

South Gloucestershire Council

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE COMMITTEE

24 SEPTEMBER 2014

THE FUTURE OF THE GRANGE SCHOOL AND SPORTS COLLEGE (All Wards)

Purpose of Report

1. To provide an update on the bid to open a Studio School on the Grange School and Sports College site and to approve the reopening of the public consultation on the proposal that The Grange School and Sports College should be closed with effect from 31 August 2017.

Policy

2. Under the Education Act 1996, the Local Authority has a general responsibility to maintain schools (Section 13) and a duty to use this responsibility to promote high standards (Section 13A).
3. Under the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority has a series of powers and responsibilities related to schools causing concern, including schools judged by Ofsted to require special measures.
4. The Academies Act 2010 empowers the Secretary of State for Education to issue an academy order for any school which is judged by Ofsted to require special measures.
5. Under Section 15 of the Education & Inspections Act 2006, a Local Authority may publish proposals to cease to maintain a secondary school ('Proposals for discontinuance of schools maintained by local education authority').

Background

6. Following the final report from the South Gloucestershire Education Commission in January 2014, the CYP Committee took the decision to consult on the proposed closure of The Grange to new admissions on 31 August 2015 and the closure of the school to all pupils on 31 August 2016.
7. The Committee also approved the proposal to develop and support the submission of a bid to the Department for Education to open a Studio School (The Grange Studio School) on the site of the current school.
8. In addition, the Committee authorised officers to carry out feasibility studies on the opportunities to utilise the surplus capacity at The Grange site to relocate the EOTAS service and to expand Warmley Park Special School and to provide a report to the Committee as part of the annual capital programme.

9. The Committee also committed to continuation of community use of the sports and recreational facilities on the school site.

The Issues

10. The consultation about the proposed closure of the school unexpectedly had to be put on hold as following an Ofsted inspection in February 2014, Sir Bernard Lovell School was deemed to require Special Measures and so there would not have been sufficient school places to offer at an alternative school if the consultation on closure went ahead. It would have been inappropriate to offer this as alternate provision at that time.
11. However, Sir Bernard Lovell School has now received an Academy Order and the school will become an Academy sponsored by The Wellsway Multi-Academy Trust in February 2015.
12. There was significant support shown for the proposal to open a Studio School and the final submission to the Department for Education reflected the wide ranging enthusiasm for the proposal to provide innovative and skill-focussed educational opportunities through this new provision including from employers, prospective students and their parents and members of the local community. This support, endorsement and hard work by the parents, sponsor and officers resulted in a very positive outcome as in August 2014, the Department for Education announced that the bid to open a Studio School on the site of The Grange School and Sports College had been successful. The Grange Studio School was one of only 4 Studio Schools to be approved in this round of applications.
13. The Cabot Learning Federation is the sponsor of the new Studio School and will now work with both the Council and the Department for Education to implement the proposals and ensure that the Studio School is set to open in September 2015.
14. The Studio Schools Trust, the Department for Education and the Education Funding Agency have already met with the sponsor and officers to start to plan the next steps to ensure that the project gets off to a good start. They have provided additional support to create a strong project team together with the sponsor, employers and officers from the local authority to ensure that the ambitious proposal can be delivered successfully in the very tight time scale through the year.
15. The site that will be needed to provide the Studio School is considerably less than is needed by The Grange School and Sports College. Plans for the site and the refurbishment of the identified buildings had to be submitted as part of the proposal.
16. The approval of the application has also secured significant capital investment directly from central government to refurbish the identified buildings and to create the flagship provision. This funding will ensure that the buildings will be fit for purpose and will align with the particular demands of the specification for Studio Schools in order to deliver the specialist curriculum and project based learning.

