

Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools
Report submitted by: Head of Service Asset Management
Date 8 February 2016

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Chorley East, Chorley Rural
West

Capital programme for regularizing primary school admission numbers and suitability projects in mainstream primary schools aimed at addressing accommodation issues as identified by Ofsted
Stage 2 Report on the Proposal to Expand St George's CE Primary School - Chorley
(Appendices 'A' to 'C' refer)

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Executive Summary

On 4 November 2015 approval was granted by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools to proceed with a programme of capital improvement/expansion projects in maintained schools, including the provision of additional places to regularize admission numbers and addressing suitability issues as identified by Ofsted, to be funded from the Schools Single Capital Pot, in a report entitled "Capital Strategy for Schools 2015/16 to 2017/18".

One of the projects included in this programme is the proposal to allow a permanent increase in Reception intakes from 35 to 45 places at St George's CE Primary School in Chorley from September 2017.

Between 16 November 2015 and 14 December 2015 a consultation was carried out on the proposed expansion of the school.

Recommendation

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

- (i) to note the consultation arrangements which were undertaken and the responses that were received in respect of the authority's proposal; and
- (ii) to agree to the authority publishing a Statutory Notice of its proposal to expand St George's CE Primary School, Chorley, by increasing the number of Reception pupils admitted to the school from 35 to 45 from September 2017.

Background and Advice

On 5 June 2014, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools approved the Capital Strategy for Schools 2014/15 to 2016/17, part of which outlined priorities for expenditure. One of the expenditure priorities identified is described below in an extract from the cabinet member report:

- ***the provision of additional mainstream primary and secondary school places, including regularising (by increasing) admission numbers at primary schools in areas of high future demand to make them compatible with class size 30 requirements;***

The Asset Management Team monitors the position for areas where the growth of pupil numbers looks to be significant enough to exceed the capacity in the surrounding schools. Schools within these areas were considered, where their PAN (published admission number) was not compatible with class size 30 requirements, and where the school had enough spare site capacity to expand.

Schools meeting this criteria were considered by officers representing the School Improvement, Design & Construction and Asset Management teams, following which officers approached individual schools asking them to consider whether they would be interested in being part of this programme. St George's CE Primary School was one of the selected schools that expressed an interest in regularising their admission number through expansion. St George's is a consistently over-subscribed school, located in an area of pupil growth and the school is rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

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 high level of births in the Chorley central area means that temporary places were provided at one primary school for 2015. The additional new housing planned for the area has the potential to increase demand for places in the area over the next few years. Regularizing the school admission number in this instance will assist to alleviate some of this demand in this area.

St. George's CE Primary School is currently experiencing a significant increase in demand for places (there were 68 first preference applications for the school in 2015.) The current planned admission number is 35 and, therefore, by increasing this to 45 the school's admission number will be regularized to 1.5 Form Entry, at the same time as assisting with meeting demand for places within the Chorley central area.

On 4 November 2015, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools approved the consultation on a proposal to permanently increase the Reception intakes at St George's CE Primary School from 35 to 45 places from September 2017. If the permanent expansion is approved, the capacity of the primary school would increase from 245 to 315 which would mean that additional permanent accommodation would be provided on the existing site, subject to planning consent being granted.

A feasibility study has been commissioned to explore the options for providing the additional accommodation to address the increase in capacity.

A consultation on the expansion proposal took place between 16 November 2015 and 14 December 2015.

Process for permanent expansion

Because the increase of the school's capacity in this case is categorised as a 'significant enlargement' under the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013, relevant statutory procedures must be followed. Details of the planned timescale to include these statutory procedures are as follows:

Action	Timescale
Consultation on the proposals to enlarge the Primary School referred to above (non- statutory stage)	16/11/2015 to 14/12/2015 (4 weeks)
Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on the responses to the consultation and permission to publish notices	Current stage
Publish Statutory Notices	March 2016
Representation Period	4 weeks to April 2016
Decision by the Cabinet Member	May/ June 2016 (The decision must be made within 2 months of the end of the representation period)
Implementation	September 2017

The following are the statutory requirements around consultation as set out within Department for Education (DfE) guidance 'School Organisation: Maintained Schools Guidance for Proposers and Decision Makers' and evidence of the authority's compliance with each requirement:

(Para 11) It is best practice for proposers to (a) allow adequate time; (b) provide sufficient information for those being consulted to form a considered view on the matters on which they are being consulted; (c) make clear how their views can be made known; and (d) be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the views expressed during consultation in reaching any subsequent decision as to the publication of proposals.'

Arrangements: (a) a consultation period was held from 16 November 2015 to 14 December 2015; (b) the consultation document (Appendix 'A') provided full details of the proposal and a consultation event was held at the school on 24 November 2015 for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties; (c) Pages 5 & 9 of the consultation document (Appendix 'A') provided information on how to make views known (d) this report provides an analysis of views expressed which will be taken into account prior to making a decision as to the publication of proposals. All written comments received will also be available on the councillor's information portal, Councillor First.

(Para 10) It is best practice to provide a list of those to be consulted.

