

Consultation on the expansion of Cherry Garden Special School

APPENDIX 1

March 2012

Southwark Children's Services

What are we proposing to do?

This consultation document is about the proposed expansion of Cherry Garden special school and its co-location on the site of Gloucester primary school. This will address the growth in the number of pupils in the borough who need places at Cherry Garden special school. Co-locating Cherry Garden in a brand new building on the Gloucester primary school site will be a considerable improvement over the current building and site.

It is proposed that the school will expand the number of places from 46 to 66, with effect from September 2014. This will be made possible by building a new Cherry Garden school on part of the Gloucester primary school site.

If you have a child already on roll at Cherry Garden school he or she will still be able to attend the school and benefit from the improved facilities and environment that this proposal is offering.

Southwark Children's Services wants to hear your views on this important proposal.

If you have difficulty in accessing this information please contact Southwark Children's Services on 020 7525 5018 or email us at martin.wilcox@southwark.gov.uk

PART ONE

Our vision and what we would like to achieve

Education is a powerful means of transforming and enriching lives and communities. Future success and well-being depends on strong creative partnerships, new ways of working, high expectations and a belief that we all have a part to play and can make a difference together.

Southwark Council is committed to improving the quality of educational provision to help raise standards for all learners.

Our vision also sees schools operating at the centre of their immediate and often extended communities.

In Southwark there is a need to increase some forms of special education provision. One of these growth areas involves an increasing incidence of children and young people with severe and complex learning needs. In order to promote their learning and development intensive support is necessary so that children and young people with the most complex needs may thrive in a safe but positive learning environment. Wherever possible we seek to place children with such complex needs in our schools but sometimes children have been placed in schools in neighbouring boroughs at some distance from their homes and families. Our wish is for the vast majority of children with such complex needs to be educated in Southwark at a special school that is able to provide high quality education, care, health and well being to support families in caring for their children.

Over the last ten years, Southwark special schools have changed in nature and increasingly they have admitted larger numbers of pupils and children with a much wider range of needs than they were originally established to do. This is the case for Cherry Garden special school.

Cherry Garden opened approximately 35 years ago. It was originally an all age school until its designation changed about 16 years ago to a nursery/primary special school for pupils aged 2 to 11. At that time there was an assessment nursery of about 16 pupils some of whom went onto mainstream schools. Gradually due to a demand on places, the school population has changed; the majority of pupils are now aged five and over.

The school got an outstanding rating in its last two Ofsted inspections and is highly regarded by other schools and the LA. Cherry Garden provides training, outreach and consultancy for a growing number of the borough's schools. This has proved highly successful and is something the school would like to build provided funding streams can be found to continue this long term.

PART TWO

The Proposal

The proposal is two-fold: firstly to expand Cherry Garden special school from 46 to 66 places.

The expansion would improve the provision of special education for Southwark's children and young people and will reduce the level of travelling and the need for placements in special schools in neighbouring authorities and beyond.

Secondly, in order to deliver this expansion, it is proposed to co-locate Cherry Garden school with Gloucester primary school in new accommodation on the Gloucester primary school site.

The idea for the co-location was born out of a strong educational rationale about the benefits of collaboration between mainstream and special educational needs settings, as well as practical considerations about the need to improve the accommodation at Gloucester and find an appropriate site for new accommodation for Cherry Garden.

The proposed co-location will meet these objectives as well as opening up possibilities for links with the neighbouring Tuke School, a secondary school for students with similar special educational needs. The project will seek to strengthen these links and build an educational and community hub that will take into consideration the concerns and aspirations of pupils, staff, parents and local residents.

The approach to co-location

There are many models for successful co-location which Gloucester and Cherry Garden have explored through joint discussions, research and visits to other co-located schools. Through these experiences the schools have reached a shared conclusion about the model of co-location they would like to adopt, which is outlined below.

Both schools wish to retain their individual identity and autonomy, but also make the most of the opportunities that co-location presents to co-operate and collaborate, enriching the learning, pastoral and social experiences of pupils, staff, parents and the local community through the sharing of knowledge, ideas, skills, expertise and resources.

The schools' vision is that the co-location be characterised by a sense of developing a learning campus with a shared educational ethos. Strong and meaningful links between the schools will ensure that everyone feels valued within an ethos of mutual respect, and that a range of exciting joint initiatives can develop organically over time.

How it will work

The schools are conscious of the need to work with pupils, staff, parents, governors and the local community to prepare them for the co-location, address any anxieties they may have, and ensure the change is as smooth as possible. Ideally, in order to achieve this, they intend to develop a transition plan mapping out steps for collaboration, which would initially be relatively small scale and then build up gradually with time. This plan would involve different groups from next academic year, through to the first year of the co-location and beyond.

The schools plan to build their collaboration incrementally, starting some joint initiatives well in advance of the move, and building on these over time. The schools have already had a number of discussions about the possibilities for collaboration seeing immediate potential in a range of areas such as gardening and creative arts projects, and longer term potential in regular joint projects and modules linking to curriculum topics. The schools also see particular opportunities for integration in the foundation stage and will focus on these early on.

Collaboration across the schools will be enabled by links between individual pupils and individual members of staff, joint working parties on different curriculum and pastoral areas, joint team-building and INSET sessions, and regular meetings between the two schools' senior leaders and governors.

