



King's Norton Boys' School

Proposal to remove Sixth Form provision

Background

King's Norton Boys' School has a long history dating back more than 100 years and prides itself on being a traditional school with a modern approach to education.

Headteacher Paul Woodhouse was appointed in September 2014 and has been working hard, with the support, scrutiny and guidance of the Governing Body, to drive school improvement. In December 2015, Ofsted said: "Teaching and achievement are improving. The rate of improvement has accelerated since the head teacher joined the school".

Following a monitoring inspection in May 2016, Ofsted said the school was "taking effective action... to become a Good school".

Maintained by Local Authority Birmingham City Council, King's Norton Boys' School is smaller than most secondary schools and currently has 661 students aged 11 to 18 on roll. It has 89 Sixth Form students, 57 of whom are in Year 12 and 32 of whom are in Year 13.

Challenging times

Many sixth forms and colleges across the country are struggling to survive as they face dwindling budgets and fierce competition in a saturated sector. The Association of School and College Leaders has said a school sixth form would require at least 200 students in order for it to be viable.

King's Norton Boys' School has seen the number of sixth form students reduce in recent years, falling from 119 students in 2015/16 to 89 students in 2016/17. A reduction in funding in recent years for sixth form education, combined with an increase in costs, including employer pension contributions, has also had a severe impact on King's Norton Boys' School. Meanwhile, there are now over a dozen post-16 providers in close proximity of King's Norton Boys', offering a range of courses and qualifications and affording students with much more choice than has previously been available.

The cost of running King's Norton Boys' School's sixth form provision is double that of the funding received by the school from the Education Funding Agency, for its Year 12 and 13 students. The school has had no choice, therefore, but to subsidise its sixth form with funding allocated to its students in Years 7 to 11. Despite this, projected figures show that the school is facing a deficit growing to £800,000 within the next three years if a solution to this problem is not found.

Meanwhile, when the school recently canvassed its current cohort of 105 Year 11 students, just 29 boys said they planned to join the sixth form in September 2017.

The sixth form, therefore, is not sustainable and the students in Years 7 to 11 are being unfairly burdened with the cost of trying to maintain its viability.

Exploring different options

The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse have been working hard for some time now to find the best possible solution to these times of challenge. In autumn 2015, the school began exploring options to address its projected deficit and a number of models were considered, including different ways of organising the sixth form. The Governing Body voted to approve a restructure, which saw a small reduction in staffing across the school.

Despite the restructure, the school continues to face a deficit and therefore the Governing Body are left with no choice other than having to make more difficult decisions to protect the future of the school and the students. With a heavy heart, the Governing Body has unanimously agreed to begin a period of consultation over proposals to close King's Norton Boys' sixth form, given the dwindling number of students choosing to study at the school.

The vision

The school's Governors and headteacher are committed to its vision of ensuring King's Norton Boys' becomes the outstanding school its students, staff and community deserves.

The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse believe this would be best achieved by the school focusing on its provision for students in Years 7 to 11. Demand for the school's Year 7 places has been strong over the last few years, and the school has a recent trend of being oversubscribed. The council has forecast there is a need for additional secondary school places in the coming years.

The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse, therefore, have a shared vision to expand the school's intake for Years 7 to 11, increasing from a four-form to a five-form entry school. The school will seek agreement to begin to offer 150 places in Year 7 from September 2018 – an increase of 30 places compared to the traditional Year 7 intake of 120 places.

This will not only help address the local shortage of secondary school places, but the increased funding would enable King's Norton Boys' to be financially sustainable and develop into an 'Outstanding' school offering a quality education to youngsters aged 11 to 16.

By being able to properly invest in students across Years 7 to 11, the school will be able to offer an innovative and forward-thinking curriculum, providing the very best opportunities available to its students.

This will enable the school to accelerate progress towards achieving its vision to create a school that offers students the chance to raise their aspirations to achieve both personal and academic success.

