PROPOSALS TO MAKE A PRESCRIBED ALTERATION TO OAKLEY (COMMUNITY) SCHOOL, PEMBURY ROAD, TUNBRIDGE WELLS, KENT TN2 4NE

Introduction
The proposals to make a prescribed alteration to Oakley (Community) Special School, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4NE for 1 September 2017 are being published by Kent County Council, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ. Contact Name and Address: Jared Nehra, Area Education Officer (West Kent), Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XQ. Tel: 03000 412209.

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School Details and Pupil Numbers
Oakley is the Tunbridge Wells district co-educational, (Community) Special School for day pupils, aged from 4 to 18 years, all of whom have severe and/or complex needs, with associated communication and learning difficulties. Oakley School is judged by Ofsted as a ‘good’ school (March 2015). The current designation is 218.

Description of alteration and evidence of demand
In accordance with section 19 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 Kent County Council with the support of the Governing Body intends to make the following prescribed alterations to:

- increase the designated number of places from 218 to 242
- extend the lower age range at Oakley School to age 2 for 1st September 2017 in order to develop an observation and assessment nursery provision

The proposed observation and assessment provision (O&A) would be established for up to 24 children, which would equate to 12 full time equivalent places. Over time it is likely that this would comprise up to 20 children between 3 and 4 years old who claim the free entitlement funding with 4 further children eligible for the two year old funding. It is envisaged that at a practical level this would mean up to 12 children will be attending the O&A nursery at any one time. The additional places will necessitate an increase in the overall designated number of the school, from 218 to 242.

Planning Permission for the new school building
The application for the new school building would be considered by KCC’s planning committee under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990; Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will be a consultee to the proposals but will not be the decision making body.

Evidence of Demand
For a number of years Kent County Council has had an arrangement with Barnardo’s to provide nursery provision for Tunbridge Wells children with complex special educational needs (SEND). The existing contract (which for education covers outreach and nursery
provision) is coming to an end and cannot be extended. Kent County Council must have arrangements in place for 1 September 2017 for the children who will no longer be at Barnardo’s Ravensdale Nursery.

Oakley School is currently the only district special school which is not designated to deliver nursery provision from age 2. Oakley School serves children with complex needs from across Tunbridge Wells with high quality local specialist provision. Oakley was rated ‘Good’ by Ofsted in March 2015 and is a popular and successful school. We feel it is important to ensure the needs of children are met locally and that Oakley School can extend its offer to admit children from age 2 as other district special schools do.

Oakley School operates across three sites, currently arranged as primary aged provision at the Waveney Road site in Tonbridge and secondary and post-16 provision at the Pembury Road site in Tunbridge Wells, with a “satellite provision” supporting and integrating a small number of children with special needs into the mainstream setting of the Skinners’ Kent Primary School.

The need for places is firmly established in Tunbridge Wells and there is a need to ensure high quality provision is maintained to serve the area. The proposal is therefore to establish the O&A provision at the Pembury Road site. Careful consideration has been given as to the location of the nursery on the school site, to ensure that it will be secure and appropriate for the age range and will not impact on the other provision on the school site.

**Objectives**

As the strategic commissioner of school provision, Kent County Council as the Local Authority has a duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places for the residents of Kent. These proposals reflect KCC’s aspirations to increase the number of SEN school places across the County, as set out in Kent’s Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2016-20.


**The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area**

KCC does not anticipate any adverse impact on neighbouring schools. KCC’s existing contract with Barnardo’s to provide nursery provision for Tunbridge Wells children with complex special educational needs (SEND) is coming to an end and cannot be extended. Oakley School is currently the only district special school which is not designated to deliver nursery provision from age 2.

**Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long term value for money will be achieved:**

**Capital**

The nursery is to be a single storey building located immediately adjacent to the south of the existing school, partly surrounded by the existing building and well screened by the mature trees on site. Accommodation will comprise an entrance lobby, main play area, adult only area, hygiene room, break out space, toilets and storage. Additionally there will be an outside play area, some of which will be covered plus an external store. The total cost is estimated to be in the region of £586,000 to be allocated from the Education and Young
People’s Services Capital Budget. The costs are estimates and these may increase as the project is developed.

**Revenue**
The O&A nursery places will be reflected in an increase in the school’s formula funding, including an adjustment for the increase in floor area.

**Human**
Providing continuity for families who currently access provision at Ravensdale Nursery is of the utmost importance to us. We also recognise the great work, skills and expertise that Barnardo’s staff have provided over recent years and would seek to retain core staff that directly work with the children should the proposal to create a nursery at Oakley School proceed. Oakley School is consulting with Barnardo’s staff separately in order to review their rights under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (Amendment) regulations 2014 (referred to as TUPE).

The new accommodation and facilities will have a positive impact on pupils and staff through the improvement of the learning environment.

**Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation**
Following the end of the public notice period, should the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform confirm his Decision No 16/00099 taken on 30/11/16 that the proposal can go ahead the expansion will take effect from 1 September 2017, subject to planning permission being granted for the new buildings.

**Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision**
KCC have produced a Strategy that sets out our plans for children with SEN and Disabilities (SEND). It is available on the website at: [www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy](http://www.kent.gov.uk/sendstrategy)
This proposal will lead to improvements in the standard, quality, and range of the educational provision for SEN children. It is anticipated that this proposal will enhance the quality of education provided through the sharing of skills and expertise, enable the curriculum to be broadened and enhance the extra-curricular opportunities.

**Travel**
Traffic and parking assessments have been carried out as part of the design and planning process. If the proposal goes ahead the school’s travel plan would be updated and would be utilised by the school to encourage families to find alternative ways of travelling to school in order to reduce the number of car journeys.

**Consultation**
KCC recognises the significant importance given to parent/carer views. All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to these proposals have been complied with. A public consultation was carried out by the Local Authority from 12 September 2016 until 10 October 2016. The Consultation documentation was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment. These documents can be obtained from KCC’s school consultation website: [https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations](https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations)

The consultation documents were distributed to statutory stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:
- The parents/carers of all pupils attending Oakley School via their pupil’s, school staff and governors and staff, and parents of children attending Ravensdale nursery.
The Department for Education
The Dioceses
Chief Executive and Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC)
Elected Members (Kent County Council, MBC)
Tunbridge Wells Parish Councils
Local MP
Schools in Tunbridge Wells area
Special schools in Kent
Local Libraries in the Tunbridge Wells area
All stakeholders were able to access copies of these documents on the KCC website.

A drop-in session was organised on 27 September 2016 between 3.30 and 5.00pm at Oakley (Special) School, Pembury Road, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 4NE.

The outcome of the consultation was discussed at the Education and Young People’s Cabinet Committee on 23 November 2016 whom resolved to endorse the recommendations. The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform took the decision to proceed with the proposals on 30 November 2016.

**The procedure for responses: support; objections and comments**
A public notice was published in a local newspaper on 6 January 2017. The notice is available on KCC’s website: [www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations](http://www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations)

Within four weeks from the date of publication, any person may send in a response supporting, objecting or commenting on the proposal to Jared Nehra, Area Education Officer (West Kent), Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone ME14 1XQ. Tel: 03000 412209 or email school.consultations@kent.gov.uk. The final date for sending in written representations is 3 February 2017.