

PROPOSAL TO EXPAND WOODSTOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report by Children, Education & Families

Introduction

1. Until recently Woodstock CE Primary School had planned to admit 30 children each year. Due to growth in the local population of young children, in recent years the school has received more applications from within the Woodstock catchment area than it has been able to accommodate.
2. Population data shows that this level of demand can be expected to continue. In addition, nearly 100 new homes are being, or have recently been built, close to the school, and this can be expected to increase demand for pupil places.
3. Woodstock CE Primary School is a primary school for 3-11 year-olds in Woodstock town. The school has a formal admission number of 30 for September 2011 but has worked with the county council to agree an increase to 45 for September 2011 – 38 children had by May been allocated places, although there may also be late applicants. In September 2010, 40 parents chose the school as their first preference, with 67 preferences in total for the school. The current number of children (January 2011 pupil census) in Years 1-6 is 173, and in Years F1-6 is 203, as shown below:

F1	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	F1-Y6	Y1-6
30	30	30	29	24	30	30	203	173

4. There are five statutory stages for a proposal to expand a school:
 - i. consultation;
 - ii. publication of a statutory notice;
 - iii. representation;
 - iv. decision;
 - v. implementation.

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

The Proposal

5. The proposal is to increase the school admission number (at F1 entry) from 30 to 45. Because the published admission number for 2011 and 2012 has already been decided, the school's admission number can only now formally change from 2013. However, the school would like to accept over its official

admission number in 2011 and 2012 to allow all in-catchment children to attend. The plan is therefore to accept up to 45 children into Reception (F1) from September 2011.

6. 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. Some minor enabling works are already programmed to be carried out in the summer holiday 2011 at the school to extend the current Foundation room to ensure that the agreed 45 pupils may be accommodated from September 2011, as stated above.

Representations

7. During the Stage 1 consultation phase (27 April 2011 – 8 June 2011) a meeting was held at the school for parents to discuss their concerns with a county council officer, and 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. 26 responses were received. 19 respondents (76%) supported the proposal in principle, 4 respondents (16%) raised concerns about the proposal in principle and 3 respondents (12%) were neutral in that they made points both for and against the proposal.
8. 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 (18 respondents).
 - This is a successful school which should be allowed to expand (9 respondents).
 - Benefits to the school – resourcing (1 respondent)
9. 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. 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. Currently some Woodstock children have to attend schools outside the town, increasing the need for car travel: this expansion is therefore hoped to reduce the need for car travel by providing more school places within the town.
 - Concern about sufficient permanent buildings being provided (3 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 1.5 form entry.

- Concern about the design of future buildings (1 respondent)
Officer comment: *A qualified architect will be appointed and the building project will be subject to the usual Planning legislation and scrutiny. Spaces within the building will conform as far as possible to those used across the county as set out in the Building Bulletin 99 guidelines from the DfE.*
 - Concern about the effect of expansion of the school on its standards of education (6 respondents)
Officer comment: *The concerns were specifically that there would be 45 pupils in each classroom, which is not the case. Key Stage 1 and 2 classes would still be limited to 30 as a rule but some would be mixed year groups (i.e. taught to ability rather than to age). Mixed age teaching is common in the county and, while presenting some classroom management challenges, has not been shown by research to be detrimental. The school is confident that mixed-age classes will not harm their high and improving standards, as their approach is to target teaching to the ability, not age, of children. The 1.5 form entry school is an organisational model in use across the county and staff to child ratios remain the same as for 1 form or 2 form entry models. The staff at Woodstock are committed to making this model of organisation work and see expansion as an opportunity to enhance their school. In the short-term, the F1 class will be of up to 45 children, but it will be in a double sized classroom, with two specialist teachers as well as classroom assistants (an increase in staffing ratio compared to the current class of 30). It would be more accurate to think of it as two classes of no more than 23 sharing a large open plan space, which is not an uncommon model of delivering early years education. The longer term structure for F1 teaching will depend on the building solution agreed for the school.*
 - Concern about the disruption of building works (2 respondents)
Officer comment: *It is inevitable that there would be some disruption to the school during any building works. This will be minimised as far as possible by careful planning with the school during the feasibility process and detailed design and delivery of the project. The school staff are clear that they expect disruption and are prepared to work around it as required during the project.*
 - The funding for additional buildings may not be in place (6 respondents).
Officer comment: *Approval for funding of capital works would be addressed through the separate Project Approval and Resource Appraisal process. Basic Need (demand for additional pupil places) is a capital funding priority and there is a demonstrable rise in Basic Need in Woodstock. Also see paragraphs 17-19 below.*
10. Following the close of the consultation, an additional four responses were received, by post, which had narrowly missed the end date. All four responses were supportive in principle of the proposal and were from local residents with children either at the school or due to start at the school.

Inclusion of these responses in the figures would raise the percentage of those in favour of the proposal to 85% of all received responses.

11. There was a consultation meeting held at the school on 17 May 2011, where similar issues were raised including: funding; building requirements; class organisation and size; and decision-making processes.
12. With respect to accommodation, the feasibility study will identify how accommodation can be provided to meet the statutory requirements for a 1.5 form entry school. This feasibility study will be carried out in full consultation with the school's governors. The final timeline for the capital project will be confirmed during the feasibility study, however the school's existing accommodation includes space that could be adapted to classroom use in the first instance, providing more time to complete the capital works.
13. 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 Schools Improvement.

Making a Decision

14. 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").
15. 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 27 April 2011 – 8 June 2011, thereby meeting the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
16. 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, Woodstock CE Primary School would qualify as a successful and popular school. Over the last three years its Key Stage 2 results have consistently outperformed county and national averages, with 95-100% of children gaining

Level 4+ in both English and Maths. As noted above, it is now consistently over-subscribed.

17. A decision is now required as to whether to publish formal proposals for this expansion. If approved, a statutory notice would be published (currently intended to be in the autumn) followed by a formal representation (Stage 3) 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 Schools Improvement if no representations are received, or to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

18. There are not considered to be any equality and inclusion implications arising from this proposal.

Financial and Staff Implications

19. 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.
20. 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).
21. 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.
22. 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

23. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the publication of a statutory notice for the expansion of Woodstock CE Primary School, Oxford.**

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Background Papers: Nil

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