



<b>ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS</b>
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<b>1.</b>	<b>Meeting:</b>	<b>Lifelong Learning, Culture and Leisure Cabinet Member and Advisers Meeting</b>
<b>2.</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>29th November 2005</b>
<b>3.</b>	<b>Title:</b>	<b>The proposal is to amalgamate Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam Junior Schools by closing both schools and opening a new Fitzwilliam Primary School.</b>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Programme Area:</b>	<b>Education, Culture and Leisure Services Ward 19 - Wath</b>

### **5. Summary**

Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant School and Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior School are both separate schools. The report to Lifelong Learning Cabinet Member and Advisers on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2005 approved a Statutory Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools by closing both schools and opening a new Fitzwilliam Primary 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 been sent to Ward Members. Statutory proposals have now stood for 6 weeks and a number of objections have been received. This matter cannot be determined by the Local Education Authority and this matter has to be referred to the School Organisation Committee, which hold the necessary powers to make the determination. This report will be considered by the School Organisation Committee at their meeting to be held on the 1st December 2005.

### **6. Recommendations**

**It is recommended that the information in this report is received and that the report along with any comments made by Members is referred to the School Organisation Committee which holds the powers to make the final decision.**

## 7. Proposals and Details

It is proposed to amalgamate Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam Junior Schools with effect from September 2006. To do this both Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam Junior Schools will be closed and a new Fitzwilliam Primary school with an age range of to 3-11 years will be opened. The new Primary school will accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

The new School would have 350 places (R-Y6) with a Nursery unit of up to 52 places (26FTE). This is the combined numbers of the current two schools. The school would have an admission number of 50.

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 is currently a vacancy for the Head Teacher's post at the Junior School, both schools are on the same site and the admission limit of the two schools is 50. The conditions for consultation on amalgamation are met.

Meetings were held at Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior School on the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005 for the Governors of both schools. A meeting was held at Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant school on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005 for Staff from both schools and on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2005 for Parents from both schools.

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

Copies of the consultation papers have also been sent to Ward Members. No comments have been received from Ward Members.

Following publication of the Statutory Notice (which has stood for 6 weeks) representations to the proposal have been received from the Governing body of the Infant School, the Governing body of the Junior School, letters of objection from parents and the local community, petition signed by 218 people, a petition from the school staff of both schools signed by 22 members of staff and comments from the Council's Access Officer.

**(Copies of all these objections are enclosed with this report)**

A number of issues have been raised in the representations and the following comments address the main issues raised:

- 1) A request for a site visit to be undertaken has been made. The decision as to whether or not a site visit is made is a decision for the School Organisation Committee (SOC) to take. A site visit would require the SOC meeting to be adjourned and reconvened at a later date.
- 2) Concern has been expressed that a new Head Teacher would be appointed to manage the amalgamated school whilst the current Head Teacher of the Infant School was available to undertake these duties. The advice given at the pre-statutory meetings was that if the current Infant Head Teacher was to be appointed the Head of the new school there was a likelihood of having to replace her within one or two years due to her retirement. This has been fully discussed with the Infant Head Teacher and she has agreed that if the amalgamation goes ahead she will retire.
- 3) Concern has been expressed that all the considerations for amalgamation have not been met and in particular the requirement that: *It is possible to accommodate all of the children on one site, thereby removing surplus places (if applicable)* has not been met. The two schools are on the same plot of land, share a sports pitch and there is no physical barrier between the two schools. The whole site is rectangular in shape and sloping, the two schools are currently linked by steps and a pathway. There are currently two different entrances to the site which is not uncommon and the whole site is enclosed by a single fence. The site 'criteria' for amalgamation has been met.
- 4) Concern has been expressed at the distance between the two schools, the physically linking of the two buildings and that a path would not successfully link the schools nor would be 'Disability Discrimination Act' (DDA) compliant. The school buildings are approximately 25 metres apart and there is a slope between the buildings. The advice given at the pre-statutory meetings was that, due to the differing levels of the two schools, it would not be possible to physically link the schools. An improved footpath, possibly with a canopy in places, would be considered.

The Authority has an 'Accessibility Strategy' approved by Members which supports the implementation of a policy to make a number of schools fully accessible over time. The Authority has carried out adaptations at a number of schools across the Authority with Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant School already benefiting by receiving substantial funding of around £60,000 from the Authority's 'Access Initiative' funding to make the main entrance accessible. The Junior School main entrance is currently inaccessible, and the Authority has already agreed to fund the cost of making this full accessible. The Junior school playground is inaccessible and the shared sports pitch is sloping. To make a school fully accessible not only requires the provision of an accessible entrance and disabled toilets but also requires changes to doorways, handles, switches, washing and changing facilities, changes to floor coverings, signage, colour contrast, improvements to lighting, the acoustic environment, ramps/handrails etc.

