

New Primary School, Paignton Consultation Information

The Proposal

In February 2016 the Council approved the proposal, subject to consultation, to move Torbay School from its current location at Torquay Road, Paignton TQ3 2AL, to a new site with purpose built accommodation for secondary pupils with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties.

The proposal is, should Torbay School be moved, the Council will use the site on Torquay Road, to open a new primary school.

Background

The main part of Torbay School has been at its current location since 2003. Under a reorganisation of the Council's provision for pupils with special needs it was established as a special school for 60 pupils aged between 9 and 16 with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Since then the demand for places has continued to rise so in 2013 the age range of the school was changed; it became a provision for secondary aged pupils only.

In 2014 the school was amalgamated with the Council's Alternative Provision Pupil Referral Unit (PRU); this made Torbay School a split site school with premises at The Preston Centre, Torquay Road, Paignton; The Assessment Centre, Higher Polsham Road, Paignton and The Hillside Learning Centre, South Parks Torquay.

With these changes and the size and access limitations of the Torquay Road site the school had been in discussion with the Council about the long term suitability of its existing site and premises for its pupils.

The relocation of Torbay School and total vacation of the Torquay Road site would be expected to take place in 2017.

Reasons for the Proposal

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that there are sufficient school places to meet demand. Torbay, like other Local Authorities, is experiencing an increase in the demand for school places as a result of increased housing, high birth rates and inward migration. A recent programme of primary school expansions has ensured that the Council has been able to meet this duty and current projections show an expected surplus capacity of up to 3% in Torquay, 3% in Paignton and 5% in Brixham until 2020.

However, the surplus capacity in Paignton and Torquay is very low and this presents problems for the Council when placing children moving into the area during the school year and when considering parental preference. The Audit Commission recommends a surplus of between 5% and 10% of places to allow for parental preference and choice. In addition there is no capacity for any unforeseen growth following the completion of the South Devon Highway or any increase in housing targets as set by regional government.

There are no longer any viable and affordable options for future expansions of existing school so if numbers continue to rise the only way the Council can meet its statutory duty is by opening a new school. The relocation of Torbay School provides the Council with an opportunity to open a new primary school in a central location. Data below from the Council's Schools Admission Team, shows the high demand for places in the area of Paignton where we are proposing to open the new school.

School	Number of reception places available	1 st Preferences received			
		2016	2015	2014	Average over last 3 years
Collaton St Mary	30	24	35	32	30
Curledge Street	60	47	46	40	44
Hayes	57	37	44	45	42
Kings Ash Academy	60	24	30	37	30
Oldway Academy	90	130	149	99	126
Preston Academy	45	33	34	28	32
Roselands	45	68	41	47	52
Sacred Heart	30	39	27	29	32
White Rock	90*	73	55	57	62

In 2016 the two closest primary schools (highlighted in orange in the table above) to the proposed new school were significantly oversubscribed. Oldway Primary received 130 first preferences against an admission number of 90 and Sacred Heart received 39 first preferences against an admission number of 30. This means that a substantial number of parents from this part of Paignton are not getting a place at their preferred local school.

These schools are oversubscribed for a number of reasons. Oldway in particular is very popular with parents and first preferences nearly always exceed the number of places available. The number of first preferences for these schools reflects parental choice but preferences are also rising because of demographic growth and demand in this part of Paignton is forecast to continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

The Local Authority has recently published the number of Reception places offered to parents in Paignton for September 2016. The number of applications was significantly higher than anticipated and currently there are only 14 places remaining available in Reception for this September. This is less than 3% of the places available and the majority of these places are at one school so if a family move in to the opposite side of Paignton, the Local Authority would have to pay for transport. This is not ideal for the family and could be a long term revenue cost to the Council.

The higher than expected numbers for this September are partly a result of additional housing being developed in the Paignton area. There are further housing developments planned for the west of Paignton, particularly in the Collaton area and the Council anticipates that there will need to be another primary school or additional places provided in that part of the town within the next 5 to 10 years. This is in addition to the new primary school that is proposed in Preston as part of this consultation.

As stated in the opening paragraph above, Torquay faces a similar pressure with a low number of surplus places and another reason for choosing the Torbay School site for the new school is the expectation it will serve both towns.

