

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER
DATE: 26 OCTOBER 2018

**OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE AMALGAMATION OF ASCOT HEATH INFANT
AND CE JUNIOR SCHOOLS**
Assistant Director: Education & Learning

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

- 1.1 To receive the outcomes of the consultation of the possible amalgamation of Ascot Heath Infant and CE Junior Schools to become a primary school and agree the way forward.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the outcomes of the consultation are noted.
- 2.2 That the possible amalgamation of Ascot Heath Infant and CE Junior Schools should move to the next stage of Representation (formal consultation).
- 2.3 That the Representation stage should be based on an amalgamation progressing, with the route to becoming a primary school being to extend the age range of the Infant School and to close the Junior School.
- 2.4 That the Proposal, attached as Annex 3, is agreed subject to any detailed changes.
- 2.5 That once the Primary School is established, the Council will work with the Governing Body and the Diocese to undertake another consultation with the local community to ensure that all parents have an opportunity to express their thoughts about potential Voluntary Controlled church status.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 92% of respondees to the consultation supported an amalgamation.
- 3.2 45% of respondees opted to extend the age range of the Infant School and to close the Junior School. Specific benefits of this approach were recognised by respondees in their comments.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The Ascot Heath schools were created as separate Infant (ages 4-7 years) and Junior (ages 7-11 years) schools, and they share the same site in North Ascot.

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- 5.2 There are positive educational benefits for children to be educated in all-through primary schools (ages 4-11 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 29 June to consult on the possible amalgamation of the schools. The consultation period ran from 5 July to 26 September 2018. There was consultation on the following questions:
- Q1: Would it be advantageous to merge the Infant and Junior schools and open an Ascot Heath Primary School? Yes / No
- If your answer to Q1 is 'Yes' then:
- Q2: Should the way of achieving the Primary School be to:
- Option 1) Extend the age range at Ascot Heath Infant School to become a Primary School and close Ascot Heath CE Junior School.
 - Option 2) Extend the age range at Ascot Heath CE Junior School to become a Primary School and close Ascot Heath Infant School.
 - Option 3) Close both schools and open a newly formed Ascot Heath Primary School
 - Option 4) No preference
- Q3: If your preference is for the outcome to be a newly formed Primary School (Option 3), should the future Primary School be a:
- Option 3a) Community school?
 - Option 3b) Voluntary Controlled (VC) Church of England school?
- 5.4 The consultation involved a discussion paper and questionnaire, a drop-in for staff at the Infants school and open meetings (two, one at each school).

Consultation outcomes

- 5.5 149 responses were received through the web-based questionnaire. 92% of respondents were in favour of amalgamation. 62% of respondents voted for the primary school to have a Community status and 25% preferred a Voluntary Controlled status. 45% of respondents opted to extend the age range of the Infant School to become a primary and close the Junior school (Option 1).
- 5.6 A full report of the consultation including detailed percentage breakdowns and full views of respondents, backing up their preferences described above, is attached as Annex 1.
- 5.7 The Infant School Governing Body expressed a preference for Option 1. The Junior School Governing Body's preference was for Option 3b, to amalgamate the schools by closing both the current schools and opening a Church of England Controlled Primary, with no denominational criterion meaning that it was accessible by the whole community. The full responses from the governing bodies are provided in Annex 1.
- 5.8 The Diocese of Oxford's view is that they support option 3b – a new school, as a voluntary controlled school.

Other developments during the consultation period

- 5.9 The Governing Body of Ascot Heath CE Junior School requested that the local authority remove church attendance (the 'denominational criterion') from the admission criteria for 2019/20, and later years, in line with Diocesan guidance. This would mean that other criteria,

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such as designated area and sibling, will then be the same for both Infant and Junior schools and amalgamation would be facilitated. However, to change admission criteria for 2019/20 the Council had to apply to the Schools Adjudicator, who refused the request.

- 5.10 If Options 1 or 2 were progressed the Council can still manage the transition of the admission of pupils to Year 3 of a primary school in September 2019 with a minimal effect on class sizes. If Option 3 were progressed, the Schools Adjudicator would need to agree admission arrangements as part of their overall approval process and it is unlikely this would happen before September 2020.
- 5.11 Ascot Heath Junior School is a school causing concern and is closely monitored by the LA and Ofsted. Standards at the Junior School at the end of Key Stage 2 in July 2018 were an improvement on 2017 and are above national benchmarks. There is still work to be done on raising attainment for specific groups of pupils e.g. those with SEND, and on ensuring that pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 maintain the good progress they make at the Infants as they move through the Juniors. Amalgamation would enable rigorous systems and processes to be implemented across the whole primary phase in relation to the quality of teaching, learning and assessment and this would have a positive impact on the achievement of pupils and ensure that standards across all cohorts remain above national benchmarks for all groups of pupils. There would be consistency in leadership across the primary school.
- 5.12 The OFSTED rating of the Infants remains as 'Outstanding' and the Juniors as 'Requires Improvement'. If one school expands then that school's OFSTED rating carries forward to the expanded primary school. If a primary is achieved through closures and a new school there is no OFSTED inspection for up to 2 years.