Neither school is fully accessible and the provision of an accessible walkway between the two schools is only a part of the DDA requirements.

The DDA legislation requires the LEA and Schools to make reasonable adjustments to allow pupils with disabilities to be treated no less favourably for a reason relating to disability. The duty does not, **however**, require schools to make adjustments to physical features. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 introduces new planning duties requiring LEA's to draw up accessibility strategies and Schools to draw up accessibility plans to improve access **over time**. The Authority and all schools have drawn up such plans which may include long term strategies such as the provision of lifts.

The provision of a lift shaft to link the school alongside the staircase has been costed and to provide a combined stairway and lift would cost in the region of £175,000. Plans for a new footpath and steps have been drawn up and copies of the plans have been made available to both schools for display to Governors and Parents. The footpath has covered steps and links both schools. If the amalgamation is approved this path and covered steps would be built in time for the new school to open in September 2006 and the cost of this is estimated at £90,000. There are currently, no pupils or staff, who require a lift and the LEA/School will address the needs of individual pupils and staff, as and when, the need arises.

A number of schools that have recently been amalgamated (including the last three) are not fully DDA compliant. Redscope Primary School which was the last school that was amalgamated is not fully accessible. The Redscope Infant school side entrance was accessible (the separate nursery building is not accessible); and the Junior School is at a different level with steps in the middle of the building, an upper floor, and the Main Hall being located on the first floor. Wickersley Northfield Primary School has neither main entrance accessible but does have one side entrance that can be used. Pupils moving from the Infant to the Junior building will make use of a walkway with a canopy. Roughwood Primary School has a nursery building that is inaccessible from the main school building. The cost of making all schools in the Authority accessible was costed a number of years ago at some £60M which is beyond the funding currently available.

The needs of pupils can often be met by a combination of different methods and in particular where schools are on two levels, as in most secondary schools, use of ground floor classrooms and re-timetabling has allowed pupils to attend in wheelchairs and access the whole curriculum.

- 5) Concerns have been raised about the size of the halls within the schools. The latest area guidelines from the Department for Education and Skills (DFES) are contained within Building Bulletin 99: 'Briefing Framework for Primary School Projects'. Part C of the document relates to net areas of buildings, including school halls. It recommends a minimum area for an infant school hall to be 120m<sup>2</sup> and a junior school hall to be 140m<sup>2</sup>, with a total area for a primary school of 350 places should be a minimum of 205m<sup>2</sup>.

The current area of the Fitzwilliam Infant school hall is 198m<sup>2</sup> and the Fitzwilliam Junior school hall is 156m<sup>2</sup>, giving a total area of 354m<sup>2</sup>. These comfortably exceed the latest area guidelines. (The new space for 'Sports and Arts' School halls which have been built at four schools across the authority only have an area of 180sqm)

- 6) Concern has been expressed that the new Head Teacher would most likely be based in one building and would not know all the children. The advice given at the pre-statutory consultation meeting was that additional funding would be provided for four years, allowing the school to have two deputy head teachers (although funding support ceases if one of the deputy head teachers leave) and that the new Head Teacher would spend time in each building. The decision on whether to have one or two staffrooms would be a decision for the new Head Teacher. The Authority will ensure that suitable adaptations are carried out to ensure that a whole school staff room is provided in either school. Given the length of the length of the mid-day break and the short distance between the two buildings it is likely that whole staff meetings would occur at lunch time, or before pupils have arrived in the morning, or after pupils have left school in the afternoon.
- 7) Concern was expressed that this was a cost-cutting exercise. Reassurance was given at the pre-statutory consultation meetings that this was not the case and that any savings made were retained within the education budget and shared amongst all schools. It is likely, given that protection will be provided to the school for the deputy head teachers for four years, and that capital costs would be incurred in building adaptations that additional costs will initially be incurred and that only in the long term would any savings be made which would be redistributed to benefit all pupils in the Authority
- 8) Concern was expressed that as both schools were performing well education standards would fall if the schools were amalgamated. Advice was given at the pre-statutory meetings that nationally the results of through primary schools were higher than the results of separate Infant and Junior schools. Schools. The Strategic Leader for School Improvement advised at the meeting of the educational benefits that would arise from having a through primary school. Attached to the representation received from the Governing Body of the Infant School was a copy of the most recent OFSTED inspection report from the school. The report shows that compared with other similar schools the school was currently performing 'above average'. It is anticipated that the amalgamation of the two schools would further raise educational standards.

### **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 2006-07 and additional funding is added in the first year to the budget of an amalgamated school.

## 9. Risks and Uncertainties

Formal objections have been lodged during the 'statutory consultation' the proposal will therefore be determined by the School Organisation Committee' (SOC). If unanimous agreement cannot be made by the SOC the final decision lies with the 'Chief Adjudicator of Schools' to whom all the relevant documentation will be sent.

