



***The Westgate School, Rotherly Boarding House, Rotherly Day Nursery
and Westgate Badminton Centre***

Proposed Closure of Rotherly boarding in response from the Headteacher

The management and financial viability of Rotherly Boarding has been a cause of concern for the governing body during the last 10 to 15 years.

The Governors have run Rotherly Boarding on behalf of the Local Authority (LA) and for many years, it has struggled to break even, resulting in any losses being taken from the main school budget. On an annual basis this places the budget share at risk.

Recruitment of girls has been a problem and it has become increasingly difficult to recruit pupils particularly amongst years 7 to 9. This has resulted in numbers being top heavy in the upper school and placing an unnecessary strain on numbers in Key Stage 4. The large numbers in year 10 have also meant that on occasion, local pupils on our waiting list have been unable to be admitted.

Rotherly House itself is not fit for purpose. Its infrastructure is extremely old and tired. If we were to make it more viable, the LA would have to invest significant funds into the house itself so that we were able to meet the needs of 21st century boarding. Estimates for this work some three years ago were in the region of £300-400k. To date the LA has not been forthcoming with these monies. In the current financial climate this appears to be unlikely.

In the past, boarding was established to support the children of service personnel and to house grammar school children from across the County. With the demise of grammar schools, this is no longer appropriate and to date Rotherly Boarding houses only one service child. The majority of other pupils are from overseas, often recruited by agencies such as Academic Asia and a Spanish organisation. As such, boarding is supporting entrepreneurial businesses from abroad. There are no other pupils in boarding from Hampshire currently.

The management of the facility takes a disproportionate amount of key staff time and represents poor value for money. The Headteacher, Deputy Headteacher, Business Manager and other key administration staff are all heavily involved with key management issues. Combined, this can often reach up to 30 hours each week. This is a significant amount of time that has been taken away from our core responsibilities of supporting high quality teaching and learning.

Key Considerations following any potential closure

Governors are mindful that staff have committed a huge amount of time, energy and devotion towards Rotherly Boarding. They have created a home from home for our boarders and the girls feel very well supported. Following any decision to close the Headteacher will liaise carefully with educational personnel to ensure that members of staff are supported as effectively as possible through this difficult time. This process has already begun with an initial meeting with Educational personnel.

Any closure will take effect from July 2013, therefore this decision would potentially have the greatest impact on the current Y7, 8 and 9. This totals ten girls. Governors would seek reassurance from the LA that alternative accommodation would be offered to these pupils and that their place at The Westgate would be retained.

Finance

Governors are aware that there will be an inherent cost involved in any winding up of the Rotherly boarding facility. The Governors would want reassurance from the LA that any cost would be met by the LA and that the Westgate would not be expected to cover these. Governors are determined not to spend monies allocated or earmarked for Teaching & Learning to subsidise boarding.

The Way Forward

Upon reflection, the Governors would support any proposal to close boarding. They are keen to consider the option of all through schooling on site. If this option is not deemed to be viable then Governors would consider many other possible uses for the Rotherly site. This may include the expansion of the current nursery or the introduction of new teaching spaces to further enhance the quality of provision at the Westgate.