



Proposal to amalgamate Ryde and Sandown Bay Academies

Consultation Document

25 May 2017

About Academies Enterprise Trust

The Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) is the UK's largest Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). Currently it supports a national network of 66 primary, special and secondary academies and educates around 35,000 children. Multi-Academy Trusts are a core part of the Government's educational agenda.

AET is committed to providing a great educational experience for the children it serves, whatever their ability or background, and seeks to operate schools of which the students, their families and the local communities can be proud. A third of AET's academies are located in the top 20% most deprived areas in England for child poverty.

AET was set up in 2008 as an educational charity and was developed from Greensward College, based in Hockley, Essex. This connection continues and the Greensward Charitable Trust remains principal sponsor of AET. However, in response to requests from schools to become academies, the organisation has grown rapidly from its initial three secondary-age academies in Essex.

The proposal, and the reasons behind it

The proposal is for Academies Enterprise Trust (AET) to amalgamate Sandown Bay and Ryde Academies, resulting in a single school for 11-18 students located in Ryde. Both of these schools currently form part of the AET Group of academies, and we believe that this new, combined school can be truly outstanding and benefit students, families and the local community.

This proposal stems from a rapid fall in the number of students attending Sandown Bay Academy. The same pattern is being experienced by many schools across the Isle of Wight, where there are many more secondary school places than there are students to fill them.

Background: Sandown Bay Academy

Sandown Bay Academy opened on 1 September 2011 as part of a re-organisation of primary and secondary education on the Isle of Wight. It was situated in the premises of two closed schools, on adjacent sites. A large number of staff transferred to the academy from the closing schools.

Over the last five years, Sandown Bay has halved in size and income: in 2011/2012 student numbers were at 2084, and in 2016/17 they stand at 1122 – so enrolment has almost halved in only 5 years. Therefore income, which is tied to student numbers, has likewise nearly halved from £12m in 2012/13 to £7m this year: a reduction of close to £5m over the 5 years.

This has a direct effect on the school and its pupils. It means less money to spend on everything, but especially teaching, which quite rightly is the school's first priority, and the largest area of spend. Without enough funds, the school lacks the teachers and the resources it needs to invest in the education we would all wish to see for our students.

Instead, the Academy has been involved in a continuing cycle, year on year, of restructuring and redundancies in order to try to reduce costs in line with dwindling funds. This has created very great pressure on the remaining staff, while the school's reserves have been severely reduced. In this climate, the school has struggled to deliver the educational improvement we would all want to see. It currently has an Ofsted rating of 'Requires Improvement', and academic results, progress and attainment measures for the for the students aged 11-16 are all well below average, both nationally and for the local area.

Background: Ryde Academy

Meanwhile Ryde Academy is seeing rapid improvement under the leadership of its Principal, Joy Ballard. The school is currently rated 'Good', it is demonstrating a strong focus on improving performance in all key measures, it will have the benefit of a new building as from the autumn 2017 giving it significantly increased capacity, and it has a strong and stable financial platform from which to work.

Although the amalgamation of the two schools would inevitably have an impact on Ryde Academy, we believe the additional student numbers would bring real benefits, as the extra funds associated with increased numbers, as well as the economies of scale, would enable it to offer a still broader, richer curriculum, and would mean more resources would be available to the new combined school.

Ms Ballard would oversee the transition to the new combined school, ensuring strong leadership in both schools during the transition period and putting in place effective arrangements so that the change is managed as smoothly as possible for everyone involved.

Timescales for the transition

The new combined school would operate on Ryde Academy's existing site, where a new building is due to open in the autumn 2017. This will increase capacity to 1,500 students aged 11-16, with additional capacity for 310 post-16 students in the adjacent Haylands site. The total capacity of the Ryde campus is 1,810. An artist's impression of the new building at Ryde is provided below.



View of Courtyards from South of Site

The academic year 2017-18 would be a transition period during which both schools would continue to operate on their current sites. The new combined school would then come into effect as from September 2018.

