

TO: EXECUTIVE MEMBER CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE & LEARNING
DATE: 25 JANUARY 2019

**PROPOSAL TO CLOSE HOLLY SPRING JUNIOR SCHOOL AND EXTEND THE AGE RANGE
OF HOLLY SPRING INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL**
Assistant Director: Education and Learning

1 PURPOSE OF DECISION

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

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 **That the outcomes of the formal consultation are noted.**
- 2.2 **That the proposal to close Holly Spring Junior School and extend the age range of Holly Spring Infant and Nursery School is agreed.**

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 96% of respondents to the initial consultation supported an amalgamation. 100% of respondents to the subsequent formal consultation agreed with the proposal to close Holly Spring Junior School and extend the age range of Holly Spring Infant & Nursery School.
- 3.2 Views expressed in the consultations 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.
 - 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.
 - 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 provide opportunities to 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.
- Give a clearer, single local community presence.

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 would continue as separate organisations.

5. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

- 5.1 The Holly Spring schools were created as separate Infant (ages 4-7 years) and Junior (ages 7-11 years) schools, and they occupy adjacent sites in Bullbrook.
- 5.2 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.
- 5.3 The Executive Member agreed on 30 July 2018 to consult on the possible amalgamation of the schools. The consultation period ran from 6 August to 14 October 2018, and outcomes were reported to the Executive Member on 16 November 2018.
- 5.4 At this time it was agreed that the option to close the Junior School and extend the age range of the Infant 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 26 November and 23 December 2018 on the proposal *'To close Holly Spring Junior School and extend the age range of Holly Spring Infant & 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 2019'*.
- 5.6 16 responses were made, all supporting the proposal. All stakeholders in the school – including parents, staff, governors and the wider community - were able to respond; this means that 16 is not a high response rate. Although the number of responses was lower than anticipated, it is worth noting that the view of colleagues and governors at the schools is that this should be seen positively. In their view, if parents had a real concern they would have made their voices heard.
- 5.7 9 respondees made comments which are summarised in paragraph 7.4.

If the recommendation is agreed

- 5.8 The Council will support the schools with amalgamation into a primary school, which would likely open on 1 September 2019. A Working Group will be established including the headteachers, Chairs of Governors and service leads, including those for the areas below.

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

- Governance
- Admission matters
- School Name
- Appoint the headteacher using the organisational change staffing protocol and School Staffing regulations.
- Consider 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. All other amalgamations in Bracknell Forest have successfully transitioned to the new level of funding which reflects the allocation basis used to finance all other primary schools in Bracknell Forest and is therefore considered sufficient to manage the school.
- Agree staffing structure - by 31 May 2019 - and implement organisational change staffing protocol.
- Agree the Instrument of Government of substantive Governing Body.
- Consider options for building works. The Capital budget for works in 2019/20 is scheduled to be agreed by the Council's Executive in February 2019 with draft proposals currently including £0.32m in 2019-20. The scope of the amalgamation works will be agreed following a feasibility study to be completed by the Council's managing partner Atkins.
- Establish / review school policies.
- Practical issues e.g. uniform.
- Communications.

5.10 An updated timeline is attached as Annex 1.

5.11 The existing Junior School would continue until the school ceased to be maintained. This is anticipated to be 31 August 2019.

6. ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

Borough Solicitor

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

Director of Finance

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 headteacher. 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 will support the governing body to appoint the headteacher for the new Primary school and confirm appointments to the staffing structure. This will be managed under the Organisational Change Protocol, School Staffing Regulations and, should any redundancies be required, under the Council's Redundancy procedure.

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 30 July.

6.5 The Council has given due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty on the needs to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- foster good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

6.6 Amalgamating the schools will not be to the detriment of any of these aspects, and the new Primary school can work on enhancing the requirements through their work in the local community.