## 10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The major corporate priority supported by the proposal is Rotherham Learning. The principle advantages of amalgamation arise from the continuous primary education entitlements which are: -

- Removal of the school transfer at the end of key stage1;
- 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.

## 11. Background Papers and Consultation

Report to Cabinet member and Advisers 28<sup>th</sup> June and 13<sup>th</sup> September 2005, 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	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2005
6-week period for representations and objections closes	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2005
LEA/School Organisation Committee decision	by 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2005
Implementation	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2006

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**EDUCATION, CULTURE AND LEISURE SERVICES****Proposal to 'amalgamate' Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam Junior Schools****1 The Proposal and its Purpose**

The proposal is to amalgamate Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam Junior Schools from September 2006. To do this both Fitzwilliam Infant and Fitzwilliam junior Schools will be closed and a new Fitzwilliam Primary school, with an age range of 3-11 years, will be opened. The new Primary school will accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

The School would have 350 places (R-Y6) with a Nursery unit of up to 52 places (26 FTE). (This is the combined numbers of the current two schools)  
The new school would have an admission number of 50.

The principal objectives of amalgamation are:

- i) to provide a continuous primary entitlement across the key stages; and
- ii) 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 where:-

- 1) It is possible to accommodate all of the children on one site, thereby removing surplus places (if applicable).
- 2) The admission limit is already no more than 60, or can be reduced to no more than 60, by the associated removal of surplus places.
- 3) Both Key Stages are on the same site.
- 4) There is a vacancy for one or both head teacher posts (and possibly deputy head teachers also) as a result of retirement or resignation.

**2 Existing Situation: Numbers on roll and Capacity****2.1 Fitzwilliam Infant School**

Net Capacity	=	150
Admission Limit	=	50
Number on Roll (2002) (NOR)	=	137
Surplus Places	=	13



2.2 Fitzwilliam Junior School

Net Capacity	=	176
Admission Number	=	50
Number on Roll (2002) (NOR)	=	171
Surplus Places	=	5

**3 Development of Numbers on Roll**

Year	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08	2008/09
Infant	137	135	142	128	133
Junior	171	162	165	176	177
Total	<u>308</u>	<u>297</u>	<u>307</u>	<u>304</u>	<u>310</u>

**4 Advantages and Disadvantages**

The principal ADVANTAGES of amalgamation arise from the continuous primary education entitlement:

- 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 principal DISADVANTAGES of amalgamation are:

- the loss of the Head teacher of one of the schools which could impact upon accessibility to staff, parents and pupils (this may have particular relevance where schools serve areas of social and economic disadvantage);
- potential difficulties in bringing together two different sets of working practice;
- possible fear of and resistance to change amongst staff, governors and parents;
- in some (but by no means all) cases, a lack of staff expertise in teaching and management across the two key stages.

**5 Financial Implications**

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 2006-07 and additional funding is added in the first year to the budget of an amalgamated school. (Further guidance on the 'Minimum Funding Guarantee' for future years has still to be issued)

**6 Consultation Timetable**

Cabinet Member to agree to consultation	28th June 2005
Pre statutory consultation period, (end of term) including meetings with governors, staff and parents	until 22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2005
Report to the Cabinet	13 <sup>th</sup> September 2005
Publication of statutory notices	23 <sup>rd</sup> September 2005
6 week period for representations and objections closes	4 <sup>th</sup> November 2005
LEA/School Organisation Committee decision	by 4 <sup>th</sup> December 2005
Implementation	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2006

**Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools Proposed Amalgamation**

Joint Meeting with Governors of Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2005 at 6.00pm in the Junior School

Present: David Hill, Graham Sinclair, Paul Fitzpatrick and Ann Hercock (LEA)  
Governors of Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools  
Meg Hebden (Head of Infant) and Jo Leishman (Acting Head of Junior)

David Hill outlined the proposal to close both Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior Schools and to open a new Swinton Fitzwilliam Primary School, with an age range of 3-11 years. The new Primary School would accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

He spoke about existing and predicted numbers on roll, financial implications and the advantages and disadvantages of amalgamation. A summary of the information had been distributed prior to the meeting, which also included a timetable for the consultation process.

