

Public Consultation

Proposal to close Tunbridge Wells High School to replace with a new Government funded Academy



Kent County Council would like to hear your views on this proposal



Kent County Council is considering a proposal to close Tunbridge Wells High School in order to open a Government funded Academy. We want to know what you think of this.

Your views, as key stakeholders, are important and will help shape what happens. This document gives you the opportunity to share your thoughts and invites you to a Public Meeting to talk about the proposal and to ask questions. It is written mainly for parents/carers, governors, staff, students and other people who have an interest in education in the area.

There are two strands to this consultation process. This one, led by the County Council, is about the need to close Tunbridge Wells High School in order to make way for an Academy to replace it. The second strand is a separate but linked consultation about the opening of an Academy.

Academies are state maintained schools but independent of the County Council and so consultation about them is led by Project Management Consultants on behalf of the sponsors and appointed by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). We work very closely together, however, and attend each other's consultation activities. There will be a number of opportunities for you to tell us what you think and to ask questions about the proposed Academy.

Further details about the proposed Academy can be accessed from the website address below, which is managed by PKF, the Project Management Consultants for this Academy: - www.proposedtunbridgewellsacademy.org

Please note that there is a Reply Form at the back of this document for you to send in your comments if you would like to. No decisions will be made until this consultation process is completed and your views will inform the outcome.

Tunbridge Wells High School

Tunbridge Wells Community High School, with a roll of circa 400 students, is a small 11-16 mixed, non-selective secondary school, located to the east of Tunbridge Wells, about one mile from the town centre, off the main Pembury Road.

It is the only community high school in Tunbridge Wells town. There are also three single-sex grammar schools and two co-educational, comprehensive, church schools. A large number of local students travel to other grammar and non-selective schools both within Kent and across county borders.

Tunbridge Wells High School mostly serves an urban community within the town and very few students come from further afield. Many come from backgrounds marked by unexpected levels of disadvantage. Their attainment, on entry, is well below the national and county average. The numbers of students with Special Educational Needs and those eligible for Free School Meals are also above the national and county averages.

The roll of the school has been falling in recent years despite significant improvement in its 5 A*-Cs GCSE results and despite being rated as 'Good' at its last Ofsted inspection, in 2005. Tunbridge Wells High School is, however, part of the DCSF 'National Challenge' initiative for those schools who gain fewer than 30% GCSE A*-C, with English and Maths. This makes it eligible for consideration within the DCSF Academies Programme.

*Dr Ian Craig, Director - Operations
Children, Families and Education, Kent County Council
10 November 2008*

What is an Academy?

Academies are publicly funded independent schools that provide a first class, free education to local students of all abilities. Each Academy is unique, able to provide local solutions for local needs, drawing on the expertise of sponsors to deliver a distinctive ethos. They have the flexibility to be creative in their curriculum, timetabling, organisation and governance arrangements. All offer a broad and balanced curriculum, consistent with national curriculum requirements and focus on one or more specialisms.

Successful Academies share specialist experience and facilities with other primary, secondary and special schools, together with the local community. In this way they play their part in the regeneration of communities, providing a focus for learning and for raising aspiration.

They are all-ability schools established by Sponsors from a range of backgrounds including business, faith or voluntary groups working in highly innovative partnerships with central Government and local education and multi agency partners. The Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) meets the running costs for Academies in full.

What does this proposal mean?

The proposal is that Tunbridge Wells High School will be closed at the end of August 2009 so that an Academy can open in its place. The Lead Sponsor for the Academy will be the Skinners' Voluntary Aided Grammar School, within the Skinners' Company. Co-sponsors will be West Kent College and Kent County Council. There are already strong partnership initiatives between the Sponsors and Tunbridge Wells High School. These will be built upon by the Academy.

The Academy will open from September 2009 in existing but refurbished premises. New 'state of the art' buildings are expected to be completed for September 2012 and will be located within the current school site.

It will be an 11-18 co-educational school for all abilities and will admit up to 180 students in each year group. There will be 250 places available in the sixth form, taking the roll to a possible 1,150 by 2015. All existing and future Year 7 students will transfer, automatically, to the Academy's roll.

The Academy will specialise in Science and Engineering, with a particular focus on Applied Science and with strong emphasis being given to Technology and Maths. Sponsors intend that the Academy will be a place in which all learners have a sense of identity, worth and excitement about their life chances. The Academy will have a village feel to it, adopting and adapting the key transferable features that make for a stable, supportive home life and a healthy, successful working life.



Why is KCC proposing this change?

The need for this Academy is simple – to transform a 20th century school into a 21st century one that can deliver a 21st century curriculum and learning environment for Tunbridge Wells.

Collectively, the Sponsors are able to draw upon considerable skills and expertise in the fields of academic and vocational learning, business and enterprise, school and college management and the new learning technologies. Embedding vocational learning into the Academy's curriculum will ensure that students have a wider range of curriculum options and provide for both academic and vocational pathways. There is a commitment to the Academy's provision being complementary to that of the other local secondary schools in the West Kent Learning Federation.

The Academy will be at the heart of its local community, offering a hub for family and life long learning, and providing sporting and cultural activities, together with the delivery of a wide range of essential services for families and local residents, within the context of Children's Trust arrangements in Kent. The Academy will bring about a culture change and raise the attainment, ambition and aspiration of all the young people in its care.

