

Cabinet - 13 April 2005

Statutory proposal to discontinue Three Crowns School

Portfolio	Councillor Eddie Hughes, Children's Services
Service Area	Education Walsall
Wards	All
Forward Plan	Yes

Summary of report

This report outlines the processes following the Cabinet meeting on 22 December 2004. This report explains that no objections to the proposal to discontinue Three Crowns School have been received and in view of this, Cabinet is recommended to approve closure from 31 August 2006.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approve the statutory proposal to discontinue Three Crowns School from 31 August 2006.

Resource and legal considerations

At the meeting on 22 December 2004, Cabinet received a detailed report on the outcome of consultation on the review of specialist provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The proposal to close Three Crowns School, which provides places for children with physical disabilities, was one of the recommendations of the review process and the publication of a statutory proposal was approved by Cabinet.

The statutory notice was published on 13 January 2005 and a statutory two-month representation period followed. During this period a further round of meetings was held with staff and governors to discuss the proposals. In addition, one-to-one discussions were offered to parents to consider the implications of the proposal for their own child.

No objections to the proposal have been received during the representation period from the parents of children at Three Crowns School, nor from the staff or the governors. One letter of comment was received in which the writer expressed support for the parents.

As no objections have been received, it is for Cabinet to determine the statutory proposal and not the School Organisation Committee.

Education Walsall will continue to provide assistance to all pupils, families and staff during the closure period.

An outreach team to support children with physical needs will be developed within the same timescale as the school closure. This will initially utilise the skills and expertise of staff at the Three Crowns School and minimise any likelihood of redundancies.

Closure of the school will result in the school site becoming available to the Council.

Citizen impact

Walsall Council has clearly stated its commitment to inclusion and over the past year has put this into practice by investing significantly in developing the ability of mainstream schools to support the inclusion of children with SEN. This is being strongly supported by additional government funding.

The needs of each child at the Three Crowns School will be considered individually through the annual statutory statement review process with involvement from parents, children and staff at the school and other professionals. Suitable alternative school places will be offered either in Walsall or in a neighbouring borough, in mainstream, resourced mainstream schools and other special schools, in order to most appropriately meet the needs of individual pupils.

Community safety

There are no community safety implications as a result of this report.

Environmental impact

There are no direct environmental impacts as a result of this report.

Performance and risk management issues

Three Crowns School was established to cater for 135 pupils aged from 2 to 16. In January 2005, there were only 40 pupils on roll, 28 secondary-aged and 12 primary-aged. Although staff at the school make every effort to best meet the needs of pupils, it is challenging to provide a broad, balanced curriculum with appropriate social interaction for such small numbers of pupils.

Equality implications

Three Crowns School is a special school that caters for children and young people with physical needs, not learning needs. The proposal provides an opportunity to educate many of the school's pupils in a more inclusive, mainstream setting. The Disability Discrimination Act makes it unlawful to deny mainstream education to any child with a physical disability unless it is impossible to meet all of their needs, including learning, due to the complexity of their needs.

An outreach team to support children with physical needs will be developed within the same timescale as the school closure. This will initially utilise the skills and expertise of staff at the Three Crowns School.

The proposal will also enable many pupils to attend schools in their own locality alongside other pupils from their community.

Consultation

There was very extensive consultation on this proposal, which formed part of the review of specialist provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN), during the autumn term 2004. A detailed report on the outcome of this review was considered by Cabinet at the meeting on 22 December 2004. After full consideration of the issues and the consultation responses, Cabinet decided to approve the publication of a statutory proposal to discontinue Three Crowns School from 31 August 2006.

A statutory proposal to this effect was published on 13 January 2005 and this was followed by a two-month representation period during which objections could be made. A further round of meetings was held during this period with parents, staff and governors and parents were also offered one-to-one discussions to consider the possible implications for their child. No objections were received during the representation period and one letter of comment was received.

Vision 2008

The proposed consultation would contribute to the delivery of Walsall's vision for 2008 – Section 4 Make Our Schools Great - by enabling more pupils to be educated in mainstream settings.

Background papers

Cabinet Report, 22 December 2005: Review of Specialist Educational Provision for Children with Special Educational Needs

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Date: 4 April 2005

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Managing Director, Education Walsall

Date: 4 April 2005

Signed:



Portfolio Holder: Councillor Eddie Hughes

Date: 4 April 2005