Future process issues

- 5.13 The approach to amalgamations is described in statutory guidance. Both processes are similar but the decision maker and timescales are different:
- 'Making prescribed alterations to maintained schools' (DfE April 2016) in relation to options 1 and 2. An amalgamation by closing one school and extending the age range of the other is a 'prescribed alteration' which the local authority can decide within a timeframe that would lead to a merged school opening in September 2019.
 - 'Opening and closing maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' (DfE, April 2016) in relation to option 3. An amalgamation by closing both infant and junior schools and replacing them with a primary school could be considered under 'Section 11' proposals and the Schools Adjudicator would be the final decision maker. The timeframe of progressing this decision would mean that the earliest a merged school could open is September 2020. In addition a risk is presented from the Council's viewpoint that the Schools Adjudicator might challenge the basis or process of a proposed merger and could introduce a complication that the new primary school should be an academy.
- 5.14 In both processes, if there is agreement following consultation that a proposal should progress, the next stages are for a notice to be published followed by a period of 'representation' – formal consultation of four weeks - during which views can be submitted.
- For options where the primary school would have a Community status – Options 1 and 3a – the Council would publish the notice. This can happen on 29 October and the period of representation be completed by 25 November 2018.
 - For options where the primary school would have a Church status – Options 2 and 3b – the Diocese would publish the notice. This presents a risk from the Council's

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viewpoint of a delay that could mean that a headteacher appointment in January and implementation by September 2019 would be prejudiced.

- 5.15 Also, for options where the primary school would have a Church status – Options 2 and 3b – an additional stage is required, after approval. This is the need to apply for a designation of religious character. This does not necessarily present a potential delay as with these options implementation will be in September 2020 and there will be time to seek this approval.

Conclusion and next steps

- 5.16 Annex 2 summarises the factors for and against the various options from the Council's viewpoint, taking into account views expressed in the consultation. Evaluating these factors leads to the recommendation that Ascot Heath Infant School be expanded and Ascot Heath CE Junior School be closed with the changes progressed through the 'prescribed alterations' process.
- 5.17 If the amalgamation in this way is agreed, the final draft of the Proposal on which formal consultation will be held is attached as Annex 3.
- 5.18 The Executive Member will then consider responses and decide the proposal. It is hoped that this stage can be completed by early in January 2019.
- 5.19 Following amalgamation and the set-up of the primary school, the Council will work with the Diocese and the governing body to consult on possible conversion of the Primary School to Voluntary Controlled status in September 2020.

If it is agreed to proceed in December 2018

- 5.20 The Council will support the schools with amalgamation into a primary school, which will open on 1 September 2019. As previously reported, an amalgamated school receives a lower budget allocation than the existing Infant and Junior schools but there are consequential savings from an amalgamation. Governors are aware of the anticipated financial impact and a future amalgamation would result in the new primary school receiving comparable funding to other similar sized BF primary schools. The current draft capital programme for 2019-20 includes funding to enable some building adaptations to facilitate the creation of a single school on the site.
- 5.21 If amalgamation proceeds on the basis of Option 1 it would be good practice for the governing body of the Infant School to be enlarged to ensure it was representative of all the stakeholders of both schools, for example by electing or appointing additional governors. The existing governing body of the Junior School would continue until the school ceased to be maintained.
- 5.22 An updated timeline is attached as Annex 4.

6. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

- 6.1 The general legal issues are addressed within the report. The specific issues relating to the property transfer ownership and entitlement raise complex issues that can't be resolved prior to the report going to the Executive Member for approval to commence the consultation. The situation is particularly complicated by the way the land is currently held. It may be necessary to consult the property adviser at the DfE as some of the issues associated with the property cannot be resolved by legal advice alone.

Director of Finance

- 6.2 The anticipated general 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.
- 6.3 In respect of the financial consequences of property transfer ownership and entitlement issues detailed by the Borough Solicitor, insufficient information is available to accurately quantify a possible cost and this therefore remains as an outstanding financial risk.

Human Resources

- 6.4 Human Resources have been involved in discussions with both governing bodies through the process to date. There are interim leadership arrangements currently in place in both schools and should these arrangements be agreed then the appointment of a substantive Headteacher would need to be made for September 2019. The HR Team will support the governing body in the new staffing structures required for the new arrangements.

Equalities Impact Assessment

- 6.5 Issues were addressed in the Consultation Plan of the consultation, reported as part of the paper agreed by the Executive Member on 29 June.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

- 6.6 Issues are addressed below.

ISSUE		RISK	COMMENT
1	School standards	Standards will fall when schools amalgamate into a primary school	<p>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.</p> <p>LA support will be provided to the primary school to maintain and improve standards.</p> <p>The period of disruption and uncertainty will be minimised as much as possible.</p>
2	Recruitment and retention	Staff retention may be a concern on amalgamation	<p>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.</p> <p>Effective communication can mitigate this risk.</p>

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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.
4	Academisation	If the process of merging the schools means that the School Adjudicator makes the final decision, she may decide not to accept our recommendations and seek an academy sponsor.	This is not a problem in itself, but the Council would prefer to support a new Community primary school rather than an Academy.
5	Timing	If Option 2 is selected there is a high risk that implementation would need to be Sept 2020. If Option 3 (a or b) were selected the implementation would need to take place in Sept 2020.	The Junior School needs further improvement now and some approaches enable a headteacher to be appointed in January 2019 and merger to take place in Sept 2019.
6	Diocese	If the Diocese have concerns about the process or outcome they can refer any decision to the Schools Adjudicator	Discussions with the Diocese will continue but any referral would create a delay, additional work and could negate decisions taken.
7	Site	If a community primary school is established land ownership issues and any financial implications need to be resolved.	Currently the Diocese have a legal entitlement to the land occupied by the Junior School (excluding playing field). Legal implications in the light of the Junior School closing need to be established.

