

CABINET– 14 FEBRUARY 2012

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF AGE RANGE AT THE WARRINER SCHOOL, BLOXHAM TO INCLUDE POST-16 PROVISION

Report by Children, Education & Families

Introduction

1. This report follows a Stage One public consultation held by the governing body of The Warriner School in Bloxham relating to their proposal to extend the age range of the school from its current 11-16 status to include post-16 students by establishing a Sixth Form.
2. The public consultation was launched by the governing body of The Warriner School on 31 October 2011 and expired after six weeks on 9 December 2011. Leaflets with full details of the proposal were produced by the governing body and sent by them to all interested parties (Annex 1). Full details were additionally made available on the Oxfordshire County Council public website.
3. The Warriner School currently works with other local education providers to host courses for post-16 pupils not on the school roll, however the majority of pupils leaving the school at 16 go on to study A and AS Levels, as is shown in Annex 4. For this reason the governing body believe they will best serve their school community by offering Sixth Form provision for studying traditional A and AS Level courses, so offering them the choice of remaining at The Warriner or travelling elsewhere.

The Proposal

4. The governors propose to establish a Sixth Form at The Warriner School and increase the number of sixth form student numbers slowly in order that existing staff may be trained or experienced staff recruited. The proposed pupil numbers are detailed below:

Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Total
2011	211	227	226	237	223	0	0	1124
2012	228	211	227	226	237	22	0	1151
2013	228	228	211	227	226	30	20	1170
2014	228	228	228	211	227	60	20	1202
2015	228	228	228	228	211	105	40	1268
2016	228	228	228	228	228	105	90	1335

5. The Warriner School currently has a planned admission number of 228 but has the physical capacity for an admission number of 232 so this means that it currently has the capacity within its buildings to meet an initial increase in student number.
6. It is anticipated that future capacity needs will be met from income generated by increased pupil numbers within the sixth form. In addition to this, Section 106 contributions have been secured by the County Council from housing developments within Bloxham. These funds may be spent towards a capital project to build a dedicated Sixth Form area that the governors envisage would include a common room, IT facilities and study areas.

Responses

7. Two open public meetings were held during the public consultation period at The Warriner School on 8th and 28th November, in which parents of children at the school and any other interested parties had the opportunity to discuss the proposal with County Council Officers and the school leadership team. Issues raised during these meetings were:
 - Concern about a negative effect of diluting the market of post-16 pupils for the schools and colleges that pupils leaving The Warriner traditionally attend, with consequent financial implications for them.
 - Queries as to what mix of subjects The Warriner School will offer to pupils post-16 and how this will influence choices of subjects studied at an earlier age.
 - Financial impact on resources for 11-16 year old pupils at The Warriner School of the costs of establishing the Sixth Form.
 - Query as to whether the post-16 provision will include pupils with Special Educational Needs.
 - Query about uniform requirements for Sixth Form pupils.
 - Query as to what facilities would be exclusively for the Sixth Form pupils.
 - Query as to what pupil numbers are needed to make the Sixth Form financially viable.
 - Concern that the initial small number of Sixth Form pupils will not suit some pupils, although recognising that there is no other way for the school to finance it.
 - Perceived oversubscription of the school by parents and querying what effect the Sixth Form may have on this.
 - Discussion around working in partnership with Oxford and Cherwell Valley College (OCVC) in Banbury to offer veterinary medicine/science courses to prepare pupils for jobs in the current jobs market, making good use of the unique farm facility at The Warriner.
8. 60 responses were received during the public consultation period. 52 of these were in favour of the proposal in principle. These include responses from the Council Member for Bloxham, Banbury Town Council, Bloxham Parish Council, The Warriner School student council, five feeder primary schools and two neighbouring County Councils which post-16 pupils from The Warriner

have traditionally travelled to for their continued education. Reasons given for supporting the proposal include:

