

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
DATE: 25 AUGUST 2017

CONSULTATION ON THE AMALGAMATION OF COLLEGE TOWN INFANT & NURSERY AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Director of Children, Young People and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 To decide whether to undertake a consultation with all stakeholders over the possible amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools.

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 When an opportunity arises the Council considers the amalgamation of infant and junior schools so that the benefits of primary provision can be realised.
- 2.2 With the retirement in December 2017 of the headteacher at College Town Junior School such an opportunity is presented.
- 2.3 The process and typical timescales are laid down in statutory guidance from the DfE. The first stage is a wide stakeholder consultation which this paper seeks to agree.
- 2.4 Should an amalgamation be finally agreed in February 2018 it is expected that the new primary school would open on 1 September 2018.

3. RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 **That the consultation on the possible amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools should proceed.**

4. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 If an opportunity is presented to amalgamate Infant and Junior Schools then the Council seeks the views of all stakeholders with the intention of achieving this outcome.
- 4.2 An example would be when the headteacher of one of the schools leaves or retires, as is the situation at College Town Junior School where Jill Ward is retiring after 14 years as headteacher.
- 4.3 If the two schools amalgamate into a primary school there are opportunities for better educational outcomes for children through a consistent approach through the primary phase and other benefits (more details are provided in paragraph 6.7).
- 4.4 The governing bodies of both schools have agreed to support a consultation on amalgamation.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 Not to progress with amalgamation proposals, meaning that both current schools continue as separate organisations and the possible benefits are not realised.

6. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 6.1 The College Town schools were created as separate Infant (ages 5-7 years) and Junior (ages 7-11 years) schools, and they share the same site in Sandhurst.
- 6.2 There are however positive educational benefits for children to be educated in all-though primary schools (ages 5-11 years). The majority of schools in the Borough are primary schools, and any new school would be a primary school.
- 6.3 Over the years a number of separate infant and junior schools in Bracknell Forest have joined together to form a single primary school: Sandy Lane and Great Hollands Primary schools are the most recent of these. Amalgamated schools have been successful and have achieved many benefits similar to those envisaged with this proposal (see paragraph 6.7)
- 6.4 With the retirement of the headteacher of College Town Juniors on 31 December 2017 an opportunity is presented to amalgamate the schools.
- 6.5 The Council will help by leading the process of consulting everyone who may be interested in the proposal. If the Executive Member agrees at the end of the process to amalgamate both schools, The Council will help with planning and organisation of the new school.
- 6.6 The Council did previously propose to amalgamate the schools in 2003 at the request of, and supported by, the governing bodies of both schools, however consultation did not show sufficient support for the proposal.

Why might change be desirable?

- 6.7 In principle, amalgamation would:
 - 1. Provide scope to achieve higher educational outcomes.
 - 2. Enable better continuity of education for children whose parents are mobile, principally parents in the armed forces, thus limiting changes of school at an important time in their lives.
 - 3. Enhance the safeguarding needs of all pupils, for example by being aware of the needs of children of all ages in the same family.
 - 4. Provide opportunities to develop the curriculum and enhance the delivery of the National Curriculum.
 - 5. Allow better use of educational resources, including both teaching and non-teaching staff.
 - 6. Provide opportunities to increase the range, expertise and experience of teaching and support staff, provide opportunities and development for staff, and opportunities in the deployment of staff.
 - 7. Allow improvement and greater flexibility in management and organisation, for example in specialist teaching.
 - 8. Better promote and support the recruitment and retention of the headteacher and staff.
 - 9. Provide scope to achieve better value for money, for example by a rationalisation of some administrative and leadership posts in the school.
 - 10. Provide a higher profile in the local community

What is proposed?

- 6.8 The approach to amalgamations is described in statutory guidance 'Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' DfE, April 2016.
- 6.9 Likely timeframes in this instance are provided in Annex 1.
- 6.10 DfE Statutory Guidance states that there are two different routes to amalgamating an Infant and Junior School: 1) closing both schools and opening a primary school or 2) closing one school and extending the age range of the other school. The governing bodies have expressed differing initial views on their preferred route to amalgamation.
- 6.11 If route 1 is pursued the new primary school may be a local authority maintained school or an academy. There is no appetite from the governing bodies or the local authority for the new school to be an academy so this alternative is not included as a consultation option. If route 2 is pursued the school extending its age range would remain in its current form as a local authority maintained school.
- 6.12 Changes to the size of year groups, currently 90 pupils in each year group, are not being considered.
- 6.13 Nursery provision, currently at the Infant School, would continue largely unchanged. If the proposal to amalgamate is agreed then the primary school would take on the Nursery provision.
- 6.14 The options will therefore be:

Option 1: Close both schools and open a College Town Primary School as a local authority maintained school.

