

**TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER**  
**DATE: 16 FEBRUARY 2018**

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**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE COLLEGE TOWN JUNIOR SCHOOL AND EXTEND THE AGE RANGE  
OF COLLEGE TOWN INFANT & NURSERY SCHOOL**  
**Interim Chief Officer, Strategy, Resources and Early Help**

**1 PURPOSE OF DECISION**

- 1.1 Following formal consultation, to consider the proposal to close College Town Junior School and extend the age range of College Town Infant & Nursery School.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **That the outcomes of the formal consultation, both for and against the proposal, are noted.**
- 2.2 **That the proposal to close College Town Junior School and extend the age range of College Town Infant & Nursery School is agreed.**

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 3.1 74% of respondents to the initial consultation supported an amalgamation. 71% of respondents to the subsequent formal consultation agreed with the proposal to close College Town Junior School and extend the age range of College Town Infant & Nursery School.
- 3.2 It is recognised that there are continuing, strong opinions either against the principle or method of amalgamation. These views were considered fully in coming to the recommendations.
- 3.3 The proposal is to extend the age range by adding Years 3 to 6 to the Infants School, therefore creating a school with all primary phase years. The Council's view is that a primary school would:
- Enable better continuity of education and progression for all pupils and parents, in particular from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.
  - Enable more stability for children and parents by avoiding the need for a change of school at a young age. Among those who would benefit would be children of parents in the armed forces.
  - Enhance the safeguarding needs of all pupils, for example by being aware of the needs of children of all ages in the same family.
  - Provide scope to achieve higher educational outcomes.
  - Provide opportunities to develop the curriculum and enhance the delivery of the National Curriculum.
  - Allow better use of educational resources, including both teaching and non-teaching staff.
  - 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.

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- Allow improvement and greater flexibility in management and organisation, for example in specialist teaching.
- Better enable the recruitment and retention of a headteacher to support the vision of a new combined primary school.
- Provide greater opportunities for staff to work across a primary school which could promote the recruitment and retention of staff.
- Provide future scope to achieve better value for money, for example by a rationalisation of some administrative and leadership posts in the school.
- Provide a higher profile in the local community.

### 4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 Other amalgamation options were considered at earlier stages of the consultation, including to close the Infant School and extend the age range of the Junior School, and to close both schools and open a new primary school.
- 4.2 Earlier stages of the consultation also considered not progressing with amalgamation proposals, meaning that both current schools continue as separate organisations.

### 5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### Background

- 5.1 The College Town schools were created as separate Infant (ages 4-7 years) and Junior (ages 7-11 years) schools, and they share the same site in Sandhurst.
- 5.2 There are however positive educational benefits for children to be educated in all-through 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.
- 5.3 The Executive Member agreed on 25 August 2017 to consult on the possible amalgamation of the schools. The consultation period ran from 8 September to 22 October 2017, and outcomes were reported to the Executive Member on 24 November 2017.
- 5.4 At this time it was agreed that the option to close the Junior School and extend the age range of the Infant & Nursery School be progressed through formal consultation ('representation'). The proposal would be progressed through the DfE's 'prescribed alterations' process.
- 5.5 Formal consultation was therefore undertaken between 27 November and 31 December 2017 on the proposal '*To close College Town Junior School and extend the age range of College Town Infant and Nursery School by adding Years 3 to 6 to the existing school, so creating a school that will provide education for nursery and all primary-phase years from Reception to Year 6 (ages 4 to 11). The Primary School will come into effect on 1 September 2018*'.
- 5.6 35 responses were made - 25 supporting the proposal and 10 against. All stakeholders in the school – including parents, staff, governors and the wider community - were able to respond; this means that 35 is not a high response rate. Comments reflected a range of views, positive and negative, and are shown in full in Annex 1. Note that some respondents did not make any comments.