- Benefits to the school in recruiting high calibre teaching staff who are otherwise deterred by the lack of a Sixth Form.
- The view that The Warriner School pupils should have the same choices to remain at the school or to go elsewhere as pupils at neighbouring schools do at age 16.
- The view that it will prevent students travelling greater distances to access the courses they want.
- Benefits to the younger pupils and the vertical tutoring system in the school from the example of the older set of pupils in the Sixth Form.
- Perception that The Warriner School is a good school and a Sixth Form would only enhance its reputation.
- The majority of the received favourable responses were from parents of children at The Warriner who were very keen for their child to have the option to stay on at the school post-16. The reasons given were the benefit of continuation of education with peers and teachers they already know.
- The Warriner School collected signatures of 166 parents of pupils in current Year 11 at the school who would have liked their children to have been able to stay on at the school post-16.

9. Six responses objected to the proposal in principle. These included responses from the Governing Body of the Banbury Dashwood School Federation, Chipping Norton School, The Banbury School Trust (Banbury School and Chipping Norton School are two destinations of post-16 pupils from The Warriner School) and two parents of children who have attended The Warriner School in the past. Reasons given for objecting include:

- The fragmentation of post-16 cohort leaving The Warriner School enriches the pupils' experience and prepares them better for their choices post-19.
- A and AS Levels are offered at Banbury School which is 2.3 miles from The Warriner and has spare capacity. Other courses are offered at OCVC which is 2.8 miles from The Warriner, therefore pupils do not need to travel long distances to access post-16 education when they leave The Warriner. Chipping Norton School also has spare capacity in its Sixth Form.
- The view that The Warriner School is not proposing to offer any courses that are not already on offer, and will duplicate and fragment provision.
- Banbury School's Headteacher has already indicated a willingness to work in partnership with The Warriner School regarding post-16 education.
- The view that there is no "dip" in attainment when pupils move from one establishment to another post-16.
- The view that there is no significant added value for vertical tutoring systems that include Years 12 and 13 pupils as opposed to those that

do not, and that specialist Sixth Form tutor teams benefit Sixth Form pupils more.

- Perception that the creation of a new Sixth Form would be a waste of public money in times of falling rolls nationally.
- The view that small Sixth Forms are inefficient and not as educationally effective as large ones and would have a detrimental impact on pupils in the lower year groups in terms of financial resourcing. Concern that this would be the effect in The Warriner School and the knock-one effect in neighbouring establishments that currently their post-16 pupils go on to attend.
- View that parents would rather send their children to Sixth Forms that are well established as perceived as “tried and tested”.
- The view that post-16 provision should offer breadth and excellence, that another Sixth Form would fragment existing provision.

10. Two responses were undecided about the proposal in principle. Queries raised include:
- Wish for funding to be spent on upgrading existing facilities in addition to extending the buildings for a Sixth Form.
11. With respect to the view expressed that the fragmentation of the current post 16 cohort enriches pupil experience there is clear conflict with the greater number of responses indicating a clear desire for future cohorts to have a similar offer to most other secondary schools in the county. Such an offer would give a choice of staying at the existing school or moving on to a new setting.
12. With respect to the view that this will offer no new courses and provide additional places in times of falling secondary rolls, there is clear evidence that this is not the case. The developing partnership between OCVC and The Warriner School aims at using facilities on both sites to enhance and expand existing offers of A level subjects and also to develop the unique opportunity at The Warriner for courses supported by the farm. It is the case that part of the offer would replicate the types of courses offered in the many different settings to which the Warriner post 16 pupils now move on, as in other parts of the county. Both nationally and locally it is now recognised that secondary rolls will increase in line with the boom in current numbers of pupils in the primary sector from 2015. In addition to this the catchment areas of Banbury, Warriner and Chipping Norton partnerships are earmarked for significant housing growth.
13. The view that there are sixth form courses offered within 2-3 miles distance of The Warriner School site itself is not in dispute. However, part of the proposal is joint working to enhance the offer between OCVC and The Warriner to reflect gaps in current provision identified by both institutions. Also, although the travel distance from The Warriner School itself is not long, pupils in this rural catchment area do travel from further afield. A significant number of post

16 pupils choose to travel significantly longer distances to access traditional sixth form courses they see as suitable for their needs. There is clear advantage to being able to offer such provision closer to home and this consultation has given evidence of that perceived need from parents and pupils from the school.

