

CABINET – 16 APRIL 2013

OPTION APPRAISAL CONCLUSIONS ON CUTTESLOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL FOUNDATION STAGE UNIT

Report by Director for Children's Services

Introduction

1. At the time of writing, Cutteslowe Primary School is a community primary school in north Oxford. The school is due to convert to become a sponsored academy on 1 April 2013 as part of The Cherwell School Academy Trust (TCSAT). The school is currently in Special Measures following an Ofsted inspection designating the school as Grade 4 (Inadequate) in November 2011. Since that date a new Headteacher has been appointed and two monitoring inspections have taken place, the latest in October 2012, which found that progress has been good.
2. Cutteslowe had a published admission number of 30 children each year until September 2011, but due to sharply rising numbers of children needing primary school places in Oxford, the school worked with the county council in meeting the demand and agreed to admit more than 30 in 2009 and 2010. The school's admission number for 2011 was published at 60 and the statutory process for expansion to 60 permanently has been completed.
3. A phased capital scheme, with a budget provision of £2.4m of Basic Need investment, is on-going at the school, delivering the additional required accommodation for the increase in pupil numbers.
4. The school leadership team had agreed to admit up to 60 children into the F1 (Reception) in years prior to the permanent expansion of the school, and CEF considers that the FSU (Foundation Stage Unit) accommodation is sufficient in terms of an admission number of 60. The FSU accommodates both F1 and F2 (Nursery) children. The FSU accommodation was not raised as a concern during the feasibility study process relating to the on-going permanent expansion of the school, and was considered outside the scope of the study.
5. Foundation Stage pupils must have 2.3m² per pupil internal floor area. Cutteslowe Primary School currently admits up to 39 F2 (Nursery) full-time equivalent (fte) children i.e. up to 39 in the morning and 39 in the afternoon, and 60 F1 (Reception) children; a maximum of 99 children at any one time.
6. The Foundation Stage Unit area consists of three classrooms plus storage, toilets and circulation spaces and has access to an outdoor play/learning area. The three classrooms are of 70.3m², 93.0 m² and 43.8 m², giving a total of 207.1m². The smallest classroom is too small to accommodate a separate

class of 30 F1 (reception) children but if combined with the largest would be adequate space for 60 F1 (reception children). Provided the 60 children in total are taught by two qualified teachers such an arrangement is compliant with 'The Education (infant class sizes) (England) Regulations which limit the ratio for 'normal' taught sessions to 30 children per qualified teacher. Alternatively, if some of the F1 (Reception) children were taught along with an equal or larger number of F2 (Nursery) children the class size limit would not apply since it is for classes where the *majority* of the children will attain the age of 5 years within the year.

7. Since starting in post, the current Headteacher has raised a concern about the sufficiency of the FSU accommodation in relation to the published admission number of 60. Officers consider that the school has sufficient floor area for 60 F1 pupils and up to 26fte F2 (Nursery) pupils which would be typical of a 2 Form of Entry (admission number 60) primary school. However, the Headteacher and TCSAT, wish to accommodate 39 fte F2 (Nursery) pupils, with the intention of providing more children with, ultimately, an outstanding start to better equip them for full time schooling.
8. Within the Summertown Ward in which Cutteslowe School is located, the overall sufficiency of F2 (Nursery) provision is in excess of known and forecast demand, albeit within a range of settings located within walking distance of the Cutteslowe estate (Annex 2). If Cutteslowe School were to offer 26 fte places (i.e. accommodate 52 children) the overall sufficiency in Summertown Ward would reduce to 140%.
9. The county council's Early Years Childcare Sufficiency team had suggested previously to the school that it reduces the number of places offered for F2 (Nursery) children from 39 to 26 fte (full time equivalent) as there is more than sufficient childcare provision in the area for this age group. Taking this action would address the concern that the Headteacher has about the sufficiency of the internal area in the FSU. Although it is more typical of a 2fe primary school to have a Nursery of 26fte places, the Headteacher has chosen to admit up to 39fte for several years and TCSAT wishes to continue with this practice.
10. An option appraisal was commissioned by Children Education & Families to investigate the FSU area and present options on what work might be carried out, and its cost, to the area. This option appraisal is attached as Annex 1. The indicative cost, subject to more detailed investigation of issues such as drainage and acoustics, is **£125,000**; no budget has been identified for modifications or expansion of the FSU accommodation. A decision is required as to whether to allocate additional funding for this purpose.

Making a Decision

11. A decision is now required as to whether to allocate additional funding to address capital works in the FSU at Cutteslowe Primary School. Because no funding is currently identified for this, Cabinet must make the decision.

Financial and Staff Implications

12. The financial implications of this report are linked to the capital works that will be carried out should the Cabinet decide to allocate funding to extend the FSU. There is no current identified funding for such works. Exceptional contributions of up to £100,000 have been previously agreed towards schemes not within the capital programme.

RECOMMENDATION

13. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED:**

- (a) **to decide whether it would wish to financially support The Cherwell School Academy Trust's aspiration to make provision for 78 (39 fte) rather than 52 (26 fte) F2 (nursery pupils); and**
- (b) **If it decides so to do whether to:**
- i. fully fund the expansion of the Cutteslowe School foundation stage area (as per Option 2 in Annex 1) or**
 - ii. make a maximum contribution towards the scheme and determine what that sum shall be.**

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Annex 1: Option Appraisal Report
Annex 2: Map of childcare provision in Summertown ward