Option 2: Close College Town Infant and Nursery School and extend the age range at College Town Junior School to become a Primary School.

Option 3: Close College Town Junior School and extend the age range at College Town Infant and Nursery School to become a Primary School.

Option 4: Retain both schools as separate Infant and Junior Schools.

- 6.15 The Consultation Plan is attached as Annex 2.

Next steps

- 6.16 The proposed consultation period runs from 1 September 2017 to 13 October 2017. Responses to the consultation, feedback from the meetings and other information (for example on costs) will be considered by the Executive Member in November and the decision taken whether or not to formally determine to proceed with the amalgamation of the two schools.
- 6.17 If the decision is taken to proceed, a formal notice will be published followed by a four week period of 'representation' (formal consultation) during which views can be submitted. It is hoped that this stage can be completed by 31 December 2017.
- 6.18 The Executive Member will then consider responses and decide the proposal. It is hoped that this stage can be completed by the end of February 2018.

Unrestricted

If it is agreed to proceed

- 6.19 The Council will support the schools with amalgamation into a primary school, which would likely open on 1 September 2018.
- 6.20 The existing governing bodies would continue until the schools ceased to be maintained. With Option 1, after the Executive Member had decided to proceed, a temporary governing body would need to be established until the primary school opened. With Options 2 or 3 it would be good practice for the governing body of the school remaining open to be enlarged to ensure it was representative of all the stakeholders of both schools, for example by electing or appointing additional governors.
- 6.21 The pupils would continue through the new primary school, without a having to re-apply for a school place at 7 years of age. It is anticipated that the class organisation of the new primary school would be very similar to that in the current infant and junior schools.
- 6.22 The Organisational Change staffing protocol would guide the deployment of staff from the current schools to the new primary school together with the requirements of the School Staffing Regulations. A staffing structure would be drafted for consultation but, in practice, many roles would continue largely unchanged. There may be an opportunity to rationalise certain posts within the school – such as through the administrative functions whilst the senior leadership requirements could be reviewed. Where any salary reductions are identified then salary safeguarding arrangements will apply for 3 years.
- 6.23 The Site Controller is already shared between the two schools and there is a single caretaker's house located on the shared site. The school meals kitchen is located in the Junior School but is also already shared between the two schools.
- 6.24 There are areas that would require capital investment to support amalgamation and the scope and scale of this has yet to be determined. As a minimum the signage would need to be changed even if the buildings were left as they are. Refurbishment could create the new large shared staff room and administration offices required by an amalgamated school, as well as the single formal entrance and public reception area. Another significant issue would be the rationalisation of plant, equipment and ICT across the combined site to provide common standards of provision and to maximise value for money on running costs for the amalgamated school going forwards. A feasibility study would be undertaken to determine the precise scope and estimated cost of the various options for capital works.
- 6.25 Capital funding options are:
1. To bid for Council funding in 2018/19 (there is no EFA Basic Need Grant (BNG) in that year)
 2. To allocate BNG in 2019/20 - we have had a total allocation of £750k in that year announced.
 3. To allocate from the unspent balance of BNG in the current year. The likely use for this balance otherwise is to reduce the borrowing requirement for Kings Academy Binfield.
- 6.26 In terms of revenue funding implications arising from an amalgamation, a Primary school will receive less funding than a separate Infants and Junior school. This is because every school receives the same amount of fixed lump sum funding allocation, irrespective of school size. Taking account of the current proposals in the Schools National Funding Formula, which have yet to be confirmed and are therefore subject to change, an amalgamated Primary School would receive £110k per annum less than separate Infants and Junior Schools.

There would be one year of transitional funding where the new primary school receives 85% of the fixed lump sum received by the Infants and Junior schools.

- 6.27 The extent to which a new Primary School could manage the reduction in funding will be dependent on budget decisions of the governors. A saving of around £70k - £80k will arise from moving to one headteacher, with the potential to also make savings on leadership, office and support staff.

7. **ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS**

Borough Solicitor

- 7.1 The relevant legal issues are addressed within the main body of the report, particularly the options for retaining the amalgamated school as a maintained school or an academy or free school.

Borough Treasurer

- 7.2 The financial implications anticipated at this stage are set out in the supporting information. In terms of the potential impact on the council, any capital investment, even if it is initially funded from DfE grant will ultimately increase the council's borrowing requirement as it will reduce the amount of grant available to contribute to the cost of Binfield Learning Village. Every £1m of capital investment funded by the council results in a £50,000 revenue pressure to service debt charges. All new capital project schemes need to be approved by full council before any expenditure can be incurred.

