

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ASHFORD CHRIST CHURCH CE (VOLUNTARY AIDED) SCHOOL AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH AN ACADEMY

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents distributed: 3,000

Responses received: 224

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers of pupils at Ashford Christ Church School	6	2	1	9
Members of staff at Ashford Christ Church School	7			7
Governors at Ashford Christ Church School		1		1
Pupils attending Ashford Christ Church School – see summary at Appendix 3.	71	77	52	200
Local residents	2			2
Interested party	1	4		5
Total	87	84	53	224

In support of the proposal

- I am fully in favour of the proposal. At Ashford Christ Church many students continue to be deprived of the opportunity to achieve their full potential.
- I am more than delighted with the idea of an Academy at Ashford. Well done Kent!
- I support the proposal as it would mean our child has the opportunity to continue education until 19.
- I agree with closing the school because it is very poor. Teachers do not help or support pupils. They do not listen to pupils or parents.
- There is too much “forgive” at Christ Church, not enough punishment. Simply saying “don’t do it again” or “we’ll give them another chance” does not work.
- I am in favour but wonder how this will affect support staff in terms of personal and job development.

Against the proposal

- Replacing Ashford Christ Church with an Academy would throw away the history of Ashford Christ Church – it is a great school.
- I am not in favour of an all-age Academy and will move my children from their current schools if that proposal ever goes ahead.
- It’s not the building that’s the problem; it’s some of the students. A new building will not change their attitudes; you should just get rid of the dead wood. The 6th form is a good idea though.
- I do not believe the achievements and improvements that Ashford Christ Church have made have been sufficiently recognised in this process. As far as I can see the dominant focus has been on the negative aspects of school.
- The Academy will worsen the pay and conditions of the staff.

- Any changes to the results will only be temporary.
- The proposal will seriously affect the other high schools in the Ashford area.
- We are concerned about the impact the development of an Academy will have on the other high schools in Ashford. The second specialism of Technology which accompanies the Academy status will undermine the plans at The North School and Towers School for developing Engineering and Manufacturing.
- We are worried about the impact on parental choice and the deficit effect this will have on falling rolls at The North School and Towers School.

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Summary of pupil responses

200 responses were received from members of the Student Council.

Respondents by year group:

Yr 7	Yr 8	Yr 9	Yr 10	Yr 11	Total
48	49	42	36	25	200

90% (180) of the students were aware of the proposal.

54% (108) of the students had discussed the proposal with someone else, mainly with friends and family. 54 students (27%) had discussed it with teachers; 6 students attended one of the public meetings.

When asked **“How much positive difference do you think a new Academy will make to you personally?”** responses were as follows:

A lot	Quite a lot	A little	None at all	Total
19	53	60	68	200

The question **“What do you think is the best change that a new Academy could bring?”** brought a variety of answers. The most popular answers were:

- Nothing
- A new uniform
- A better education
- More pupils
- A sixth form
- Better facilities
- Better behaviour
- Better choice of subjects

When asked **“What is the best thing about Ashford Christ Church that you would like to see kept in a new Academy?”** the most popular answers were:

- The teachers/most of the teachers
- Everything
- Nothing
- The uniform

“If you could have one question answered about the proposed Ashford Academy, what would it be?” Many and varied questions were asked but the most popular two were:

- Will there be a new uniform?
- Why are you doing this?

The students were also asked if they had **any other comments**. Again, many and varied responses, but the most popular comments were:

- Don't do it
- Don't change the uniform
- Please change the uniform
- Good idea

PROPOSED CLOSURE OF ASHFORD CHRIST CHURCH CE (VOLUNTARY AIDED) SCHOOL AND ITS REPLACEMENT WITH AN ACADEMY

Summary of points raised during the Public Meeting held on 17 November 2009 at Ashford Christ Church School

Approximately 45 people attended the public meeting including parents, governors and other interested parties.

