

Proposed changes to the age Derbyshire County Council

Prescribed Information for Statutory Proposes to make a prescribed alteration to New Mills School and Sixth Form to change the age range from 11-18 to 11-16.

Statutory consultation September – October 2016

Introduction

New Mills School and Sixth Form is a community school maintained by Derbyshire County Council. Certain changes to maintained schools are known as *prescribed alterations*. The proposal and implementation of these changes is governed by national guidance.

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514548/16-04-06_FINAL_SO_Guidance_PA_Regs.pdf

Proposal

The Governing Body of New Mills School and Sixth form has proposed changing the age range of the school from 11-18 to 11-16. The proposal would be implemented from August 2017 with the result that there would be no recruitment into year 12 at the school from September 2017. The proposal would not affect students who are currently (2016/17 academic year) in the sixth form at the school. These students will be able to complete their studies with the effect that there would be no students aged over 16 from September 2018.

Rationale

A public consultation was conducted on this proposal in April and May 2016. A copy of the consultation document, an analysis of the responses, some further responses and analysis are included in the attached paper that was presented to Derbyshire County Council's Cabinet on 20 September 2016.

http://www.derbyshire.gov.uk/images/7qPropsoed%20Closure%20of%20Sixth%20Form%20at%20New%20Mills%20d4_tcm44-284055.pdf

The table below shows the pupil numbers at the school since 2001/2

SchYear	Age11	Age12	Age13	Age14	Age15	Age16	Age17	Age18	Age19	SchNOR	11 to 16	16+
2001/2002	163	149	171	162	151	67	68	4	0	935	796	139
2002/2003	191	158	149	172	161	51	57	6	1	946	831	115
2003/2004	142	189	157	147	170	89	46	9	0	949	805	144
2004/2005	137	138	189	162	150	72	72	5	1	926	776	150
2005/2006	122	131	137	187	164	85	64	9	1	900	741	159
2006/2007	119	128	140	138	188	89	65	0	0	867	713	154
2007/2008	116	119	133	138	138	103	57	18	2	824	644	180
2008/2009	81	113	121	132	133	71	85	6	1	743	580	163
2009/2010	103	85	113	126	132	49	49	21	0	678	559	119
2010/2011	96	101	82	111	125	56	39	13	3	626	515	111
2011/2012	85	99	102	86	114	59	41	3	2	591	486	105
2012/2013	84	86	100	103	87	55	48	7	0	570	460	110
2013/2014	104	85	90	100	107	30	46	11	0	573	486	87
2014/2015	81	99	85	90	99	53	33	0	0	540	454	86
2015/2016	101	84	100	86	87	47	40	0	0	545	458	87

Table 1 – Number on roll by year group at New Mills School and Sixth Form 2001/01 to 2015/15.

There has been a general decline in numbers attending the school with a consequential reduction in the size of the sixth form. This has reached a stage where the sixth form is no longer economically or educationally viable.

This proposal can be understood in the context of the requirements set by the DfE for the approval of proposals to open new sixth forms. These are set out in the statutory guidance which is referred to (with a hyperlink) in the introduction section of this document.

- The quality of pre-16 education must be good or outstanding

The last inspection of New Mills School and Sixth Form took place in June 2015 and the school was judged to Require Improvement.

- The proposed sixth form will provide places for a minimum of 200 students.

It can be seen from table 1 above that the size of the sixth form in 2015/16 was 87. Over the last 15 years, the sixth form has never reached the 200 figure for the number of students and the average post 16 roll at the school over this period is 127.

- The proposed sixth form will provide either directly or through partnership a minimum of 15 A level subjects.

The sixth form at New Mills is currently offering 13 A level subjects to students who entered Year 12 in September 2016.

- There is clear demand for a new sixth form (including evidence of a shortage of post 16 places and a consideration of the quality of L3 courses in the area).

The Cabinet paper of 20 September 2016 (referred to with hyperlink under rationale above) analyses the performance of all the post 16 providers in the area (page 6) and presents evidence that across a range of measures, the other providers standards of performance are good and in many cases better than New Mills. Poor quality of alternative provision cannot be sustained as an argument for retaining the New Mills sixth form.

