

7 July 2020		ITEM: 13
Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Update on the Free School Programme		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: N/A	
Report of: Sarah Williams, Service Manager, Education Support Service		
Accountable Assistant Director: Michele Lucas, Assistant Director of Education and Skills		
Accountable Director: Sheila Murphy, Corporate Director of Children's Services		
This report is public		

Executive Summary

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are enough school places to meet demand and therefore needs to be proactive in ensuring we have high quality school accommodation that provides choice for parents and supports the educational outcomes for our children and young people.

This report seeks to provide an update on the status of the free school programme including temporary accommodation prior to the opening of the free schools where required.

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the update in relation to the Thames Park Academy Free School, Orsett Heath Academy Free School, Treetops 2 and Reach2 Free School**
- 1.2 That Children's Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee notes the update on the plans for temporary accommodation at Orsett Heath Academy and Thames Park prior to the opening of the Free Schools**

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council has a statutory responsibility to ensure that suitable and sufficient school places are available in Thurrock for every child of school age whose parents wish them to have one.
- 2.2 The successful Free Schools include:

- 2.3 Orsett Heath Academy - mainstream, 8FE, 1,200 place secondary with a sports specialism. The new school is part of the South West Essex Community Education Multi Academy Trust.
- 2.4 Thames Park Academy - 6FE, 900 place secondary. The new school is part of the Osborne Co-Operative Multi Academy Trust.
- 2.5 Treetops 2 Special Free School; special, all-through school with 140 places for pupils between the ages of 4-16 catering for Moderate Learning Difficulties and Autistic Spectrum Condition.
- 2.6 Reach2 Aveley Free School – 2 FE, 240 place primary school. The new school will be located in Aveley.

3. Update on temporary/permanent location

3.1 Orsett Heath Academy

- 3.1.1 The new building, currently under construction, located on the site of the Thurrock Rugby Club is well underway and will be the temporary accommodation for 120 new pupils from September 2020 with a further 120 pupils from September 2021.
- 3.1.2 The permanent site for Orsett Heath is located on the land lying to the North West of Stanford Road, Grays. The Department for Education are working towards submitting a planning application, which is due to be submitted in June/July 2020. The school is planned to open ready for September 2022. Concerns remain in relation to the additional land required, which is impacted by the Lower Thames Crossing. The Council and Department for Education are working together to find resolve this issue.

3.2 Treetops 2 Special School

- 3.2.1 Treetops 2 secured their planning permission to progress the delivery of the school on 6th November 2019. The new school is on track to open from September 2021.
- 3.2.2 In addition to the new school, there has been a planning application submitted to provide temporary accommodation whilst the new school is under construction. Thurrock is seeing a significant increase in the demand for special school places for local pupils. In light of this demand, it is necessary to provision additional places at Treetops school. This will enable pupils to access specialist places locally, whom otherwise would have been required to travel or to be transported to alternative specialist schools outside of the borough and would add substantial financial costs to the service.

3.3 Thames Park Academy

3.3.1 The new school will open in its temporary location from this September 2020 and will open to 120 pupils in the first year, with a further 120 pupils in September 2021. The location of the site is the former Thurrock Learning Campus (TLC), Grays, which was the temporary location for students whilst South Essex College was under construction. Internal alterations are underway to ensure the building is fit for purpose. External works will shortly commence to provide a safe and secure out door space. Planning permission in relation to the external space was approved on 24th April 2020.

3.3.2 The new permanent site is located on the Chadwell Road, adjacent to USP College. The site is in the process of being purchased by the Department for Education; acquisition of the site will be completed upon planning permission being granted. A full planning application is due to be submitted around September 2020. The school is planned to open ready for September 2022.

3.4 *REAch2 Aveley Free School*

3.4.1 The new two-form entry primary school will be located at Hall Road in Aveley. The Department for Education has acquired the site for the school. Feasibility works are in progress, with a plan to submit a full planning application in November 2020. It is possible the new school will open in the autumn term 2022. Confirmation of opening date will be provided once the delivery programme has been finalised.

4. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

4.1 In relation to Lower Thames Crossing, further consideration will need to be undertaken whilst the proposal for the new crossing is being further developed.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

5.1 To provide an update on the progress of the Free School Programme to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

6. Consultation (including Overview and Scrutiny, if applicable)

6.1 This report is for review by Corporate Overview and Scrutiny to provide a progress update.

7. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact

7.1 This will enable the Council to continue to meet its statutory duty to provide sufficient pupil places under the Education Act 2006.

8. Implications

8.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **David May**
Strategic Lead Finance

There are no financial implications for the Council in relation to REAch2 Free School or Treetops 2 Free School as the Department for Education is funding them. Temporary accommodation for both Orsett Heath and Thames Park is being funded from the Schools Capital Programme budget. The funding for the addition pupils will be prioritised within the Dedicated Schools Grant.

8.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Lucinda Bell**
Education Lawyer

The Education Act 1996 s 14 imposes a duty on the Council to ensure the provision of sufficient schools for the provision of primary and secondary education in their area. S26 of the Children and Family Act imposes a duty to make arrangements, jointly with the NHS Commissioning Boards for the provision of education (as well as health and social care) for children and young people with SEN or disability. There is an additional duty to keep the latter under review (s27). This report does not require a decision to be made. It asks that its contents be noted only.

8.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Rebecca Lee**
Team Manager Community Development and Equalities

The development of two new free schools and one special needs school will help to tackle inequality and social exclusion. The procurement process will follow responsibilities as set out within The Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty, with due regard to advancing equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it

7.4 Other implications (where significant) – i.e. Staff, Health, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder)

None.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report (including their location on the Council's website or identification whether any are exempt or protected by copyright):

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Sarah Williams

Service Manager, Education Support Service

Education & Skills