



Consultation on Expansion of Alderbrook School

Overview

Alderbrook School has been asked by Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to expand from 250 pupils per year to 280 pupils per year, from September 2022.

This is considered to be a “significant change” we must consult in line with guidance from the Department for Education. This is the consultation document.

An introduction from the Headteacher, Tom Beveridge

Exciting plans are being developed to invest significant capital money to support the expansion of Alderbrook School. Following careful scrutiny and planning, SMBC identified the need to increase the number of secondary places following the significant increase in the number of pupils leaving primary schools and the level of new housing developments in the area. We consider this a fantastic opportunity for the school as it also allows us to:

- Introduce new, modern teaching and learning facilities at the school, with the addition of a new 7 classroom block
- Create a central pedestrianised hub running through the school, increasing recreational space for students
- Improve connectivity between existing teaching blocks by the introduction of a new building at the centre of the school site.
- Improve catering facilities across the site to improve the experience of all students at break and lunchtimes
- Create significant improvements to the landscaping and front driveway
- Improve the experience for all visitors to the site, with the introduction of a brand new reception area and meeting rooms
- Increase safety for all pedestrians, with significant improvements to pedestrian access through Blossomfield Road, and segregated bus access
- Provide a solution to the growing pressure on school places.

We want to make sure that as part of any expansion we keep all our stakeholders fully informed, giving them the appropriate opportunities to consult and feedback their views.

In the light of the proposed increase to our numbers, we must, as an academy, follow the guidance published by The Department for Education in “Making significant changes to an open academy and closure by mutual agreement. Departmental guidance for all types of academy trust. Published November 2019.” A copy of this can be found [here](#).

The most relevant section relates to any proposed changes detailed in “Expansion of physical capacity” where it says:

“A ‘significant expansion’ is defined as an enlargement that increases the overall physical capacity of an academy (as recorded in its funding agreement) so that it can increase its overall teaching space enabling the school to provide places for more than 30 additional pupils...Permanently changing the internal configuration of a school building to accommodate



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more than 30 additional pupils would also be classed as an ‘increase in capacity’ and requires the significant change process to be followed.”

To comply with the significant change process, we must “demonstrate that a fair and open local consultation has been undertaken with all those who could be affected by the proposed change, and that the academy trust has considered all responses received. Comments or objections can be made on any grounds and opportunities for feedback should be given at all public and stakeholder meetings. The LA will hold important contextual information on the requirement for places locally and must be consulted in all cases.”

Details of how you can feed back comments or objections are contained in the letter on the school consultation webpage, with a separate comment form available.

This consultation document sets out

- The position of SMBC
- The school’s context
- Why there is a need for more places in Solihull
- Why Alderbrook is best placed to meet this need
- The expansion proposal
- The broad financial and educational implications
- How will we manage the increase in numbers?
- Will the increase in numbers effect the level of pastoral care available?
- Will the increase in numbers effect the level of support for students with SEND?
- Will we be changing the admission criteria when we expand?
- What does this mean for travel and the school site?
- What happens next?

The position of SMBC

The proposed expansion is in response to a request from SMBC to provide more school places in order to meet the rising demand from Solihull families due to apply for secondary school places in the coming years. The Council’s School Organisation Plan 2020, available [here](#), outlines the requirements for school places in Solihull and on 22nd February, the Cabinet Member for Children, Education & Skills considered the particular proposal for Alderbrook School. The report approving the School Organisation Plan is available [here](#).

For further information on school place planning in Solihull, please contact Ann Pearson at SMBC via annpearson@solihull.gov.uk .

The school’s context

Situated centrally in Solihull, Alderbrook is a successful 11-18 school in the south of the borough, judged as ‘good’ by Ofsted.



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The School converted to an academy in August 2011. In September 2015 it opened a Sixth Form which is flourishing and providing learners with a first-rate post 16 experience. The first Year 12 cohort numbered 55 students. As of September 2020 Alderbrook has a Sixth Form of over 200 students.