The same paper also examines the demand for places at New Mills and concludes that overall there is no shortage of provision and that places are available within the FE sector colleges to meet the additional demand. In addition these colleges can provide additional places where there is sufficient demand.

As a consequence, whilst there is some demand for the places in the New Mills sixth form, it is not sufficient to generate a sixth form close to the viability level defined by the DfE. In addition, there is no rationale for the sixth form based on shortage of provision elsewhere or poor quality of provision elsewhere.

- The proposed sixth form is financially viable (and will not impact on 11-16 education by requiring cross subsidy).

The 'financial considerations' section of the Cabinet Report of 20 September 2016 (see page 9) makes clear that the school does face financial difficulties and has required additional support from the Authority to address them (Team Around The School Process). It also makes clear that the sixth form 'is adding pressure to the school's pre-16 budget'. The report makes clear on pages 2 and 3 that funding for sixth form students (which is provided by the Education Funding Agency) has fallen in recent years from £4,280 per head in 2013/14 to £3,947. This combined with the falling number of 16+ students recruited has added to the pressure faced by the school.

The school's Governing Body, via its consultation document, and financial officers of the Authority have agreed that the sixth form is not viable financially and currently requires subsidy from funding that is provided for 11-16 students.

Discussion

Whilst the criteria for opening a new sixth form are not directly applicable to a proposal to close a sixth form, they are clearly relevant. The DfE has not provided statutory guidance for decision makers on proposals to close sixth forms. It is therefore relevant for the Authority as decision maker to take account of the closest relevant advice. In this case, it is clear that the sixth form at New Mills does not meet any of the criteria for opening a new sixth form.

Both the Governing Body of the school and officers of the Local Authority take the view that the change of the age range to remove the sixth form will allow the school to focus its financial and human resources on making improvements to the pre 16 school. The prime objective of this proposal would be to improve the financial health of the school with a corresponding improvement in performance 11-16.

This proposal will naturally reduce the number of post 16 providers that students and parents can choose from, although as stated below, young people living in the New Mills area are already accessing post 16 education at around 20 different post 16 providers. Nevertheless, as the prime objective of this proposal is to improve the financial health of the school with a corresponding improvement in 11-16 performance, this should result in an increased ability of parents in the area to choose secondary school at age 11 that is rated good or better by Ofsted.

Effect on other institutions

The data in table 1 above has been analysed to assess the staying on rate into the sixth form (year 12) from the previous year 11 (15 year olds). Over the whole period covered by the table, the average staying on rate is 46.5%. The most recent rate in 2015/16 was 47.5% in line with the long term average. The majority of students who did not choose to stay in the sixth form chose to go to a number of FE sector colleges. The two most popular alternative providers and their number of 'full time equivalent students' (this is the number of students whose performance is reported in the 2015 performance tables published by the Department for Education) are set out in the table below. The figure for New Mills School and Sixth Form was 29.

College	Number of Full time equivalent students at the end of A level study (DfE Performance tables 2015)
Aquinas College	806.5
Cheadle & Marple 6th Form College	240.8

Table 2

Both of these institutions have been consulted about the proposed change of age range at New Mills School and Sixth form and neither has expressed any concern about a negative impact on their institution.

In 2015, young people living in the New Mills normal (catchment) area attended 20 different post 16 providers (other than the present New Mills sixth form). There is no evidence that there will be a negative impact on any of these institutions.

Project costs

No investment is required to deliver this proposal. The proposal is expected to improve the financial viability of the school. The Cabinet paper does report in the financial considerations on page 9 that there may be some additional costs for the

home to school transport costs of SEN students who qualify for support under the Authority's policy.

Conclusion

The Derbyshire County Council's Cabinet agreed the request of the Governing Body to publish this proposal at its meeting of 20 September 2016.

Contact Details

There is a four week representation (consultation) period when any person or organisation can submit comments on or objections to this proposal. These comments will be taken into account by Derbyshire County Council before reaching a decision on the proposal. Representations can be made until the end of 21 October 2016.

Any comments in response to this consultation should be sent to –

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