

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF THE BRADBOURNE SCHOOL FOR GIRLS AND THE WILDERNESSE SCHOOL FOR BOYS, SEVENOAKS TO REPLACE WITH A GOVERNMENT FUNDED ACADEMY

Summary of points raised during the Public Meeting held on 28 April 2009 at Sevenoaks Primary School

Comment or Question	Response
Loss of Single Sex Teaching	
<p>Parents at both schools have actively chosen a single sex school because they believe that children learn best when taught without the opposite sex. Will existing students continue to be taught in this way?</p>	<p>There is a considerable strength of feeling about single sex teaching amongst parents and the Local Authority (LA) is very mindful of this, together with the need to build on the strengths of the two schools. It is expected that current students would continue to be taught in their single sex cohorts.</p>
<p>The consultation documents states that single sex teaching would be 'explored' in core subjects within the Academy. What does this actually mean?</p>	<p>A number of options are being considered. One would be to bring the new Year 7s, in 2010, together as a co-educational group on the Bradbourne site and introduce single sex teaching into core subjects for them, while the current students, whose parents/carers had chosen a single sex school, could continue to be taught in their single sex environment, in their existing buildings, until the new Academy building opens in 2012.</p>
Concern that Bradbourne is being lost in order to improve Wildernesse	
<p>Academies were established to drive up standards, yet Bradbourne is oversubscribed and recently described as Good overall by Ofsted. How will merging it with a school with very high levels of SEN benefit the girls at Bradbourne?</p>	<p>Bradbourne and Wildernesse are two sides of the same coin in Sevenoaks and the future of one cannot be determined in isolation from the other. This proposal seeks to provide a 'one off' opportunity for all young people in the Sevenoaks area by delivering a quality school of choice in a 21st century learning environment.</p>
<p>Given that the existing staff and leadership teams from both schools will transfer to the Academy, how will this benefit the Academy given that the team at Wildernesse has presided over a failing school?</p>	<p>This is a unique opportunity to draw on the considerable strengths of both staff teams.</p>
Role of Sponsors	
<p>Will the Lead Sponsor benefit financially from the disposal of the land at Bradbourne when the Academy building opens at Wildernesse?</p>	<p>Sponsors cannot profit from their involvement with an Academy and this is a legal element of the contract with the DCSF. The nature of sponsorship is about giving, not receiving. The</p>

	involvement of Sponsors is in order to support young people in Sevenoaks and there is no personal gain in this for them.
Traffic Congestion at Wildernesse	
There is already considerable traffic congestion at the entrance to the site at Wildernesse. What thought has been given to the additional traffic that an Academy will generate, in terms of safety once the new building opens?	This is an important issue which would have to be addressed as part of the planning process for opening new buildings on the Wildernesse site for September 2012. Full consultation with residents would take place and planning permission would not be forthcoming without satisfactory attendance to traffic management issues.
Disposal of Bradbourne Site	
What are the plans for the Bradbourne site once the new building opens at Wildernesse?	There are no plans at present for this site although the speculation and rumour concerning potential options is acknowledged.
Admissions	
At present, large numbers of girls, in particular, from Eynsford, West Kingsdown and Horton Kirby attend Bradbourne. If the Academy is successful, will these students still be able to obtain places?	The admissions arrangements would be agreed by the Academy's Governing Body. Ultimately young people living closest to the Academy would, in the main, have priority over those living outside of Sevenoaks. That may mean that some students who currently obtain places at Bradbourne may not be able to do so in the future, although that is more likely to affect those from neighbouring LAs, rather than North West Kent. There would also be an opportunity for the Academy to select 10% of its students on aptitude for its Expressive Arts specialism which could benefit those students living further afield.
How can the Local Authority guarantee that there will be fair admissions arrangements?	The Academy would need to adhere to the national Schools Admissions Code of Practice, in the same way that the predecessor schools do as Foundation Schools. This ensures fair practice. If necessary the LA could ask the Secretary of State to direct the Academy to take students if it was found to be in breach of not following the Code of Practice and In Year Fair Access protocols agreed across the West Kent Learning Federation.
The consultation talks about the Sevenoaks area. Will this include Edenbridge and the surrounding villages?	Edenbridge and its surrounding villages are part of the Sevenoaks District area that the Academy wishes to serve.