Arrangements: A list of all those that have been consulted appears in the consultation booklet (Appendix 'A' page 8)

(Para 10) It is best practice to consult pupils on any proposed changes to local school provision that may affect them.

Arrangements: Pupils' views were invited through a children's consultation carried out by the school. Questionnaires were completed by pupils in years 4 and 5. In addition, year 6 pupils were consulted as part of their Literacy topic relating to persuasive writing. Furthermore, the School Council were interviewed verbally and the responses were noted.

As part of the children's consultation 100 questionnaires were completed. The summary of these responses is given at Appendix 'B'.

(Para 11) It is for proposers to decide what their consultation arrangements will be and, for example, whether to hold public meetings. It is recommended that consultation should be held during term time.

Arrangements: Consultation documents were provided (Appendix 'A') which were widely circulated. Furthermore, a consultation event was held at the school on the 24 November 2015. Consultation was held for a 4 week period during term time.

Consultation Responses

The consultation document asked whether people supported the expansion of St George's CE Primary School, to increase the number of pupils admitted to Reception year at the school from 35 to 45 with effect from September 2017.

All responses received, together with the notes of the public consultation event, have been made available via the councillor's information portal, Councillor First.

A total of 40 responses were received. All responses received were via completion (either manually or on-line) of the questionnaire provided.

Of the 40 responses, the following information was obtained with regard to the view as to whether or not there was support for the proposal to expand the school:-

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Totals
32	4	1	1	2	40

Of the 40 respondents, 36(90%) gave a reason for their response and 4 others (10%) gave no reason.

The responses came from the following categories of people with an interest in the school:

25 (62.5%) from parent/guardian of pupils currently attending St George's CE Primary School;

2 (5%) from parent/guardian of potential future pupils of St George's CE Primary School;

5 (12.5%) from members of staff at St George's CE Primary School;

4 (10%) from a governor at St George's CE Primary School;

4 (10%) from an interested member of the local community;

Support

From the responses, the following comments were received:-

Of the 36 respondents (90%) that agreed or strongly agreed with the proposal to expand St George's CE Primary School, four did not provide a reason. Of those who gave a reason:

- 14 of the respondents felt that expansion would be a benefit to current and future pupils, through reduced class sizes and better space provision;
- 9 of the respondents stated that the school was outstanding and had great leadership;
- 7 of the respondents felt that there was a need by local families in the area;
- 5 of the respondents felt that it would stop the school taking more pupils than the school's budget allows;
- 4 of the respondents felt that it would benefit the wider Chorley community;
- 3 of the respondents stated that families struggle to get siblings into the same school and expansion would help with this;
- 2 of the respondents felt that expanding the school by an acceptable amount without making the school too big and impersonal would be positive;
- 2 of the respondents felt that as the school is always oversubscribed the expansion would assist with this;
- 1 of the respondents felt the expansion would improve the school's ability to support the Yarrow Teaching School Alliance Programme;

- 1 of the respondents felt that expansion would allow the school to have more same year group classes rather than mixed year group classes;
- 1 of the respondents felt that it would allow class sizes to be reduced from 40 for Key Stage 2, which they feel is too large;
- 1 of the respondents felt that it would enable more local children to attend the school closest to them;
- 1 of the respondents felt that class planning would be easier;
- 1 of the respondents felt that additional places were required to address increased demand from new housing;
- 1 of the respondents felt that expansion would enhance learning opportunities.

Opposition

From the 3 responses (7.5%) that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal to expand St George's CE Primary School, the following reasons were provided:

- 2 of the respondents felt that split classes were not beneficial and that they prevented children from socialising;
- 2 of the respondents expressed concerns about parking;
- 2 of the respondents expressed concerns about the continuation of the summer and Christmas fairs;
- 1 of the respondents expressed concerns about the continuation of the breakfast club and after school club;
- 1 of the respondents felt that the school was already taking too many pupils and that this was having a negative impact on the children.

Response

The head teacher and governors are committed to ensuring that the increase in the number of pupils will not result in larger class sizes, with class sizes actually expected to reduce. Furthermore, the increase in the number of classes will stabilise the need for children to be with different peers as they change classes, especially in the Infant classes.

The school acknowledges that the increase in pupil numbers is likely to result in increasing traffic and demand for parking, however, they are confident that any issues can be managed. Green transport plans will be promoted. At the same time there is street parking available, together with additional parking that has been made available in the car parks of several neighbouring businesses. Parking and traffic issues will be further considered as part of the Traffic Assessment, which will be undertaken by a specialist consultant and submitted as part of the application for planning permission.

The school intends to continue to operate the breakfast and after school clubs following expansion, indeed the location of the clubs will be enhanced as a direct result of the building works. Furthermore, the school would be keen to continue the summer and Christmas fairs.

