

**From:** Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

**To:** Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education

**Subject:** Governing Body Proposal to make prescribed alterations to Laleham Gap (Foundation Special) School

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Decision No:** 18/00015

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member decision

**Electoral Division:** Ramsgate – Karen Constantine  
Ramsgate – Paul Messenger

**Summary:**

This report sets out for consideration the results of the consultation held by the Governing Body of Laleham Gap (Foundation Special) School and the subsequent statutory public notice published by the Governing Body to make the following prescribed alterations.

- I. To remove the boarding provision at the school no later than July 2020;
- II. Change the age range from 4-16 to 4-17 years by introducing a one-year post 16 provision;
- III. Change the designated number of the school from 170-178.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to agree to:

- a) **NOTE** the outcome of the consultation and statutory notice;
- b) **COMMENT, ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education on the decision to agree that the Governing Body of Laleham Gap School should implement their proposal to remove the boarding provision; change the age range from 4-16 to 4-17 years by introducing a one-year post 16 provision and increase the designated number of the school from 170-178.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Laleham Gap School is a Special School in Thanet and has a designated number of 170. The School specialises in providing both day and residential education for pupils aged 4-16 years who have Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs. The school currently offers boarding on weekdays as a weekly placement.

1.2 Ofsted judged the school to be Good in all areas in July 2017.

1.3 All pupils have a statement of special education need or an Education, Health & Care plan.

1.4 The Governing Body of Laleham Gap School held a public consultation on a proposal to make prescribed alterations to the school. The consultation ran for a four-week period from 19 February to 20 March 2018.

1.4 On 23 May 2018, the Governing Body of Laleham Gap School published a statutory public notice in a local newspaper on their proposal to make prescribed alterations to the school. The public notice period ended on 21 June 2018 and no comments were received.

## **2. Governing Body Proposal**

2.1 Over the last seven years the number of residential pupils has fallen from 27 in 2011 to 14 in 2015 and 5 in 2017. It has become clear that the residential provision in its existing form is unsustainable. The proposed opening of Bearsted Academy (a secondary special school for 168 children with high functioning autism) in September 2019 and the progress of Aspire (a free school for 116 primary aged children with high functioning autism) also planned for opening in September 2019, adds further support for Laleham Gap School closing its residential provision.

2.2 The proposal is to close the provision no later than July 2020. This will see three of the four current residential students to the end of year 11. One student is currently in year 8 and this will provide sufficient time for a planned transition. Discussions have already taken place with the family. If this proposal is agreed, the school will only then take additional residential children based on the July 2020 closure.

2.3 In parallel with the proposal to close the boarding provision, Laleham Gap are proposing to permanently change the age range of the school from 4-16 years to 4-17 years by introducing a one-year post 16 provision, for up to 8 students. This will then utilise one floor of the Phoenix building (residential unit) for a one-year post 16 provision and an independent living support provision which will also be helpful pre-16.

2.4 It is envisaged that these proposals will have a positive impact in Thanet as Laleham Gap School will be able to improve support to students to encourage independent living skills, reduce the dropout rate from pupils attending college from Laleham Gap and reduce NEETs

### **3. Financial Implications**

#### **3.1. Capital**

There will be limited alterations to the boarding provision in Phoenix building to accommodate independent living. It is envisaged that this can be met within the schools' own resources.

#### **3.2. Revenue**

The LA will agree the commissioned number of post 16 places with the school, based on actual level of need, up to a maximum of 8, on an annual basis. The commissioning cycle which commences each autumn will confirm the number of known students who will require a place for the following September. Approved changes can be made during the academic year if required and funding will follow.

#### **3.3. Human**

Boarding Staffing (Phoenix Building) have been fully consulted on this proposal. It has been made clear to boarding staff that the school wants them to play an active part in the development and use of the Phoenix building for future provision years to come. The School wants the Phoenix building to be the base for a post 16 provision, providing person centred curriculum opportunities to better prepare young people for the difficult transition from Laleham Gap School to their next step in life, whether it be in education, training or employment. The boarding staff are highly trained and experienced in providing person centred activities as part of a full curriculum offer. They have all shown dedication to Laleham Gap School and its pupils for many years. They will all have the opportunity for their service to continue at Laleham Gap School.

### **4. Vision and priorities for Improvement**

4.1 Kent's Strategy for Children and Young People with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) aims to address, amongst other things, gaps in provision. It has a priority to create at least 275 additional places for ASD and BESN. Therefore, the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent (2018-22) sets out the intention to commission additional Special School places.

4.2 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, including sufficient special educational needs places. The Commissioning Plan outlines the requirement for the need to significantly increase the number of supported internships and study programmes that include personalised support and high-quality work experience placements post 16. The post-16 provision will give the students the additional time they need for a more successful transition into their college place and reduce the dropout rate.

### **5. Views**

#### **5.1 The view of the local Member:**

Karen Constantine, the Local Member has been informed of the plans.

5.2 The view of the Headteacher and Governing Body:  
The school, Headteacher and Governing Body fully supports the planned proposal.

5.3 The view of the Area Education Officer  
Laleham Gap School is a good and popular school and we support its proposal to remove the current underutilised boarding provision, to create a one-year post 16 facility, which will give these pupils the additional time they may need to more successfully transition into their college placements.

## 6. Public Consultation

6.1 Consultation Timetable:

Agreement from Governing Body to hold the consultation	January 2018
Public Consultation period	19 February to 20 March 2018
Public Meeting date	8 March 2018
Outcome decision from Governing Body on consultation	15 May 2018
Public Notice period	23 May to 21 June 2018
CYPEE meeting (record of decision)	10 July 2018
Four-week appeal period	24 July – 21 August 2018
Phased implementation from	September 2018 to July 2020

6.2 Outcome of the responses to the Consultation:

The consultation was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors at Laleham Gap School, the local Members, Thanet Borough Council, The Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local libraries and others.

A consultation page for Laleham Gap was set up on Kent.gov.uk and a page on Laleham Gap website. The link to the website was circulated to statutory stakeholders. All interested parties were provided with the opportunity to send in responses via the school, by post and email.

A drop-in consultation event was organised by the School on 8 March 2018 between 4:30pm and 6pm and was attended by the Headteacher, AEO, Head of SEN and colleagues. This provided the opportunity for parent/cares to ask any questions regarding the proposal.

Following the closure of the consultation 49 responses were received. 42 were positive, 3 negative and 4 undecided.

## 7. Statutory Public Notice

7.1 Responses to the statutory public notice:  
Laleham Gap School has received no responses to the statutory public notice.

## 8. Recommendations

## Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education is asked to agree to:

- a) **NOTE** the outcome of the consultation and statutory notice;
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## 9. Background Documents

9.1 Vision and Priorities for Improvement 2018-2021

[http://www.kelsi.org.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0008/68498/Children-Young-People-and-Education-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement-2018-2021.pdf](http://www.kelsi.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/68498/Children-Young-People-and-Education-Vision-and-Priorities-for-Improvement-2018-2021.pdf)

9.2 Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-2022

[www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision](http://www.kent.gov.uk/educationprovision)

9.3 SEND Strategy

[www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy)

## 10. Contact Details

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