

**Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames  
Primary School Expansion  
Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why do you think you need so many extra places? How can you be confident that you now have the projections right? (you've been wrong for the past two years)**

School admissions data for September 2009 shows a sharp rise in demand for reception places for a second year due to a significant increase in the local birth rate and many families with young children moving into the area. School roll projections indicate that the increase in demand will continue until at least 2015. We are as confident as we can be with the projections based on the information available. We have spent a lot of time in the past year examining data supplied by the Greater London Authority and have supplemented this by looking at local trends and any new national trends that have emerged.

**How have you decided which schools to include in the options for expansion?**

All schools were asked to indicate if they wished to be included as an option for expansion. Thirteen schools who expressed an interest are named in the consultation and some have already accepted additional pupils for September 2008 and/or September 2009. The Council has discussed with many schools (and with the Dioceses where appropriate) the extent to which places are needed in the area around the school and whether the school site is likely to be able to accommodate extra buildings.

**How will you decide which schools to expand permanently?**

As well as undertaking the consultation, we are currently doing a feasibility study at each school site to confirm that it is possible to provide sufficient additional accommodation on the site. This will take into account the need for more classrooms and indicate building works needed to ensure that there is sufficient hall and dining space, toilets, staffrooms, internal sports facilities and external play spaces. We will then have discussions with the planning department at the Council to find out at an early stage if our building plans conform to national and local planning policy. At the same time, we are discussing the possibility of using available sites to build new schools. If we can progress one or more new schools we will need to expand fewer existing schools. All of this information will help us identify a final plan for the expansion of primary schools.

**When will the public know which schools you intend to expand?**

There will be two stages. Firstly, the Council's Executive Committee will consider a final plan for expansion on 7 July 2009. If this is approved, the Council will start the statutory consultation process for each school from September 2009 onwards. A timeline showing the key stages in this process is on display here tonight.

**The consultation is about what will happen from September 2011 - why can't you yet say where the additional temporary places will be added for September 2010?**

Due to the scope of some of the building works that will be required at schools with permanent expansion it may not be possible for some of the schools named in the consultation to accommodate additional temporary classes for September 2010. This will be clearer after the feasibility studies are completed and the preferred mix of schools for expansion is confirmed by the Executive in July. Information on the location of additional temporary classes will be available at the start of the admission process for September 2010 in autumn 2009.

**How long will the building works take?**

For a school being expanded around two years in total. Some of the new accommodation could be available sooner than that to allow additional children to start before all of the buildings are complete. Building works are of course subject to planning permission being granted.

For a new school once the site is identified it takes about two and a half to three years to design the school, secure planning permission and build the school. It is possible to complete the building in phases to allow occupation of part of it after two years.

**Isn't it disruptive for children to be at a school where building works are being undertaken?**

The Council has clear and effective protocols in place to deal with this. We manage the building/expansion process with close involvement of the school by:

- ensuring schools identified for expansion have strong management teams that are well able to deal with the challenges posed by building work and reorganisation
- establishing a project team who own and manage the building project
- ensuring inspection and advisory staff support schools in matters of organising learning. We also have lots of recent experience of completing building works at primary and secondary schools whilst the pupils are there. We aim to ensure that parents and pupils are kept informed of the changes taking place and wherever possible provide an opportunity for them to view and learn from the building works as they take place.

**What about the impact of school expansion and new school proposals on the local community?** Planning applications would need to be submitted to the Council as Local Planning Authority for school expansion and new school proposals. Planners as part of pre-planning application discussions and the assessment of planning applications are required to consider what impact expansion or a new school will have on the local community. This includes looking at the likely impact of the design, the appearance and siting of the proposals, the impact of additional trips and increased traffic and the availability of suitable access and whether the proposals would result in the loss of open space or playing fields, which may be protected.

**There is the potential for increased traffic as a result of more pupils attending a school. How do you intend to manage this?**

This will be addressed through the use of Sustainable Travel Plans by schools which aim to reduce the number of journeys made to and from school by car and encourage pupils and staff to find alternative and more environmentally friendly ways of travelling. Currently all but three Kingston Schools have Travel Plans and by the end of the current term, all Kingston schools will have Travel Plans. The Council's Travel Plan officers will continue to work in partnership with schools to review and improve travel planning. Ways of reducing disruption during building work, including from contractors' vehicles will also be considered and this may include the use of traffic management measures.

**Where a school is expanded, how will this affect the quality of the education of the pupils there?**

Borough schools offer high quality education and the Council would not want or expect expansion to threaten or detract from the quality of education. Many parents are unhappy at the thought of their child's school getting bigger and many have chosen a school, in part, because of its size. This is a tribute to the school and its leadership. However there is a high level of parental satisfaction in Borough schools and parents are very satisfied with provision in one, two and three form entry schools. Ofsted's research in to successful schools shows repeatedly that the success of a school is determined by its leadership, expectation and ethos, not size. Successful larger schools create small units for each year group which become a 'mini school' and can benefit from the increased number of staff and resources focussed on that age range.

**Will the playing space at a school be reduced as a result of expansion?**

We understand parents' concern about taking away valuable playing space but we don't yet know what the impact of expansion will be on any particular school. This will be addressed as part of the feasibility study. It is the Council's aim to ensure that any space available at a particular site is used as wisely as possible.

**Who is paying for all of this? Will I have to pay more Council Tax as a result?**

Council Tax is no longer used to contribute to the annual cost of education (staffing, premises and curriculum costs). Instead, the Government pays for the annual funding of schools through a separate ring-fenced grant based on the number of pupils in our schools. We will need to spend a lot on the building works necessary to expand schools. We are talking with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) about the need for additional funding to pay for this and we hope to receive news about this later this year. In the event that the cost of the building works exceeds the funding available the Council will have to borrow money to pay for the works. The cost of repaying the borrowed money may have to be borne by local Council Taxpayers, but this is far from clear yet.

**What are you doing about expanding secondary schools?**

We are conscious that the need for extra places will be extended to secondary schools as the increased pupil numbers move from Year 6 into Year 7. The Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme addresses the need to expand secondary provision to accommodate the increasing numbers of pupils. Within the strategy the Council has agreed to establish a new secondary school in the borough and consultation on the location of this school will take place shortly.

**Additional demand for school places isn't just an issue at primary and secondary level. What are you doing to address the rise in demand for nursery places?**

The Council has a range of early education provision provided by the maintained, private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sectors. The Early Years and Childcare Service, as part of the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, ask parents' views to help understand their needs both for early learning and childcare places and the changing patterns of demand due to employment or change in demographics. The Service then respond to this need by ensuring sufficient provision is available within the borough. This could mean establishing or expanding nursery classes within primary schools or supporting the PVI sector to expand or start up additional provision.