14. With respect to the point made about the effectiveness of small sixth forms, it is nationally recognised that the minimum size of sixth form likely to be effective is 150 - 160 pupils. This proposal allows for that size to be reached within 3 years (Academic year 2014/15). There remains in excess of these numbers of pupils likely to require sixth form places in other affected establishments based on current rolls before the planned housing growth referred to in paragraph 12 above. It is the view of County Council officers that given the location and size of the school a sixth form is sustainable.
15. The question of appropriate premises is dealt with in the part of report dealing with financial and staff implications.
16. The governors of The Warriner School have provided a formal response to the concerns raised during the public consultation. This response is attached as Annex 3.

Making a Decision

17. The Education & Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools)(England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) ["the Prescribed Alterations Regulations"] establishes the procedures that must be followed when expanding a school by adding a sixth form. 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").
18. 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 by the governing body prior to the publication of a statutory notice. Annex 1 includes a list of details of the governing body'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 31st October 2011 to 9th December 2011, thereby exceeding the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
19. A formal public statement is now required as to whether the Cabinet formally supports the school governors' proposal to publish a statutory notice for this expansion. Either the governing body or the County Council may publish the statutory notice but the decision-making power in terms of determining the

notice will lie with the Cabinet or the Cabinet Member for School Improvement, and a report will be put to Cabinet if representations are received, for a final decision in due course.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

20. The proposal would improve accessibility of post 16 studies generally at the school to mirror opportunities in the remainder of the county. In particular, there is a specialist learning resource base for Communication and Interaction (speech, language and autism) at this site. This offer would offer the potential for those pupils at the Base able to access a sixth form curriculum, the opportunity to do so without changing establishments.

Financial and Staff Implications

21. The direct financial implication of this report is the cost of the statutory process, 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.
22. There are capital funds allocated to the school resulting from housing developments within Bloxham. These funds can be used to improve facilities for pupils generated by the new developments and could be put towards a building project to build a dedicated sixth form learning resources area that would include a common room, IT facilities and study areas. Detailed work to identify a scheme to this budget is underway and will be completed prior to the publication of any public notice. The initial small sixth form numbers are to have a small common room and social facilities provided from within the existing school site. Other classroom space is to be provided between a combination of effective timetabling of space and use of facilities across OCVC and The Warriner.
23. The school will incur additional revenue costs for additional staff, resources, exam fees and increased maintenance requirements. The initial small sixth form numbers may mean that no additional teaching staff is required in the early years of sixth form implementation, however the school will need to plan to meet other costs of the sixth form. The provision of revenue funding for post 16 places will be sought from the Young People's Learning Agency (YPLA) or its successor body the Education Funding Agency (EFA) in due course. The mechanism for this has been explained by the YPLA and they are aware of the proposal. The school is currently demonstrating the ability to generate savings of around £80k per annum from existing budgets, which indicates that the gradual sixth form growth to 2014 should be manageable.
24. Revenue funding from the YPLA is based solely on the courses studied by sixth form pupils and not on the number of pupils. Unlike the Oxfordshire school funding formula, sixth form funding from the YPLA or its successor will not include any funding for additional building area when the sixth form

facilities are built. Funding allocations for sixth forms from the YPLA are expected to decline by around 3% per annum over the next three to four years. Beyond 2014 the more rapid growth projections and declining funding allocations could place the school under financial pressure. Finances will need to be carefully planned over the medium term plan in order to ensure sustainability.

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to support the governing body of The Warriner School, Bloxham by approving the publication of a statutory notice to extend the age range of the school and establish a Sixth Form.

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- Annex 1: Public consultation leaflet
- Annex 2: Consultation with interested parties.
- Annex 3: The Warriner School governors' formal response to concerns raised.
- Annex 4: The Warriner School leavers' destination courses of study 2010