

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL
POLICY, PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE
(SCHOOLS)



CONSULTATION ON THE POSSIBLE CREATION
OF A PRIMARY COMPLEX SCHOOL
IN AYLESBURY VALE

FEBRUARY 2004

A CONSULTATION PAPER

1. Introduction

Following discussions with the Governing Bodies of Kynaston, Stoke Leys, The Park Schools, and more recently Furze Down School, Buckinghamshire County Council (LEA) is consulting parents of children at the schools, staff, its partners and the local community about the future of primary special school provision.

The County Council is committed to the principle of high quality education for all children and it believes that these proposals will support that aim.

The project has been discussed in detail and there is widespread support from governors of all four schools, recognising that the proposal to create a primary complex school offers improved opportunities for children and their families.

The launch of this consultation does not commit the County Council to any further stages in the statutory process. This is a formative consultation and the County Council will want to take account of all views and any changed circumstances prior to making a decision on whether to proceed to the publication of Statutory Notices.

2. The Proposal

It is proposed to create a primary complex special school that will amalgamate existing Aylesbury Vale primary special school provision into one school on the Stoke Leys/Kynaston site in Aylesbury. In addition to the amalgamation of Stoke Leys and Kynaston schools, it is proposed that the new school will take primary-aged children currently placed at Furze Down and The Park schools, both of which are presently, all age schools. By offering a more supportive environment it should enable more children to remain in schools nearer to their home and families, rather than being placed in out-county provision.

The proposed primary complex school would have 147 places for children, with separate areas appropriate to the different needs of the children. There would be 47-place provision for children with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), 80-place provision for pupils of statutory age and a 20-place early years provision. Additionally, consideration is being given to including a six-bed residential/respite unit on the campus.

The proposed school will:

- enable pupils to be educated, within the school, alongside other children, appropriate to their individual needs and abilities
- offer a multi-disciplinary approach to the planning and provision of appropriate support to both children and their families
- as part of a partnership with mainstream schools the new school would offer, where appropriate, short-term or part-time placements to children

- be a centre of excellence facilitating an exchange of training, resources and expertise between the special school and mainstream providers
- offer residential and respite accommodation for pupils for 52 weeks of the year
- offer outreach work to facilitate collaboration with mainstream schools, SEN departments and pupil referral units
- support early intervention and inclusive practice.

3. Why is the proposal being made?

Buckinghamshire's Special Educational Needs (SEN) policy is to develop a range of provision for children with special educational needs, which ensures that the County Council can be responsive to the needs of children. This recognises that the intensity of support required for individual children will not be constant, and needs to be flexible. This can be achieved within a school, and/or by facilitating the movement of children, and staff, between different settings.

Whilst the majority of children with special educational needs will have their educational opportunities supported by placement in a mainstream setting, for some children access to a appropriately resourced special school would be more appropriate, and would better meet their needs so that are able to achieve to their full potential.

A key element of the strategy is to develop the role of special schools, as part of the County Council special educational provision to ensure they work in close collaboration with the wider educational community.

As part of the development of the Policy and Strategy for SEN, consultations took place with special school headteachers and chairmen to explore potential developments in special school provision in Buckinghamshire. This exercise was within the context of:

- reducing the number of children placed in schools outside Buckinghamshire
- raising achievement of all pupils including those with special educational needs
- reducing the proportion of pupils placed in special schools
- ensuring that special schools were of an economic and viable size
- ensuring that special schools were adequately funded and with appropriate spare capacity.

It also highlighted the need to develop the capacity to make an early identification of need, with early intervention and an ability to offer multi-agency support, in order to enable children to access different levels of provision appropriate to their changing needs.

Children placed in special schools tend to have a greater mix and complexity of need than was the case ten years ago. It is recognised that early assessment, intervention and prevention are effective ways of ensuring positive and successful outcomes for all children, and that in particular, these strategies are vital in the early years and primary phases of a child's education.

4. Why is the proposal being made now?

The role proposed for this primary complex school closely matches Department for Education and Skills (DfES) policy. In Autumn 2003 the DfES invited bids from Local Education Authorities wishing to develop special schools matching their policy.

Buckinghamshire County Council submitted a bid to the DfES, which allocated to the County Council Targeted Capital Funding (i.e. permission to borrow), for the primary complex school, of £3.5 million. This allocation was linked to a time limit, which required the proposal to be formally agreed this summer.

This public consultation is the first stage in this process.

The proposal has been developed with support from professionals in the Aylesbury Vale Health Trust, Special Educational Services, Early Years and Childcare Development, Social Care (Children and Families), governors and headteachers.