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5.7 Included in the points supporting the proposal were:

- The Infant school is a strong performing school with an excellent Headteacher. As such it is the logical approach to use this school as the basis for the new amalgamated school
- Better transition for children and families.
- Infant School performing better; likely improved outcomes at end of KS2.
- Good leadership at Infants; high expectations. Can benefit all pupils of primary age.
- Continuity, stability and communication improved.
- Reductions in funding can be managed.

5.8 Included in the points made against the proposal were:

- The proposal is primarily about cost saving for the local authority.
- Where will budget savings come from?
- Better to retain both schools, co-operate, and not amalgamate.
- Better to close both and create a new primary – establish new ethos and standards, not force infants standards on the junior school.
- Both management and governance of for Infants years different to Juniors years.
- Worry that Junior School staff morale will be low, which will both affect children and staff will leave.
- Could dilute standards at the Infants School.
- A different headteacher should be appointed.
- Use of buildings will be a challenge.
- The process has been biased towards the Infants School.

### If the recommendation is agreed

5.9 The Council will support the schools with amalgamation into a primary school, which would likely open on 1 September 2018. A Working Group will be established including the headteachers, Chairs of Governors and service leads, including those for the areas below.

5.10 Issues to be addressed during the implementation phase will include:

- Governance
- Admission matters
- School Name
- Confirming the appointment of the headteacher using the organisational change staffing protocol and School Staffing regulations.
- Consideration of revenue funding and spending implications. Whilst National Funding reforms are currently taking place, it is estimated that an amalgamated school would receive around £0.16m less funding than the separate Infant and Junior Schools. An amalgamation would also present opportunities for substantial cost savings, depending on how a new primary school is organised by the governors.
- Agree staffing structure - by 31 May 2018 - and implement organisational change staffing protocol.
- If necessary, agree Instrument of Governance of substantive Governing Body
- Consider options for building works. The Capital budget for works in 2018/19 is scheduled to be agreed by the Council's Executive in February 2018 with draft proposals currently including £0.6m funding split equally in two across 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial years. The agreed budget would limit the scope of adaptations.
- Establish / review school policies

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- Practical issues e.g. uniform
- Communications.

5.11 An updated timeline is attached as Annex 2.

5.12 The existing Junior School would continue until the school ceased to be maintained. This is anticipated to be 31 August 2018.

## 6. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

### Borough Solicitor

6.1 The relevant legal issues have been addressed within the report.

### Borough Treasurer

6.2 The anticipated financial implications are set out in the supporting information. School governors will need to manage the reduction in revenue budget arising from an amalgamation, most significantly through the saving arising from employing one less head teacher. Any capital works will need to be approved by the Executive and these can be properly considered when options have been identified and costed.

### Human Resources

6.3 Human Resources have been involved in discussions with both governing bodies through the process to date. The proposal to extend the infant school will mean the existing substantive headteacher continues in post for the extended primary school. The HR Team will support the governing body for the arrangements of the new staffing structures..

### Equalities Impact Assessment

6.4 Issues were addressed in the Consultation Plan of the consultation, reported as part of the paper agreed by the Executive Member on 25 August.

### Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.5 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 school to maintain and improve standards. The period of disruption and uncertainty will be minimised as much as possible.

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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.

## 7. CONSULTATION

### Principal groups formally consulted

7.1 Stakeholders in the school and the wider community were consulted.

### Method of Formal Consultation

7.2 Through consultation materials on the Council's website. These were promoted to interested parties and a notice placed in the Bracknell News on 29 November 2017.

7.3 The consultation period was from 27 November to 31 December 2017.

### Representations Received

7.4 35 responses were made - 25 supporting the proposal and 10 against. Comments reflected a range of views, positive and negative. See Annex 1.

7.5 The number of responses, 35, were not high in the light of the potential number.

### Background papers

Papers for Executive Member agreement:

- 'Consultation on the amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools', 25 August 2017
- 'Outcome of the consultation on the amalgamation of College Town Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools', 24 November 2017, including the 'Proposal to close College Town Junior School and extend the age range of College Town Infant School to become a Primary School.'

'Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' – DfE - April 2006

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Contacts for Further Information

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**Annex 1:**

**Comments received in formal consultation**

<b><i>Agree with proposal?</i></b>	<b><i>Comment</i></b>
Yes	I believe that amalgamation will benefit all the children and is a great opportunity
Yes	This proposal makes sense. The Infant school is a strong performing school with an excellent Headteacher and as such it is the logical approach to use this school as the basis for the new amalgamated school.
Yes	Amalgamation makes obvious and perfect sense from three angles; firstly and most importantly it makes transition a from yr 2 to yr 3 that much easier. Secondly, it is the fiscally responsible option to amalgamate given the obvious consolidation savings in both human and resources cost and vendor controls, and lastly if one School is performing better in Ofsted's view then the other should benefit from the operational and, principally, the didactic lessons learnt from the better performing school.
Yes	Very pleased to see the outcome from the first stage. With children in both schools I'm far happier about the Juniors closing and this school, out of the two, as I see it, requires a huge improvement in communication, leadership and overall teaching results. Should the Headteacher from the infants wish to take on the new primary school I would be delighted. I considered moving my son from juniors to another school but with one child in infants (which we are extremely happy with) it wasn't a easy decision but hopefully the right one with the proposed amalgamation. In terms of who will run as the executive head until this stage I would again be very happy should this be Mrs Sammons.
Yes	The leadership at College Town Infant and Nursery School is outstanding. As a member of staff at College Town Infant and Nursery School I have received plenty of training that has been tailored to my needs, and I feel that this can be replicated on a larger scale with the junior staff. It is a pleasure to work with Trudi Sammons and she has proven success of improving schools in a short period of time. Extending the age range of the infant school would ensure that the high expectations and tailored curriculum of the infant school would continue. It would support transition for the children and their families and therefore improve their educational success.
Yes	As a parent of children in both the infant and the junior schools I am VERY happy with this decision to close the juniors and extend the infants into a Primary. It will be much better for continuity throughout the school for both the children & the parents, much better to manage inset/holiday dates, and much better for communication overall. I think it's the best decision.
Yes	About time this happened.
Yes	More continuity for the kids and better management by the Infant management
Yes	My wife and I have complete trust in CTIS and this proposal can only be seen as a benefit to our daughters' education due to the stability and age range of the proposed new school.

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- Yes I am very happy with the Proposal. Just hope that the change of uniform will not be mandatory too fast ...
- Yes Excellent idea will save having to 'reapply for school positions for juniors.
- Yes As a newly qualified teacher I have settled into CTI with a strong support team around me. The leadership team have always put the needs of the children first and this is what is needed to coordinate this amalgamation efficiently.
- Yes I think it's a very positive thing for the children of both schools.
- Yes Great idea and great leading in infant school .
- Yes The proposal is relevant and will work if the current Head Teacher for the Infant & Nursery school becomes the Head for the new primary school, given the feedback from those who have commented on the junior school.
- Yes Becoming a primary school will ensure continuity and development of the pupils and improve outcomes for the children at the end of key stage 2. Extending the range of the Infant School will use the proven expertise of the outstanding leadership and management to develop an excellent primary school. Any reduction in funding can be saved through the reduction of leadership costs; administration costs and shared resources without impacting on the education of the children. A larger school enables greater flexibility in the use of finances and resources both staffing and physical.
- Yes I feel it is a positive move and especially support Mrs Sammons being an executive head. I would strongly recommend her being made a permanent head for the amalgamated school. I feel the current junior school is not well managed and therefore needs a strong leader through this change.
- Yes I like it. I'm hoping that Mrs Sammons will be the head teacher. When will we have that confirmed?
- Yes It is good for continuous provision for the children. I am extremely concerned about funding moving forward. The report issued in November was disappointingly biased. Negative comments about the Junior School were included but none of the positive messages that had been submitted about the Junior School were included. . The amalgamation is not about better provision than is currently being provided but is about better provision for the future. Reading the report suggests that the Juniors is not a 'good' school whereas this is blatantly untrue. Leadership at both schools is good. There has been no suggestion about how we can unite both sites. The report was published by the Infant School on their website before the Junior School had sight of it. This is unprofessional and drove further wedges into an already difficult situation. The whole process has been poorly managed, rushed through and from my perception has been lacking in rigour and complete honesty - in particular omitting to highlight the financial implications and the effect on staffing that this may have.