6.7 The current schools serve a largely homogeneous community and no impact on local community cohesion is foreseen. The Primary school can work on enhancing cohesion through their teaching, and an understanding of, and respect for, other cultures, faiths and communities.

6.8 The Primary school will be based around the existing Infant and Junior sites so there will be no changes in journey times or transport costs that would adversely impact on disadvantaged groups. Current walking and cycling routes will be maintained. The Primary school can continue to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school.

Strategic Risk Management Issues

6.9 Issues are addressed below.

ISSUE		RISK	RISK SEVERITY	COMMENT
1	School standards	Standards will fall when schools amalgamate into a primary school	Low	<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>

Unrestricted

2	Recruitment and retention	Staff retention may be a concern on amalgamation	Low	<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>
3	Financial	Running costs following an amalgamation may exceed the reduced funding allocation due from the Schools National Funding Formula.	Low	<p>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. All other amalgamations in Bracknell Forest have successfully transitioned to the new level of funding.</p>

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 28 November 2018.

7.3 The consultation period was from 26 November to 23 December 2018.

Representations Received

7.4 16 responses were made, all supporting the proposal. 14 respondees were parents, who may have identified other interests in the school too. 9 respondees made comments. Note that some respondees made several different points:

- Amalgamation will be in the best interests of schools, children, community and staff (2 similar comments)
- From a governance viewpoint, it would be better to start afresh. (2 similar comments)
- Big children mixing with smaller children at breaks and lunch a concern. Smaller children may feel overwhelmed. (2 similar comments)
- The amalgamation will avoid year 2 children having to change school
- Current standards at Juniors a concern
- Funding should be maintained and used to make the amalgamation a success.
- No changes in uniform should be made
- The proposal will retain the Infants' OFSTED rating.
- The current Headteacher should be retained – key to success.

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- Same strong teaching and leadership across both schools will benefit everyone.
- Concern that first 'transformation year' will impact on some children.

7.5 The number of responses was not high in the light of the potential number.

Background papers

Papers for Executive Member agreement:

- 'Consultation on the amalgamation of Holly Spring Infant and Junior Schools', 30 July 2018
- 'Outcome of the consultation on the amalgamation of Holly Spring Infant & Nursery and Junior Schools', 24 November 2017, including the 'Proposal to close Holly Spring Junior School and extend the age range of Holly Spring Infant & Nursery School to become a Primary School.'

'Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools: Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' – DfE - April 2016 and November 2018

Contacts for Further Information

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**Annex 1:
Holly Spring 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 30 July • Preparation of materials 		1 May – 5 August 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'	6 August to 14 October COMPLETE
Consider consultation outcomes and report to Executive Member		16 November COMPLETE
Stand-still period for appeals	5 clear working days	
Prepare and publication of Formal Proposal		
Formal consultation / Representation	'Must be 4 weeks, or more.' 'Must cover the specific proposal'	Monday 26 November to Sunday 23 December COMPLETE
The statutory proposal and notice are sent into the DfE notifications mail box	Within one week	COMPLETE
Consider consultation outcomes and final determination of proposal by Executive Member.	'Must be within 2 months' (else proposal is referred to Schools Adjudicator)	Fri 25 January 2019
Stand-still period for appeals	'4 weeks'	By 24 February 2019
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 • School Name 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GB confirms/ recruits (depending on option) a Headteacher 		By end of the Spring Term 2019

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• Address financial issues		By 31 March 2019
• Agree staffing structure	Organisational change protocol to be used	By 31 May 2019
• Agree Instrument of Government of substantive GB		
• Consider options for building, IT and telephony works.	Various options will be possible of different scales. Funding of these works to be determined.	
• Establish / review school policies		
• Communications	Within school, with parents and with wider stakeholders	
• Practical issues e.g. uniform, website, email addresses		
Primary school opens		1 September 2019

* Guidance on significant changes ('prescribed alteration') of schools

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/751295/Maintained_schools_prescribed_alterations_guidance.pdf