From two schools, therefore, we believe that with this proposal we can create one, combined school with the potential to be truly outstanding, and of which the whole Isle of Wight community can be really proud.

Merger or closure?

In formal, technical terms, to merge the two schools involves the closure of Sandown Bay. Closure of Sandown Bay Academy would mean that of course all students and their families are free to make their own choice as to which school they wish to go to as an alternative. However, we do not believe that simply closing the school would offer a satisfactory option to students or staff, and so are putting forward the proposals for a transfer of students and staff across to Ryde Academy. Operationally, therefore, this will work as a merger, providing students and staff who wish to transfer with a smooth path to transition from one school to the other as seamlessly as possible.

The merger of the two academies would create a sustainable and more cost effective staffing structure which would provide stability and strong leadership for the academy. As the legal employer the Trust would engage with our recognised trade unions and the affected employees to ensure a fair and transparent process is undertaken in due course.

Consultation process

The consultation on this proposal is being launched on **Thursday 25th May** and will run for 6 weeks to Thursday 6th July. Interested parties are invited to respond using the questionnaire available online at <https://survey.corcinternational.com/orc/start/j3000956/AETSurvey.html>, or available in hard copy from the receptions at Sandown Bay and Ryde Academies. You can also contact IOWConsultation@academiesenterprisetrust.org.

Following the consultation, a feedback report will be prepared which will be available via both schools' websites, and which will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Education to inform their decision.

How will this proposal help improve education?

Educational performance is linked to financial health. Without enough funds to support teachers and resources, Sandown Bay Academy has struggled to improve educational outcomes and attainment. With the additional numbers at the new amalgamated school, there is the opportunity to expand curriculum and non-curricular activities alike, to the benefit of all students.

Current performance

Academic performance at Sandown Bay is currently well below average, particularly in mathematics (although there has been robust support from the AET Group in this area to support improvement this summer). The school's Progress 8 assessment was below the floor level at -0.53 and in all subjects outcomes are below national average.

Ryde Academy, in contrast, is seeing rapid improvements, and the school's strengths noted by Ofsted, including leadership, planning and school improvement initiatives, argue well for continued improvement in the future.

The schools already share a joint sixth form of between 160-180 pupils per year. The new combined school will allow for continued investment and development of post-16 education.

Future improvement

The new, amalgamated school will have the potential to provide the best educational provision on the island, with:

- New purpose-built classrooms and facilities
- A wider choice of curriculum, especially at KS4 and KS5
- Offering pastoral care and support for young people and families
- Ensuring students who need support receive the very best intervention
- Raising aspirations and stretching all pupils to achieve beyond their perceived potential

What effect would a large school have on education?

A larger academy can offer economies of scale which means that more money can be spent on the pupils.

As the Isle of Wight Council pointed out in its Committee Report following its consultation into secondary school provision in 2015, 'It is tempting to think that smaller schools are somehow able to provide more personalised education and there is some evidence that smaller class sizes are beneficial

for some students. However, class sizes are unrelated to school size nor particularly to the overall performance of schools. The economies of scale possible in larger schools help to make the provision of small classes in larger schools more economically viable. There are also other factors such as greater and more flexible staffing capacity allowing for greater stability and curriculum breadth which advantage larger schools.'

The same document finds that 'the relationship between attainment (based on GCSE examination results of pupils achieving 5 or more subject passes at C grade or above, including English and Mathematics) in 2014 for all schools nationally (excluding special and selective schools) shows a correlation between cohort size and outcomes, with larger schools recording better results and, on average, higher Ofsted ratings.'

What would be the size of the combined school?

As we have said on page 3 of this document, there is significant over-capacity in the number of secondary school places currently across the Isle of Wight, which is affecting many schools. Over the last five years, Sandown Bay has halved in terms of its student enrolment, and its numbers are predicted to continue falling. Ryde Academy currently has an enrolment of 912, while a new building commissioned by Government will increase the school's capacity to 1,500 students aged 11-16 from the autumn 2017.

There are too many school places for the actual number of school children on the island.