The school operates an Additionally Resourced Centre with 30 places reserved for pupils with Special Educational Needs. The provision is for pupils with communication and interaction needs in the age range 11 to 16. **This provision is unaffected by the proposed school expansion.**

Why there is a need for more places in Solihull

The increased cohort leaving primary schools and the housing developments that are approved and currently under construction will impact on pupil numbers entering secondary schools in the coming years. The Council's School Organisation Plan has identified that over the next 7 years secondary school rolls are forecast to rise by nearly 6% to just under 16,695 pupils.

Why Alderbrook is best placed to meet this need

Alderbrook School is located in the West and Central planning area where additional school places are required. The forecasts show a shortfall of places by 2026. Tudor Grange Academy Solihull has expanded by 150 places from September 2018, which will go some way to meeting this demand and addressing the place shortage in this planning area. However the addition of further school places is required to meet this future demand.

The expansion at Alderbrook School will ensure that Solihull families are able to access a secondary school place. Initially this expansion will meet the demand from the significant growth that has taken place in primary schools and the existing housing developments located in the Central and West planning area. In the longer term this expansion will meet some of the demand from the housing developments identified in the draft Solihull Local Plan.

The broad financial and educational implications

30 extra students in Year 7 requires 50 hours extra teaching time across a fortnight, equating to a need for approx. 1.5 extra teachers.

The basic funding we receive is £5150 per pupil, therefore we will receive £154,500 additional income per annum, ensuring we have adequate funding to cover the additional teaching cost.

Our most valuable asset is our intellectual capital and so the more people working in the school the better and stronger we will become.

We also believe in serving the needs of our local community in Solihull.



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How will we manage the increase in numbers?

As the number of students increases so will our revenue. We will therefore ensure that this increased revenue is spent proportionately and in line with national benchmarks.

The proposed new 7-classroom block will give us the needed classroom space to teach the additional students.

One of the consequences of Covid-19 has been the need to split our breaks and lunches to maintain “social bubbles”. This has provided an ideal opportunity to assess the benefits of split breaks/lunches and we are overwhelmingly of the conclusion that this is a good thing. With the continuation of this timetable change, resulting in more recreational space for each year group, and with the proposed catering changes, the increased numbers will be well managed. The split breaks/lunches will clearly alleviate some of the demand for lunch seating across the site whilst providing a calmer, more capacious dining experience for our students. The proposed increase to catering facilities, and modifications to current facilities, will improve efficiency across the site.

Will the increase in numbers effect the level of pastoral care available?

We are confident that we will retain the high quality of pastoral care we currently have. We will retain and enhance pastoral support structures. We will also look to increase the level of pastoral support proportionately as the number on roll grows.

Will the increase in numbers effect the level of support for students with SEND?

We see no reason why any increase in numbers should impact upon the provision for students with SEND. As the school grows in all aspects there will be a proportionate increase in terms of the funding we receive and therefore where we spend it. We will grow any additional support in line with our current provision whilst ensuring it is appropriately benchmarked against national guidance.

Will we be changing the admission criteria when we expand?

There are no plans to change our current admissions criteria.

What does this mean for travel and the school site?

SMBC has commissioned a travel assessment which will be published as part of the planning application.

The proposed expansion will bring a number of benefits to the school site. The proposed changes to the entrance and parking facilities will ensure segregation between vehicles and pedestrians as they enter the site from Blossomfield Road. The introduction of a bus turning circle will ensure separation between the buses and pedestrians, and the front drive will be landscaped to channel pedestrians to the front of the school. The new building proposal



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allows improved internal and external access around the school with good interconnection of spaces. The location also creates a pedestrianised hub at the centre of the school site, with increased safe recreational space for students. The proposed improvements to catering facilities will improve the dining experience for students, reducing queuing time and enabling hot meals to be served in more locations on the school site.

The location of the proposed new building offers access to construct with minimal impact upon the day-to-day functioning of the school site.

What happens next?

This consultation will run from Monday 1st March 2021 until Tuesday 6th April 2021. As the consultation progresses, we will update a FAQ document on our website. Consultation responses will then be considered by the Alderbrook Governing Board, and any changes or modifications necessary will be made to what we are proposing. If Governors decide to proceed with the expansion, then a business case will be submitted to the Regional Schools Commissioner, as required by the DfE guidance for making changes to an Academy School.

The changes to the school building will require planning permission and will be subject to all normal planning processes.