Issue or Comment	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What sort of support will be available at the Academy for children with a Hearing Impairment? • Can the inclusive nature of the Academy be guaranteed? • You say the Academy will benefit from the skills and experience of the sponsors, yet none of the sponsors have experience in HI. What experiences or skills will they bring if the Academy is going to be a Lead School for HI? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ashford Christ Church (ACC) already has a number of pupils with Hearing Impairments (HI). It is designated for HI and is a Lead School in the locality for HI. • The Academy would be a leader on HI issues. • Staff for HI are already in the school and the LA will continue to support that through its specialist teaching service. • Canterbury Christ Church University have people who specialise in inclusion and lead workshops and seminars on a range of topics including HI. • Diocese: There is an organisation called Church in Society operating as part of the Church of England in Rochester and Canterbury. They have a full-time officer concerned with developing the church's awareness of HI to enable people with a HI to fully participate in services and discussions.
<p>After 2010 how will feeder schools be involved in this process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will sit down with Linden Grove and the other primary feeder schools to draw up a Memorandum of Understanding to structure the curriculum and the future working relationships. • The Academy has to work positively with primary schools and wider than the feeder schools – other institutions on the community like churches etc.
<p>Community representation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can we be assured that there are long-standing community members on the Project Steering Group and that the community representation is adequate? • What assurances can you give that the community will be represented in the future at the highest level? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There has been some community representation so far on the Project Steering Group. • In the future the Academy will ensure that community people are involved, as well as parents, on the Governing Body. • We will need to have people totally committed to the people of South Ashford.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is going to be different in 2010? • How is to going to be transformational? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transformation is not instant. Any change takes time, thought etc to develop.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great deal of effort will go into the curriculum. • It will be exciting for staff to plan the 6th form provision, plan new resources. The Academy will energise and excite staff. • The Academy will bring in new focus on vocational prospects. Secure success for young people coming in from day one. • Change will be gradual at first and then become more rapid over time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support the Academy in delivering the curriculum. - Focus on standards - Engage with the community - Post 16 from 2011 - New building from 2013
<p>Most of what the Academy wants is already in place except a bit more money. What can you say to convince or reassure me that the Academy will work?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kent's experience of Academies has been better than other parts of the country. • Folkestone, Marlowe and Marsh Academies have all shown significant improvements. • If all of this was being done in this school now why have we not seen results similar to those Academies? As a Local Authority we have to say that it is not working. • The Academy will provide money as well as better and more modern buildings for staff and children to work in. • There was some evidence in the early days of Academies not doing so well. Now, where universities are involved we are seeing improvements. Sponsors are involved who are proud of their reputation. They do not want to be linked with an Academy that is not working.
<p>How will the Academy and its sponsors provide for diverse cultures of students – ie from overseas? This number has grown from 600 to 1800 in Ashford in the last three years. We now have 37 different nationalities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rejoice in that diversity. Multi-cultural and multi-faith are two different things. The mark of a good Christian Institution is that it rejoices in diversity of faith. People of faith seek out schools of faith as they know they will be understood. • The Academy will support those communities by going back to the ethos of the Academy. The Academy will support the locality and the residents in the locality, not just the students.
<p>How are students involved in the development of the Academy and how will work not suffer during the building programme?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The building programme will be disruptive. Students are already involved. Three children came to the ethos day and made an immense contribution. Further involvement from the student body is expected.
<p>How will the Academy change the attitude</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As the curriculum becomes increasingly

<p>and interest of other students?</p>	<p>relevant to the student body – if the pupils are engaged and if they can do it and see the relevance in their life – behaviour will change.</p>
<p>How is changing the buildings going to change the pupils and the issues they bring with them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In an ideal educational setting you should have the right learning environment and the attitudes generated by brilliant teaching with basic core values that people share. • Changing children in any way is not an easy thing. Inspiring schools do change the behaviour of the children who attend. The right building can affect the behaviour of staff and children. Once you change behaviour consistently for a length of time then you do change the child. • If the education vision is right then you can shape the buildings to meet those aspirations. Design the building for the kind of curriculum you are going to offer.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why can we not have an all-through Academy? • Is there any other way of getting funding that does not involve the Academy route? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disappointing re all-age Academy. Believe the re-development and re-generation in the area will bring a change in aspirations. • We do want an all-age Academy and will continue to work towards that goal. We will include Linden Grove and the Ray Allen Centre – even if not included officially. • We do not have funding at the moment to improve the buildings of Linden Grove and the Ray Allen Centre, both of which are in old buildings. We are continuing to lobby for capital investment. • Sponsors are moving forward to a secondary Academy. • There is no other way of releasing funds other than an Academy. It is the Academy or nothing.
<p>Where are the buildings going to be built and what happens to this site?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not know yet. Some buildings may remain, some will disappear. After the feasibility stage is over we will know the costs of new build and refurbishment. • New parts of the building will be on parts of the site where there is no building already and then the school will move into those buildings.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where is the money coming from? • If the money is coming from the government, why do we need sponsors? Why can't the money come to Ashford Christ Church? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Academies programme is fully funded by the government. • In the early days of Academies, sponsors had to bring £2m. Now sponsors can be universities, high-performing schools etc who bring expertise, share facilities etc to assist with the development of the programme.

