

Committee:	<b>Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness</b>
Date:	<b>8 November 2011</b>
Title of Report:	<b>Creating additional primary school places in Bexhill</b>
By:	<b>Director of Children's Services</b>
Purpose of Report:	<b>To seek the Lead Member's approval to commence consultation on a proposal to relocate and enlarge Sidley Community Primary School from 1 form of entry (1 FE) to 2.5 FE, and a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from 1 FE to 1.5 FE</b>

---

**Recommendation:**

**The Lead Member is recommended to:**

**(1) Approve the commencement of consultation on a proposal to permanently relocate Sidley Community Primary School to the former Bexhill High School Year 7 Block at Gunters Lane from September 2012, and its enlargement from 1 FE to 2.5 FE effective from September 2013;**

**(2) Approve the commencement of consultation on a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from 1 FE to 1.5 FE, effective from September 2013; and**

**(3) Note the likely change in status of Sidley Community Primary School to Sponsored Academy in the 2012/13 academic year.**

---

**1. Financial Appraisal**

1.1 Revenue: this proposal will not affect the Schools Formula, although it will affect the budget position of both schools, which will increase in accordance with rising pupil numbers.

1.2 Capital: Capital investment will be required to provide the additional school places at both schools. Currently £1.02m is identified in the Capital Programme, made up from £670,000 Basic Need allocation, £115,000 Primary Capital Programme contingency and contributions from previous housing development of £235,000. Detailed design work will be required on both projects to determine the level of capital funding required to deliver the additional places. The Diocese of Arundel and Brighton would wish to deliver the physical enlargement of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School using its own consultants and contractors.

**2. Supporting information**

2.1 Reflecting national trends, Bexhill is experiencing an increase in demand for admissions into reception classes as a result of a rising birth rate. Across Bexhill births have risen from 289 in 2004/05 to 368 in 2008/09 an increase of 27%. Forecasts beyond this are based on ESCC Policy Based Population Projections and planned housing development across the town in the period to 2028. These forecasts are more speculative, but it is anticipated that the trend in demand for places will continue to exceed the number of places currently available. From September 2012 there will be a shortfall in reception classes of up to 2FE (60 places) across the town.

2.2 The Senior Management Team in the Children's Services Department has considered a number of options to address the predicted shortfall in places, working with the Bexhill Consortium (made up of the primary and secondary schools in Bexhill) and the two Dioceses. The focal point of each option has been the former Bexhill High School Year 7 Block at Gunters Lane, which became vacant in October 2010 and which is considered suitable for remodeling as a primary school.

2.3 In considering the best option for the short term, the Council has also been mindful of

what might happen in the longer term, through Rother District Council's (RDC's) emerging housing plans, to ensure there is a pattern of provision which matches demand in the future.

2.4 RDC's Proposed Submission Core Strategy, approved by its Cabinet, includes a proposal for development of a new community to the north east of Bexhill (known as Worsham Farm). The Council has advised RDC that a suitable site would be required within the proposed development for a new primary school. The timing of this development is currently unknown as it is dependent upon the Bexhill Hastings Link Road proceeding.

2.5 Taking this into account, the options appraisal has concluded that:

- Due to the proximity of Sidley Community Primary School to the area of predicted pupil demand and the condition of its existing buildings, the school should relocate from its existing site to the former Year 7 Block at Gunters Lane from September 2012, and increase its capacity from 1 FE (210 places) to 2.5 FE (525 places) from September 2013 through remodelling/enlargement of the building. The school's Published Admission Number (PAN) would increase from 30 to 75.
- In response to an increasing demand for pupil places highlighted by the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton, St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School should increase its capacity from 1 FE (210 places) to 1.5 FE (315 places) through permanent enlargement of the premises from September 2013. The school's PAN would increase from 30 to 45.

2.6 As the Gunters Lane site is less than 2 miles from the existing Sidley Community Primary School site on Buxton Drive, the Council is not legally obliged to consult on the proposed relocation. However, it is considered good practice to do so, particularly as the relocation is combined with a proposal to enlarge the school. If the relocation and enlargement of the school is approved, the Council will need to consider potential future uses for the existing school site once it is vacated.

2.7 The Governing Body of Sidley Community Primary School has indicated its support for the proposal to relocate to Gunters Lane and enlarge its capacity to 2.5 FE.