In setting its Capital Programme in Spring 2003, the County Council allocated £5.761m of capital funding towards the cost of the project.

At this stage the County Council has not formally decided to proceed with the project but has taken the decision to undertake a public consultation exercise to gauge the level of public and staff support for the project. The inclusion of a project in the County Council's capital programme does not indicate a decision to proceed.

5. What are the advantages of the proposal?

Overall benefits:

As a result of the range of services provided by the proposed school, the benefits would include:

- i) earlier identification of pupils' needs and earlier intervention
- ii) a better ability to meet the needs of pupils and their families
- iii) an improved ability to reintegrate, where appropriate, pupils into mainstream schools

- iv) the ability to provide residential/respite provision 52 weeks a year would increase the range of support available to pupils and families. The expectation is that in turn this would reduce the pressure on both social care and special education to provide out county placements
- v) through increased collaboration, share the specialist knowledge and expertise in the Primary Complex School with mainstream schools
- vi) improved co-ordination between education, health and social care leading to a reduction in the gaps in support for special educational needs children and their families.

This should result in:

- i) better trained and highly skilled staff in both the mainstream and special school sectors, increasing best practice in both sectors
- ii) reduced expectation that referral to a special school means the placement is for the whole time a child is in education
- iii) reduced long-term interventions by professionals
- iv) reduced pressure from parents seeking independent placements in order to access therapeutic support
- v) a model for building good practice, developing multi agency collaboration and improved working practices
- vi) creating strategies for children, families and schools to support those children remaining in special schools at the age of primary transfer. This should increase the chances of such children transferring to the appropriate secondary special school within Buckinghamshire, rather than opting to go to the independent out-county sector
- vii) less out county/independent foster care arrangements and/or educational placements required
- viii) reduced risk of the breakdown of families, of foster placements and of education placements.

In summary the benefits for particular groups would be:

Children

Children would have the support and expertise in the school that would enable them to achieve to the full.

Improved services delivered in partnership with other agencies would be available to children and their families. These would include, a hydrotherapy pool, residential accommodation, speech and language support, physio and occupational therapy, out-reach support to wider groups of children and staff, and specialist early years facilities.

Parents

Many of the advantages to parents are explained above in section 5, but the main benefit of the creation of the new school would be the improved educational opportunities available to the children who go to the school.

Greater support will be provided to families because of the linking of a number of key support services in the one school. As explained in the document these services include speech and occupational therapy, educational psychology and parent partnership officer support. Better facilities will be available, including family rooms and accommodation for pupils.

Staff

Enhanced professional development and training opportunities for all staff would be available, enabling them to be better placed to keep up to date with developments in the curriculum and teaching and learning methodologies. The primary complex school would be better placed to support children, because services would be combined under one roof and thus more readily accessible.

Staff will have more appropriate facilities that help them to meet and support the needs of children.

6. Key Questions

a) What are the challenges the proposal may create?

As this is an innovative proposal, there will be challenges to overcome. The commitment of the partners in the project to work collaboratively would ensure that, by careful planning any disruption would be kept to a minimum.

The building project could potentially disrupt pupils' education and if a decision were taken to proceed with the project, we would work with all partners to ensure that this was kept to a minimum and that the education of all pupils was protected. Children would not be transferred to the new school from The Park or Furze Down schools until the school building and facilities were completed.

There would be a risk of disruption to some residents and again we would ensure that this, wherever possible, was kept to a minimum. In particular it might be possible for access to the building site to be gained via the Buckinghamshire County Council's sports club grounds.

b) What would happen to The Park and Furze Down schools?

Park School and Furze Down School would continue to cater for secondary aged pupils, as would Pebble Brook School, pending the outcome of the review of secondary phase special schools. It is planned that the changes to these schools would be effective from 1 September 2007 when the new school opens.

c) When would the opening of the new school take place?

If the County Council took the decision to proceed, it is planned that the new Primary Complex School would open on 1 September 2007.

d) Has the decision to open a Primary Complex School been taken?

No. The County Council will not make a decision about whether to proceed until after the consultation exercise. It will use the responses received as one of the components to their decision.

e) Transport Arrangements.

The transport arrangements would be in line with the existing Buckinghamshire County Council policy for transporting children with Special Educational Needs. There would be little disruption to the present travel arrangements, as the great majority of children already go to schools in Aylesbury Town. For children from North Buckinghamshire journey times may be longer.

f) Staff consultation arrangements.

All staff will be invited to attend a meeting where they will be able to discuss the proposals: they will have the opportunity to be represented by their association or union. The County Council is committed to ensuring the professional development of all staff to ensure that they have the skills and expertise to support the development of the school.

g) Those who are being consulted.