Why change it to an Academy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The government has put forward school improvement strategies – partner organisations to bring about change in schools. ACC is currently supported by Fulston Manor School. ACC does not have a future as a stand-alone institution. We have options. We cannot close ACC without replacement. National Challenge Trust School or federation are limited options. Academy is the best route for the children here.
During the last 12 months the school has changed for the better. How will the Academy improve on this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All of our schools will be fully extended and the Academy will be part of that. The school is at the heart of the community and will listen to the community's needs etc. Significant public investment. The buildings will belong to the community and be accessible to the children. The Academy cannot be separate from the community.
Concern expressed over lack of parents at the meeting. Timing of the meeting?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sponsors have another public meeting on 23 Nov 2009 – also at 7pm. Possibility of another date before the close of the consultation. [since arranged for 2 Dec 2009 at 4pm] We tend to receive more written responses than come to the public meetings.
Point of information made about the comparison of this proposal to Marsh Academy. That Academy shares an Executive Headteacher with another school. It is a different model.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marsh Academy started as a stand-alone Academy.

The following points were clarified by local authority officers at the public meeting

- Some questions we are not able to answer fully yet. We are currently in the feasibility stage. The process is in three parts:
 - Expression of Interest: Says what we are interested in.
 - Feasibility: Explores putting concepts into reality.
 - Implementation: Move towards the opening process.

Summary of the Public Meeting held on 2 December 2009 at Ashford Christ Church School

Approximately 50 people attended the public meeting including parents, governors and other interested parties.

Issue or Comment	Response
As the Academy will be a Lead School for HI what expertise do the sponsors have in this area?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> KCC's Specialist Teaching Service already supports Ashford Christ Church School (ACC) and will continue to provide that support.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) has significant expertise in staff development, continuous professional development etc.
Can you assure us that the needs of all children will be met by the Academy if it comes to fruition? In other schools that became Academies (ie Leigh Academy) the acoustics are dreadful.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There have been issues in other Academies re acoustics etc. We will take it into the design process. • The LA is committed to ensuring the Academy provides for the needs of all students.
In the presentation you talked of introducing pastoral support into the school. Would you expand on that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benenden School brings expertise in a pastoral care and guidance system. • The Academy will be broken down (in terms of size) to schools within schools. Each child will feel known and understood. • Pastoral care is a strength of ACC and we need to build on that. Any system needs continuous improvement built in.
The consultation is regarding the Academy proposal. Is there a fall-back proposal if this does not go ahead and if so, what is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC is a National Challenge School. If the Academy proposal does not go through then ACC will continue. The LA and the Diocese would continue to work with the school. ACC receives support currently from Fulston Manor School.. LA's preference is to move forward with the Academy proposal. The alternative will be a federation with a high performing school.
What gives you the confidence in the Academy being right? The consultation is about the Academy, not other options. You say it will focus on raising standards – every day here we focus on raising standards. What gives you the confidence that it will change? The staff will be the same; the pupils will be the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Academies did not always work. DCSF recognised this and wanted expertise, Higher Education etc to drive up standards. More recent Academies have been successful. Kent Academies have proved successful. • ACC is right to focus on raising standards but currently is not getting it right. Have to look at other options. No option of status quo – we have to move forward. Investment in children – 6th form provision etc. • The sponsors had hoped that the Academy might be all-age, including primary. Not happening currently now but still our aspiration. Linden Grove is not part of the Academy proposal but we would like it to be in the future.
What evidence base have you gathered that confidence from – for the Academy route?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Price Waterhouse Coopers audit showed that Academies make greater progress. That, together with the Academies in Kent showing accelerated progress at a rate not seen before.
We've heard about the plan to provide an academic 6 th form. What about a vocational 6 th form? What expertise will come from the sponsors re the 6 th form?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KCC have the 14-19 innovation unit. Roll out vocational element at post-16. Benenden have experience of 6th form. CCCU have support mechanisms. • Need a curriculum on offer that meets the needs of every student as personalised as can be. Cannot deliver it all here. Academy will be part of a family of schools across Ashford.
What is the building programme going to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New buildings on stream by 2013. In the