7. CONSULTATION

Principal Groups Consulted

7.1 Parents, children, staff, governors, trade unions and the wider community were consulted.

Method of Consultation

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

7.3 The consultation period was 6 weeks from 5 July to 26 September 2018.

Representations Received

7.4 See Annex 1.

Background papers

Paper agreed by the Executive Member, 'Consultation on the amalgamation of Ascot Heath Infant and CE Junior schools', 29 June 2018,

'Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' – DfE - April 2016

Contact for Further Information

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Annex 1

Report on the consultation regarding the possible amalgamation of Ascot Heath Infant and Ascot Heath CE Junior Schools

The consultation was held from 5 July to 26 September 2018

The consultation involved discussion paper and questionnaire, a staff meeting and open meetings (2, one at each school). Responses were requested through the web-based questionnaire.

The open meeting at the Infant School was attended by 11 parents.

The open meeting at the Junior School was attended by 12 people, including parents and governors

Responses – summary

Number of valid responses: 149

137 (92%) of responses were in favour of an amalgamation in some way.

12 (8%) of responses were not in favour of an amalgamation.

	Number	%
In favour:		
• Option 1 –Extend the age range of Infant to become a primary and close Junior School	67	45
• Option 2 –Extend the age range of Junior to become a primary and close Infant School	4	3
• Option 3 – Close both schools and open a primary	60	40
• Option 4 – No preference to method	6	4
Not in favour	12	8
	149	
If preference was Option 3 – a new primary – this should be:		
a) Community School	26	17
b) Voluntary Controlled	34	23

The option preferred by most respondees is to extend the age range of Infant to become a primary and close Junior School.

% preference for:

- Community school in some way: 93 - 62% (Option 1 and 3a)
- Voluntary Controlled School in some way: 38 - 25% (Option 2 and 3b)

44% respondees (68) made comments

73.8% respondees (110) had children attending Ascot Heath Infant and/or Junior schools now.

58% respondees (87) had children who will attend Ascot Heath Infant and/or Junior schools in the future.

Responses by parent (of a child currently, past or future at the schools), teacher, non-teaching, governor (note that some respondees had more than one role)

Number	In favour					Not in favour	Total
	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3a	Option 3b	Option 4		
Parent	62	4	24	32	5	11	138
Teacher - AHI	11					1	12

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Teacher - AHJ	1		1	3			5
Non-teaching staff - AHI	9			1	1	1	12
Non-teaching Staff - AHJ	1			1		2	4
Governor - AHI	10						10
Governor - AHJ	1		2	5			8
% of role							
Parent	44.9%	2.9%	17.4%	23.2%	3.6%	8.0%	100.0%
Teacher - AHI	91.7%					8.3%	100.0%
Teacher - AHJ	20.0%		20.0%	60.0%			100.0%
Non-teaching staff - AHI	75.0%			8.3%	8.3%	8.3%	100.0%
Non-teaching Staff - AHJ	25.0%			25.0%		50.0%	100.0%
Governor - AHI	100.0%						100.0%
Governor - AHJ	12.5%		25.0%	62.5%			100.0%

Community interests noted (possibly in addition to one of the roles above) included: previous pupil, previous teacher, previous governor, local resident, local church leader, a Member of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and being an education academic at the Institute of Education and University of Reading.

Governing Body preferred options and comments

Infant School

The Governing Body (GB) at Ascot Heath Infant School (AHIS) is entirely committed to the best interests of the children in our community. We are passionate about ensuring our children receive the quality education they deserve, not just at infant school age but throughout their primary career.

On the retirement of our exceptional Head, Mrs Catherine Bates, we made the decision to proceed with a consultation on a possible amalgamation with our neighbouring school, Ascot Heath CE Junior School. We did not take this decision lightly but concluded that our children's best interests are served by bringing the schools together. This would enable continuous education from entry at YR until exit at Y6, without the disruption and uncertainty of applying for a place at the Junior school at the end of Y2, without the adjustment required of the children to understand a new school on entry to Y3, and with a consistency in approach to teaching across the board, but particularly core subjects such as Maths and English which would enhance learning.

So if an amalgamation is to go ahead the question becomes who should lead this process? Given our status as an Ofsted outstanding, LA category 1 School; with a good external reputation (within the community and other LA schools); a strong Senior Leadership Team; a leading influencer in the formation of the North Bracknell School Cluster (TOPS) and with an experienced and effective Governing Body it will come as no surprise that we believe we have the capacity and skills to extend into KS2 and therefore fully support Option 1 from the consultation document (Ascot Heath Infant School to extend up to Y6).

Under the leadership of our Head and with the support of the GB, our school has continued to strive to grow 'confident learners, in a happy, safe and secure environment'. Our success is demonstrated not only in our school data but also in our parent survey results with 97% of responding parents stating they agree or strongly agree that they are happy with their child's experience at AHIS.