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- No I agree that the two schools should amalgamate. However due to the enduring politics between the staff at the two schools I think both schools should close and open afresh. This would give no advantage or disadvantage to either school and potentially encourage other suitable primary headteacher candidates to come forward and give the school a genuine fresh start.
- No I agree that the schools should amalgamate but both should close and a new primary school be opened in September 2018. Unfortunately, from comments that I have received, the recent consultation paperwork has not represented the views of many of the Junior school staff and parents. Quite a few parents from both schools have described the process as a 'hostile takeover'. This does not engender a supportive and positive environment in which to move forward. I do sincerely hope that the amalgamation is a success.
- No I feel that the consultation results did not show a true picture of how the Junior school works. I do feel that the two schools should work more closely with each other, but find it very difficult to see how two schools can become one with a large playground separating us.
- No I think both schools should close and staff chosen from both schools.
- No No evidence that creating a "Monster" school will be of benefit to the pupils. Slashing £160K off the budget and having a "Super Head" will not make up for the obvious shortfalls of the Junior school. Attend to and attack those shortfalls, don't dilute the standards at the infant school. Where will the savings come from? Wording on the questions are slanted, specifically detailing in section 4.1 "Not to progress with amalgamation proposals, meaning that both current schools continue as separate organisations and the possible benefits are not realised" - Sounds like BFC and School movers and shakers have it sewn up.
- No I still believe this is a cost saving opportunity for the LA and not one which will benefit the students for many years if ever. The implications on budget means the school will see a reduction in teaching and support staff to the detriment of the pupils and school results. Improvement between the schools could be achieved by co-operation rather than closing one school. I also do not believe the infants school Governing Body have the necessary skills to manage the larger school, the teaching and governor demands are on another level and don't see the new GB extending their membership to include either the Junior staff or existing Governors.
- I believe the consultation was passed at the previous stage based on biased input, I have spoken at length with many parents in CTJS who have stated their opinions were neither represented or reported in the consultation output, as such the feeling is that the original survey results were skewed and unrepresentative and painted the CTJS in a very poor light. If the amalgamation does go ahead, it should be only under the basis of closing both schools and operating under a newly GB made up of governors from both schools
- No I feel it would be fairer to close both schools and reopen as a primary school. Both schools have different ethos and standards and to keep one open would force their ethos and standards on the other. If both close, the new head would be starting fresh. I also feel that a new head teacher should be employed to make sure that there is no favouritism towards one set of staff or the other. Any existing head will be more likely to favour her existing staff over the other school and this would be to the detriment of the new school.

