

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Lifelong Learning Cabinet Member and Advisers
2.	Date:	15th April 2008
3.	Title:	The proposal is to ‘amalgamate’ Broom Valley Infant and Junior Schools by the closure of Broom Valley Infant School and the expansion and change of age range at Broom Valley Junior School from 7-11 to 3-11 years.
4.	Programme Area:	Children and Young People’s Services Ward 2 – Boston Castle

5. Summary

Broom Valley Junior School and Broom Valley Infant School are both separate schools. The report to Cabinet Member and Advisers on 26th February 2008 approved a pre-statutory consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools by closing the Infant School and expanding and changing the age range at the Junior School. Members have previously agreed to consult as appropriate where two schools meet the considerations for amalgamation which are described in the ‘School Organisation Plan’. Pre-statutory consultations have been undertaken with School Governors, Staff and Parents, and copies of the consultation papers have also been sent to Ward Members. This report details the outcome of these pre-statutory consultations.

6. Recommendation:

It is recommended that the statutory consultation on the proposal to ‘amalgamate’ Broom Valley Junior School and Broom Valley Infant School by closing the Infant School and expanding and changing the age range at Broom Valley Junior School as described in Appendix ‘A’ is begun and that a further report be brought to Members with details of the outcome of the formal consultation.

7. Proposals and Details

The proposal to be consulted on is:-

It is proposed to 'amalgamate' Broom Valley Infant and Broom Valley Junior Schools from September 2008. To do this, the Infant school will be closed and the Junior school will be expanded and will have its age range changed from 7-11 to 3-11 years. Broom Valley Junior will, therefore, become a 'through' primary school and will accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

The new School would have 420 places (R-Y6) with a Nursery unit of up to 78 places (39FTE). (This is the combined numbers of the current two schools) The school would have an admission number of 60.

The principal objectives of amalgamation are:

- 1) to provide a continuous primary entitlement across the key stages; and
- 2) to provide a unified management structure with a single school ethos which will be more efficient and make more effective use of resources.

Considerations for amalgamation are described in the School Organisation Plan in Section 4, 'LEA Policies and Principles'. (These are described in Appendix 'A')

There will be a vacancy for the Head Teacher's post at the Infant School, both schools are on the same site and the admission number of the two schools is 60. The conditions for consultation on amalgamation are, therefore, met.

A meeting was held on the 13th March, 2008 for the Governors of both schools. Further meetings were held on the 17th March 2008 for Staff from both schools together with Union Representatives, which was then followed by a meeting for Parents from both schools.

(The minutes of these meetings are attached to this report)

A number of issues were raised at all these meetings and officers from the Authority responded to the questions asked. The following comments address the main issues raised at the meetings:

- 1) Concern was expressed about the extent of support that would be available to the school and whether there would be money available to 'buy-in' expertise. Advice given was that the School Improvement Provider (SIP) will challenge and support with particular emphasis on the 'amalgamation'. Additionally, the H/T from Redscope Primary (a school that has already gone through the process) would be joining in discussions at the school in order to give advice gained from previously experiencing the 'amalgamation' process. There would probably also be scope within the budget for the governors to consider whether or not to buy in some additional advice/expertise, but it was emphasised that this would be a decision for them. No

specific model was being imposed on the governing body, but help and expertise were always available to the school from the LA.

2) There were questions about monitoring the 'amalgamation' and how it would be judged to be successful, if it did take place.

The response was that there will be quality assurance measures put into place as there would be at any other school, but these would be likely to be more frequent and specifically focussed on the 'amalgamation'. There is no single definition of a 'successful' school - many things contribute to this. Research throughout the world suggests that continuity is likely to lead to better attainment and it is important that everyone is looking towards a 'new' school rather than a simple welding of two separate schools.

3) Concern was expressed that staff may be expected to teach different age ranges. The advice given was that where teachers and support staff wished to work with a different age group they could be given the opportunity. Primary school teachers are trained to teach children aged 3-11 and it does not mean that infant teachers couldn't teach 11 year olds. Teachers are not going to be put into a class to fail, all staff are supported and the aim is to do what is the best for the children.

4) Some staff expressed concern that they were on temporary contracts and could be out of a job in September or have to reapply for a job. The advice given that jobs were not at risk as a result of the amalgamation and that the two Head Teachers were already looking to confirm the staffing establishment for September. Advice was available to all from our Human Resources Team.

5) There were a number of questions relating to financial savings and the position of the Deputy Headteachers, particularly in relation to the 'four years protection'. In response, it was explained that there is indeed a four year protection period to support two Deputy Heads following an 'amalgamation'. Previous 'amalgamations' have seen one of the Deputy Heads securing a headship in another school, for example, but if this does not happen within that time period then it would be up to the governors to decide whether or not to support two Deputy Heads from within the school's budget.

'Amalgamation' is not simply about making financial savings. Although a 'saving' is made on one Headteacher's salary, any 'savings' are ring-fenced within the whole schools' budget and, therefore, stay within the schools sector.

6) The question of pupil numbers was raised – could more than 60 pupils be admitted in any year group leading to a larger school?

Advice was given that although numbers born within the catchment area are usually quite high, rates of attrition (movement out of the area and preferences for other schools) together with the ability to limit numbers to 60 through the admissions criteria via a 'tie-breaker' would mean that the number will not be broken. There is a possibility, however, that this might mean that in some years some pupils from within the catchment area may not gain a place at the school.

7) Will the organisation of the Key Stages (in terms of buildings used) stay as it is and could devolved monies be used for any building work?

In the short term, education of the Key Stages is likely to take place within the same buildings, but this could change in the future with, for instance, Y2 being educated within the present Junior building.

Devolved monies could be used for any of the building changes and the school would require a staff room which is large enough for all staff, appropriate office accommodation (via internal building work), a new more central main office and improvements to IT. The LA could provide support for this work.

8) All meetings were advised of the timetable for the consultation and how concerns/comments could be submitted as part of the statutory consultation.

8. Finance

Financial savings, which arise, are savings on staffing, mainly from the loss of a Head Teacher's post from the school's budget. The 'Minimum Funding Guarantee' procedures protect the school budget in 2008-08 and the school will enjoy additional funding is added in the first year of the budget because of the saving on the leaving Head Teachers salary.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Formal objections may be lodged during the representation period following the publication of a statutory notice. A final decision should be determined by the Cabinet Member within 2 months from the end of the representation period. If this fails to be done, then the matter is referred to the Schools Adjudicator for decision.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The major theme supported by the proposal is 'to ensure that everyone has access to skills, knowledge and information to enable them to play their part in society'. The principle advantages of amalgamation arise from the continuous primary education entitlements which are: -

- Removal of the school transfer at the end of key stage 1;
- Provision of a whole school curriculum across the primary age range;
- A unified management structure with a single school ethos;
- The potential to remodel the staffing structure and to safeguard the staffing establishment when pupil numbers change across the key stages;
- A whole school approach to staff development across the primary phase; more efficient and effective use of resources, especially accommodation, when numbers fluctuate across the infant and junior phases.

The experience of the Authority with past amalgamations is that these disadvantages have all been addressed and have not impacted upon the success of the amalgamation of the two schools.

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Report to Cabinet Member and Advisers 26th February 2008, minutes of the meetings held with School Governors, staff and parents. The School Organisation Plan and the 'School Standards and Framework Act 1998'

The statutory consultation timetable is:

Publication of statutory notices	18th April 2008
6-week period for representations and objections closes	30 th May 2008
LA decision	24 th June 2008
Implementation	1 st September 2008

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