Collaboration and integration will also be facilitated by the sharing of certain resources and specialist facilities, and by the creation of some joint spaces where the two schools will meet and mix on a regular basis. These spaces could include social spaces, the music room and ICT suite as well as joint use of the garden, playground and dining room. In addition to the agreed joint spaces, it is important that the design and build is as future-proof as possible with the ability to flex to meet the long term evolving needs of a collaborative relationship between the two school communities

The two schools will also seek to develop links with Tuke School, building on an existing relationship between Tuke and Cherry Garden (which is one of Tuke's main feeder schools), and an initial creative arts project between Tuke and Gloucester.

Anticipated benefits

It is anticipated that the co-location will result in many mutual benefits for staff, pupils, parents and the local community.

Gloucester has a well-recognised strong commitment to inclusion which is demonstrated by the open, welcoming approach of staff, pupils and governors to the concept of co-location and the children's immediate offers of things they would like to share with Cherry Garden.

Cherry Garden is dedicated to working with other schools to support pupil and staff development as evidenced by its extensive outreach work. Its school community is similarly open and positive about the possibilities of co-location.

Some of the anticipated benefits for both schools are as follows:

- Gloucester is proud to be a learning community in which diversity is recognised and valued and the co-location should provide opportunities for Gloucester children to increase their knowledge and understanding of disability and hence their life skills, thus increasing their ability to make a positive contribution and be good citizens.
- The co-location also presents some exciting possibilities for Gloucester pupils arising from the shared use of specialist space in Cherry Garden such as the sensory room, soft play and hydro pool.
- For Cherry Garden pupils, Gloucester children will provide good role models in social and language skills, providing valuable opportunities for pupils with severe learning difficulties in particular to communicate and interact with mainstream peers.

- The co-location will also benefit Cherry Garden pupils through access to a broad range of facilities on the Gloucester site, providing important opportunities to practice functional skills.
- Staff from both schools will have valuable opportunities to share knowledge and skills in relation to inclusion, special needs and a range of curriculum areas.
- The local community, and parents and carers, will benefit from access to improved school facilities, and better designed entrances, exits and grounds will improve supervision in the local area leading to a safer neighbourhood for all.
- Both schools will benefit from economies in sharing some facilities (such as specialist learning spaces, dining and some play spaces) as well as staff (such as premises and kitchen staff) and resources and services (such as ICT). Economies may also be found in the procurement of various services and the joint provision, for example, of the After School Club.

Expansion of a special school

The current regulations mean that if an authority proposes to expand a special school by more than 10% then their proposal must be published in a statutory notice.

There are 5 stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

1. Consultation

The issue of this document marks a period of consultation during which the views of any interested parties are sought and which will be considered before any move to the more formal stages of the process.

2. Publication

Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, a decision to proceed to issue a statutory notice must be made by the Cabinet Member for Children's Services.

3. Representation

Statutory notices for school enlargements allow a 6 week period for anyone to submit their comments on the proposals. This enables people to express their views in the form of supporting or objecting to the proposal.

4. Decision

Within 2 months after the statutory notice period ends the authority must make a decision on the proposal.

5. Implementation

If the proposal is approved the number of school places will increase from 46 to 66 with effect from September 2014.

PART THREE

The consultation and decision making process

Timescales

16 March 2012 to 20 April 2012	Informal consultation
May 2012	Cabinet Member decision making to consider the results of the consultation and decide whether to publish a statutory notice for the proposal
June/July 2012	Publication of Statutory Notice
September 2012	Final decision by Cabinet
September 2014	Implementation

Consultation Event

You are invited to a drop-in style open event to find out more about the proposal and/or offer your views. Officers will be at Cherry Garden school to answer any questions you may have on **Thursday, 29 March from 2 to 5 p.m.**

Who We Will Consult

This consultation document will be provided to people and organisations who may have an interest in these proposals. These include the following:

- Parents/carer, staff and governors of the Cherry Garden special and Gloucester primary schools
- Headteachers and chairs of governors of Southwark schools
- Local authorities that maintain a statement of educational needs for children attending the school or who may be affected by the proposals, including neighbouring authorities
- Health authorities whose area covers any part of Southwark
- Any NHS Trust responsible for a hospital or other provision in the area of Southwark
- Local Councillors and Members of Parliament
- Trade unions and associations
- The wider community through local libraries

Your Response

We welcome your views on this proposal and all observations will be considered very carefully before any decision is made to progress any further with the proposal.

This consultation is stage 1 of the process. The information provided should be enough to enable people to form an initial view on the proposal. However, at this stage we have not worked out every detail of the proposal as we need to listen to your views and concerns so that the detailed proposals which we make later in this process can take these into account.

Tell us what you think

We would like to hear your views on our ideas for Cherry Garden School, so please email us or complete the tear-off slip and hand it in to the school office or post to the address shown.

Also, please come along to the information session at the school on 29 March where you can ask questions about this change.



Merril Haeusler
Deputy Director Children's Services: Education

Do you support the increase in the number of places from 46 to 66 at Cherry Garden from September 2014? (please tick one)

Yes No

You may wish to give reasons here

Please tick to let us know if you are a parent/carer member of staff governor

Please give us your contact details:

Please email your comments to martin.wilcox@southwark.gov.uk, hand this form in at the school office or post it to Martin Wilcox, Southwark Council Children's Services, PO Box 64529, London SE1P 5LX.

The deadline for comments is **Friday 20 April 2012**.