17. The bid for the Studio School was predicated on the closure of The Grange School and Sports College so it is now important that the consultation for closure is started as soon as possible or there will be a risk to the project.
18. There are also a number of areas which will become increasingly difficult for the school to manage while the future of the school remains uncertain.
19. South Gloucestershire Council is committed to improving standards of education for all students. The current position and uncertainty continues to be very difficult for students, staff and parents and does not create the stable and secure conditions in which a school can flourish.
20. In addition, lower numbers of students can make it more difficult for a school to maintain the quality of educational provision and these difficulties are increased when other local schools are also competing for fewer secondary school age children in the area.
21. In the current circumstances it is very unlikely that student numbers will increase, especially when other local secondary schools are available within reach. The decrease in numbers will mean that the school will become unsustainable and that there is increasing detriment to the quality of education at the school.
22. This future unsustainability is highlighted by the number of students who are currently on roll at The Grange School and Sports College as shown in the table below:

Numbers on Roll at The Grange School and Sports College as at September 2014

School	Admission Number	Number on roll (surplus)				
		Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
The Grange	180	9 (171)	45 (135)	43 (137)	80 (100)	132 (48)

23. The school currently has a budget deficit. There is also a projected deficit over the next three years which is unsustainable, particularly as student numbers decrease the deficit will increase even more significantly. In addition, costs relating to the site and buildings, the employment of a head teacher and administration do not decrease in line with falling pupil numbers.
24. The school accommodation has outstanding urgent repairs and maintenance works of £8.345m with a potential further £2.057m non-priority works required.
25. All these areas highlight the increasing difficulties which the school is currently facing while there is uncertainty about the future.
26. Following the decision to consult to close the school, the local authority can then put planned arrangements in place for the existing students on roll to ensure that they have as much continuity in their education as possible.
27. The new Grange Studio School will be available to offer places to students aged 14-19 from 1 September 2015. Current Year 9 students on roll at The Grange will be able to apply to transfer to the new Studio School to join Year 10 in

September 2015. Current Year 11 students will also be able to apply for a place in the sixth form.

28. Current students in eligible year groups will be able to apply for a place at the new Studio School from September 2015 under admission arrangements as proposed by the sponsor. There will be 75 places available for Year 10 and 60 places available for Year 12.
29. If the current form of The Grange School and Sports College is to be closed, the following arrangements for managing the closure are proposed.
30. The current Years 10 and 11 will be able to complete their current GCSE studies at The Grange School and Sports College. However, they will not be able to start Post -16 studies at the Grange School and Sports College, although they could, of course, apply for a place to start Post 16 studies at the new Grange Studio School.
31. The current post-16 students in Years 12 and 13 will be able to complete their studies at The Grange School and Sports College.
32. The current Year 9 may wish to apply to the new Grange Studio School to start Year 10 in September 2015. Alternatively, they may choose to stay at The Grange School and Sports College - although they would not be able to continue their Post 16 studies there – or even apply to another secondary school for the start of Year 10.
33. The current Year 8 has two options - they can complete Year 8 at the Grange and apply to move to another school to start Year 9 in September 2015 or they can complete Year 9 and apply to move to another school for the start of Year 10.
34. The current Year 7 can move to another school to start Year 8 in September 2015 or they can complete Year 8 at The Grange and can apply to start Year 9 at a new school in September 2016. This will mean that they will be settled in a new school before they start their GCSEs.
35. There will be no admissions to The Grange and Sports College in September 2015 or thereafter.
36. In managing the closure the local authority will also need to ensure that:
 - parents or carers are able to have their say in what they want for their children;
 - transition does not have a negative impact on children's progress;
 - the appropriate admission process and transition arrangements are in place
 - parents receive help to cover the cost of purchasing a new school uniform.
37. The Council is also working with secondary schools and Academies in South Gloucestershire to ensure that additional places will be available for parents/carers of children who do not wish to apply for a place at the Studio School. The current number on roll in other local schools is shown in the table below:

Numbers on roll in other local schools (as at September 2014)

	Admission Number	Straight Line Distance (miles) from The Grange	Number on roll				
			Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11
Downend	210	2.58	182	176	135	180	199
Hanham High	180	1.92	150	175	158	150	180
King's Oak	120	0.41	167	116	113	93	102
Mangotsfield	240	1.59	219	216	220	235	237
Sir Bernard Lovell	210	1.02	239	188	209	212	186
Total	960		957	871	835	870	904