According to the Department for Education's school capacity survey (SCAP), a statutory data collection that all Local Authorities are required to complete every year, the number of secondary school places on the Isle of Wight in 2015-16 was 11,089, as against actual student numbers of 7,208. This represents a surplus capacity of nearly 4,000 school places. There is expected to be a small increase in students in future, based on current primary school numbers: the same SCAP survey projects a small increase of 452 students (from the current figure of 7208, up to a total of 7,660) by 2022-23. However, this increase will only take up approximately 10% of the existing over-supply of secondary school places on the island.

This situation is having a negative impact on secondary schools right across the island, almost all of which have significant numbers of places unfilled. Actual student numbers for the 8 secondary schools on the Isle of Wight over the last 3 years have declined by 10% between 2013 and 2016.

With the completion of its new building, Ryde Academy will have capacity for 1,500 students aged 11-16. With some further refurbishment at Haylands, there is room for an additional 310 post-16 students. If every family with pupils at Sandown Bay were to choose to go to the new school, in the short term this capacity would not be enough; but we believe there are further options which would allow us to take in greater numbers, and we are currently preparing a more detailed business case for further development if this should be needed.

Amalgamation process

We are proposing that the new, combined school would take effect from September 2018, with 2017-18 being a transition year when both schools will continue to operate on their existing sites. We will prepare more detailed transition plans once the Secretary of State has made a decision on the proposals. We are keen to hear from everyone interested through this consultation, about any specific aspects that concern you so that we can ensure as smooth a transition as possible. We have accordingly set out below key elements of the process which, although currently only in outline, will give an idea of the approach we plan to take.

Curriculum As part of the transition planning, we will be reviewing the curriculum offering across both schools to ensure as wide a choice as possible for all students. As a key educational benefit of the amalgamation we are expecting to be able to offer a richer curriculum, as well as an increased range of extra-curricular activities, within the new expanded school.

Exams We will ensure that all options chosen by current Year 9 pupils can be honoured, and will look carefully at current exam board arrangements to make the transition as smooth as possible for all students.

Extra-curriculum activities and sports facilities As we have already indicated in this document, the increase in student numbers for the new amalgamated school will allow more scope and variety in curricular and extra-curricular activities alike.

Sandown Bay's existing site includes an athletics track, operated by IoW Leisure Services. The school currently uses the track for some curriculum PE, and pays for its use, along with a number of local and sports groups that also use the site. We have been in discussions with the Local Authority regarding running the track in future. We will continue to work with the Council to agree future arrangements.

Leadership Joy Ballard, Principal of Ryde Academy, will be Executive Principal for both schools and will oversee the transition. She will put in place suitable leadership arrangements on both sites to provide full support for all pupils.