He then invited questions and comments which were as follows:-

**One Governor felt that Meg Hebden had not been given any option other than to retire**

*Graham Sinclair explained that as a new school was being proposed it was felt that it was necessary to give it as much stability as possible at the beginning. If Meg was to be the Head of the new school there was the likelihood of having to replace her in 1 or 2 years due to her retirement.*

**Another Governor made the point that Meg could work until she was 65 if she wished**

**If she was not approaching retirement, would the proposal to amalgamate have gone ahead?**

*Yes, because the criteria for amalgamation would still be met.*

**Would jobs be safeguarded?**

*The view is that no members of teaching staff would be at risk. The only difficulty would be with having 2 caretakers and 2 sets of admin staff. However, there is sufficient time to make provision for any affected staff.*

**One of the reasons for amalgamation is often cost cutting. Can we have reassurance that this is not the case? – Where do savings go?**

*There would be financial savings, mainly due to the loss of a Head Teacher post. Savings would be put back into the Education budget and shared out across other schools in the Authority.*

**What would the financial savings be?**

*Around £50,000*

**Despite being amalgamated there would still physically be two schools**

*The main advantage of amalgamation is for children transferring from Y2 to Y3. Research suggests that 7 year olds who transfer from an infant to a junior school do not make as much progress as a child in a through primary school.*

*Amalgamation would also provide a unified management structure which would benefit the children.*

**Would the situation arise where a Head Teacher is based in one school with a Deputy Head 'running' the other school?**

*What normally happens is the two Deputy Heads are retained for up to four years so there would be a Deputy Head on the two sites.*

**The main disadvantage to this proposal is the physical location of the two schools. There is a path to each school but movement between the two would be difficult in bad weather.**

*It is hoped that a path could be provided that complies with current legislation but it would be mainly uncovered. Covered areas in suitable places would be an option. A surveyor would be asked to look at the options and provide estimates of cost. The provision of a lift would not be possible.*

**When would the proposal go to the School Organisation Committee (SOC)**

*David Hill explained that this would only be the case if objections to the proposal were made. He explained the membership of the SOC.*

**Would the SOC members visit the schools?**

*This would not normally happen. However, if there were objections and if problems with the site were emphasised the SOC could come and look. In the event of approval not being given the case would be referred to the School Adjudicator.*

**Is there an appeals process?**

*No, the decision of the Adjudicator is final.*

**How have amalgamations affected results in other schools?**

*Results nationally have improved.*

**Do staff usually leave after an amalgamation?**

*No, this is not normally the case. In fact there can be opportunities for staff to teach different key stages thus adding to their expertise.*

**How many times in this authority has an amalgamation school started with a new Head Teacher**

*This would be the second. St Ann's J&I was the first.*

**How did the amalgamation affect results at St Ann's?**

*You could speak to the staff at St Ann's if you wished.*

**What statistics do you have about Ofsted amalgamations? St Ann's had a poor inspection after amalgamation but both schools had successful inspections previously.**

*We will try to obtain this information.*

**There are schools with separate buildings such as Brinsworth Whitehill that have a linking corridor. Where does funding come from?**

*The LEA would make funding available.*

**The distance between the two schools would make it difficult to realistically achieve a single ethos without a joint staff room.**

*There would be a staff room where all staff could meet. It is not unusual to have separate buildings on a school site.*

**There is no way staff can travel from one building to another for informal contact – this binds a school together.**

*This would be done potentially outside the school day.*

**I cannot see how this arrangement would promote a single ethos.**

*By single ethos we mean a unified management structure and whole school curriculum across the whole primary age range.*

**There was much concern about moving between school buildings in inclement weather.**

**It will not be one school**

*There will be arrangements for points of contact. The benefits for the children is the most important consideration. A through primary school allows for a smoother transition in a more structured way.*

**I still feel it would not work without a physical link between schools. Could this be sorted out first?**

*We will not make false promises but will look at options.*

**Could we look at any plans?**

*Yes, but the whole proposal would not be based on the link.*

**Why has there been a delay in timetabling. The Acting Head was appointed on the understanding that the change in working arrangements would be for two terms – it now looks like four.**

*Yes there was a delay – it was felt we needed that time. The timetable relates to the appointment of a temporary Governing Body.*

**Has any thought been given to how the children will cope with the changes? They have already had change with one Head and now face more with amalgamation and the loss of another Head.**

*We feel that in the long term it is better to have a new Head of the new amalgamated school.*

**Would it not have been possible to extend Meg's contract? Two years carrying on with Meg would create familiarity for the children.**

*The children would become familiar with a new Head. Also, the Council has already made the decision.*

**Why are you so adamant about a new Head Teacher? Is there a hidden agenda?**

*There is no hidden agenda.*

**Would the new Head be given a minimum contract?**

*No.*

**Will any future amalgamation be the same as this one?**

*All amalgamations are carried out on an individual basis.*

**If the amalgamation does not go ahead, will Meg be allowed to stay?**

*In the event of the amalgamation not taking place, Meg would probably stay in post and retire at retirement age.*

**Has any thought been given to dining arrangements, playtimes or assemblies?**

*This would be a decision for the new Head Teacher.*

**How would it be practicable to get large number of children down/up the path?**

*This is no different to schools with temporary classrooms.*

**It would not be possible to fit 300 children into the junior hall. There could also be problems accommodating children and parents for concerts.**

*A number of schools cannot get all year groups into one hall. It is not unusual to have this situation. Many schools have concerts over a few days.*