Our Governing Body has extensive governance experience across EYFS, KS1 and KS2 (through involvement with other schools). Our GB includes a teacher, a School Business Manager and a

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Professor of English along with a local church minister, governors with business and finance expertise, and a highly effective clerk who is well regarded within the LA; all of whom bring skills and experience to enable us to function effectively. We are committed, stable, reflective and self-critical, with a solid understanding of the role of governance, a clear vision for our school and an ambition to see all our pupils and staff flourish.

We believe that extending the Infant school is the least disruptive option for the children offering a certainty of quality education within a school that they know and trust either because they are currently schooled here or have been previously schooled here as with Junior pupils. Whilst the Infant School would clearly need to make adjustments to address the needs of KS2, the bedrock of outstanding education is already in place offering consistency without the challenges of starting afresh.

Junior School

With regard to the amalgamation consultation, Ascot Heath CE Junior School Governing Body have the view that an amalgamation of the Junior and Infant schools would be beneficial for the children of North Ascot.

The collective consensus is a preferred option of both schools closing and the formation of a new school.

The preferred setup of the new school would be of Church of England Controlled School status, but in line with Oxford Diocese guidance *ALL* denominational criteria would be removed for school admissions to ensure that the school is inclusive to all children in the local area.

This has been carefully considered to harvest both schools' strengths. This includes harnessing the experience and skills of both governing bodies, whilst maintaining ongoing relationships with the Oxford Diocesan Board of Education and Bracknell Forest Council.

Diocesan view

The Diocese of Oxford made no response in the consultation period, but subsequently expressed a view that they support option 3b – a new school, as a voluntary controlled school.

Comments made by consultation respondees

The essence of comments is reported, by individual point. Comments have typically been abridged.

From those not in favour of amalgamation

Perception that any amalgamation will be used as a reason for the Marplace development, which I am not in favour of.

Challenge of unknown outcome of Marplace proposal in respect of new buildings, or not.

A separate infant school provides a much less intimidating environment for a 4 year old to start school which is more important than the disruption in changing schools aged 7

Having changed school at age 7 my son was more relaxed about starting senior school.

Caring feel in both schools that would, in my view, be reduced by one school double the size.

I cannot see how you could get the 2 current sites to work as a single school without huge financial consequences.

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Need to work with the school needing improvement first, rather than risk dragging down Infants School. When improved, consider amalgamation. Concentrate on what's wrong vs trying to fix something which is not broken.

Little evidence that merging schools improves children's education or saves money.

It would be a shame to lose the identity of the 2 schools, with the Juniors as a Church school.

By those preferring Option 1 – Extend Infants; close Juniors

The opportunity to extend the Infant ethos through to the end of Key Stage 2 is an excellent opportunity for all the future children of North Ascot

Will provide consistency allowing the education to be of the highest standard

Will further develop the knowledge and skills of those working at both schools, increasing morale and future proofing the retention of teaching staff.

Juniors has not had a pleasing OFSTED report so should not take over the Infants.

Juniors have staff retention issues, unlike the Infants.

The expertise of the Infant school will work to everyone's benefit.

Ascot Infant School is a very successful well run school, it is Ofsted Outstanding and looks after the children in it's care very well.

Ascot Heath Junior School seems to have a number of issues including bullying and poor teaching.

Ascot Heath Infant School has an Outstanding Ofsted rating (albeit awarded some time ago) and I have been very impressed with the leadership, standard of teaching, parental communication and the way the school is run (3 similar comments).

The Infants have an excellent history of high quality care and education, values and beliefs which provide a stronger school community than that found in the Junior school.

The leadership in the infant school is excellent, the school is of an outstanding grade and both my children have received the highest quality of education during their infant years. Our experience with the Junior school is not of the same standard.

The infant governing body is well established, stable and very effective.

The Infant school is a highly effective, well managed, Ofsted outstanding school, that gets consistently high results not only in pupil data but also in the parents' questionnaire.

The school is well loved and well regarded. It has a clear vision, implemented through a thorough SDP, which Governors ensure is delivered and positively impacts pupils.

There is a culture of continuous improvement as attested to by the ongoing category 1 school status.

The schools leadership team have complete confidence in the school's capacity to extend to deliver KS2 to the same high standard that the infant stage is currently delivered.

It is extremely difficult to see any case where by it is in the interest of the pupils to close the Infant School and it would be appalling to close such a well regarded and successful school if this decision was reached only to appease other stakeholders.

The implementation of strategies at the Infant School has shown how the school is continually looking to achieve better outcomes.

Transition into the Junior School feels disjointed with apparently limited continuity.

The Junior has suffered from poor management, lack of staff retention, a poor OFSTED rating and standards issues; the Infant school has not had any of these issues (2 similar comments)

Standards need to improve at the Juniors in comparison with the Infants.

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Need to ensure that there is stability in the Senior Leadership of the Infant School in order to deliver the implementation of its successful policies to the expanded school and that the Junior teaching staff are encouraged to 'buy-in' to these.

The religious element of the Ascot Heath Junior School is too dominant.