<p>knock down and what will it build?</p>	<p>build-up to that it is important to get curriculum and learning even better than it is today. That shapes the type of building that we would need to deliver that provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some of the buildings here are recent, some are good and others could and should be replaced.
<p>Re the 6th form from 2011: Where will they be put?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspirations are that we will have up to 250 6th form students (across years 12 and 13), but we will not have this number from day one. Current capacity is 1200, with a Published Admission Number of 240. Current year 7 is lower than 240. There is sufficient space in the school to cope with a 6th form in its first year.
<p>Facilities here are not that good. The canteen cannot cope with the numbers of pupils. Toilets are not up to standard. If we have more children here we need more facilities to cope with them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer children in now; the number on roll has dropped. We know the constraints – the canteen facilities, corridors, teach facilities etc and we can address some of these issues. Cannot provide it by tomorrow. • The Academy proposal allows us to move forward to develop the school. ACC has had aspirations for a 6th form; we hope we can deliver a 6th form.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication issues with this whole process: I received information a week after the first public meeting. • The Principal for this school: I understand that the Principal has been appointed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not everyone who should have had information received it in time. It was because of inadequate notice for some people that an extra meeting was arranged. We also had another Academy meeting on 23 November. • Principal Designate: He has been appointed. Press release and notification is imminent. Staff are aware. Details on the website in 24 hours and will also come out in hard copy to parents. • In order that someone is ready to step in if the Academy goes ahead that person is appointed. They are at risk as will not necessarily be able to go back to previous appointment if the Academy does not happen. We need a Principal Designate to be able to effect a seamless transition.
<p>Has there been any consultation with the young children at the school?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil voice is important in any institution and that's going to be important for the Academy and the build-up to the Academy. So far students have been involved in a Vision Day working through the educational vision for the new Academy; a number of them have been present at these meetings; involvement in the appointment of the Principal Designate. • There will be a forum that students are involved in to feed in their thoughts and views in the process on what shape things should look like in the future; what particular things to do with the curriculum they count as

	important.
Having been through the Academy process once before I understand how staff, children etc feel about the process. Lower morale around the community. Communication process is not good so far. What are you going to do to help with this?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching staff were invited along re current design. Part of the process is that we can e-mail staff directly. • Parents received hard copy letters via school in the usual channels. • Website – you can feed back to sponsors as well as pick up information. • The Principal Designate will have discussions with parents, staff, youngsters etc. This will be key to a smooth transition. • KCC will work with ACC re the transition. Supporting youngsters who have concerns or are anxious.
Community representation: As I understand it the new Governing Body / Top Trustee Board will have 3 reps from each sponsor, 2 parent governors and the Principal. No representation from long-standing community representatives, those who understand this community. Very important to have someone on the top decision-making board. Community made to feel listened to and heard. Can something be done to ensure long-term community representation on the board?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open to and incumbent upon sponsors in deciding who should go on to take account of what you are saying. May be someone not living here but who knows Ashford. May be parents. • Some Academies have a very small top table of trustees. We are going wider than that. • LA able to potentially appoint 3 representatives. In practice, LA tends to rely on people in the community to be on the Governing Body. • Parent committees etc – new ways of doing things. A range of mechanisms for discussion and input from parents and community.
The consultation document states that the Academy will seek to develop extended services to the community. That is one of the things this school has done brilliantly. From 0% to 100% in the last year. How will the sponsors develop on that?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The detailed ways of doing things are already here and we just want to build on that. • Availability of facilities. Community learning, community support. Re-shaping the way of delivering children’s services. • Children with HI and PD needs: re-shape services to bring them through the school to the community. • Children’s services and partnership agencies.
How many other Academies are the sponsors involved in? If they are do you not think you might be spreading it a bit thin?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benenden – just this one. • CCU: Is lead sponsor of one and co-sponsor of two. Very big university with capacity to support more than one Academy. One member of staff spends 50% of time supporting Academies. • Canterbury Diocese: Sheppey Academy and this one.
The target of 30% pass rate by 2011. Assume you have identified specific areas to target. Assume sponsors have been chosen accordingly. How quickly will the pass rate improve?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2011 is the bench-mark period. Government are impatient and putting pressure on LAs to put pressure on schools from 2009. Expectation is ACC will not achieve benchmark. Sponsors’ aspirations to move through that benchmark within the first two years. • Two things happening simultaneously: Long-term and strategic planning, plus intense effort

	on analysing why certain pupils are not getting certain grades.
If the Academy takes over in 2010 what happens if they don't reach the target by 2011? Do we start again?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We want to be there in 2011. Exams are in May. Starting with a school that is focusing on improvement, we are not starting at zero. • Do not anticipate closing and starting again.
Raising standards: We have 40% SEN in school; increasing numbers of complex needs in school. Those children will not help that 30%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise that the school has significant proportion of numbers of SEN. Ensure working with specialist support is right. • Pastoral systems – ensure students are known. • Ensure staff here are as highly skilled as we can make them in order to support those pupils. • Cannot use SEN levels as an excuse not to reach the target.