

Division(s): **Headington & Marston**

Also affecting: **All Oxford city Divisions including Barton & Sandhills, Wheatley**

CABINET – 16 APRIL 2013

PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ST JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC (VA) PRIMARY SCHOOL, OXFORD

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. St. Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a Voluntary Aided (VA) school in the Archdiocese of Birmingham. It is situated in Headley Way, Headington, Oxford in the parish of St. Anthony of Padua but it also serves the parishes of Corpus Christi and SS. Edmund and Frideswide (Greyfriars). The children attending the school come from most areas of Oxford and several of the outlying villages. The school is graded Good (Grade 2) by Ofsted.
2. The school's published admission number is 45. The school is oversubscribed, and for the September 2012 intake, places were allocated as shown below:
 - 67 first preference applications received
 - 45 places allocated (all allocated to baptised Catholic children)
 - 34 applicants refused, of which 10 were baptised CatholicThe last successful applicant offered a place lived within 1.4 miles of the school
3. St Joseph's is a popular school with local families. As a VA school, its designated area (catchment area) is wide, to cover several parishes, and includes Wheatley, Waterperry, Elsfield and Holton to the east of Oxford. It is therefore often the case that Catholic families applying for a place at St Joseph's, and living within the designated area, are unable to be allocated a place at St Joseph's as all of the available places are offered to applicants living closer to it.
4. Oxford City Council's Core Strategy for Growth to 2026 was approved by the Secretary of State in autumn 2010, and sets out the intention to provide at least 8,000 additional dwellings in Oxford city between 2006 and 2026.
5. The current forecast for primary age pupils in Oxford is as follows:

Year	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2012-13	1424	1286	1329	1273	1224	1207	1038	8782
2013-14	1459	1412	1269	1324	1271	1273	1204	9213
2014-15	1522	1453	1402	1271	1329	1331	1281	9588
2015-16	1560	1512	1438	1397	1269	1382	1331	9889
2016-17	1581	1548	1495	1433	1394	1324	1380	10154

6. Within the overall need for additional primary school places, there is a specific need for places at Catholic schools. Oxford's Catholic primary schools, together currently offer 150 places. In each of the last three years, total first preference applications for Catholic primary schools in the city has exceeded 200. Applicants to Catholic primary schools in the city are less likely to secure their first preference school than applicants to non-Catholic schools.
7. 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 the Catholic Archdiocese could now proceed to publication. A decision is now sought as to whether Oxfordshire County Council supports the Governing Body and Catholic Archdiocese in their wish to proceed to publication of a statutory notice.

The Proposal

8. The Governing Body of St Joseph's wishes to increase the formal published admission number from 45 to 60 children, on a permanent basis from September 2014 (the admission number for 2013 is already published at 45 but if this proposal is approved the school may admit 60 by agreement with the county council, subject to some small internal remodelling works). This would bring the number of children on roll at the school up to a maximum of 420 children in F1 to Year 6.
9. To accommodate this growth in pupil numbers, there would be some extension of the school's buildings. The Catholic Archdiocese is currently undertaking a feasibility study, to investigate options for how this can best be provided.

Representations

10. During the Stage 1 consultation phase (16 January 2013 – 6 March 2013) a public meeting was held at the school for parents and interested parties to raise any queries about the proposal with a county council officer, a representative from the Catholic Archdiocese and school governors. A consultation leaflet (Annex 1) was sent to parents of children at St Joseph's Catholic (VA) Primary School, staff and governors, and was posted through the doors of properties along Headley Way, where the school is located, by school staff. Local councillors, both County and District, for the areas within the school's wide catchment area were contacted about the proposal, as were partnership schools and early years providers in the area, libraries and other stakeholders including relevant parishes. The leaflet was also available on the council's public website, together with full details of the various ways of responding. A link was also set up on the school's website to the consultation.

