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Ann Potter
Headteacher
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Re: Proposal to establish a 6th form at Addey and Stanhope from September 2013

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on your proposal to create a Sixth Form at Addey and Stanhope.

I am sure you will agree that young people should choose the provision at post-16 that best suits their needs, and the Local Authority must consider your proposal in the light of this principle. In the context of student-led choice, Lewisham has statutory duties to ensure sufficient, appropriate post-16 places, and to support the improvement of the quality of the education and training of young people aged 16-19.

I note from your letter the school's desire to offer a small, high achieving, and academically excellent sixth form largely recruited from your own learners and with a maximum of 200 learners. I understand that the proposal has the full support of your governors, staff, parents / carers and learners. The local authority will always support the ambition of schools to create new, high quality provision where there is already a good, supportive track record of student achievement, and when that ambition is likely to succeed.

KS4 attainment at Addey and Stanhope continues to improve and is now above the Lewisham and national averages. This should provide confidence amongst parents and learners currently in the school that, despite being a new provider without a post-16 track record, you can achieve similar levels of success in a new Sixth Form, with the likelihood of an associated positive impact on raising aspirations 11-16.

I understand that prospective year 6 parents have already expressed a positive interest in the proposal for an 11 - 18 school. When also taking into consideration the likely appeal to some learners of continuity in your "family" approach, your strategy to recruit an academic Sixth Form largely from your own learners is therefore soundly based. There may also be the additional benefit of attracting learners who otherwise might suffer economical disadvantage through incurring the costs of travel to post-16 establishments outside Lewisham.

Recruitment from within the school's own population means that pre-16 success can easily be marketed. Currently the proportion of year 11 learners in each of your attainment bands is matched by appropriate post-16 destinations. This suggests that Addey and Stanhope is providing appropriate IAG for your year 11 leavers. When promoting the Sixth Form, it will be nevertheless important to ensure that impartial IAG continues in the light of evidence of large numbers of learners in London dropping out of Level 3 courses at 17 in part because of inappropriate IAG from their home institution aimed at their retention.

A crucial determinant of the success of a Sixth Form will be the extent to which your proposed curriculum offers an appropriate breadth, and quality in meeting the needs of your target students. You have mentioned that the Sixth Form curriculum aims to complement the existing technology specialism, enhanced by the BSF proposed IT facilities, and this is emphasised by the proposal to offer Engineering, Science and IT. As described in your letter, local partnerships with Lewisham College and Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College should enable your Sixth Form learners to access a broader and more balanced sixth form curriculum offer than you can deliver alone, provided the practical issues involved in such collaborative arrangements, especially timetabling, can be resolved. For example, there is the opportunity for you to build on your specialist curriculum strengths through joint delivery of the engineering pathway, enhanced by skilled technicians and up to date equipment at Lewisham College. Your letter states that staffing of the Sixth Form will be sourced from confident, successful and experienced level 3 subject teachers. Governors will want to be assured that consistently high quality teaching is pervasive from the start of a Sixth Form.

Despite these largely positive aspects, when considering further the merits of the proposal, governors should nevertheless be aware that your first year target of 60 academic level 3 learners, more than half of the total 2011 year 11 cohort, is very high, and higher still in Year 2. Post-16 demand in Lewisham and south-east London will not rise until around 2021, and, prior to this, competition will continue to grow. The academic level 3 market is already over-supplied with providers with proven credentials (HAHC, Prendergast Hilly Fields, Christ the King and out-borough academic providers). Other schools are trying the same strategy of proposing to retain their pre-16 learners post-16 (eg Southwark Catholic Schools Joint Sixth Form and Deptford Green School). It should be borne in mind that more than anticipated Addey and Stanhope academic learners may want a change at 16 rather than the comfort of continuity at Addey and Stanhope. Significant numbers of this key target group may therefore get sucked away, and external recruitment may not fill the gap.

In general, I am reassured that, if your recruitment to the 6th Form is successful, the impact on other Lewisham providers will not be significant. Although in 2012 an average 15 Addey and Stanhope learners progressed to Prendergast Hilly Fields College and Christ the King, both sixth forms are over-subscribed. An average of 23 learners progressed to Lewisham College. College recruitment is unlikely to be affected as most learners require a different programme of study to your proposed curriculum offer. As Crossways has already seen a decline in progression of Addey and Stanhope learners, the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on their learner numbers.

However, governors should take into account when reviewing the proposal as it stands that it does not contribute to meeting the borough-wide need for more Foundation Learning and Level 1 provision, whilst making a modest contribution to addressing Lewisham's analysis of need at Level 2.

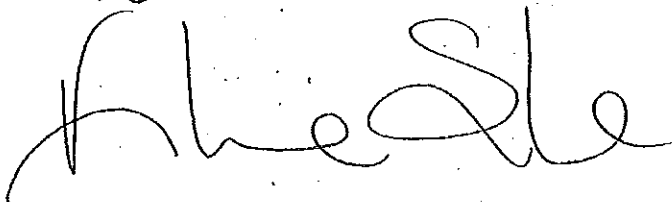
I am aware that the school proposes to develop the Sixth Form accommodation on site, and the necessary capital funding is partly secured, with the aspiration that LCVAP will provide the additional monies. The latter case is advanced and meets the requirements for funding in 2012/13. The Local Authority appointed Quantity Surveyor, who manages and endorses the LCVAP bids, will need to finalise the bid and submit to Central Government for endorsement within the next month. Approval for the bids is normally received in four weeks.

of submission. Therefore we do not anticipate any issues with this proposal being accepted as a project by Central Government.

I note that the proposal also considers start up costs and takes into account the reduced revenue funding regime of 'lagged learner numbers' for sixth form programmes. It will be important, therefore, that governors ensure that the school has adequate reserves. The Local Authority will support the Governing Body in evaluating financial risk should it wish to take up this offer.

I am aware that, although the proposal would not fill gaps in provision identified by the Borough's 14-19 Partnership, the Lewisham 14-19 Forum and its Policy and Programme Steering Group have indicated their support for the proposal. Despite the reservations set out above, and pending the outcome of consultation, I am happy to recommend to the Mayor that the Local Authority should also support your ambition to open a Sixth Form.

I hope that these points are helpful to governors in coming to a decision about taking forward your proposal. Be assured that we will be fully supportive in helping the school to plan and implement a future Sixth Form should this be the outcome following your consultation.

Yours ever


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