Consultation

38. The statutory consultation process for a decision to close a school is set out below:

- Where a Local Authority proposes to discontinue (cease to maintain) a school in England, it must carry out a consultation on the question of whether the closure should take place.
- The Department for Education recommends a minimum period of 6 weeks with a recommendation that school holidays should be taken into consideration and avoided where possible.
- The consultation must seek the views of the governing body of the school; families of students, teachers and other staff at the school; any LA likely to be affected by the proposals, particularly where there may be significant cross border movement of students; the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of any other school that may be affected; families of any students at any other school who may be affected including feeder primary schools; any trade unions who represent staff at the school or at schools who may be affected; MPs whose constituencies include the school or whose constituents are likely to be affected; the parish council; any other interested party and such other persons as appear to the proposers to be appropriate.
- At the end of the consultation the local authority as proposer should consider the views expressed during that period before reaching any final decision on whether to publish statutory proposals.
- Proposals should be published within a reasonable timeframe following consultation, must contain the information specified in the Regulations and must be published in a statutory notice. The complete proposal must be sent to a range of copy recipients and published on the school/LA website. The statutory notice must be published in a local newspaper.
- Once proposals are published there follows a statutory 4 week representation period during which comments on the proposals can be made. These must be sent to the LA. Any person can submit representations, which can be objections as well as expressions of support for the proposals.
- The Local Authority should decide the proposals within 2 months of the end of the representation period otherwise the matter is referred to the Schools' Adjudicator for a decision.

39. A proposed closure of a school is a serious step so it is important that there is extensive consultation before a decision is made, taking into account the view of all interested parties.

40. If the decision to reopen the consultation is agreed, the Council will follow a statutory five stage process as detailed in the table below:

Stage	Action	Timeline
Consultation	Consultation with all interested parties begins	29 September 2014
	Public meeting with parents Meetings with staff and governing body	Tbc – during consultation period
	Consultation ends	14 November 2014
Decision	At this point the Council will consider all the responses to the consultation and the CYP Committee will decide whether or not to publish a statutory notice	3 December 2014
Statutory Notice	The publication of a statutory notice with full details of the proposals for closure	5 January 2015
Representation	An opportunity for all interested parties to have their say on the proposals	5 January – 2 February 2015
Decision	Final decision about whether the closure should go ahead, having considered all of the relevant information	4 March 2015
Implementation	If approved the arrangements for the closure of the school will be implemented.	31 August 2017

41. Subject to the Committee decision to reopen the consultation, a revised consultation paper is being prepared for issue on 29th September 2014.

Risk Assessment

Financial Implications (includes tax implications such as VAT)

Annual Funding

42. The delivery of pre-16 education at the Grange School and Sports College is primarily funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG). The DSG funded budget for 2014/15 is £2.74m. 94% of secondary school funding is student led and if the Grange were to close the funding would follow the student to the school

they attend. The remaining 6% would stay within the DSG for redistribution to schools.

Accommodation Costs

43. The school has outstanding urgent condition works of £8.345m with a potential further £2.057m non priority works required. The mechanical and electrical services could potentially fail at any time requiring an immediate repair at an estimated cost of £2-3 million.

Redundancy Costs

44. There will be potential redundancy costs following the closure of The Grange School and Sports College in its current form. Depending on the scenario, redundancy costs are funded as follows:

School Budget

- Where premature retirement, redundancy, severance and pension payment costs have been incurred without the prior written agreement of the authority to bear such costs (the amount chargeable being only the excess over any amount agreed by the authority). These costs are borne by the school's budget.

Education Services Grant (part of the Council budget)

- Where the costs have been agreed by the Local Education Authority, the costs are deemed by the Education Funding Agency to be met from the Education Services Grant.

