

**Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools**  
**Report submitted by: Interim Executive Director for Children, Young People**  
**and Schools**  
**Date 7 November 2013**

**Part I**

Electoral Divisions affected:  
Lancaster Central;  
Lancaster East; and  
Lancaster South East.

**The Provision of Additional Primary School Places in Lancaster**

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## **Executive Summary**

Lancashire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure that a primary or secondary school place is available for every child of statutory school age living in Lancashire who requests one.

A sustained increase in the number of births in the Lancaster area to the south of the River Lune means that, as local children reach statutory school age, there may not be sufficient places in this area to meet the demand for September 2014 and beyond.

This report outlines the current and projected position and recommends a temporary increase in the admission number of Moorside Primary School for 2014, and seeks approval to commence consultation on the provision of permanent places at the school.

## **Recommendation**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools is recommended to:

- (i) approve a temporary increase (from 60 to 90 places) in the admission number of Moorside Primary School, Lancaster, for one year only; and
- (ii) approve a formal consultation on a proposal to permanently expand Moorside Primary School, Lancaster to admit 90 pupils to each reception year (as detailed in this report) with effect from September 2015, through the provision of additional permanent accommodation on the existing school site (subject to obtaining relevant planning permission and Section 77 consent).

## **Background and Advice**

As detailed in the 'Strategy for the Provision of School Places and Schools' Capital Investment 2013/14 to 2015/16' (link below), after a steady decrease between 1989 and 2001, birth rates across the county have subsequently been rising (by just over 17% between 2001/2002 and 2010/11.)

[http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/a\\_to\\_z/service.asp?u\\_id=3617&tab=1](http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/atoz/a_to_z/service.asp?u_id=3617&tab=1)

As a result of the rising birth rate, intake into primary schools is expected to increase over the foreseeable future. The changing dynamics of Lancashire's population, influenced by increased births, immigration, housing developments and economic migration, mean that Lancashire County Council's provision of school places must also change in order to meet the changing needs of residents, whether through provision of additional places or through the redistribution of existing places within the county.

Action has already been approved by the Cabinet Member for Children and Schools and is underway to provide additional places in a number of planning areas across Lancashire.

In a report considered by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on 6<sup>th</sup> September 2013, it was agreed to provide temporary places at a number of schools across Lancashire. The report stated that a further report would be submitted in relation to the Lancaster area to the south of the river, where the need for places is more sustained.

Primary schools in the Lancaster city area to the south of the river Lune have already been experiencing an increase in pupil numbers for a number of years. An additional 30 places per reception year were provided at Bowerham Community Primary School in 2011 but births have continued to rise.

In dealing with rising numbers resulting from higher birth rates, it is necessary to assess whether or not this is a short term increase or a more sustained trend. Short term increases in demand can often be met by asking schools to co-operate in years of higher demand by taking in higher reception numbers, especially when other year groups are not full and there is sufficient accommodation in the school. However, if the growth is persistent this is obviously not sustainable. In such cases, permanent additional places must be provided either by increasing the size of existing schools or establishing new schools. In order to ensure that there is sustainable growth, three years' worth of increased demand will normally need to be evidenced before plans are put in place to permanently increase provision.

## Lancaster

The following table shows the position in the Lancaster Primary Schools:

Number on Roll January 2013	Net Capacity	Reception places	forecast intake based on births		
			2014	2015	2016
3079	3389	495	514	534	490

The table shows the expected intakes for the Lancaster primary schools, based on recent admissions to the schools, when compared with the corresponding birth rates 4 years earlier. In this area, 78.4% of pupils attended their local schools but some children have had to cross the river to access places or travel further afield. All of the primary schools in the Lancaster area to the south of the river have filled or almost filled in reception year for the last 2 years. The following table gives details of Lancaster births which will provide the reception intake for the next 3 years, which shows that, whilst the forecast intake above shows a dip in 2016, there are sufficient births in the area to justify additional places on a permanent basis, as there will be more opportunity for children to access a school in their locality.

In addition, there is significant new housing planned in the area which will ensure the viability of the new places.

	2008/09 (intake 2013)	2009/10 (intake 2014)	2010/11 (intake 2015)	2011/12 (intake 2016)
Births	623	656	682	625

In order to accommodate the expected demand for places in September 2014, an additional 19 places are required and this need rises to 39 places in 2015. However, whilst additional places are required in order to accommodate the expected increase in pupil numbers for September 2014, further consultation is required before proposals are made to add places permanently for 2015 and beyond.

In order to provide the additional places required, it is proposed that the number of children admitted to Reception year at Moorside Primary School be increased from 60 to 90 pupils for September 2014 and that consultation begins on the permanent expansion of the school, increasing the number of children admitted to the school to 90 for each following reception year intake and the net capacity to 630 by the expansion of the existing building.