The closure of the current school to provide for the establishment of an Academy will lead to new purpose designed and built facilities and curriculum innovation, together with the recruitment and retention of high quality staff. It presents an opportunity to radically reshape the educational provision available and to secure resources that the Academy programme can deliver to make an enduring difference to life chances for young people.

The Academy in Tunbridge Wells

At the heart of the Academy will be the desire to make a great school which embeds an ethos of high academic standards, reflected in good exam results, both on an absolute and a value-added basis. It will apply principles and practices that already change lives at The Skinners' School and at West Kent College, while losing nothing of what makes Tunbridge Wells High School a high achieving school.

There are two key tenets of the Vision for this Academy. The first is 'INTEGRATION', allowing smooth transition through the phases of education and involving all aspects of community, external and a secure 'home like' school and working life. The second element of the Vision is that 'EVERY CHILD IN THE ACADEMY WILL BE KNOWN', their family embraced and 'EVERY LEARNER SUPPORTED'. The Academy will place the Social, Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) at the core of its curriculum.

Sponsors want the Academy to become a school of choice for Tunbridge Wells, by becoming a high performing specialist school able to attract back into Kent those local students who currently feel it necessary to cross the County borders to access their secondary education.

Key characteristics will include

- A focus on readiness to learn, building students' confidence and self-esteem
- Ensuring discipline and order through the application of clear sanctions and rewards, within a 'house' framework
- Creative partnerships with business to support the application of vocational learning and understanding the wider work environment through the development of entrepreneurial and enterprise skills
- A focus on individual personalised learning

How much will it cost?

Capital

The capital costs of the Academy will be borne by the Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). Should there be a need to dispose of any part of the Tunbridge Wells High School site, a contribution towards the capital costs would be provided by KCC.

Revenue

The Academy will receive its revenue funding directly from the DCSF each year. It will be funded at a rate equivalent to other Kent specialist schools.

Human

In these circumstances legislation concerning transfer of staff (known as TUPE) is considered to apply and consultation will take place in accordance with these requirements.

Transport and Road Safety Implications

Ensuring that students travel to the Academy using sustainable methods of transport is also at the heart of this proposal. With the increase in numbers envisaged as being on site, a school travel plan will be in place upon the opening of the Academy. Students will be encouraged to take advantage of schemes such as the Kent Freedom Pass, which for £50 per year provides unlimited bus travel to all Kent students in Years 7 to 11.

CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

5 November 2008	Kent County Council's School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider a Public Consultation.
10 November 2008	Start of Consultation
4 December 2008	Public Meeting
19 December 2008	Close of Consultation
8 January 2009	School Organisation Advisory Board meeting to consider issuing a Public Notice, following Public Consultation
Mid January 2009	Report to Cabinet Member
End January 2009	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member
Mid March 2009	End of Statutory Representation Period
End March 2009	Final Decisions made
31 August 2009	Tunbridge Wells High School closes and an Academy opens 1 September 2009

What Happens Next?

- All the views received, either in writing, by email or at the Public Meeting, will be reported to the School Organisation Advisory Board of Kent County Council (KCC) on 8 January 2009 at 10.30am. **This is a Public Meeting and reports to it are available on request: Tel: 01622 694289 or 694297**
IF following a Cabinet Member decision, KCC determines to take the proposal forward, a Public Notice will be published in the local newspaper, at the school, and in public places like the library. The Public Notice will run for six weeks, during which time anyone can make a Statutory Objection or a Representation about the proposal.
IF no one objects, KCC can close Tunbridge Wells High School
IF there are objections, the Schools' Adjudicator may be required to make a final decision.
Concurrently, consultation on the Academy proposal itself, will be led by PKF, the Project Management Consultants.
- NO** decisions will be made until your views are known

HOW TO TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

► **Complete and return the Reply Form**

Send to:

Ms Chris Lay

Area Children's Services Officer,
(Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells)

17 Kings Hill Avenue

Kings Hill

West Malling

Kent ME19 4UL

Fax: 01732 525223

(your comments must reach us by 19 December 2008)

► **Come to a Public Meeting**

At:

Tunbridge Wells High School

Blackhurst Lane

Tunbridge Wells

Kent TN2 4PY

Thursday 4 December 2008 at 7pm.

An elected member of Kent County Council will chair this meeting. You will be able to ask questions and tell us what you think regarding the school closure process. Officers from the Local Authority, the Project Management Consultancy and representatives from the Sponsors will also be present to tell you more about the proposals to open an Academy.

► **Email your comments to school.consultations@kent.gov.uk**

(We will note all you say, but will not be able to respond individually to Reply Forms, letters or emails)

This consultation document is also available at

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-learning/about-education-service/consultations>

Public Consultation Reply Form

Proposal to close Tunbridge Wells High School to replace with a new Government funded Academy

To: Ms Chris Lay
Area Children's Services Officer, Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells
17 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill, West Malling
Kent, ME19 4UL
Fax: 01732 525223

You can also email your views to: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

PLEASE RETURN NO LATER THAN 19th DECEMBER 2008

Do you agree with this proposal?

Yes

No

Undecided

I am (please tick as appropriate)

The parent/carer of a student
at Tunbridge Wells High
School

A member of staff at
Tunbridge Wells High
School

A governor of Tunbridge Wells
High School

A student at Tunbridge
Wells High School

Other interested party

Name of other interested party:
.....

Name:

Address:

Kent County Council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will comply with the requirements of the Act at all times. We will ensure that your personal information is processed fairly and lawfully and in this instance used only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.

PLEASE WRITE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OVERLEAF

My comments are as follows

Please continue on another sheet if necessary