Human Resources

- 7.3 The main workforce issues are covered under paragraph 6.22. The School Staffing Regulations enables a headteacher to be appointed to a post without the need of a selection process in certain situations such as an amalgamation. Where an existing headteacher has the skills and experience to take on the primary school this should be actively considered.
- 7.4 The earliest an amalgamated primary school could open is 1 September 2018. For the period between 1 January and an amalgamated school opening the governing body of the Junior School would need to agree an interim headship arrangement.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.5 Issues are addressed in the Consultation Plan.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 7.6 Issues are addressed below.

ISSUE		RISK	COMMENT
1	School standards	Standards will fall when schools amalgamate into a primary school	The evidence is that better continuity for pupils, opportunities for enhanced delivery of the National Curriculum and better use of resources are more likely to lead to higher standards. LA support will be provided to the primary

Unrestricted

			school to maintain and improve standards.
2	Recruitment and retention	Staff retention may be a concern on amalgamation	Opportunities will be presented to increase the range, expertise and experience of teaching and support staff, provide opportunities and development for staff, and enhanced opportunities in the deployment of staff. In the long term these should aid recruitment and retention. Effective communication can mitigate this risk.
3	Financial	Running costs following an amalgamation may exceed the reduced funding allocation due from the Schools National Funding Formula.	Governors will need to carefully consider the required staffing structure and other budgets and satisfy themselves that the financial consequences of amalgamation can be managed.

8. CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

- 8.1 The first stage of the amalgamation process is a wide consultation with all stakeholders of at least 6 weeks.
- 8.2 Parents, children, staff, governors, trade unions and the wider community will be consulted.

Method of Consultation

- 8.3 Through consultation materials on the Council's website, feedback from meetings and individual's comments.

Representations Received

- 8.4 To be reported in a subsequent paper to the Executive Member scheduled for November 2018.

Background papers

Organisation Change Staffing Protocol available at <http://schools.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/hr>

Contact for Further Information

Graham Symonds
Head of School Sufficiency and Services
01344 354067
Graham.symonds@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Unrestricted

Approved by Cllr Dr Gareth Barnard
Executive Member, Children, Young People
& Learning

Approved by Nikki Edwards
Director, Children, Young People
& Learning

Signature.....

Signature.....

Date: 25 August 2017

Date: 25 August 2017

Annex 1

College Town schools – Possible amalgamation – consultation and approval process

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Any guidance?</i>	<i>Period; End date</i>
Initial written agreement from both Governing Bodies to consider amalgamation		By 21 July
Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Decision on approach – or consult on both methods? • Initial approval by Executive Member on 25 Aug • Preparation of materials 		By 1 September
Consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaflets/Posters • Website • Meetings • etc 	'A minimum of 6 weeks; school holidays should be avoided.' 'Consult individuals, groups and organisations'	1 September – 13 October (or 20 October, start of half term)
Consider consultation outcomes and report to Executive Member on 24 Nov.		By 24 November
Prepare and publication of Formal Notice		
Formal consultation / Representation	'Must be 4 weeks, or more.' 'Must cover the specific proposal'	27 November – 22 December
Depending on amalgamation option selected, either:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If schools closing and primary opening, establish Instrument and Temporary Governing Body of Primary School or; 	Individual GBs continue until new school opens. On school opening, Temporary GB ceases and substantive GB takes over.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one school is extending its age range, review instrument, extend GB/set up a 'primary school' committee 	GB of school to close to continue to meet until school closes.	
Consider consultation outcomes and final determination of proposal by Executive Member on 16 Feb.	'Must be within 2 months' (else proposal is referred to Schools Adjudicator)	By 16 February (Start of half term)

Unrestricted

Stand-still period for appeals	'4 weeks'	By 16 March
Implementation		By 31 August 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Admission issues 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Name 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GB confirms/ recruits (depending on option) a Headteacher 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address financial issues 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree staffing structure 	Organisational change protocol to be used	By 31 May 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, agree Instrument of Governance of substantive GB 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider options for building works e.g. to establish a common entrance, one staffroom and one office. 	Various options will be possible of different scales. Funding of these works to be determined.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish / review school policies 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical issues e.g. uniform 		
Primary school opens		1 September 2018

Annex 2

CONSULTATION PLAN

AMALGAMATION OF COLLEGE TOWN INFANT & NURSERY AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

1. Introduction

This consultation is to seek views on the proposed amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools. It is the first stage in the process that could lead to the schools amalgamating into a primary school in September 2018.

The consultation is relevant to:

- Children
- Their parents and carers
- Staff
- Trade unions
- The infant and junior school governing bodies
- Other schools in Sandhurst
- Wider community.

