part 4 of the Council's Constitution, provides a clear and appropriate link between this decision and the actions needed to implement it. For information it is envisaged, if the proposal goes ahead, that the Director of Property & Infrastructure Support will sign contracts on behalf of the County Council.

8. Conclusions

8.1 This proposal will create an additional 55 places at Five Acre Wood School for students in line with Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 Policy Framework' and the 'Commissioning Plan for Education – Kent' (2015 – 2019).

9. Recommendations

Recommendations: The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to agree to:

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- (v) Authorise the Director of Property and Infrastructure Support to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

10. Background Documents

- 10.1 Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement 2015-2020 <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/corporate-policies/increasing-opportunities-improving-outcomes>
- 10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2015-19
http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/16236/Commissioningplan-for-education-provision-in-Kent-2015-2019.pdf
- 10.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment
www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations
- 10.4 Strategy for Children & Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/childrensocial-care-and-families-policies>

11. Report Author

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12 Relevant Director

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Summary of written responses

Proposals to:

- Increase the designed number of places offered at Five Acre Wood School, Boughton Lane, Maidstone ME15 9QF from 275 to 330 places for 4 January 2016
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Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 1500

Responses received: 33

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	10	6	3	19
Governors	2			2
Members of Staff	9			9
Other Interested Parties	1		2	3
Total	22	6	5	33

In support of the proposal

Parents/Carers

Agree

- It is important that these pupils with moderate learning difficulties are integrated within the main stream pupils so there is a better understanding and attitude of/towards their situation. It will also help teachers and pupils to assist them.

Governors

Agree

- Hopes that all the special adaptations for toilet facilities will be in place before any students attend HTC
- Suggests changes to future consultation documentation

Other Interested Parties

Agree

- Maidstone Mencap Charitable Trust Ltd has been providing a service for pre-school children with learning disabilities for almost 50 years. We are delighted to hear that Five Acre Wood School is proposing to include nursery provision and feel this is a positive development for children and their families. Cobtree Playschool currently has a very long waiting list and unfortunately will be unable to accommodate all those applying. The additional 15 spaces to be offered at Five Acre Wood will ensure there is a place for all children needing specialist provision and a high level of support. It will also ensure that parents and carers have a choice of setting.

- We feel we have had a good working relationship with Five Acre Wood School, our aims for the future will be to continue our partnership and to work together with Five Acre Wood in providing an Early Years' service that complements and supports their new nursery provision.
- As an established charity providing services for children and young adults aged from 0 to 25 and beyond, Maidstone Mencap would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Five Acre Wood management team so we can build on and develop our strong working relationship. This can only be of benefit to the children and families we wish to support.

Undecided/did not indicate whether in support or against

Parents

- I am confident there will be an increase in teaching staff to accommodate this, I am hugely doubtful there will be any increase in therapists to meet the needs of the increase in pupils. There has been no increase in therapists in the time my child has been there to meet the initial increase in pupils and has obviously led to a much reduced therapy service for the children, which is a constant issue for parents.
- While I am happy the staff at school try their best, it is an impossible task to expect them to provide a good level of therapy for the increase in children and all that happens is that each child gets seen less and less by therapists. KCC needs to meet all needs of special needs children and this means an increase in the therapy staff as well as the teaching staff.
- Comments seeking clarification on guidelines for those children who will go to Holmesdale; transition arrangements especially for a child who has never changed classroom or school.
- Request opportunity to consult individually on a change of school as impact on quality of life. How will it affect school transport, when will be informed of who will be going to the unit and at what stage?

Other Interested Parties

- North Loose Residents Association & Neighbourhood Planning Forum have no adverse comments to submit.

Against the proposals

Parents

- Concerned Holmesdale Technology College would not have enough resources and funding to run and cope with the Satellite provision.
- Worried daughter's education would suffer.
- Holmesdale is a large school with lots of pupils, concerned dining area would not cope as it gets busy at break and lunch time.
- Concerned that any child with a different learning disability will be picked on.
- Reason for move not really explained, poor timing for students with Autism who do not cope well with change.
- Concerns about transition arrangements

Other Interested Parties

- For the last few years, a significant number of pupils travel to and from the site in taxi's and private hire vehicles including minibus sized vehicles. A large proportion of these use the rural roads linking with Parkwood / Sutton Road to avoid congestion at the Boughton Lane and Wheatsheaf junctions. Normal parents also use this, adding to vehicle density.
- These rural lanes are single track or very winding (or both), and already stretched beyond capacity at these times. Because the vehicles tend to exit in multiple numbers, if you are travelling in the opposite direction you can be forced to reverse several times before making a small distance, and having to do it again and again. Tempers fray, and often no progress will be made as neither vehicle at the head of each queue can give way unless multiple vehicles behind decide to reverse one by one.
- I am one of the few residents along the worst and narrowest stretch (and in the mornings have tried and failed to get out of my drive up to seven times, each time having to reverse as another vehicle appears round the bend. Equally after school pick up I can often see my driveway, but cannot reach it due to the volume of traffic coming away from the school.
- I doubt this will influence you in your decision in any way - traffic concerns seem to be dismissed by authorities as a minor concern. However, I invite you to stand and observe the traffic flow over a couple of days on my stretch, and ask yourself honestly if the number of new vehicles you generate is in any way reasonable.