How will the proposals affect the current sixth form and Year 11 students?

The school is committed to ensuring that current sixth form students are not affected adversely by this proposal. If the proposals are given approval, the school would not admit new students to its sixth form from September 2017. The current Year 12 students will begin Year 13 in September 2017 to continue their studies in the 2017/18 academic year and will therefore be the school's final cohort of sixth form students. Sixth form provision would come to an end on 31st August 2018.

King's Norton Boys' School has an informal partnership with Kings Norton Girls' School, which sees a small number of students from each school accessing the other school's sixth form provision. The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse will work closely with Kings Norton Girls' School throughout the consultation period to ensure all voices are heard.

If the proposal becomes a reality, it would mean the school's current Year 11 students would not be able to continue their post-16 education at King's Norton Boys' School.

While the consultation is underway, the school will continue to work closely with all its Year 11 students to help them consider and prepare for the next stage of their lives. The school will also work closely with other Further Education providers in the local area, along with its own specialist careers adviser, to ensure students are fully informed about the alternative options available.

Should the proposal be given the go-ahead, the school will continue to provide extra support and guidance for Year 11 students. The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse are confident students will be able to choose another school or college well suited to meet their needs and preferences, as post-16 provision in the south Birmingham area, delivered by schools and colleges, is particularly strong. A wide range of courses, from A-levels to vocational qualifications and apprenticeships, are on offer in the local area.

How will this affect staff?

The Governing Body and Mr Woodhouse recognise this is an unsettling time but are committed to working closely with all staff throughout this period to ensure they are kept up-to-date with all elements of the process.

Initially there will be weekly surgeries in the run-up to the Christmas holidays, allowing staff the opportunity to ask questions and to talk through their concerns. Once the consultation period begins, the school will continue to provide support to staff.

At this stage, it is not envisaged that the proposed closure of the Sixth Form would lead to imminent job losses. However, the situation would need to be regularly assessed as it evolves.

Will this definitely happen?

This is by no means a foregone conclusion. It is vital that these proposed major changes to the school are given the full and proper consultation that they deserve.

There is also a statutory process that the school will follow. It will begin with full details of the proposals being released publicly in January 2017. A four-week 'representation period' will follow, which will allow an opportunity for the public to share their thoughts over the proposal. Over the next few weeks prior to the Christmas break, the school will also provide parents, the community and stakeholders with the opportunity to attend drop-in sessions if further information is required. Further drop-in sessions will also be held at the school during the four-week consultation period, allowing people the chance to ask questions and find out more information.

This period of consultation is due to end on 2nd February 2017. Birmingham City Council will then have two months to consider the proposal and the comments from the public. At the beginning of April 2017, the council's Cabinet should have made a final decision to approve or reject the proposal. If a decision is made to close the sixth form, provision will end on 31st August 2018.

Below for guidance is a proposed timescale, and the dates set out to meet the Government's statutory requirements.

Action	Date
Proposal document distributed to parents, staff and other stakeholders	Monday 21 November 2016
Staff surgeries	Tuesday 22 November 2016, 3.15-4.15pm Thursday 1 December 2016, 3.15-4.15pm Tuesday 6 December 2016, 3.15-4.15pm Wednesday 14 December 2016, 3.15-4.15pm
Parent and other stakeholder surgeries	Wednesday 23 November 2016, 4-5pm Wednesday 23 November 2016, 6-7pm Wednesday 7 December 2016, 4-5pm Wednesday 7 December 2016, 6-7pm
Statutory notice published	Thursday 5 January 2017
Beginning of 4 week representation period	Thursday 5 January 2017
End of 4 week representation period	Thursday 2 February 2017
Final decision	By 2 April 2017
Term begins for current Year 12s into Year 13 at King's Norton Boys' School. No new Year 12 students admitted.	September 2017

APPENDIX 2

If final decision is in line with the proposal sixth form provision would end...	31 August 2018
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