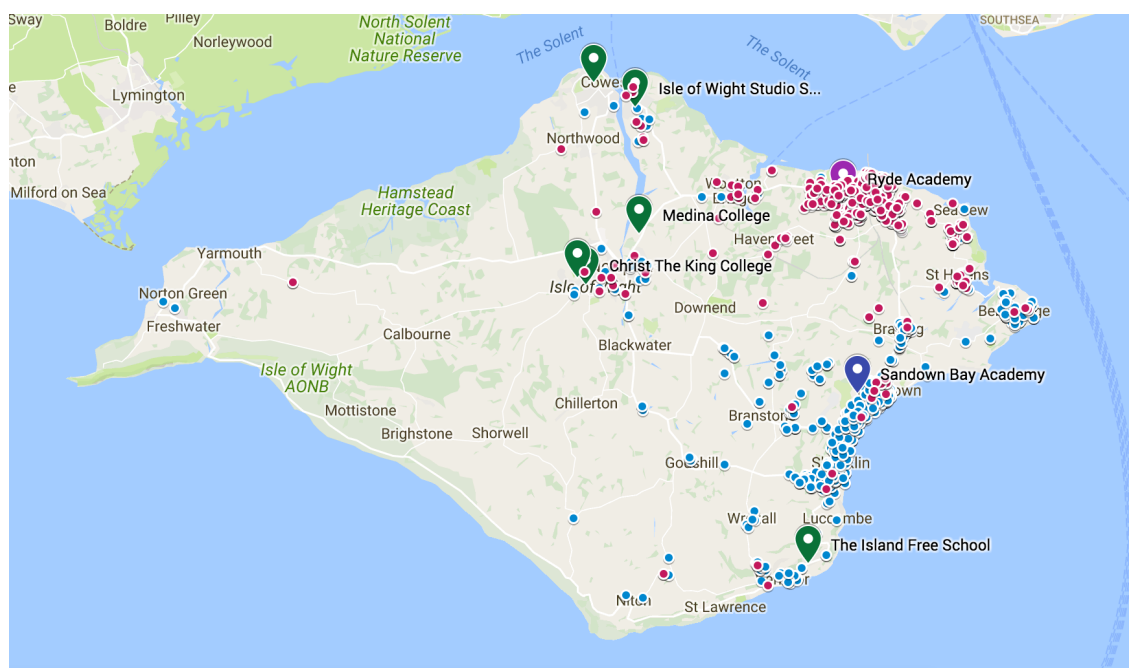
Special needs provision Sandown Bay Academy currently includes a 12-place provision for students with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Known as The Cove, this unit is located in a separate building from the main body of the academy, with its own entrance. It is successful and well-managed by experienced and knowledgeable staff, and supports students both in The Cove itself, as well as others included in mainstream provision.

We have every commitment to maintain and further develop The Cove, in the interests of all children with autism needs at the two academies. In order to do this we will work closely with current staff, parents and the students themselves to ensure we plan for each child personally. AET's Executive Director in Special Educational Needs and Development, who is a National Leader of Education in this area, will personally support and advise on the move to ensure the provision remains strong.

Staffing With any amalgamation or merger plan, there would need to be a detailed analysis of teacher and support staff needed. We would hope to accommodate as many teachers as possible, but there may be a need for a restructuring process to take place, in which case this would be subject to a specific HR consultation involving staff and unions at a later stage.

Our intention is that the new, combined school will take the very best of both academies. Roles within the new school would be open to all teachers and support staff from both academies to apply on an equal basis.

Transport The map below shows the location of current Sandown Bay students (shown in blue) and Ryde students (shown in purple).



Transport arrangements are very important to these plans, and we are aware that relying on existing public transport will not be enough. We will work with the Local Authority to ensure suitable arrangements are available for pupils to travel to their school.

Year group transitions Detailed plans will be developed as fast as possible to allow families to plan, but our aim is to make the transition as smooth as possible for all concerned. With this in mind we are keen to hear from all year groups. Options might include whether there is a preference for incoming Year 7s, or those beginning their GCSE studies, to move straight away to the Ryde Academy site.

Uniforms No plans have been made about uniforms at this point, but we are aware these can be costly item for families. We will work to come up with a sensible solution which will avoid unnecessary expense.

How does the consultation process work?

The consultation was launched on 25 May 2017, and will run for 6 weeks up to 6 July 2017. We are actively seeking views from students, parents, governors, school staff and the local communities, including local primary schools. You can take part in the consultation process by:

- **Completing the questionnaire here:**
<https://survey.cinternational.com/orc/start/j3000956/AETSurvey.html>,
or filling in a paper copy of the questionnaire which is available from the receptions at Sandown Bay or Ryde Academy.
- **E-mailing** loWConsultation@academiesenterprisetrust.org with your views.

We are also intending to hold information sessions at both academies during the course of the consultation period, and will announce dates for these sessions as soon as possible.

The results of all these consultation activities will be gathered together into a report which we will give to the Secretary of State to make a decision on the proposals. The report will also refer to the online and written petitions already received. The report on the findings of the consultation will also be published via both schools' websites and the AET website. In addition to presenting the report to the Minister, we will use the feedback we receive to help us plan the transition, if the proposal is approved.

The 6-week consultation period is longer than the 4 weeks required by Government, but will allow us to ensure everyone has a chance to express their views, and it also takes into account that half-term falls into the consultation period.

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