

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council



From Councillor: James Courtenay
Ward: Blenheim Park
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Date: 22nd July 2013

Cllr. R. Gooding,
Cabinet Member for Education &
Lifelong Learning,
Essex County Council,
County Hall,
Market Road,
Chelmsford,
Essex.
CM1 1QH.

Dear Councillor Gooding,

Response by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to the Essex County Council consultation on the proposal to discontinue The Deanes School.

Thank you for sending me the consultation document and for coming to Southend as part of the consultation process to meet with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council Members and local parents. These meetings gave me the opportunity to hear first hand the presentation by your team and the questions and concerns of parents and Members and your responses.

As was said at the meeting the boundary of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Essex County Council does not mean anything to parents or young people and there is a need to continue to offer a mixed provision of schools for residents in the South East of Essex, maximising choice. I have set out below a number of concerns that this Council has that would be contrary to this aim. These have been drawn from feedback from young people, parents, Members and officers.

Although the number of pupils attending The Deanes School from Southend is falling, the number of pupils from Southend attending King John School has remained fairly consistent and the closure of The Deanes School will reduce the spaces available for Southend parents at King John School. The wide variation in forecast figures year on year at The Deanes School means that 60 additional places at King John and Appleton Schools will not be sufficient and

so will further displace Southend pupils. Very few Southend pupils attend Appleton School and in recent years there have been no offers made to Southend pupils for the school.

The rising number of primary pupils in Southend will transfer through to the secondary sector. Based on the current pattern of admissions and current provision there will be a significant shortage of Year 7 places in Southend secondary schools by September 2017. The closing of The Deanes School and less availability at King John School will make this shortage of places more acute. Whilst this can rightly be said to be a Southend problem, and indeed we are actively planning to address it, there are significant numbers of Essex pupils attending Southend schools. Southend offers a wide range of opportunities for Essex pupils but if The Deanes School were to close the offer from Essex to Southend residents would significantly reduce and the overall range of provision across South East Essex will be reduced. In addition should the pattern of admissions change and fewer Essex pupils attend Southend grammar schools in the future there will be a need for additional Essex places.

The pressure on Year 7 places in Southend is likely to result in an increase in applications for schools outside of Essex and it is unclear if the forecasts for The Deanes School take account of this potential increase or indeed increases elsewhere in Essex. It was asked at the meeting what account has been taken of Southend pupils in the forecast of pupil numbers for The Deanes School and I am informed that your officers do not take account of Southend pupils specifically in the forecast for The Deanes School but use an overall number for all those outside of the area. This appears somewhat short sighted; joint planning and sharing of data with Southend officers would seem to me to have been essential prior to decision to consult. I am disappointed that this did not happen and suggest this takes place as a matter of urgency before any decisions are made.

There is concern as to the accuracy of the forecast potential numbers for The Deanes School taking into account the rising birth rate and primary population, the new housing figures and an allowance for the impact on applications of the originally proposed new build at The Deanes School. The answers given at the meeting here in Southend have not convinced me that the pupil number forecasting underpinning the consultation has been detailed enough to ensure we have sufficient long term capacity in the area.

The proposal to close the school has not taken into account the subsequent reduction in parental choice and the specific reasons why parents chose The Deanes School such as its sports specialism or its inclusive ethos regarding SEN. It would have been good to see alternative proposals as to how to promote the school and increase take up of places as well as a proposal to close.


Providing stability for pupils staying at the school until Year 11 is of serious concern should the school close. The questions as to how a full curriculum can be delivered, the GCSE choices of pupils met, experienced and familiar

staff retained and the quality of the learning experience maintained have not in my view been satisfactorily answered.

The additional places at King John and Appleton Schools, whilst mooted, do not yet seem to be secure in terms of school or planning authority agreement. Neither is it clear how current pupils at The Deanes School will be allocated between the two alternative schools, especially in light of the fact that Appleton School, mainly due to distance, is not a school of choice for Southend young people and their parents.

Based on the above issues and concerns, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council cannot support the closure of The Deanes School at this time. We are of course happy to continue to discuss the issues with you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'James Courtenay', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

James Courtenay
Executive Councillor
Children and Learning