2. Background

1. When an opportunity arises the Council considers the amalgamation of infant and junior schools so that the benefits of primary provision can be realised.
2. With the retirement in December 2017 of the headteacher at College Town Junior School such an opportunity is presented.
3. The process and typical timescales are laid down in statutory guidance from the DfE. The first stage is a wide stakeholder consultation which this paper seeks to agree.
4. College Town Infant and Nursery and Junior Schools were designed as separate infant (ages 5-7 years) and junior (ages 7-11 years) schools. There are positive educational benefits for children to be educated in all-though primary schools (ages 5-11 years). The majority of schools in the Borough are primary schools, and all new schools would be a primary school.
5. Over the years a number of separate infant and junior schools in Bracknell Forest have joined together to form a single primary school: Sandy Lane and Great Hollands Primary schools are the most recent of these.
6. The Council will help by leading the process of consulting everyone who may be interested in the proposal. If the Council agreed at the end of the process to amalgamate both schools, it will help with planning and organisation of the new school.

3. Consultation scope

The Consultation Mandate is attached as Appendix A.

The Council is committed to understanding the views of everyone with an interest in primary education in the College Town community. These views will:

- Establish the appetite for amalgamation.
- If there is an appetite, inform the precise proposal to amalgamate into a single primary school.

4. Consultation process and methods

The consultation methodology will include a range of consultation methods ensuring a balance between the groups to be consulted.

Methods will include:

- Information and a questionnaire available on the Council’s consultation portal, website and on paper.
- School-based meetings for parents and staff.

Promotion will include:

- Circulating information to interested parties
- Use of Council press releases
- Use of Council social media feeds
- Links on schools’ websites
- Having leaflets available at the local library, sports centre and other venues

The timetable/project plan is attached as Appendix B.

5. Proposed questions

Please tick the option you agree with:

Option 1: Close both schools and open a College Town Primary School as a local authority maintained school.

Option 2: Close College Town Infant and Nursery School and extend the age range at College Town Junior School to become a Primary School.

Option 3: Close College Town Junior School and extend the age range at College Town Infant and Nursery School to become a Primary School.

Option 4: Retain both schools as separate Infant and Junior Schools.

Comments:

.....

Please tell us about yourself: Are you?

A parent

Please tell us the age(s) of your child/children

Do they attend CTI or CTJ schools now?

Did they attend CTI or CTJ schools in the past?

Will they attend CTI or CTJ schools in the future?

Do they / did they / will they attend another school? If so, which

A member of the community

Have you a particular interest in the schools? If so, what?

A member of staff at either school

Teaching CTI CTJ

Non-teaching CTI CTJ

A governor at either school

CTI CTJ

Do you have another interest in the schools? Please specify

6. Equalities

Materials will be made available in other languages or formats on request.

Meetings will be held in fully accessible venues

7. Timescales

The consultation will be open for the period Friday 1 September to Friday 13 October 2017 (6 weeks).

The Executive Member for CYPL will consider the outcomes of the consultation and determine next steps in November 2017.

Graham Symonds
Head of School Sufficiency and Services
Bracknell Forest Council

Graham.symonds@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
01344 354067

Consultation mandate

	Consultation mandate 7 elements	Your consultation mandate
1	We	Bracknell Forest Council, Children, Young People and Learning (CYPL)
2	Need to understand the views of (target audiences/stakeholders – such as residents, local businesses)	Governors, school staff, trade unions, parents, children and the local community.
3	Concerning (issue)	The possible amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools.
4	So that (actor – such as Executive or Executive Member, a Director, lead officer or team)	The Executive Member, CYPL
5	Can (take an action)	Understand the appetite for amalgamation
6	Between (date)	1 September 2017 and 13 October 2017
7	So as to accomplish/in order to (wider aim)	Determine whether or not to proceed with the amalgamation.

Timetable / Project Plan

Appendix B

Initial liaison	Notes	Earliest	Latest	Progress
Liaise with Infant and Junior School Governing Bodies		1 July	31 July	
Gain positive support of the governing bodies to the amalgamation			1 August	
Preparation and approvals				
Paper to DMT		8 August		
Executive Member Sign off		25 August		
Consultation preparation				
Preparation of materials – leaflets, website, social media		3 July	31 Aug	
Distribute materials	After term has started		8 Sept	
Arrange parents meeting		3 July	8 Sept	
Arrange staff meetings		3 July	8 Sept	
Consultation		1 Sept	13 Oct	
Respond to any queries				
Parents Meeting		??		
Staff meeting		??		
Approvals - Review outcomes and agree next steps				
Review of findings		16 Oct	8 Nov	
DMT Papers		9 Nov		
Meeting		14 Nov		
Executive Member Papers		16 Nov		
Meeting		24 Nov		