2.8 In addition, and in light of the fact that Sidley Community Primary School is one of the 200 primary schools identified by the Secretary of State to become academies in 2012/13, the Governing Body of the school has agreed to seek sponsored academy status. It should be noted that under the terms and conditions of academy conversion the land and buildings at Gunters Lane would transfer to the new Academy on a 125 year lease.

2.9 The Governing Body of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School and the Catholic Diocese have also indicated their support for the proposal to enlarge the school by 0.5 FE. As a Voluntary Aided school, the enlargement of St Mary Magdalene could be proposed by either the Governing Body or the Council. In this instance, the Council, in its role as strategic planner and commissioner of school places, is proposing the change and will administer the statutory consultation process.

2.10 The Council would be the final decision maker for the proposed relocation and enlargement of Sidley Community Primary School and the proposed enlargement of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School.

2.11 In early 2012 the Council will separately consult on the admission arrangements for September 2013 for community and voluntary controlled schools. This will include a proposal to increase Sidley Community Primary School's PAN to 75. At the same time the Governing Body of St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School should consult on its own admission arrangements, including increasing its PAN to 45. Both the Lead Member (for Sidley) and the Governing Body (for St Mary Magdalene) must determine the admission arrangements for September 2013 by 15 April 2012.

2.12 The earliest date from which the proposed permanent enlargement of each school can be fully implemented is September 2013 as all building work to enable the schools to increase their capacity must be completed. Given that planning consent for the enlargement of both schools is likely to be required, it is not considered possible to achieve full implementation before this date. In the meantime the Council will utilise existing accommodation at Gunters Lane and St Mary Magdalene to provide the additional places expected in September 2012. **Appendix A** details the key dates of the statutory process required to meet this deadline.

### **3. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations**

3.1 Given the information set out above, and to enable the Council to discharge its statutory responsibility to ensure there are sufficient school places across the county, the Lead Member is recommended to:

(1) Approve the commencement of consultation on a proposal to permanently relocate Sidley Community Primary School to the former Bexhill High School Year 7 Block at Gunters Lane from September 2012, and its enlargement from 1 FE to 2.5 FE effective from September 2013;

(2) Approve the commencement of consultation on a proposal to enlarge St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School from 1 FE to 1.5 FE, effective from September 2013;

(3) Note the likely change in status of Sidley Community Primary School to Sponsored Academy in the 2012/13 academic year.

MATT DUNKLEY

Director of Children's Services

Contact Officer: Melanie Griffin, Head of Capital Strategy Team, Children's Services Dept  
Tel: 01273 335819

Local Members: Sidley - Councillors Ensor and Hughes  
St Mary Magdalene – Councillor Kenward

Background Documents: None

## STATUTORY PROCESS FOR CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

<b>Sidley Community Primary School Proposed enlargement from 1 FE to 2.5 FE</b>	
<b>Key Dates</b>	
Lead Member approval to consult on proposed relocation and enlargement	8 Nov 2011
Commence consultation	w/c 21 Nov 2011
Consultation period (4 weeks) to include public meeting and other consultation events	w/c 21 Nov to w/c 16 Dec 2011
End of consultation period	w/c 16 Dec 2011
Lead Member approval to publish statutory notice	24 Jan 2012
Publication of statutory notice	w/c 20 Feb 2012
Representation period (4 weeks)	w/c 20 Feb 2012 to w/c 19 Mar 2012
End of representation period	w/c 19 Mar 2012
Lead Member determination of admission arrangements for September 2013	By 15 Apr 2012
Lead Member approval of enlargement	17 Apr 2012
Implementation (including physical enlargement of premises)	Apr 2012 to Aug 2013

<b>St Mary Magdalene Catholic Primary School Proposed enlargement from 1 FE to 1.5 FE</b>	
<b>Key Dates</b>	
Lead Member approval to consult on proposed relocation and enlargement	8 Nov 2011
Commence consultation	w/c 21 Nov 2011
Consultation period (4 weeks) to include public meeting and other consultation events	w/c 21 Nov to w/c 16 Dec 2011
End of consultation period	w/c 16 Dec 2011
Lead Member approval to publish statutory notice	24 Jan 2012
Publication of statutory notice	w/c 20 Feb 2012
Representation period (4 weeks)	w/c 20 Feb 2012 to w/c 19 Mar 2012
End of representation period	w/c 19 Mar 2012
Governing Body determination of admission arrangements for September 2013	By 15 Apr 2012
Lead Member approval of enlargement	17 Apr 2012
Implementation (including physical enlargement of premises)	Apr 2012 to Aug 2013