

CABINET – 17 JULY 2012

PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ST EBBE'S CE (A) PRIMARY SCHOOL, OXFORD

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. St Ebbe's CE (A) Primary School's published admission number is 45. However, the school is very popular and has been oversubscribed for the last few years. For the September 2012 intake, the school has agreed to admit 60 children into Reception (F1) at the request of Oxfordshire County Council, in order to meet growth in demand for pupil places in Oxford. This arrangement relates only to the 2012 intake
2. Demand for pupil places across Oxfordshire generally has risen and in recent years Oxford city has experienced a significant and sustained rise in primary pupil numbers. To meet this demand additional places have been created in other Oxford primary schools each year since 2008. Looking to the future, significant additional housing is included in Oxford City Council's Core Strategy, which will, in turn, lead to increased pupil numbers across Oxford. The proposal to expand St Ebbe's CE (A) Primary School acknowledges that the community the school serves has grown, and that several other primary schools in the city have expanded recently due to this growth being sustained.
3. St Ebbe's CE (A) Primary School is a Voluntary Aided Church of England school for children aged 4-11 in the Grandpont area of Oxford city. The total current number of children on roll (as at April 2012) is 299 as shown below:

Year Group	Reception (F1)	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pupil Number	45	45	44	46	41	40	38

4. For September 2012 60 children have been allocated a place, and 59 of these chose the school as their first preference. 10 children have been refused a place and there may also be late applicants. In September 2011, 53 parents chose the school as their first preference, with 45 places allocated.
5. There are five statutory stages for a proposal to expand a school:

1. consultation;
2. publication of a statutory notice;
3. representation;
4. decision;
5. implementation.

This proposal has completed the first consultation stage, and a decision is now sought as to whether to support the governing body in its wish to proceed to publication of a statutory notice and representation.

The Proposal

6. The governing body's proposal is to increase the school admission number (at F1 entry) from 45 to 60. Because the published admission number for 2012 and 2013 has already been published, the school's admission number can only now formally change from September 2014. However, the school has agreed to accept over its official admission number in 2012 and has written into its policy for 2013 that it may agree to do the same to work with the Local Authority to meet demand for places.
7. To accommodate this growth in pupil numbers, there will be some extension of the school's buildings, and a feasibility study is underway to investigate how this can best be provided. Accommodation exists for the additional pupils to be admitted as agreed for September 2012.

Representations

8. During the Stage 1 consultation phase (2nd May 2012 – 20th June 2012) an informal drop-in session was held at the school for any parents to discuss their concerns with a county council officer and the Headteacher. A consultation document (Annex 1) was sent to parents of children at the school, as well as to local councillors, other schools and early years providers in the area, and other stakeholders; it was also available on the OCC website.
9. 7 responses were received. 3 respondents supported the proposal in principle, 2 respondents raised concerns about the proposal and 2 respondents expressed no preference but raised a concern.
10. The reasons given for supporting the proposal were:
Expansion will provide school places for local children; the importance of children being able to attend their local school.

The following concerns were raised:

- Traffic around the school. (2 respondents).
Officer comment: *The County Council Development Control team are being consulted as part of the feasibility study and the proposed capital project will be subject to Planning scrutiny in the usual way. The school*

will also be required to update its travel plan to reflect the increased pupil numbers. It is expected that most of the children will live within walking distance.

- Concern about sufficient permanent buildings and playing field being provided (2 respondents)
Officer comment: *The feasibility study will investigate all options for providing sufficient accommodation for the increased numbers in a timely fashion, including both classroom and non-classroom spaces, and will deliver programmes and costs for the complete expansion of the school to 2 form entry. Playing field sufficiency is subject to statutory limits for pupil numbers and no development of the site will be permitted that creates a shortfall of playing field.*
- Query as to whether other nearby schools could be expanded instead (1 respondent)
Officer comment: *the Local Authority has expanded, or is in the process of expanding, all Oxford city primary schools to meet Basic Need demand for pupil places. The nearest school to St Ebbe's is New Hinksey CE Primary School and the LA has worked closely with this school over the last two years to create as many places as possible. Unfortunately this school is on a very constrained site and options are severely limited. The Headteacher at New Hinksey send a positive response to this consultation for St Ebbe's.*
- Query as to the ability of the school to support additional children who may be having difficulties with their learning if pupil numbers increase (1 respondent)
Officer comment: *as increased pupil numbers bring greater financial resources, it may be that the school would find it easier to resource effectively the learning support for individual pupils' learning paths required than is currently the case.*