11. Thirteen responses to the consultation were received. Six respondents supported the proposal in principle. Six opposed the proposal in principle, while one expressed no opinion in principle but raised a query. One response was also received late, which was in favour of the proposal.
12. The reasons given for supporting the proposal were:
- Need for additional pupil places at the school, particularly the need for more Catholic school places.
 - Benefits to the school of resourcing if it were to expand.
 - Perceived benefits to the school of a simpler class organisation in a move from 1.5fe to 2fe
13. The concerns raised by respondents who objected to the proposal were:
- Concern about traffic and parking at the school by parents of children attending. This concern particularly voiced by local residents.
 - Concern about insufficient additional facilities being provided.
 - Concern that being a larger school will affect the ethos of the school.
 - Concern about disruption to the pupils of building works.
 - Concern about additional noise (for neighbours).

Officer comment:

Any building scheme approved at the school would be subject to the usual Planning regulations, which includes consultation with OCC Transport & Highways to identify traffic issues and necessary mitigation measures required as part of the development.

The Catholic Archdiocese feasibility study will identify the additional accommodation required and investigate options for how it might be delivered. This process is on-going and is being carried out in full consultation with the school.

There are good examples of 2fe schools in Oxfordshire reporting an excellent "community feel" and the Headteacher at St Joseph's has been supportive of the proposal to grow, expressing no concern over ethos or educational standards. 2fe is a very common standard model of school organisation at primary level.

Building works would inevitably mean some disruption to pedestrian traffic management around the site etc, however the most disruptive elements of required works would be scheduled as far as possible to take place during school holidays. Many schools use the construction of new buildings on their site as the basis for pupils' project work and arrange "site visits" with the contractors for groups of pupils. Often pupils are excited to see a new building being constructed at their school.

CA8

The proposal is to increase the number of pupils at the school by 15 each year from September 2014. It is not envisaged that this would have a significant impact on existing noise levels at the school..

14. At the meeting held at the school no additional issues were raised other than those set out above.
15. As objections in relation to the proposal have been raised, the decision on whether to support the Governing Body's wish to proceed to publish a formal statutory proposal is referred to the Cabinet.

Making a Decision

16. 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")'.
17. 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 16 January – 6 March 2013, thereby exceeding the four week minimum requirement. The consultation was therefore carried out in accordance with the Prescribed Alterations Regulations.
18. A decision is now required as to whether to support the Governing Body and the Catholic Archdiocese in their wish to publish formal proposals for this expansion. A statutory notice would be published, followed by a formal representation period of four weeks. 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

19. There is a current shortage of places at Catholic schools which disadvantages parents seeking a Catholic education for their children. In 2012, 37% of parents choosing a Catholic school as their first preference did not secure a place at their first preference school, and 33% did not secure a place at any Catholic school. This is a significantly lower success rate than for applications to non-Catholic schools across the city, where 21% did not secure a first preference

school. Children who were unsuccessful in securing a place at a Catholic school were disproportionately from non-white ethnic backgrounds. This expansion would therefore be expected to provide greater equality of access for parents seeking a place at a Catholic Primary School..

Financial and Staff Implications

20. 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.
21. The financial implications of this report are linked to the capital works that will be carried out should the proposal be approved. 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. The Archdiocese of Birmingham has approved funding for the initial feasibility work to establish the preferred option for meeting the additional accommodation needs. As this is a Basic Need requirement, resources for the capital works required for this expansion have been identified within the Capital programme 2012/13 – 2016/17 (existing demographic pupil provision – basic needs programme). Capital funding made available by the Council will be combined with Capital resources available to the Archdiocese of Birmingham in order to deliver the accommodation needs. In accordance with OCC Capital Governance requirements this will be the subject to a separate Stage 2 – Full Business Case/ Project Approval in due course
22. There will also be on-costs to the school for additional staff and for increased maintenance requirements. The day to day revenue costs for repair and maintenance and staffing costs must be met through the schools delegated budget as part of the Council's Fair Funding arrangements
23. 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. Additional pupils will be reflected in an adjustment in the school's funding formula which applies numbers of pupils on roll and their characteristics.

RECOMMENDATION

The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to support the Governing Body in its wish to publish a statutory notice for the expansion of St Joseph's Catholic (VA) Primary School, Oxford.

JIM LEIVERS
Director for Children's Services

Contact Officer: Diane Cameron, School Organisation Officer,
01865 816445

March 2013

- Annex 1 Consultation leaflet
- Annex 2 List of interested parties consulted