The temporary enlargement for September 2014 will be enabled by some minor modifications to the existing building.

Lancaster area will be monitored on an annual basis in order that the need for any further additional places due to housing development can be established.

### **Rationale for expansion**

In line with the Strategy for the Provision of School Places and Schools' Capital Investment 2013/14 to 2015/16, in providing additional places the potential for doing so at existing schools has been prioritised before commissioning new provision. The reasons for this approach are that the consultation timelines are shorter, as there is no requirement to run a competition; expansion is usually more cost-effective than a new school; and it helps to maintain stability in the local school system. A school competition would add in excess of 6 months to timescales and delivery would not be achievable by September 2014.

The temporary expansion of a school enables the additional places to be provided in time to meet the increased demand and is a process which has already been used in previous basic need expansions in a number of Lancashire primary schools.

An initial high level option appraisal has been done to assess the potential to extend existing schools.

All schools within the area of growth were contacted in order to seek expressions of interest in expansion before visits to schools then took place.

In an initial assessment of the potential to expand existing schools, the following factors are considered;

- The current strength of the school in terms of attainment levels and leadership.
- Parental preference
- The existing size of the school.
- The existing site and the area available to expand the buildings and maintain adequate play and sports space.
- Access to the site and proximity to the area of growth.
- Any potential joint investment benefits which are immediately obvious.

### **Process for permanent expansions**

In order to permanently and significantly enlarge a school, statutory procedures must be followed as follows:

Action	Timescale
Consultation on the proposals to enlarge the Primary Schools referred to above.	13 <sup>th</sup> November- 20 <sup>th</sup> December 2013
Report to Cabinet Member on the responses to the consultation and permission to publish notices	February 2014
Publish Statutory Notices	February 2014
Representation Period	February/ March 2014
Decision by the Cabinet Member	May 2014

### **Consultations**

The consultation process will involve the production of a consultation document for each area where additional places are required, and these will be available in printed form and on-line with opportunities to respond in writing or on-line. There will also be at least one open event in each of the areas for parents, staff and other members of the public to attend to ask questions and put forward their views. The open evenings will be attended by Lancashire County Council officers and be in the form of 'surgery style' events, where people can come and talk to officers on a one to one basis.

### **Summary**

In order to provide the temporary places required to address the need for places of the large cohort to be admitted to Reception year in September 2014 approval is sought to:

- temporarily expand Moorside Primary School for one year only, increasing the number of pupils admitted to reception year at the school for September 2014 from 60 to 90; and
- approve a formal consultation on a proposal to permanently expand Moorside Primary School, Lancaster to admit 90 pupils to each reception year (as detailed in this report) with effect from September 2015, through the provision of additional permanent accommodation on the existing school site (subject to obtaining relevant planning permission and Section 77 consent).

## **Implications:**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

If additional primary school places are not created there is a risk that the Authority would fail in its statutory responsibility to make sure that a maintained school place is available to all Lancashire children of the appropriate age range that want one. Providing additional places increases the overall capacity in the area and, if birth rates fall in the future or there is an increased level of outward migration of families from this area, there may be surplus places.

In addition, for those schools where we are proposing a permanent expansion, as a proposed permanent significant expansion is subject to a statutory consultation process, at this stage there cannot be a guarantee that it will be implemented and, therefore, by agreeing to the temporary expansion there is a risk that the school would face a potentially difficult organisational problem of having one (or more) year group(s) bigger than the others for a seven year period. It is not possible to repeatedly extend temporary arrangements, as any expansion over a certain size requires the statutory process to be followed if the cumulative effect meets significant enlargement criteria within a five year period.

The approval of any physical school expansion will also be subject to obtaining relevant planning permission and Section 77 consent. In addition, the school playing fields and other parts of the school grounds are the subject of a village green claim and a public footpath claim which could, if successful, limit the amount of useable playing field available to the school.

### **Legal and Financial Implications**

The adjustments to be made to the existing premises to enable the temporary expansion and eventual delivery of permanent additional primary school places will require schools' capital funding. The cost of delivering the temporary additional places will be approximately £100,000. This will form part of the existing 2013/2014 to 2014/2015 (2 year) Capital Programme.

Should the temporary expansion of the school be approved, in the first year the school would receive revenue funding assistance to reflect the fact that pupils would begin two terms before the increased numbers are reflected in the school budget. This funding will be provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant in accordance with the rules agreed by the Lancashire Schools Forum and will help to ensure that the school is not financially disadvantaged by the expansion.

## **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985**

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
N/A		

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A