School and club are pitching in

KICK OFF: Liam Meenan, right, head of physical education at Ashlyns School in Berkhamsted welcomes the prospect of a new sports pitch. MP David Gauke is far left, MP Mike Penning third from left and Ashlyns' headteacher Richard Dalziel is fifth from left (08-414-37).

by Louisa Felton
louisa.felton@comltd.com

PLANS for a £1.3million state-of-the-art full sized football pitch which would serve 2,000 children in Berkhamsted, have been unveiled by Ashlyns School. The school has teamed up with local football club, Raiders FC, and is set to launch a massive fundraising drive to pay for a high-quality, flood-lit pitch which would be open to the community.

The plans include a 300-seem changing room block with a meeting and treatment room.

The school unsuccess-

fully tried to improve its sports facilities in 2006 with a scheme for an indoor sports hall, but funding for the £1.5million project could not be raised.

It is hoped a joint venture with Raiders, who have been searching for a new pitch for almost 10 years, will help secure the necessary funding to make this new scheme a reality.

Ashlyns headteacher, Richard Dalziel, said: "This is an exciting and dynamic project which has real vision and resonance for the whole community of Berkhamsted - not simply for our school and pupils. "People should be in no doubt, it will significantly enhance and elevate the standard of sports facilities throughout this area."

He added: "We just cannot wait for it to become reality."

To fund the project, which is also being backed by the MP for South West Herts, David Gauke, a number of grants will be applied for and it is hoped a large sum of money will come from the FA's Football Foundation.

The rest, however, will need to be raised by the school and community.

Raiders boss, Paul Beard, said the pitch was exciting because it will be third generation astro turf which is similar to the pitch England played Russia on last year. He said: "This is a fantas-

ic opportunity for the youth of the town and the whole community. There is a lot of work to do but we are confident we will get substantial funding."

The club is the only FA Charter Community Standard Club in Dacorum and one of only five in Hertfordshire.

It has been expanding over the last few years and now has 300 children who regularly play.

Before fundraising can begin the school must get planning permission.

Berkhamsted Town Council will consider the application before passing it on, with its comments, to Dacorum Borough Council which will make the final decision.