**Separate outbuildings – were they not put there because of increases in school numbers?**

*Distance wise, the new Dinnington Primary is the same as the distance here. With regard to the linking path, most children like to be outdoors and are except in bad weather.*

**This would mean more time out of the classroom with an already full timetable.**

*It is a matter of arranging time. There should be enough time during an existing school day.*

**The impression is that more thought has been given to results and not the needs of young children.**

**The community is always going to see Swinton Fitzwilliam as 2 schools.**

**Which one of the panel represents educational standards**

*David Light, Senior School Improvement Consultant would have answered your questions but he was unable to attend tonight. However, existing LEA officers here tonight could reply to your questions.*

**Have any proposed amalgamations not gone ahead?**

*Yes, Thurcroft. It is policy not to have more than a 2-form entry primary and predictions indicated that numbers would remain high. This proved to be the case.*

**High Greave Infant and Junior Schools already have a link between them. Why have they not been amalgamated?**

*Staff at the junior school felt it would be detrimental to the children to only have one Head Teacher. Di Billups, the Executive Director at the time decided to withdraw the proposal.*

**I feel the physical barrier here is more of a problem than the LEA thinks. It will not work.**

*Meetings are also going to be held with staff and parents. All views expressed will be recorded and presented to Members.*

**Will we be able to see copies of the minutes of this meeting?**

*Yes, this can be arranged.*

**Are all your answers true?**

*Absolutely.*

*There were no more questions so the meeting was closed.*

**Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools Proposed Amalgamation**

Meeting with Parents of Pupils attending Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2005 at 6.00pm in the Infant School

Present: David Hill, Graham Sinclair, Catherine Kinsella and Ann Hercock (LEA)  
Approximately 60 parents  
Meg Hebden (Head of Infant) and Jo Leishman (Acting Head of Junior)

David Hill outlined the proposal to close both Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior Schools and to open a new Swinton Fitzwilliam Primary School, with an age range of 3-11 years. The new Primary School would accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

He spoke about existing and predicted numbers on roll, financial implications and the advantages and disadvantages of amalgamation. A summary of the information had been distributed prior to the meeting, which also included a timetable for the consultation process.

He then invited questions and comments which were as follows:-

**If, following consultation, no-one is in favour of the proposal, would it still go ahead? The feeling is that it is a 'done deal'. Many parents have stayed away as they think attending tonight would be a waste of time**

*The process has not yet been set in motion. This is the pre-statutory consultation period and any views expressed at this meeting and those with governors and staff will be presented to the Member for Lifelong Learning and Policy Advisers in September. A decision will then be made whether or not to publish proposals.*

**Why are these meetings being held just before the school holidays?**

*The timescales follow requirements of the School Standards and Framework Act. These meetings are pre-statutory consultations.*

**The decision to amalgamate was taken a number of years ago. The schools have a good reputation – why choose now? Is this about financial savings?**

*In terms of the history of decisions across the authority there have been 11 or 12 amalgamations since 1995. These were done on the basis of the criteria for amalgamation. It was made clear that if a Head Teacher retired, amalgamation would automatically be considered. This is not to say that there is anything wrong with how the schools are operating now. In terms of children's attainments, research has shown that achievement drops off on transfer with a significant drop off at Y2 to Y3. This is less so when the children are in a through primary school.*

*Another advantage of amalgamation is the creation of a single management structure looking at the needs of all the children.*

*Money is saved but it goes back into the education budget for the benefit of all schools.*



**In terms of the Y2/Y3 transfer what will be different? The infants will still be in one building and the juniors in another**

*The buildings themselves do not make good education. It is the management structure and how the school is run.*

**What do you mean by 'management team?'**

*In a school this is made up of the Head Teacher, Deputy Head and some teachers who receive extra salary points for increased responsibilities. In an amalgamated school there is a single team looking at the whole spectrum from Foundation to Y6.*

**Where would this team be based?**

*This would be a matter for the Head, Governing Body and the Management Team of the new school.*

**When the Swinton Brookfield schools were amalgamated, Mr Pyecroft became the Head of the primary school. Why could not Meg Hebden be the Head of the new school?**

*It was felt that there were advantages in appointing a new Head Teacher. Meg was close to retirement and would be leaving in the relatively near future.*

**Every child who has gone through the infant and junior schools likes and respects Meg and would like her to stay.**

*This comment was noted.*

**The two schools already work very well together; there is already continuity.**

*This is not a criticism of the two schools but when looked across Rotherham as a whole there is a fall-off in attainment in separate schools.*

**A 6 year old moving from one building to another will not see them as the same school. Children at that age would not understand this 'single school' ethos. It should be looked at from the child's point of view.**

**What would be the effect on caretaking and cleaning staff and kitchen staff?**

*There is sufficient time to look at this with the cleaning and catering services.*