Having 2 complete classes in each Junior year group is preferable to the 70 intake of the Infant school which results in mixed year classes. (NB This is being addressed from Sept 2019).

Many children have been moved to avoid going to the juniors which must have a negative effect on numbers going into the infants now.

Children have an outstanding start to education at the Infants but failings in the juniors mean have to find an alternative school to go to.

A huge shame nothing was done sooner.

The OFSTED reports 'tell the story'. (6 similar comments)

In today's multicultural diverse society, we need to create an inclusive environment for all children to prosper regardless of faith.

The Infants have a stable, experienced governing body and will be best placed to ensure the best outcomes for the children in the school currently and in the future. (2 similar comments)

To close the Junior School would give it a better chance of becoming a good school again by leveraging the reputation of the Infant School.

The junior school is not well managed. I've not been impressed by the school at all.

At this time of uncertainty stability is really important for the community.

By closing both schools the good reputation, outstanding Ofsted judgement and the values and ethos of the infant school will be forfeited. I believe that the two schools can and will work closely together in the near future but to have to start from scratch with a brand new school will be detrimental to the children, staff and parents at both schools.

If the schools are to merge, it is important that both Schools receive adequate funding support from the Local Authority to assist with the transition and additional costs.

I want a secular local education for my child. I feel that the church has placed its own interests ahead of the educational success of pupils at the juniors.

The infants already has a strong and effective governing body and a track record of success. The governing body of the junior school has been ineffective for many years.

The infant school has a clear and strong vision and is well led. The current junior head has lost the respect and support of the school community.

I feel very strongly that the current head in the Juniors would not be strong enough to take on the Primary School.

We have had a lot of bullying issues at the Junior school that have not been dealt with very well.

It is important that this happens by Sept 2019. This can't wait until Sept 2020.

I strongly believe that any new school should be a community school of no religion or faith to fully reflect the mix of different religions and those of no religion in our local community.

The infants school is much more a community minded school, building excellent relationships with parents. The Infants has very high expectations of behaviour and learning and excellent values that are modelled by all staff.

It makes sense that the infants school supports the juniors which is struggling.

We do not wish to see too strong CoE influence within the school environment and teaching. Religious education should be balanced.

By those preferring Option 2 – Extend Juniors, close Infants

We need to maintain the "Values" of a Church of England school.

By those preferring Option 3a – Close both, open new Community School

It will be important to have new administration as it would benefit both schools - neither of them have the experience of running a primary and the current policies are not adaptable to either schools.

Obtain the relevant planning permission and build the new school from the ground up. This would help remove any agendas, bias, culture and baggage that could be potentially carried over from the governors, teaching staff, Council members involved with the current schools and de-risk protectionism and differing objectives we have for each of the schools today and thus impact education for our children.

The funding help from Bracknell Forest Borough Council should be extended to help the school, especially considering the increased staffing costs for teachers (pay and super-annuation)

The current arrangements with different sized admission numbers in the two schools cause a lot of problems as 10 children do not get places at the junior school. (2 similar comments) (NB This is being addressed from Sept 2019)

It's also a waste of money and resources to have two management teams, two offices etc when the schools share a site. (2 similar comments)

The school should be non-denominational. To set up a new school with a particular religious affiliation is anachronistic.

It's important to have a balance of religious education in the syllabus and the school must uphold educational standards irrespective of religious persuasion of the parents. Strong criteria must be used to maintain a behaviour across all backgrounds and management must uphold the a-religious approach. Ideally the school should introduce students to all religions from an educational point of view.

I would like the school to be NON Church of England (non-secular)

You can see where the schools should work as one. I receive emails from both schools on the same subjects, fundraising for the same events and I have to choose which school to support. Having different companies that supply the school uniforms is confusing. Often there are clashes such as the juniors summer fair on the same day as helpers are needed to dig the infants wild garden. Both schools have separate wild gardens that need lots of parental help. Both school Parent Associations struggle to find volunteers and often run similar events but on different days, like school disco's and fairs. As a parent who wants to support both schools equally this is a big commitment to volunteer for both schools events and to get the best out of any school you need the parents support. At the moment the Juniors are looking to buy a Minibus then if the infants want to borrow the minibus they will have to pay to rent it off the juniors, this is just one example of a waste of resources. All these issues are just what I can see from outside as a parent there must be many more wastes of time and money from inside the school.

At the moment the Juniors seem to be struggling to hire teachers, probably to do with the poor Ofsted report,

The new primary school should have new leadership rather than being based on current Junior School leadership (2 similar comments).

By those preferring Option 3b – Close both, open a new Voluntary Controlled School

North Ascot is split between Windsor and Bracknell and does not really have a "heart" - this place is taken by the schools and the church - all of which work very well together - supporting each other in many ways. The community would benefit greatly from a combined all-inclusive Church of England primary school which is accessible to all the community linked to the church (6 similar comments)

For the opportunity that a Christian education provides. Having a Christian ethos at the heart of the school (3 similar comments)

So that the education for children in the Ascot Heath community can be strengthened through partnership.

A sense of community and belonging is vital to a child's education. Having one shared set of school values, one school ethos, one set of school community events and even one uniform are all potentially highly beneficial to children's learning and to families within the community.

It is important that the strengths of both schools are somehow preserved, in terms of their heritage, ethos and values. I would also wish that the distinctive age specific teaching, curriculum and pastoral care that is currently offered within each school be preserved too.

