We would like to hear your views

The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea is consulting on a proposal to change the designation of Parkwood Hall School, so that from September 2015 it would become a day special school for children with severe learning difficulties, including autism, with some respite facilities.

Following this consultation, the Royal Borough will decide whether to publish a statutory notice about the proposals, giving a period of four weeks for comments or objections to be made, before reaching a decision, probably in December 2014, on whether to proceed or not.

Get more information and have your say

We would like everyone affected by this proposal to have their say. It is important that you understand what the Royal Borough is trying to do, and we welcome any comments and questions you have.

A public meeting will be held at the school on Monday 8 September from 6pm to 7.30pm.

There will be a separate meeting for school staff on Monday 8 September from 4pm to 5.30pm. Additional meetings for staff and the public will be arranged for mid-September. Times and dates will be confirmed in early September.

Website – read the latest updates on the proposals and fill in a consultation form by visiting www.rbkc.gov.uk/parkwoodhall

Respond – to the consultation using the enclosed Freepost response form or by visiting www.rbkc.gov.uk/parkwoodhall.

The consultation begins on Tuesday 22 July and the closing date is Tuesday 30 September 2014.

Enquiries – if you have questions before responding to the consultation, please email parkwoodhall@rbkc.gov.uk
Background

Parkwood Hall School is currently a community day and boarding special school for children with moderate and severe learning difficulties. It has published a statutory notice, following its own consultation process (which closed on Wednesday 16 July 2014), on a proposal to change its status from a community school (under local authority control) to a foundation school (where the school owns its assets, employs its staff and controls admissions).

The Royal Borough replied to the initial consultation by stating that it believed the school needed a five-year business plan to address:

- the changing demand at the school, as fewer boarding places are taken up
- the burden of maintenance and running costs per pupil.

The Royal Borough has now submitted a formal objection to the school’s statutory proposals because it believes these concerns have not been adequately dealt with. It has asked the school to refer its proposal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) for further consideration. The Adjudicator will in due course consider the school’s proposals and can decide whether to accept, reject, or modify them.

Providing a first-class education

The Royal Borough shares the school’s aim to provide a first-class education for its pupils. It fully acknowledges the school’s changing relationship with the Royal Borough and does not object to the school seeking more independence.

However, it does not feel the school’s conversion proposal is the best solution to the challenges it faces, or looks far enough into the future.
The challenges

The school’s Outline Business Plan (covering the period September 2014 to August 2017) does make some reference to the need for possible curriculum changes in the future should the number of boarders at the school drop. It also sets out some short-term adaptations the school might consider making to its staffing structure.

The school’s plan also refers to the changing nature of the pupil population it serves and to the continuing rise in the referral of children with complex needs, including autistic spectrum disorder.

However the Royal Borough does not have sufficient confidence that the plan provides for a viable future for the school.

It does not put forward any concrete proposals setting out how it might meet the fall in number of pupils boarding, with resultant loss of income, and rise in numbers of pupils with complex needs.

The Royal Borough is of the view that more fundamental changes need to be made to the school’s curriculum and to its overall designation in order to meet the needs of children and young people locally.

The Royal Borough’s proposals

Firstly, the Royal Borough is asking the school to delay its conversion to foundation status, due to take place on Friday 1 August, in the first instance until after its consultation on redesignation is completed. If the Royal Borough decided to issue statutory proposals for redesignation, it would ask the school to delay its conversion status until after determination of the proposals.

The redesignation would change the present school from a special school for children with moderate learning difficulties and severe learning difficulties with boarding provision, to a day special school for children with severe learning difficulties, including autism and also provide some respite facilities.
Although this would require changes to the curriculum, more specialist teaching and some building alterations, the Royal Borough believes this could be feasible and would meet the identified needs of local children. It would give the school the opportunity to develop a viable and cost effective long-term business plan. This change to the school's designation and admissions criteria, if implemented, would take effect from September 2015.

All pupils currently at the school will continue their education at Parkwood Hall as normal. Those who board will continue to board at Parkwood Hall until they leave the school. However, from September 2015 the school would admit pupils with severe learning difficulties for day school provision only. A new respite offer would also be developed in partnership with the school.

The future

The Royal Borough appreciates that parents and pupils value the service which Parkwood Hall School provides, and it recognises the skill and dedication of the school’s staff. However the school was not built for its current use and presents many challenges in making it fit for the more complex needs of children using it today and of future pupils.

In seeking to serve current and future pupils, the Royal Borough is striving to find a long-term future but is not convinced that the school’s current proposals will achieve this.

What you have said

The Royal Borough realises that many people have already responded to the school’s proposals after considering them very carefully.

The Royal Borough has seen the school’s consultation report, setting out what people said. It will take those comments fully into account but invites you to think about the Royal Borough’s request to consider an alternative approach outlined above. We value your views on this possible alternative.
Redesignation of Parkwood Hall School response form

Please complete and return this form using the Freepost envelope supplied to Parkwood Hall Consultation (c/o Alan Wharton), The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, Children’s Services, 2nd floor, Kensington Town Hall, Hornton Street, London, W8 7NX.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey.

If you have any questions before completing this form, please email parkwoodhall@rbkc.gov.uk
You can also complete an online form at www.rbkc.gov.uk/parkwoodhall

The consultation begins on Tuesday 22 July and closes at 5pm on Tuesday 30 September 2014.

Name (optional)
Postcode

Please tick all that apply.
I am a:
Parent/carer ☐ Teacher/staff member ☐ Governor ☐
Other (please specify) ☐

Do you agree that conversion to foundation status should be delayed while the Royal Borough’s proposed redesignation is considered?
Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐

Do you agree with the Royal Borough’s possible redesignation?
Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure ☐
Feel free to write additional comments in the box below about how the proposals may affect you, your child or the child you care for.

This leaflet can be made available in different languages and formats. Please email parkwoodhall@rbkc.gov.uk for more information.
The information provided on the form will be used to help the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea decide how to proceed with the proposal. The personal information you provide will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998. Your information will not be shared with any other organisations.