**You keep talking about evidence of a fall-off in results in single schools – can we see this proof? It is disappointing that no such evidence has been brought to the meeting.**

*This can be provided and sent to parents.*

**Would this be before the end of term?**

*Probably not before the end of term but as soon as possible, probably at the start of the Autumn Term.*

**The children are all known by name by the present Heads. This would be lost if the schools were amalgamated and run by one Head Teacher, new to the school.**

*In terms of children knowing the Head Teacher, the new Head can 'test the water' with parents and governors and base themselves in the appropriate place.*

**Please explain again why this meeting is being held now?**

*In order to implement the proposal from September 2006, a new Head Teacher would have to be appointed before April 2006. A temporary governing body would have to be put together after December when the LEA/School Organisation Committee had made a decision. This would not leave much time to choose a new Head, hence the meetings being held now. The public notices would not be published during the school holidays. This way, parents have time to consider the proposal and voice their concerns.*

**Could SATs figures be produced for amalgamated schools?**

*These are easier to produce for through primaries.*

**What about the children here now? There needs to be a comparison.**

*We will look into this.*

**Results have dropped for some amalgamated schools. Ofsted inspectors have highlighted points of concern.**

*Ofsted inspection requirements have changed often since 1994. What is needed is an Ofsted comment regarding amalgamations.*

**Key Stage 2 always seems to take priority because of the transition to secondary education.**

*It is the case that emphasis is placed on Y2 and Y6. This is because of external assessments. Therefore with emphasis on Y2, Key Stage 1 still takes priority as well as Key Stage 2.*

**More emphasis is always placed on junior children.**

**Would there be just one entrance to the school?**

*There would be two entrances as at present.*

**If the majority of parents were opposed to the proposal would it be withdrawn?**

*Not necessarily. The LEA would still have to decide to publish proposals. If this happened, parents could object as part of the statutory period for objections between September and November. If objections were submitted the proposal would be considered by the School Organisation Committee (SOC) who would make a decision. If this decision was not unanimous, the Schools Adjudicator would make a final judgement.*

**Where does the Adjudicator come from?**

*The Adjudicator is independent of local authorities and is appointed by the Department for Education and Skills.*

**How many cases have been ruled against LEA's?**

*Approximately one third.*

**Would a path between the schools affect the school playing field?**

*An surveyor would look at the site and make a judgement on the best place for a path. Every effort would be made not to encroach on the school field.*

**Should not this have been done before?**

*It was thought best to hold these meetings first.*

**Young children would feel anxious mixing with older children in the playground.**

*A number of through schools have separate playgrounds as there are here, so no problems are envisaged. Some older children have the opportunity to help with activities for the younger pupils. Safety of the children would be a priority.*

**If the two schools were on the same level there would not be such a problem. Why have new schools been built in some areas? Why not a new school here?**

*Firstly, there is insufficient funding. Schools in the centre of Rotherham were identified through a process to assess greatest need. The LEA was encouraged to make a bid for Private Finance Initiative (PFI) funding. It was not possible to obtain funding for the whole of the Authority. There are government plans for the future to release funding but it is not known when this would be.*

**The canopy over the path – would it be covered at the sides?**

*No.*

**Parents of the Infant and Junior pupils have much respect for Meg Hebden – that trust would have to be built up again with a new Head.**

*This is true but this would happen anyway when Meg retired.*

**The halls will not accommodate all of the children at one (for example for joint assemblies).**

*This can be worked around by mixing year groups, although it was felt that the infant hall would be able to accommodate all of the children.*

**Our circumstances do not fit your ideal. The Head Teacher will have to choose which building to use as a base so will not be as accessible. At the moment the schools are working wonderfully together and there are benefits with two Heads. How can it be beneficial to only have one Head?**

*The advantages and disadvantages have been referred to previously.*

**In a through primary school 2 key stages are taught. Would there ever be a situation where a teacher with only KS1 teaching experience would be expected to teach KS2 (eg because of sickness absence)?**

*Some staff do have experience of teaching both Key Stages and they would therefore have opportunities to build on their skills. However, supply staff can be brought in to cover temporary sickness absence.*

**Going back to the Governing Body, would membership increase? There should be new governors.**

*Until the new school opened there would be a temporary governing body. There would be a new governing body for which elections would be held.*

**The main reason children attend school is to learn. Transferring between schools would take up time in a busy schedule.**

*Children would mix at certain times eg for assemblies. Once in their classes they would mostly remain static. This would be managed by the school.*

**What if a new Head Teacher is not appointed and the post had to be re-advertised?**

*That is a risk factor but between December and April there should be time. If the attempts to find a new Head were unsuccessful there would be the option to 'borrow' a Head Teacher from another successful school. This has been done on occasion. The Deputy Head in the donor school benefits by being given the experience of being a Head Teacher.*