The school currently has more pupils on roll than the accommodation should support. The school has 251 pupils but the net capacity of the school suggests that only 237 pupils should be accommodated. The proposed expansion would result in the net capacity of the school being increased to 315, by providing additional accommodation, and this would mean that some of the current overcrowding issues at the school would be improved by the expansion. Having a more 'regular' admission number in line with Infant class size legislation would also help the school to manage the number of successful appeals for the school. The head teacher and governors are committed to ensuring that the increase in the number of pupils will not make the school feel 'too large' for pupils and will not have a negative impact on them. They intend to maintain the strong ethos of the school, which together with the school's leadership and staff has enabled the school to be rated as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

Consultation Event

As part of the period of consultation which ran from 16 November to 14 December 2015, a consultation event was held at the school on 24 November 2015. The event was attended by 1 person, who was a parent of a pupil at the school and a potential future pupil at the school from 2017.

Notes of the comments made at the consultation event can be found in Appendix 'C'.

At the beginning of the appointment, the parent stated that she was supportive of the expansion proposal, but had a number of queries she would like to discuss. These were:

1. Was space available to accommodate additional pupils?
Response: The head and a County Council Officer provided some information about the additional accommodation that would be provided to enable the expansion;
2. Would the additional accommodation be ready in time for the arrival of the additional pupils?
Response: Information about timescales and plans to minimise disruption were discussed. It was also stated that in 2017, the school would have additional accommodation for 70 extra pupils, but would only have 10 additional pupils that year, with the expansion being at Reception age only. This would be beneficial to the school, as it would mean that the school would have excess accommodation until the school was filled up over the following 7 years.
3. A query about the future admission criteria for the school, particularly relating to sibling admissions. She explained that she had a younger child who would be seeking a place in September 2017.
Response: The diocese representative and the head provided information regarding the school's plans for the admission criteria. The school were currently working with the diocese to revise the current admission policy.
4. Do LCC have plans to also provide additional secondary places in Chorley?
Response: LCC Officers explained that one secondary school expansion had been completed in Chorley in 2015, with further expansions planned for the future.

The Children's Consultation

During the consultation period, the school consulted over 100 pupils from years 4 to 6 on their views towards the proposed expansion of St George's CE Primary School.

In addition to questionnaires being completed, year 6 pupils considered the expansion proposal as part of a literacy project relating to persuasive writing. The School Council was also verbally interviewed about the views of the proposal.

Of the 100 pupils who completed a questionnaire, 82 responses were in favour of the proposed expansion and 18 were opposed. The children's consultation response summary is attached at Appendix 'B'.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Additional primary school places are required in the Chorley central area, in order to meet the demand from the increasing birth rate and increased demand resulting from housing development. The authority must ensure that it fulfils its statutory obligations in respect of the provision of school places.

St George's CE Primary School was identified as part of the capital programme for regularising primary school admission numbers as it currently has a published admission number of 35; it is regularly over-subscribed and it is rated as an 'Outstanding School' by Ofsted.

The consultation process had highlighted a small range of concerns around the impact of the expansion of St George's CE Primary School, however the head teacher and the school governors believe that these concerns can be overcome.

Having considered the responses received as part of the consultation, it is recommended that a Statutory Notice is published to propose that St George's CE Primary School is expanded, by increasing the number of Reception pupils from 35 to 45 with effect from September 2016. The school accommodation would be increased to a capacity of 315 in order to accommodate the additional pupils.

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 or planned housing development fails to materialise in the future, there may be surplus places, with the possibility that the impact may be felt greatest by one or a small number of neighbouring schools.

If the authority delays its statutory consultation or decision making in respect of the provision of primary school places in the Chorley area, there is a real risk that increased demand will lead to emergency action rather than planned additional places. Emergency action can be disruptive for both the affected school and the families involved in the primary allocation of places, and can impact negatively on the schools' capital programme.

The expansion of the school would be subject to planning permission being granted.

Educational Structure of the School

The school Governing Body is currently considering how the school would manage its teaching arrangements, should the expansion be approved, with the objective of maintaining the school's high standards and ethos.

Legal and Financial Implications

The work required on school buildings to deliver additional primary school places is provided for within the capital programme in line with the Capital Strategy for Schools 2015/16 to 2017/18 approved by the Cabinet Member on 5 November 2015.

If the Cabinet Member agrees to the authority publishing the Statutory Notice for St George's CE Primary School, then the steps and timescales of the Statutory Procedure must be complied with following this agreement.

Should the permanent expansion of the school be approved, the school would receive revenue funding assistance to reflect the fact that pupils would begin two terms before the increased numbers were reflected in the school budget. This funding would be assessed annually and would be provided for a period up to and not exceeding 7 years, to ensure that the school was not financially disadvantaged by the expansion. This funding would be provided through the Dedicated Schools Grant in accordance with the rules agreed by the Lancashire Schools Forum.

Land and Property

The proposal can be delivered within the existing site.

The approval of any physical school expansion would be subject to obtaining relevant planning permission and Section 77(3) consent for the change of use in the land (or meeting the terms of The School Playing Fields General Disposal and Change of Use Consent (No 5) 2014.)

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Consultation Responses for the expansion proposals of St George's CE Primary School	16 November to 14 December 2015	Ben Terry/01772 531774
Capital Strategy for Schools	5 November 2015	MartinCooper/01772

2015/16 to 2017/18
Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

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N/A