Great care and concern should be given, to minimising the detriments of the transition to a primary, to both the children and the staff who are currently at both schools. This absolutely has to be through a timely, well-managed and well considered transition, which puts the children and their education at the heart of the process.

I feel merging these schools, under new management would be beneficial. I fully support this proposed improvement.

I would very much like to see it as a "new Primary school". I believe keeping it as a church school (albeit inclusive of all faiths) adds such another dimension to the child's school life and their development in terms of their emotional and spiritual intelligence which is nurtured alongside the academic and emotional needs. Church schools are places where challenge through questioning is encouraged as through this they can make sense of the world and the gift of life - providing great guidance for their years ahead.

A C of E school can best offer an environment which fosters a caring, compassionate and welcoming environment where there is space in the day for reflection, peace and healing.

There can be a nurturing environment among pupils, staff and parents, as currently experienced.

Our children have thrived in the very nurturing ethos of the Christian values at the school. They definitely help to give the children a spiritual, social and moral sense of belonging, well over and above that of a community school.

Include all of the benefits of a VC school with the denominational criteria removed.

My only concern is the money reduction overall.

The VC option is the option supported by the Oxford Diocese.

Yes, a merged VC school but maybe not quite such a high church school

By those preferring Option 4 No preference:

It is important that no student should have to reapply for a place in school for year three

Important to have same no. places in all year groups (NB This is being addressed from Sept 2019)

All students who are currently at either school should be automatically entitled to a place at the new primary, even if the catchment area changes with the building of a new school. (NB: No changes in designated areas are planned if there is a new school)

Potential cost saving paramount

Other comments made

Prefer to see the new Ascot Heath Primary School as a Voluntary Aided school.

How will the varied opinions you will receive on this matter help to make the right decision for the pupils and the community? I am no education expert and I am pretty certain most other parents are not either. I don't want opinion or limited consultation to sway a decision. There must be assurances to ensure the focus remains on the bigger picture and not individual parents' agenda for their children. How will this be achieved?

Annex 2

Comparison of process issues around options

Note that:

- Issues described from the Council's viewpoint taking into account views expressed in the consultation.
- The benefits of amalgamation (outlined in the consultation paper) apply to all the options proposing this outcome but are summarised in the evaluation below of the 'no change' outcome.

	For	Against
Option 1 - Extend Infants and close Juniors	LA can undertake Representation process with immediate effect	Will need careful handling with Diocese
	Final decision-maker is the Council	Land ownership will be an issue
45% in initial consultation	Low risk of delay and not opening in Sept 2019	Diocese may refer outcome to Schools Adjudicator
	The LA can manage Year 3 admissions and existing agreed arrangements will continue	
	Start up time can be shortest – will develop based on existing, successful school	
	If progress can be maintained, new Headteacher of primary school can be appointed in Jan 2019	
	Existing effective Governing Body continues	
	Can fully utilise management and practices of Outstanding Infants School	
	No risk of academy school	
	Carries forward existing Outstanding OFSTED judgement	
	Reduced budget allocation earlier	
Option 2 - Extend Juniors and close Infants	The LA can manage Year 3 admissions and existing agreed arrangements will continue	Diocese will undertake Representation process
	No risk of academy school	Final decision-maker is the Diocese
3% in initial consultation	Reduced budget allocation earlier	Medium risk of delay and not opening in Sept 2019
	Additional support available from Diocese	Carries forward existing OFSTED judgement of Requires Improvement
		Start up time will be longer – existing school, but there will be issues to address

Unrestricted

		Risk of delay and not possible to appoint new Headteacher of primary school in Jan 2019
		Existing Governing Body continues – would need support
		Existing management and practices continues – need support
		Need additional stage of applying for designation of religious character
Option 3a	LA can undertake Representation process with immediate effect	Final decision-maker is the Schools Adjudicator
Close both and open a new Community Primary School	Up to 2 years before inspected by OFSTED	High risk of delay and not opening in Sept 2019
		Will need careful handling with Diocese
17% in initial consultation		Land ownership will be an issue
		Admissions can be managed by the Council but need to be approved by the Schools Adjudicator, This is unlikely to happen before Sept 2020 at earliest
		Start up time will be longest – new school
		New Headteacher appointment very unlikely in Jan 2019
		Temporary GB need to be set up for new Primary School, in addition to Infant and Junior GBs
		Need to establish new management and practices
		Diocese may refer outcome to Schools Adjudicator
		Delayed budget allocation reduction
		Risk that Schools Adjudicator would raise issue of academy
Option 3b	Up to 2 years before inspected by OFSTED	Diocese will undertake Representation process
Close both and open a new Voluntary Controlled Primary School	Additional support available from Diocese	Final decision-maker is the Schools Adjudicator
		High risk of delay and not opening in Sept 2019
		Need additional stage of applying for designation of religious character
23% in initial consultation		Admissions can be managed by the Council but need to be approved by the Schools Adjudicator, This is unlikely to happen before Sept 2020 at earliest
		Start up time will be longest – new school
		New Headteacher appointment very unlikely in Jan 2019
		Temporary GB need to be set up for new Primary School, in addition to Infant and Junior GBs