11. With respect to accommodation, the feasibility study will identify how accommodation can be provided to meet the statutory requirements for a 2 form entry school. This feasibility study is being carried out in full consultation with the school's governors and is being run by the Diocese. The final timeline for the capital project will be confirmed during the feasibility study.
12. As concerns in relation to the proposal have been raised, the decision on whether to publish a formal statutory proposal is referred to the Cabinet rather than the Cabinet Member for Education.

Making a Decision

13. Sections 18 to 24 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) ["the Prescribed Alterations Regulations"] establish the procedures that must be followed when enlarging school premises. Local authorities also have a duty to have regard to statutory

guidance, in this particular case 'Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form: A Guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies ("the Guidance").

14. The Prescribed Alterations Regulations require proposers to consult interested parties and the Guidance lists these at paragraph 1.3. The Cabinet must be satisfied that the statutory consultation has been properly carried out prior to the publication of the notice. Annex 2 provides details of the County Council's consultation with interested parties that are required to be consulted with under the Prescribed Alterations Regulations. The period of consultation is not prescribed by legislation, although the Guidance recommends a minimum of 4 weeks. The consultation period was in line with the Guidance having run from 2nd May 2012 – 20th June 2012, thereby exceeding the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
15. The Guidelines state that "the strong presumption is that proposals to expand successful and popular schools should be approved". There is no single definition of a successful and popular school, but on the suggested indicators, St Ebbe's CE (A) Primary School would qualify as a successful and popular school. Its Key Stage 2 results for 2011 show that 75% of children gained Level 4+ in both English and Maths. As noted above, it is now consistently over-subscribed.
16. A decision is now required as to whether to support the governing body in its desire to publish formal proposals for this expansion. A statutory notice will be published (currently intended to be in September 2012) followed by a formal representation (Stage 2) period of four weeks. The decision-making power in terms of determining the notice will lie with the Cabinet, and a report will be put to the Cabinet Member for Education if no representations are received, or to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

17. The Equality Impact Assessment of Oxfordshire's Pupil Place Plan (June 2011) identified that increasing school places at the heart of their communities has a positive impact on equalities through promoting social inclusion and minimising barriers to accessing education.

Financial and Staff Implications

18. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of the statutory process recommended, which is planned for and met within the normal CE&F budget provision. There are no significant financial implications or risks at this stage. If the proposal proceeds, following statutory consultation there would be another report to Cabinet in due course seeking a final decision on whether to expand the school.

19. The longer-term financial implications of the current report are linked to the capital works that would be carried out should the proposals be approved. These will be the subject of a separate detailed project approval, and a further paper for decision will follow in due course, subject to the capital policies and processes laid down. The decision to proceed with the statutory process to expand the school is normally done prior to detailed project and funding appraisal, particularly where there is a demonstrable need as with this school. Resources to assist with demographic issues on school places have been identified within the Capital programme 2010/11–2015/16 (existing demographic pupil provision – basic needs programme).
20. If the proposal is finally approved, there will also be on-costs to the school for additional staff and for increased maintenance requirements. These will need to be funded from the school's delegated School Budget Share, which will increase in proportion to increases in pupil numbers, and to a lesser extent in proportion to the floor area of new buildings. Resources for School Budget Shares are provided by government through the Dedicated Schools Grant, which will increase proportionately to increases in overall pupil numbers in Oxfordshire.
21. Publication of a statutory proposal to expand the school requires confirmation from the county council that funds will be made available for the necessary capital costs.

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to support the governing body's wish to publish a statutory notice for the expansion of St Ebbe's CE (A) Primary School, Oxford.

Jim Leivers, Director for Children's Services

Contact Officer: Diane Cameron, School Organisation Officer, CEF.
Tel: 01865 816445

Annex 1: Consultation Leaflet

Annex 2: Consultation with Interested Parties

July 2012