

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of project/proposal Amalgamation of Fort Hill Community School and Cranbourne Business and Enterprise College
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Department Childrens Services
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Description of Service / Policy

The proposal is to close Fort Hill Secondary School and resourced provision for pupils with Specific Learning Disabilities (SpLD) and amalgamate the school with Cranbourne Business and Enterprise College (CBEC) including setting up new SpLD provision at CBEC with effect from 1 September 2017. Fort Hill is a school for 11-16 year olds. There are only 345 students on roll (April 2017) with less than 60 in each of years 7, 8 and 9. In September 2017 the forecast is less than 300 students. This low number severely impacts on the school's budget and its viability to deliver a suitable curriculum.

Geographical impact* Basingstoke & Deane

Description of proposed change

It is proposed Fort Hill school closes and CBEC accommodates pupils from the school. It is planned that pupils who will be in years 10 and 11 in September 2017 remain at the Fort Hill site to complete their education. Pupils in years 8 and 9 will be offered support with travel to CBEC. Discussions will take place with staff on opportunities for continued employment within HCC and it is expected opportunities will exist at CBEC who will be catering for more pupils. The SpLD provision at Fort Hill will close and a new provision established at CBEC.

Engagement and consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

Consultation took place with key stakeholders between 19 January and 2 March 2017 which included letters being sent to consultees, public meetings being held, a website for online comments to be made and a range of meetings with key stakeholders such as local borough council members. All responses received were considered as part of the process and details included in the report submitted to the Executive Member for Education (EME) on 20 March 2017 summarising the outcome of the consultation. Following the decision by the Executive Member for Education to publish a Public Notice on the proposal a further 4 weeks between 24 March and 21 April 2017 was available for people to make representations. The outcome of the representations will be reported to the EME on 19 June 2017

Impacts of the proposed change

This impact assessment covers Service users

Statutory considerations

Impact

Age Medium
Impact The potential impact relates to pupils of secondary age who attend the Fort Hill School. The impact on staff and parents/carers is felt to be low. CBEC is approximately 2.3

miles walking from Fort Hill. and 2.4 miles if cycling and for some pupils, particularly younger ones or those with mobility difficulties, this could represent an increase in the distance and time when compared to their current journey to the Fort Hill site. The estimated time to travel these routes is 45 minutes (at a walking speed of 3.5 mph/5.6 kph) and 18 minutes respectively. There are a number of walking and cycling routes between the schools which are felt to be useable assuming a suitable level of road sense that would be expected in pupils of secondary school age. It is acknowledged the potential impact on pupils education resulting from a change in schooling particularly for those who will be in years 10 and 11 in September.

Mitigation

The Local Authority will work closely with the governing body of CBEC to support the continued provision of education on the Fort Hill site for years 10 and 11 pupils from September 2017. This is to support the continuity of education for those pupils at a key time in their education.

It is acknowledged that there could be an impact on Fort Hill pupils with the additional distance to be travelled to walk/cycle to Cranbourne. To alleviate this impact it is planned that support be offered to those pupils currently on the roll of Fort Hill Community School in years 7 and 8 who will transfer to CBEC in September 2017, with travel between the two school sites at the beginning and end of the school day. This support to be offered for up to 2 years from 1 September 2017. This is subject to the EME decision on 19 June 2017

Disability Impact

Medium

Fort Hill Community School has a resourced provision for up to 16 children with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD). As part of the consultation process a separate meeting was held with the parent / carers and children supported by the provision.

Mitigation

It is proposed that the SpLD provision is provided at CBEC. The importance of this provision is recognised and, if the school is amalgamated with CBEC, pupils placed in the resourced provision would continue to receive the same level of support that is currently available to them, including access to a suitably qualified teacher and other support as required within a mainstream setting to meet their individual needs. Support would continue to be provided to reflect the provision as specified within the pupils' Education, Health and Care Plans, and/or their individual education plans. The SpLD resourced provision will be provided at CBEC

Sexual Orientation

Neutral

Race

Neutral

Religion and Belief

Neutral

Gender Reassignment

Neutral

Gender

Neutral

Marriage and civil

Neutral

partnership

Pregnancy and Maternity Neutral

Other policy considerations

Poverty Impact Medium

It is acknowledged there could be an impact on journey distances and times for pupils to attend CBEC. In addition some families may struggle to meet additional costs should a new uniform be required.

Mitigation It is proposed that support will be available to pupils with travel between the school sites at beginning and end of the school day subject to approval by the Executive member for Education. The Local Authority will work closely with the governing body of CBEC to develop a school travel plan to promote opportunities for walking and cycling to school. Pupils could also be eligible for support with travelling to and from school if they meet the criteria in the County Council's Travel to School Policy. In addition the LA will work with the governing body on a strategy to support eligible parents with any additional school uniform costs.

Rurality Neutral

Additional Information

If no action is taken to resolve the issue of the low numbers in the school of less than 300 pupils in September 2017, the impact on educational opportunities for those pupils will be severe. The resulting decrease in funding from such a low number of pupils will have a significant impact on the educational offer to those pupils with a school operating in most year groups at less than 2 forms of entry. In general, larger schools are more successful than smaller schools. This is because they have more resources available to them and it is consequently easier to build up a critical mass of good teaching within the school. So setting up one larger school would be in the interests of pupils currently in both schools.