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- No Less money from funding will have a very bad effect on children and staff at school. I completely agree with the comment of College Town Junior school about the importance of decreasing the rate of pupils per class and have more support for children with special needs. Both of these actions are key to have a good level of education. With small classes teachers can pay more attention to each child and with enough support most of children with different learning issues are able to complete their education without problems. With less money, how is going to be that possible? Even now many children get lost in the education system and I know by experience that help is not sufficient and it takes time to get it, so what is going to happen if the amalgamation goes ahead? We will go back many years when even more children could not finish their basic education. It is difficult to understand that the council is proposing to cut money for the schools and at the same time is proposing to spend or waste money in my opinion, building new structures at the schools sites, "like a common entrance". Is that really important? Why not keep two different areas and use that money for teachers and children? I believe like in other services of the council, the people taking decisions, have already made up their minds before let people know about the proposal and is terrible the way that the information was given. If they council is serious about this matter we should be offered a formal vote, not a consultation that it is used in the way that is convenient for the council. Many services have been cut in the council and many people made redundant and that is the proof that with less money you cannot have the same level of services. Teachers work really hard and they deserve enough income to live on and support to do their job properly.
- No I feel that the process has been very biased towards the infants. The comments included in the report have been very negative when it is known that a lot a people included positive comments and these have not been included. Many visitors to the school comment on the welcoming atmosphere and this has not been portrayed in the report. I am still struggling to see the logistics of the building use when it becomes a primary school as both buildings are very separate from each other and there is no possible way of joining them without a substantial lost of the majority of the infant's playground. This will make sharing resources (such as the halls) a very difficult thing to do.
- No I feel that this amounts to a 'hostile takeover' of the juniors by the infants who, based on comments made by the infant school governing body that I read, consider themselves to be the better school. The fairest option for staff at both schools would have been to close both and re open as a combined primary. I am in favour of amalgamation but am very disappointed that this option has been chosen. The staff at the juniors have worked hard to raise standards and this will be a blow for staff morale and I can predict this is going to result in a high staff turnover from the juniors from staff that will not be happy 'being taken over by the infants'. I feel that this option is a bit of an insult to the Juniors and the staff and their hard work and I believe it will create hostility and low staff morale which will impact on children regardless of how professional the staff are. My husband and I both are primary school teachers and we entirely support the staff at the juniors and relate to how this proposal for merging must have made them feel. You will need to proceed extremely carefully to avoid loss of staff and therefore stability in the KS2 part of the school (my son will be in Y3 next year) and avoid any sense that infant governing body/staff/headteacher feel that they are better than the staff in the juniors.

## Annex 2: College Town schools – Possible amalgamation – consultation and approval process

<i>Stage</i>	<i>Any guidance?</i>	<i>Period; End date</i>
<b>Initial written agreement from both Governing Bodies to consider amalgamation</b>		By 21 July COMPLETE
<b>Preparation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning</li> <li>• Decision on approach – or consult on both methods?</li> <li>• Initial approval by Executive Member on 25 Aug</li> <li>• Preparation of materials</li> </ul>		By 1 September COMPLETE
<b>Consultation</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaflets/Posters</li> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Meetings</li> <li>• etc</li> </ul>	'A minimum of 6 weeks; school holidays should be avoided.' 'Consult individuals, groups and organisations'	1 September – 22 October COMPLETE
Consider consultation outcomes and report to Executive Member on 24 Nov.		By 24 November COMPLETE
<b>Prepare and publication of Formal Notice</b>	See guidance below*	27 November COMPLETE
<b>Formal consultation / Representation</b>	'Must be 4 weeks, or more.' 'Must cover the specific proposal'	27 November – 31 December COMPLETE
<i>Proposal be to extend the age range of the Infant School, close the Junior school and progress through the 'Prescribed alterations' route</i>	See guidance below*	
Consider representation outcomes and final determination of proposal by Executive Member.	'Must be within 2 months' (else proposal is referred to Schools Adjudicator)	By 16 February (End of half term)
Stand-still period for appeals	'4 weeks'	By 16 March
<b>Implementation</b>		By 31 August 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infant School to review governance during the transition phase.</li> </ul>	It would be good practice to extend the range and skills of governors to include experience of the junior years.	

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Junior School GB to continue to meet until school closes</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions issues</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Name</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GB confirms/ recruits (depending on option) a Headteacher</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Address financial issues</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree staffing structure</li> </ul>	Organisational change protocol to be used	By 31 May 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If necessary, agree Instrument of Governance of substantive GB</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree building works e.g. to establish a common entrance, one staffroom and one office.</li> </ul>	Various options will be possible of different scales.	Capital budget to be agreed by Executive February 2018 for works in 2018/19.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish / review school policies</li> </ul>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practical issues e.g. uniform</li> </ul>		
<b>Junior School closes</b>		31 August 2018
<b>Primary school opens</b>		1 September 2018

\* Guidance on 'prescribed alteration' of schools

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/514548/16-04-06\\_FINAL\\_SO\\_Guidance\\_PA\\_Regs.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514548/16-04-06_FINAL_SO_Guidance_PA_Regs.pdf)

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2013/3110/contents/made>