**Please explain why losing a Head Teacher we are attached to will benefit the children**

*Another very good Head Teacher will be appointed.*

**Why not keep the one we have got?**

**Why do you not think it important for children to have access to the Head Teacher all the time?**

*Yes it is important but one Head Teacher can do this also.*

**Would the children be taught in the same school building as they are now?**

*This could only be answered by the new Head Teacher and Governors but there is no reason why it would be different.*

**Will these minutes go to Cabinet? Can we have it minuted that parents are not in favour?**

*Yes the minutes will go to Cabinet and the parents' objections have been noted.*

**I am still not convinced of this or re-assured.**

*There are a number of schools in the authority this size where the Head knows all of the children. The new governing body would choose the best person for the job.*

**Are those schools in separate buildings or not? If they are the pupils would not see the Head Teacher.**

*The Head Teacher would spend time in each building.*

**A 5 or 6 year old would be afraid to walk into the other building unless accompanied by another member of staff.**

*This is a good point and it would be put to the new Head.*

**I am concerned about what would happen if numbers fluctuated. Could someone trained in early years end up teaching older children? People tend to go into the areas they are most able in.**

*It would be up to the Head Teacher and Governing Body to look at required staffing levels and where to direct resources. No Head Teacher would expect a Foundation teacher to teach Y6. What normally happens is for pairs of year groups to be planned for together. Schools can also increase skills levels of existing staff.*

**I think this will go ahead as a cost cutting exercise but there would have to be a covered path.**

*Your comments are noted.*

**Has an amalgamation not gone ahead because of parents' views?**

*The only amalgamation not to go ahead was Thurcroft. It is policy not to have more than a 2-form entry primary and predictions indicated that numbers would remain high. This proved to be the case.*

**What would happen to the education of the children if the proposal did not go ahead?**

*It would continue as now.*

**I am not convinced about the advantages of a 'single school ethos' regarding culture and discipline. It is not appropriate across diverse age-groups.**

*What 'single school ethos' means is shared values. It would be hoped to develop a greater feeling of internalised discipline that was age appropriate. Values would not be determined differently but would apply according to age group.*

**Are there any other amalgamated schools on 2 sites like this?**

*Yes, Brinsworth Whitehill and previously Woodsetts Primary Schools. The Woodsetts buildings were 1/3 mile apart. Additionally there are other schools where there are separate buildings, for example, Bramley Sunnyside Infant school has a foundation unit in a similar position as these two buildings.*

**The use of donor Heads indicates a shortage of Head Teachers.**

*Resignations of Head Teachers are sometimes too late to start the process of appointing a new Head. There are only 3 times in the school year for resignation. (For an extreme example, if a Head Teacher got another job on 29<sup>th</sup> April and resigned on 30<sup>th</sup> April).*

**I feel strongly that the first 7 years are so important. The very good, strong values in the Infant School should continue and not be lost.**

*It would be hoped that this would continue.*

**I feel that the LEA is going to extreme lengths, ignoring the fact that Meg is perfectly capable of running both schools. Why can't it be Mrs Hebden? It will be stressful enough - children and parents like her. There would be much more support for the proposal if she was staying on.**

**What sort of contract would a new Head Teacher have? He/She could leave after one year.**

*In a school of this size in Rotherham there is a good opportunity to teach in a larger than average school. In Rotherham, it is not felt appropriate for a school to be bigger than this. The LEA feels there is more flexibility in a single larger size school like this would be. At the present time there are restrictions in both school budgets. Amalgamation gives opportunities to share responsibilities in a more even way.*

**Would there be just one office for clerical staff or one in both schools?**

*There would still be 2 points of contact in school.*

**There was a show of hands to indicate the very strong support for Meg Hebden to be Head Teacher of the amalgamated school.**

It should be noted that the majority of the parents came from the infant school.

**What happens after comments are taken back to the Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Policy Advisers?**

*If/when formal consultation takes place there would be a six-week period to object after the publication of a Public Notice in September. This would be placed in the local press, in libraries and at the school entrances.*

**Are we going to be provided with the evidence and information about the path? We cannot make an informed decision without.**

*We will do our best to provide the information.*

**Will minutes of this meeting be made available?**

Yes.

**Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools Proposed Amalgamation**

**Meeting with Staff of Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools on Wednesday 14th July 2005 in the Infant school**

Present: Staff of Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Junior Schools, Head teacher of Fitzwilliam Infants, Meg Hebden, representatives from teaching unions, representatives of the LEA, David Hill, Paul Fitzpatrick, David Light and Andrew Parry (Minutes)

David Hill outlined the proposal to amalgamate the two schools.