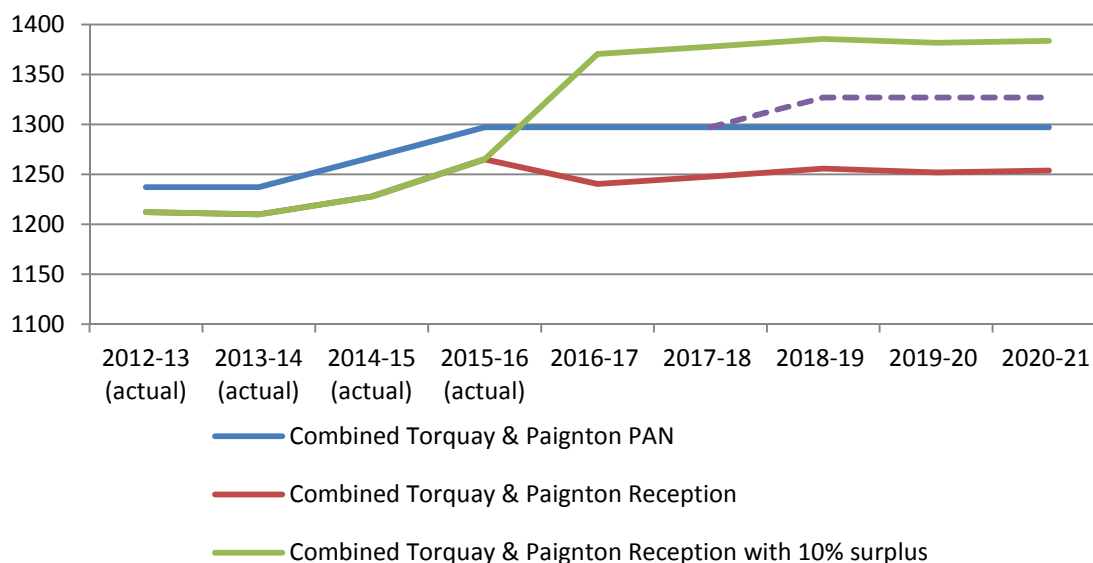
Although a catchment area for the new school has not been defined and would be determined by the trust managing the new school, Officers expect a new school in this location to provide places for children coming from the outskirts of Torquay as well as provide places for those pupils from Paignton that are currently going to schools in Torquay. It is possible that the knock on effect of this would be that more capacity may become available in Torquay primary schools.

The data in the table below shows the amount of movement between the two towns and the high number of Paignton pupils currently attending Torquay primary schools:

		HOME LOCATION		
2015		PAIGNTON	TORQUAY	OUT OF AREA
SCHOOL LOCATION	PAIGNTON	4273	173	93
	Primary	3073	58	33
	Secondary	1167	67	52
	Special	33	48	8
	TORQUAY	941	8940	1350
	Primary	126	5257	109
	Secondary	444	3499	1199
	Special	143	184	42

The new school would potentially ensure that the Council could respond to in-year migration, parental preference and any new growth from developments not already factored into the Councils projections, across both towns.

The graph below shows the combined planned admission number (number of pupils to be admitted at reception) for Torquay and Paignton alongside the combined projected numbers for the areas. It also shows the 10% surplus capacity as recommended by the Audit Commission and the additional capacity that the new primary school will provide.



The proposal to open a new primary school has the potential to address the shortfall in both towns raising the combined planned admission number capacity for Paignton and Torquay from 1297 to 1327; this would result in a projected surplus of 5.5% across the two towns.

Details of the Proposed New School

It is proposed that the new school would be a 210 place primary school with early year's provision. The school would admit 30 pupils per year group across the 7 year groups and offer 52 part time (26 full time equivalents) nursery places.

The preferred opening date for the new school is for the start of the 2018 academic year.

In line with current government guidance the new school will be opened as a free school and the Council will be working with the Regional Commissioners Officer and the Department for Education to ensure that a suitable sponsor is identified to run it.

The site at Torquay Road is owned by the Council and would remain so; it would, however, be leased to the preferred sponsor on a 125 year lease as the site for their school.

It is expected that the existing accommodation would be retained as it was purpose built in 2003 and, although it was built as a special school, would require only minor refurbishment and alterations to make it suitable as a primary school.

The Council is already in the process of acquiring additional land adjacent to the site to make improvements to address current issues around site access and external play space. The additional land will provide a new school entrance, new car parking and a new multi-use games area. This project is part of the Children's Services Capital Programme and will be completed later this year.

The existing building is substantially bigger than the recommended floor area for a 210 place primary school. There are nine classrooms already there and the new school only requires a minimum of eight. There will need to be some minor remodelling but the cost of altering it is minimal compared to the cost of a new building anywhere else. Once the Council-owned Brookfield site is added to the school site, the total site area will be 7300 square metres. This is lower than the Department for Education recommended minimum. However it is greater than the site area of over three quarters of the other 210 place primary schools in Torbay; with seven of those nine schools having less site area than that being provided at the Torbay School site.

The Next Steps

All responses received during this consultation will be collated and presented so a decision can be made.

If approved, then the following would happen:

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| ➤ Spring 2016 | Development of plans in consultation with stakeholders |
| ➤ Summer 2017 | Decant of Torbay School to new site |
| ➤ January 2017 | Decision by DfE on preferred sponsor for new school |
| ➤ Autumn 2017 | Capital works on site to existing buildings |
| ➤ September 2018 | Preferred opening date for New School |

If the proposal is not approved then the Council will need to consider alternative uses for the site.

We would like to hear your views on this proposal, please find attached a questionnaire which you can complete and return. This questionnaire can also be completed online, go to: www.torbay.gov.uk/consultation.

You can also send your views in by letter or email to the following addresses:

Letter: Samantha Poston, Schools Capital & Planning Officer, Schools Capital & Planning Team, TDA. 3rd Floor Tor Hill House. Union Street, Torquay TQ2 5QW

Email: schoolscapital@torbay.gov.uk

The closing date for responses is 2nd June 2016.