Unrestricted

		Need to establish new management and practices
		Risk that Schools Adjudicator would raise issue of academy
		Delayed budget allocation reduction
No change – retain existing Infant and Junior schools	Retains different identities of two schools	The Juniors is a school causing concern
	No risk of pulling down Infants' standards	Lose opportunity to transfer good practice from Infants
	Avoids site change issues and expenditure	Lose opportunity to develop good practice across all primary ages
8% in initial consultation	No changes needed to admission arrangements (Note that removal of denominational criterion is being progressed irrespective of consultation outcome)	Needs work to support governance at the Juniors
	Headteacher appointments can progress immediately	Needs work to support leadership and practices at the Juniors
		Continuing discontinuity for pupils and parents between Key Stage 1 and 2
		No opportunity to enhance safeguarding of all children
		No opportunity to make better use of educational resources
		Reduced opportunities for staff recruitment, retention, deployment and specialist teachers
		No opportunity for size-related value for money savings
		Retains possibility of split community loyalties

Annex 3: Formal consultation Proposal – Final draft

Proposal to close Ascot Heath CE Junior School and extend the age range of Ascot Heath Infant School to become a Primary School



Your views are invited on this proposal

This proposal directly concerns the following schools:

Ascot Heath Infant School
Rhododendron Walk
New Road
Ascot
SL5 8PN

Ascot Heath CE Junior School
Rhododendron Walk
New Road
Ascot
SL5 8PN

Currently provides Reception and Years 1 and 2

Currently provides Years 3 to 6

Proposer

Bracknell Forest Council
Time Square
Market Street
Bracknell
RG12 1JD

The Proposal

The Council's proposal is to close Ascot Heath CE Junior School and extend the age range of Ascot Heath Infant School by adding Years 3 to 6 to the existing school, so creating a school that will provide education for all primary-phase years from Reception to Year 6 (ages 4 to 11).

It is proposed that the Primary School will come into effect on 1 September 2019.

Comments on this Proposal are invited by 2 December 2018

Please read this Proposal and complete the online response form available at:

<http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/public/sch/ah-consult>

Background

Ascot Heath Infant and CE Junior Schools were created as separate infant (ages 4-7 years) and junior (ages 7-11 years) schools. There are positive educational benefits for children to be educated in all-through primary schools (ages 4-11 years). The majority of schools in the Borough are primary schools, and all new schools would be a primary school.

Over the years a number of separate infant and junior schools in Bracknell Forest have joined together to form a single primary school: College Town Primary School was established in

September 2018 and, previously, Sandy Lane, Meadow Vale, The Pines and Great Hollands Primary schools were successfully created as a result of amalgamations. Amalgamated schools have been successful and have achieved many benefits similar to those envisaged with this proposal.

The Council is proposing this change because it believes it is in the best interests of the children, families and wider community in North Ascot.

If agreed, the Council will support Ascot Heath Infant School governors with planning and organisation of the new school.

No changes are being considered to the designated area or the size of year groups, which will be 60 pupils in each year from 1 September 2019.

The Council is proposing to progress using the statutory 'prescribed alteration' of schools legislation.

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/ukxi/2013/3110/contents/made>

The Consultation

Between 5 July and 26 September 2018 a consultation was undertaken to gain views on the feasibility of amalgamating the schools. Different options to amalgamate the schools, or not, were presented for consultation. 92% of respondees were in favour of amalgamation in some way. 62% of respondees preferred the eventual primary school to have a Community status in some way and 25% preferred a Voluntary Controlled status in some way. 45% of respondees opted to close the Junior School and extend the age range of the Infant School to become a primary (Option 1).

On balance, an amalgamation achieved through closing the Junior School and extending the age range of the Infant School was the preferred way forward. A full report on the consultation and a copy of the Executive Member report agreeing to proceed to this stage, the Proposal, are available here: <http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/public/sch/ah-consult>

Why an amalgamation is desirable

The Council's view, supported by the outcomes of the consultation, 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.
- 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 across all key stages, and enhance the delivery of the National Curriculum.
- Allow better use of educational resources, including both teaching and support staff.
- Enable the successful recruitment and retention of a headteacher to support the vision of a future, larger, combined Primary school.

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- 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.
- Allow improvement and greater flexibility in management and organisation, for example in specialist teaching.
- Provide greater opportunities for staff to work across a Primary school and better promote and support the recruitment and retention of all staff.
- Provide scope to achieve better value for money, for example by a rationalisation of some administrative and leadership posts in the school.
- Clearer, single local community presence.

What may be the drawbacks?

- Appropriate education of pupils of different ages. Strategies would need to be in place to ensure that the special qualities of education for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 children are preserved.
- Potential disruption to pupils' education during the transition to a Primary school. A new set of 'whole school' policies and practices would be developed as part of planning the way the future school will look.
- The effective use of current buildings may be a challenge.
- Budget implications. In the longer term the budget for the future Primary will be smaller than the total amount currently available to both schools but value for money savings will also be made from running one school instead of two and from economies of scale.

How the Proposal will affect pupils

Pupils would continue through the new primary school without a change of school at 7 years of age. This would bring better continuity for pupils and parents. It is for governors to agree but 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.