45. In 2013/14 the average redundancy cost of a secondary school teacher was £31k. The actual cost will be determined by a number of factors including age, grade and length of service. At this stage the number of staff that will be subject to redundancy is not known. Detailed work will be required on an individual basis to determine the total cost. **(Jason Manning, 01454 868214)**

Legal Implications

46. The body of the report sets out the legal position, namely that under section 62 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 The Grange School and Sports College is eligible for intervention as it has been judged by Ofsted to require special measures. The report summarises the statutory guidance and the legal requirements that flow from this.
47. The consultation process for a decision to close a school, is as set out in the report, this is statutory and must be complied with.
48. South Gloucestershire Council must comply with the requirements of the Act as set out in the report and follow the statutory guidance when considering closing a maintained school. **(Maria Sweetman, 01454 864229)**

Human Resources Implications

49. There are approximately 55 employees at the school in full or part -time teaching and support staff positions at present, a figure that will inevitably diminish due to the school's circumstances and normal turnover factors.
50. In the event of the school's closure it is expected that there will be a substantial number of staff redundancies. Opportunities for redeployment will be limited as the council has no control over appointment decisions in other schools and academies, although cooperation will be sought where appropriate.
51. There would be a minimal impact on Traded Services as Traded Services do not directly employ staff uniquely to cover the Grange School's requirements. There would need to be timely notification to the organisation(s) who are employing staff such as Cleaners and Catering Assistants in order for these organisations to manage their HR issues. **(Jenny Wagstaff, 01454 863212)**

Sustainability Implications (includes environmental, social and economic impacts)

52. The closure of The Grange, even with the Studio School established on the site, would ensure the sustainability of a number of other secondary schools in the area.
53. The development of the Studio School will have a positive impact on the personal development, training and employment prospects of the students. (Antony Merritt, 01454 863645)
54. In terms of the environmental implications the poor energy performance of the existing school buildings will be addressed as the investment in the new Studio School will enable improvements to the existing identified buildings. (Jane Thompson, 01454 863872)

Equality Impact Assessment

55. Local Authorities are required to comply with relevant legislation on equality in the discharge of their responsibilities including school organisation and admission to schools.

Risks, Mitigations & Opportunities

56. If a decision is not taken to close The Grange, there is a risk that the school will not improve during a long period of instability and that students' education will suffer. There is also a risk that staff and students will gradually drift away from the school creating further viability and standards issues and creating some disruption for local schools. This may result in a need to consult on closing the school in the future in even more difficult circumstances.
57. In addition, the financial risk identified both in terms of the capital requirements to meet urgent building improvement work and in terms of the challenges to revenue as a result of the demographics would continue to be held by the Council. These risks can be mitigated by a decision to close the school.

58. If a decision is taken to close the school, there is a risk that children's education would be affected as students would have to adjust to life in a new school, friendship groups would potentially be broken up and receiving schools would be disrupted by the addition of large groups of students. This option could be mitigated by maintaining provision for the majority of current students and careful planning for the transfer of the remaining students, including planning for most of those students to be transferred 'on block' to particular schools, with a range of options provided to parents. Parents do not, of course, have to follow the planned approach.
59. The closure of The Grange would provide an opportunity to address some of the underperformance in the area which has been exacerbated by the continued falling rolls and consequently reducing budgets. This improvement would result in the area being better served by a smaller group of successful and sustainable schools.

Conclusion

60. The option of closing the school in 2017 appears to be the only viable option as it allows for the majority of the students currently on roll at The Grange to complete their studies at the school. This includes all of the current post -16 students and all of the students who have commenced GCSE courses (Years 10 and 11). It would also ensure that current Year 9 students complete their education in the school and do not have to start GCSE or equivalent courses in Year 10 at a time when they are joining a new school.

Recommendation

1. The recommendation is that approval is given to reopen the public consultation for the proposal to close The Grange School and Sports College to new admissions on 31 August 2015 and to all students on 31 August 2017.

Author

Peter Murphy, Director for Children, Adults and Health – Tel: 01454 865900

Departmental Contact

Susannah Hill, Interim Head of Education, Learning & Skills, Department for Children, Adults and Health – Tel: 01454 863192

Background Papers

Education Act 1996

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Academies Act 2010

Education Act 2011

Schools causing concern - guidance for local authorities

Ofsted Inspection report - The Grange School (June 2013)

CYP Committee January 2014