<p>A number of students at Bradbourne come from Bromley but may not now be able to get places at the Academy. Were families in Bromley consulted about the proposal?</p>	<p>KCC does not have a duty to provide places in Kent for students from other LAs but cannot discriminate in allocation of places if non-Kent residents apply for places at Kent schools. KCC has not been required to consult all parents/carers in a neighbouring LA but has consulted Bromley LA, together with parents/carers of students currently at the predecessor schools.</p>
<p>Academy Governing Body</p>	
<p>If the Governing Body of the Academy is appointed by Sponsors, will it also include representatives from parents and the teaching staff as at present?</p>	<p>The Sponsors, including KCC as a Co-Sponsor, can appoint a certain number of governors and this would be set out in the Memorandum and Articles of the Academy Trust. These will require a Parent Governor is included. Some academies prefer to have a parents' forum rather than one or two parent representatives on the Governing Body. There is no legal requirement to include a member of the teaching staff but it would be for the Governing Body of the Academy to take a view on this and KCC, as a Co-Sponsor, would encourage both parent and staff representation.</p>
<p>Behaviour and Exclusions</p>	
<p>How will the Academy deal with exclusions?</p>	<p>It is intended that the Academy would be a highly inclusive school, with exclusion kept to an absolute minimum. The Academy would sign up to the In Year Fair Access and Managed Moves protocols of the local West Kent Learning Federation, which would ensure that no one school has to take a disproportionate number of students with challenging behaviour, or who have been excluded from another school</p>
<p>Large, mixed sex schools often have more issues with challenging behaviour and disruption to classes</p>	<p>There are a number of very popular mixed sex schools in Kent, Surrey and East Sussex, which are the size of the proposed Academy and which have very good behaviour. It is a matter of good leadership and management, rather than size of school.</p>
<p>Start Times and Holidays</p>	
<p>Will the Academy set its own opening times and term dates?</p>	<p>The Academy would operate in the same way as the Governing Body of a Foundation School and would be able set its own opening times and term dates.</p>

Safeguarding	
Could teachers who have been banned by the General Teaching Council still teach at an Academy?	The Academy would be part of the same safeguarding process that exists in other mainstream schools and could not employ someone who had not satisfied safeguarding regulations.
Cost of Academy	
Why could the money earmarked for the Academy not be put into re-building Wildernesse and leaving Bradbourne as it is?	The money that goes into academies comes from a central 'pot' and is not available to the Local Authority to spend in any other way. The Building Schools for the Future programme, which is not due in Sevenoaks until 2017, would not provide for the rebuilding of Wildernesse because it would be considered to be too small and not viable.
If £2million has been raised for an Academy from the Sponsors, why could this money not be spent on improving the existing schools instead?	Previously this money would have gone towards the cost of building a new Academy but regulations have changed and this money now goes into an Endowment Fund for the Academy to enrich the learning opportunities of students.
If there is no money for improving the existing school buildings, why did Bradbourne recently have £0.5m taken away from it by KCC?	Government has directed that money must not be left sitting in school bank accounts, unused. KCC introduced a 'balance control mechanism' and as a result a number of schools across Kent with excessive rollovers had money clawed back and put back into the education budget to benefit all schools across the county.
Transition Arrangements and Disruption to Existing Students	
There is insufficient information about how students' education will not be compromised between now and the completion of the new build in 2012, which is of concern to parents/carers of all existing students	If the proposal were to be approved, project management consultants, Appleyards, would establish a Transition Group which would protect the interests of all students at both schools and ensure curricular progression and continuity. Ideas would be consulted upon in a number of stakeholder settings and information would be shared with parents/carers on a regular basis.
How will the disruption be managed whilst the new building work is taking place at Wildernesse?	KCC is rehearsed and successful at managing major building projects on operational school sites. The Wildernesse site is large enough to maintain 'business as usual' at the school whilst progressing the new build.

<p>Concern that the uncertainty over the Academy plans will result in teachers being disillusioned and look for other jobs</p>	<p>Staff employed at both schools, at the point of the Academy opening, would be protected under TUPE legislation, and staff with substantive contracts at the time of the transfer have the right to transfer to the Academy with existing terms and conditions of service. There would be a full and extensive programme of consultation meetings and other support arrangements, with both staff teams, in due course.</p>
<p>Role of Governing Bodies of Predecessor Schools</p>	
<p>The government booklet on setting up academies states that, if the governing bodies of the predecessor schools vote against the proposal, then it cannot proceed</p>	<p>The LA has the legal power to close the schools and does not need the agreement of the Governing Bodies, although their views are carefully considered as part of the consultation process. The Secretary of State makes the final decision on whether the Academy proposal can be implemented.</p>
<p>Performance of Academies</p>	
<p>All academies are introduced to replace failing schools and have poor results.</p>	<p>This is not the case. For example, Marsh Academy doubled its results just a year after it first opened and there are many other such successes. There is also greater evidence of impact when there is a strong education partner, as in this case in this proposal.</p>
<p>A number of academies, such as Leigh Academy, are experimenting with class sizes as large as 60. This can only have a negative effect on the teaching of students</p>	<p>This is not unique to academies and has been tried in a number of schools across the county and indeed the country. By bringing classes together for certain lessons, the students can be supported in a flexible range of ways. Large lecture style groupings can be very effective depending on the learning activity and objectives, providing for individuals and smaller groups to also be supported.</p>
<p>Alternatives to an Academy</p>	
<p>Given that Bradbourne is so popular and parents do not want it to change, why could Bradbourne not be made bigger and the accommodation at Wildernesse not be improved?</p>	<p>This is not an option as there is not the surplus capacity available to enlarge Bradbourne nor the money within KCC to address the accommodation issues at Wildernesse. The Academy is the only option available.</p>
<p>If the decision is made to build the new academy on the site at Wildernesse, could a church school be built on the Bradbourne site as an alternative for parents?</p>	<p>The size of the Academy cannot be reduced because that has been agreed by Government and to open a new school there has to be a need for additional school places.</p>