The County Council has already consulted extensively with a number of its partners, including the DfES and the Aylesbury Vale Primary Care Trust, as the proposals for the school were developed.

As part of this consultation exercise, the County Council is keen to hear the views of as many people as possible and is therefore consulting widely and the following groups or organisations will be contacted:

- Headteachers and chairmen of all Buckinghamshire schools
- Local residents
- Stoke Mandeville parish council
- Winslow Town Council
- Buckinghamshire County Councillors
- Aylesbury Vale District Council and local district councillors

- Parents, guardians and carers of children already in these schools and those in local early years settings
- Parent Partnership
- Primary Care Trusts and the Strategic Health Authority
- Buckinghamshire Race Equality Council
- Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership
- Groups and organisations that hire the schools premises
- Social Care: Children and Families
- Neighbouring Authorities
- All staff at the schools directly involved
- Teaching Associations and UNISON.

h) Admission arrangements

Buckinghamshire County Council will continue to be the admission authority for the new school and will therefore work with parents and its partners in arranging the admission of pupils to the school.

i) Evaluation of the project

As this is an important project the County Council, will, if the decision is taken to proceed with the new school, work with its partners to evaluate the whole project. This will enable the whole process to be reviewed and any lessons for the future to be learnt.

7. Consultation process.

By publishing and distributing this consultation document, we are asking for your views on the proposal.

Please complete the form at the back of this document and send it either to:

The collection boxes at Kynaston, Stoke Leys, Furze Down or The Park Schools.

or to: Paul Holmes,
Group Manager (School Organisation),
(Ref AVCP/PH),
County Hall,
AYLESBURY,
Bucks.
HP20 1UZ

If you prefer not to complete the enclosed form then please write directly to Paul Holmes at the above address.

Responses can also be emailed to consult_pcs@buckscc.gov.uk.
Alternatively you can leave a message on the following telephone: 01296 387090.

Please respond by 31 March 2004

The County Council has arranged a series of meetings so that people can find out more about the proposal and be better placed to respond to the consultation. Councillors and County Council staff will be present. The meetings are:

Furze Down School, Winslow on **Thursday 4 March**

- for staff from 4:30pm to 6:00pm

Furze Down School, Winslow on **Thursday 4 March**

- for parents, governors and others with an interest in the proposals from 7:30pm to 9:00pm

The Park School, Aylesbury on **Monday 8 March**

- for staff from 4:30pm to 6:00pm

Kynaston School, Aylesbury on **Monday 8 March**

- for parents, governors and others with an interest in the proposal from 7:30pm to 9:00pm

The County Council will consider all responses received to the consultation. In the light of these responses, the County Council will decide whether to proceed to the statutory part of the process.

8. Procedure to implement the opening of the new school.

If the decision is made after the public consultation to proceed with the proposal to create a Primary Complex school in Aylesbury Vale, then the County Council will have to publish Statutory Notices (similar to those you see when someone is applying for planning permission). By law these notices must remain public for two months. The notices would be placed in the Bucks Herald and Bucks Advertiser newspapers.

During this time any elector is entitled to make comment or object to the proposals by writing to the Strategic Manager, Children and Young People, for the attention of Paul Holmes at the above address.

If there are no objections or comments the County Council is then able to “determine the proposals”. This means that the County Council can decide to implement the proposal to open the new Primary Complex School.

If objections and comments are received the County Council will have to refer the proposal to the independent School Organisation Committee. They will consider it in the light of any objections or comments received and also taking account of the outcome of the consultation exercise. The committee will have the power to decide whether to agree to the proposal.

If the School Organisation Committee were not able to agree on the proposal then the matter would be referred to the Adjudicator, a senior government appointee, who would then decide whether the proposal could go ahead.

PROPOSAL TO CREATE A PRIMARY COMPLEX SCHOOL ON THE STOKE LEYS AND KYNASTON SITE. CONSULTATION RESPONSE DOCUMENT.

1. Reply from:

Parent

Staff

Resident

Other (please specify)

If you are replying as a parent please state the age of your child(ren) and the school they attend:

2. Do you support the principle of creating a primary complex school?

Yes

No

Not sure

3. The proposal states that one of the elements of the building will be that a residential/ respite care unit is built. Do you support this proposal?

Yes

No

Not sure

4. Would you support the proposal for a primary complex school if the residential/ respite unit were not included in the proposed building?

Yes

No

Not sure

5. Do you support the development of the school at the Stoke Leys/Kynaston site?

Yes

No

Not sure

