

Item No	Classification: Open	Date: 5 March 2010	Decision Maker: Leader of the Council
To			
Report title:	Outcome of the consultation process on the proposed permanent enlargement of Cherry Garden school		
Ward (s) or groups affected:	Borough wide		
From:	Strategic Director of Children's Services		

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That the responses to the initial consultation on the proposal to permanently enlarge Cherry Garden Primary Special school be noted.
2. That the statutory notice required for permanent enlargement from 45 to 66 pupils from September 1 2013 be published.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. The Executive, at their meeting on 29 September 2009, agreed to initial consultation on the proposal to increase Cherry Garden School in size from 45 to 66 places and to relocate the school to part of the existing Gloucester primary school site, with a target date of September 2013.
4. The initial statutory consultation on the permanent enlargement to Cherry Garden School from 45 to 66 pupils has now been carried out.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Policy implications

5. Cherry Garden is a very effective special school. The school was judged to be outstanding during its last Ofsted inspection. However, the current school building has serious condition and suitability issues. The school building is small and is not now considered suitable for purpose. The main priority for capital expenditure in the Primary Capital Programme is therefore a new building for Cherry Garden School. This is required to meet the current and planned demands from this client group of children with complex needs, multiple disabilities and severe learning difficulties. At the moment many of these are placed out of borough because of a lack of suitable places locally. It is also planned that the new building incorporate early years provision for the first time.
6. It is proposed to enlarge the school to take 66 pupils and, as reported in September, it is planned to develop the new Cherry Garden school on the Gloucester primary school site. There would be many advantages in this such as the potential for co-location of services with Gloucester primary school, including early years provision, kitchen and large hall and performance spaces. In addition the proposed location is between Gloucester and the new Tuke secondary special school, currently being constructed on the site next to Gloucester primary school. Both schools cater for pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties and complex needs, and this proposal would enable the two special schools to work together in supporting these pupils, particularly at the age of transfer.

7. There would also be other efficiencies in the use of resources, including the sharing of the bus drop off for the new Tuke School. The feasibility study also shows that a new large hall, funded in part by Sport England, can be retained as part of the new Cherry Garden school with the potential for joint and community use.

Need for places

8. As confirmed in September, there has been a review of the proposed size of the new Cherry Garden in the light of the projected need for places for pupils in this category over the next ten years. Previously the school had been planned on the basis of 96 children, in comparison to the current capacity of 46. This had been based on an expectation that the numbers of children in this category was rising faster than the general population. In the light of this review, it is proposed that the new Cherry Garden is still enlarged to 66 places, of which 56 are for statutory age pupils, with in addition a 10 place nursery.
9. Reducing the size of Gloucester primary school provides the opportunity to consider the possibility of co-locating the new Cherry Garden on the Gloucester school site. The feasibility study demonstrated that sufficient land could be made available to provide a satisfactory school at its smaller size of 66 places.

Statutory process

Following approval of recommendations in this report, the authority must publish a statutory notice and receive community representations on the proposals through a six week period. The outcome of this notice consultation would be reported to the Executive for its decision.

Consultation

10. In carrying out the consultation process on the proposed enlargement letters were sent to the following stakeholders: parents and carers of pupils, governors and staff at Cherry Garden School, Headteachers and Chairs of governors of all Southwark schools, councillors, the NHS Trust, local MPs, the Southwark Diocesan Board and Commission, trade unions and Directors of neighbouring authorities. The consultation period was from 30 October to 4 December 2009.
11. Meetings for parents and carers and staff to discuss the proposal were held at Cherry Garden School on 11 November 2009. The parents' meeting was attended by 4 parents/carers. They were in favour of the scheme for the expansion of the school. The staff meeting was attended by about 20 staff, who had some concerns about the proposal to locate the new school building in Peckham, particularly about ensuring there is a dedicated entrance with suitable bus access, sufficient car parking and whether the site is as near to the shops for providing pupils with life skills training. There were positive comments about increasing the school in size and the opportunities there would be to share good practice with the mainstream school. The proposals were also discussed at a Governing Body meeting on 16 November 2009. Again there was support for the proposal, with some queries about the need for stairs to help children practice stair walking in a functional way every day, with a desire for a family support centre, and a training centre for SEN staff. The comments from the staff have been noted and reasonable adjustments will be made to meet the issues raised. Providing stairs may be difficult as an upper storey also requires a lift, but the school could make use of the stairs in the Gloucester school building, to which it is proposed there would be a direct internal link. It was agreed that the family support and training provision could be pursued in collaboration between all three schools.
12. Five responses have been received from the Cherry Garden school community, all in support of the proposals. One queried whether there would be an increase in therapy

provision, which will be an issue to be resolved at the later stages of the project's development. In addition five schools have responded positively to the feedback form supporting the proposal. One queried where the resources to support the project would come from. Capital has been set aside in the Primary Capital Programme to support the costs of this scheme. The local MP has also written in support of the proposals.

Community Impact Statement

13. Permanently enlarging Cherry Garden School will enable more pupils in Southwark with special needs to benefit from its improved and expanded buildings, and to enable it to develop its outreach programme into its local community. This will be assessed in an Equalities Impact Assessment for this proposal.
14. The building will also incorporate more facilities for extended facilities including family support and staff training.

Resource implications

Capital

15. The DCSF has confirmed the PCP allocation of £12.48m in 2009-11. Approval was received for the second year (2010/11) in May 2009. Executive agreed at their meeting in September that the Cherry Garden and the Gloucester schemes could proceed within the resources currently available.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance

16. The Leader of the Council will have noted the proposal to permanently enlarge Cherry Garden Primary Special School.
17. The Leader of the Council is also asked to agree to publish the statutory notice for permanent enlargement.

Matters for consideration

18. As it is intended that the permanent increase at this special school will be more than 10%, this proposal is caught by The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) (hereafter 'The Regulations').
19. The Leader of the Council is advised that these proposals must be published and consulted on in accordance with The Regulations Schedule 4 Part 2.

Departmental Finance Manager (CS09061)

Revenue

21. The additional revenue costs arising from the expansion of places at Cherry Gardens school will be chargeable against the Schools Budget and therefore funded from the Dedicated Schools Grant. Provision for these additional places will need to be incorporated in to the local authority's School Budget proposals for 2013-14. There will be no direct impact on other Council Funding streams.

Capital

22 As set out above, the capital costs of progressing the Cherry Gardens and Gloucester schemes will be funded from existing capital programme resources.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
DCSF Regulations and Guidelines	Children's Services 160 Tooley Street London SE1 5LX	Martin Wilcox 020 7525 5018

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Romi Bowen Strategic Director of Children's Services	
Report Author	Martin Wilcox, Education Planning Officer	
Version	Final	
Dated	4 March 2010	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / EXECUTIVE MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Director of Finance	Yes	Yes
Executive Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Officer		4 March 2010