The proposal is to amalgamate Swinton Fitzwilliam Infant and Swinton Fitzwilliam Junior Schools from September 2006. To do this both Swinton Fitzwilliam infant and Swinton Fitzwilliam junior schools will be closed and a new Swinton Fitzwilliam Primary School, with an age range of 3-11 years, will be opened. The new Primary School will accommodate the same number of pupils as are currently accommodated within the two schools.

The School would have 350 places (R-Y6) with a Nursery unit of up to 52 places (26 FTE). (This is the combined numbers of the current two schools). The new school would have an admission number of 50.

Cabinet Member for Lifelong Learning and Advisers agreed at the meeting of the 28th June 2005 that pre-statutory consultation could begin.

Paul Fitzpatrick outlined the staffing and financial implications of the proposed amalgamation. He emphasised that there was no member of staff who were at risk due to duplication and if there was in future years then RMBC will fully support the member of staff. The two deputy head teachers will have their salary safeguarded for 4 years.

David Light gave his views on how it will affect the curriculum and how the school will be run.

Questions and comments were invited from the floor, these were as follows:-

**Question:** Would there be a reduction in the contractual hours of any staff?

**Answer:** It can not be guaranteed that it will stay the same as it will be up to the new head teacher and governing body, however RMBC will support any one that this happens to. Any changes would also result in a consultation process.

**Question:** Two separate buildings will hinder the transition.

**Answer:** David Light indicated that he didn't think that it would be an insufferable barrier. It is not necessary to split the school as it is now. The hill will be a problem, but it is not a major disadvantage.

**Question:** Is there additional money to better link the site?

**Answer:** There is no way to link the school physically due to the gradient. The LEA will look to provide a better path between the two buildings, one which is DDA compliant and the other shorter one for staff.

**Question:** Can the play areas be joined?

**Answer:** Many primary schools have different play areas for infants and juniors.

**Question:** Will there be one path for pupils and one for staff?

**Answer:** This will depend on how the school is run.

**Question:** Will the path be put in before the new head teacher is in post?

**Answer:** The new head teacher will be consulted.

**Question:** Will further training be provided to teach an extra key stage?

**Answer:** Depends whether the school who wanted it or the teacher wanted to do it for career advancement. There will have to be a bit of give and take.

**Question:** The LEA can not answer all the questions we have, for a whole year as a new head teacher isn't in place?

**Answer:** New head teacher will be appointed in the spring term (March 2006). The senior staff in the school and governors should look at the curriculum before the head is in place.

**Question:** Is it a fore gone conclusion that the amalgamation will happen?

**Answer:** No, the process has only just begun, the statutory proposal allows 6 weeks for objections to be raised. Any objections will be passed to the School Organisation Committee (SOC) for a final decision which is independent of the Council. If a decision can't be made by the SOC, then the Chief Adjudicator will give the final determination.



**Question:** Has a proposal been turned down before?

**Answer:** Yes, Thurcroft Infant and Junior didn't get through the consultation.

**Question:** Who will see the design of the path?

**Answer:** When drawings are produced, the schools and staff can have sight of them.

**Question:** Is the path the only physical change?

**Answer:** There are currently 2 staffrooms, need to create space for 1 larger one for all staff. The new head teacher needs to decide when and where to hold staff meetings.

**Question:** Will there be one diner hall?

**Answer:** This will depend on the new head teacher.

**Question:** Are we merging on paper?

**Answer:** No, it will be a through school.

**Question:** It would have been useful for a head teacher from another school who have merged to be present at this meeting?

**Answer:** The LEA can provide a list of schools and head teachers who have experienced an amalgamation, so staff can visit those schools.

Meg Hebden spoke that she had visited schools on a split site and the head teacher spent different days in both buildings. David Light added that responsibilities will fall on deputy head teachers as the head will not be in both buildings.

**Question:** In the past has one head teacher generally remained?

**Answer:** This is true, although there have been instances where both heads have left and a new head took over i.e. Alan Staton at St. Ann's. As this is a larger school, the governors could choose to retain 2 deputy head teachers beyond the 4 years. During the preparation stage for a new head, the involvement and role of the deputies is very important.

**Question:** There will be times when the head teacher is off site.

**Answer:** This is the same as the situation now.

**Question:** Will KS2 teachers be asked to teach KS1 against there will?

**Answer:** If they were trained properly then they may have to. This will depend on the new head teacher.

**Question:** A teacher stated that they resigned from one school as they were forced to teach KS2.

**Answer:** This is not how RMBC operates. There will be greater opportunities in a bigger staff team.

A member of staff remarked that it may have been better if an original head teacher remained in post during the transition. Another remarked that it was the buildings that were the concern, not the teaching arrangements.

**Question:** Communication, would there be two phone lines?

**Answer:** It is envisaged that there would be one number, with extensions for the two buildings.

Meg Hebden remarked that the amalgamation of staff was welcome; it was the buildings and access that was the main concern.

David Hill reassured the staff that the path and access changes will be LEA funded.