How the Proposal will affect staff

The Council's 'Organisational Change staffing protocol' and the requirements of the School Staffing Regulations would guide the deployment of all staff from the current schools to the new primary school. When appointed, the headteacher would work with the governing body and staff to draw up a development plan for the new Primary school. Appropriate leadership and staffing structures for the school would follow. In practice, it is envisaged that many roles would continue largely unchanged. There would probably be some changes to the structure of senior leadership and administrative posts in the school. Where any salary reductions are identified then salary safeguarding arrangements will apply for 3 years.

How the Proposal will affect governors

If the Proposal is agreed, the governing body of the Infants School will take on additional responsibilities to oversee the establishment of the Primary School. The Junior School Governing Body would continue until the school closed on 31 August 2019.

How the Proposal will affect buildings

There are areas that would require capital investment to support amalgamation and the scope and scale of this has yet to be determined. With the publication of this Proposal, options can now be evaluated by the Council to determine the precise scope and estimated cost of possible capital works. The financial cost of any agreed capital building works would be funded by the Council.

How the Proposal will affect other schools in the local area

The effect on other local primary schools and the secondary schools, Charters School and Garth Hill College, would be minimal. Children from the local North Ascot community will continue to be able to express a preference for any school in North Bracknell, elsewhere in the Borough or in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. The planned admission number (PAN, the number that is used to decide how many children can be admitted into a year group) of the primary school would be the same as the PAN of the current Infant school. It should be noted that the PAN is due to change from 70 to 60 from 1 September 2019 whether or not a primary school is created. No changes in year group sizes are proposed so intake to secondary schools should be unaffected.

Project costs

Infant School governors will need to consider the implications of work arising from the implementation and prioritise school budgets accordingly. Council support for governors and school leadership will be provided from within existing resources. In terms of capital building works, the Council will develop and fund an acceptable scheme.

The Governing Body will need to consider financial issues and determine a sustainable budget plan for the Primary school for the remaining period of the 2019/20 financial year, and subsequent financial years.

Issues to be addressed during the implementation phase

The issues to be addressed by governors will include:

- Admission matters
- School Name
- Recruitment of Headteacher using the organisational change staffing protocol.
- Consideration of financial issues
- Agree staffing structure - by 31 May 2019 - and implement organisational change staffing protocol.
- Agree an Instrument of Governance of the substantive Governing Body
- Consider options for building, IT and telephony works. The Capital budget for works in 2019/20 is scheduled to be agreed by the Council's Executive in February 2019.
- Establish / review school policies
- Communications within school, with parents and with wider stakeholders
- Practical issues e.g. uniform, website, email addresses

Timetable

Stage	Relevant dates
Publication of Proposal and Formal Notice	29 October
Period of formal consultation ('Representation')	5 November to 2 December
Consider representation outcomes and final determination of proposal by Executive Member.	On 2 January

Unrestricted

Stand-still period for appeals	By 31 January 2019
If the Proposal is agreed:	
Implementation period	1 January to 31 August 2019
Junior School closes	31 August 2019
Primary School opens	1 September 2019

If you wish to respond to this Proposal through support, objections, comments or otherwise making representations go to the Consultation website: <http://consult.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/public/sch/ah-consult>

The consultation closes on 2 December 2018.

If you have any queries please email: consultation.education@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Please put 'Ascot Heath consultation' in the subject line.

Annex 4: Ascot Heath 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		COMPLETE
Preparation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Decision on approach • Initial approval by Executive Member on 11 June • Preparation of materials 		14 May – 4 July COMPLETE
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’	5 July to 26 Sept COMPLETE
Consider consultation outcomes and report to Executive Member		26 October
<p><i>The following stages and timescales are based on the recommendation being accepted, meaning that the Council will be publishing the Notice, undertaking the Representation stage and subsequently making the final decision.</i></p> <p><i>Note that an implication of progressing other approaches is that execution of the Representation stage and final decisions may be the role of the Diocese and/or the Schools Adjudicator and not in the Council’s gift.</i></p>		
Prepare and publication of Formal Notice		
Stand-still period for appeals	5 clear working days	
Formal consultation / Representation	‘Must be 4 weeks, or more.’ ‘Must cover the specific proposal’	If recommendation accepted – Monday 5 November to Sunday 2 December
The statutory proposal and notice are sent into the DfE notifications mail box	Within one week	
Depending on amalgamation option selected, either:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If one school is extending its age range, review instrument and extend Governing Body if required 	GB of school to close to continue to meet until school closes.	
Consider consultation outcomes and final determination of proposal by Executive Member.	‘Must be within 2 months’ (else proposal is referred to Schools Adjudicator)	By Wed 2 January 2019
Stand-still period for appeals	‘4 weeks’	By end January 2019

Unrestricted

The decision record is sent to the DfE Notifications email address.	Within one week	
Implementation		By 31 August 2019
<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 		Anticipated by 31 January 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address financial issues 		By 31 December 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree staffing structure 	Organisational change protocol to be used	By 31 May 2019
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If necessary, agree Instrument of Government of, if necessary, temporary and substantive GB 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider options for building, IT and telephony works. 	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"> • Communications 	Within school, with parents and with wider stakeholders	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practical issues e.g. uniform, website, email addresses 		
Primary school opens		1 September 2019

* 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

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