

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families' Services
2.	Date:	21st May, 2014
3.	Title:	Proposals to Amalgamate Thorpe Hesley Infant and Junior Schools – statutory consultation.
4.	Directorate:	Children and Young People's Services

5. Summary

This report seeks approval from the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Family Services to commence statutory consultation on the amalgamation proposals.

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that statutory consultation should commence on proposals to Amalgamate Thorpe Hesley Infant and Junior Schools and that a further report be brought to Members in due course.

7. Proposals and Details

It is proposed to amalgamate Thorpe Hesley Infant and Junior Schools by the discontinuance of the Infant School and change of age range of the Junior School from 7 - 11 to 3 - 11 to establish a 'through' primary school.

The proposed 'through' School would have 490 places (Reception(FS2) to Y6) with a Nursery (FS1) unit of up to 52 places (26 FTE). (This is the combined numbers of the current two schools). The 'through' school would have a Published Admission Number (PAN) of 70. There will be no changes to existing premises or site arrangements.

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.

There will be a recruitment and selection process for the position of Head Teacher at the Primary School. This will ensure an open and transparent recruitment and selection process enabling the Governing Body to appoint the strongest possible candidate to the position of Headteacher for the new 'through' school.

8. Finance

The proposed amalgamation will allow the Headteacher and Governing Body to structure financial resources to best support a through school ethos across the Infant and Junior sites.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

There are always risks and uncertainties when school place provision is considered since future pupil numbers are based on estimations. Over provision at one school could influence pupil numbers at other schools. Local Authorities are obliged, however, to provide sufficient places, promote diversity and increase parental preference. (CYD0015/018 - Corporate risk register).

If the Local Authority progresses to the statutory consultation phase, then formal objections may be lodged during the representation period following the publication of statutory notices. A final decision should be determined by the Cabinet Member as 'decision maker' 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 determination.

The risks and uncertainties associated with an amalgamation are detailed below:

The principal ADVANTAGES of amalgamation 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 organise and arrange 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 reduction to only one head teacher post 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.

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'.

Rotherham School Improvement Mission:

- ~ All children will make at least good progress
- ~ There will be no underperforming cohorts
- ~ All teachers will deliver at least good learning
- ~ All schools will move to the next level of successful performance

11. Background Papers and Consultation

The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013

School Organisation (Maintained Schools) guidance for proposers and decision makers (January 2014)

Summary of pre statutory consultation with relevant stakeholders.

Parent / carer and staff completed questionnaire forms on the proposals.

Report to Cabinet Member 5th March 2014.

Consultation timeline

Cabinet Member to agree to consultation	5 th March 2014
Pre statutory consultation period With relevant stakeholders.	
Report to the Cabinet Member detailing the Outcome of pre statutory consultation and seeking approval to commence Statutory Consultation.	21 st May 2014
Publication of statutory notices and proposals (4 week period)	30 th May 2014
Report to Cabinet Member and final Determination of proposals and notification to the Department for Education	16 th July 2014
Implementation Date	1 st September 2014

Consultation meetings / correspondence has been undertaken with the Governing Bodies of both Schools, Staff and Trade Union representatives, Parents / Carers of pupils at the schools, local Councillors, any local Parish Council and the local MP.

Additionally consultation has also been undertaken with the Governing bodies of any other school that may be affected plus the Diocese of any school likely to be affected and any other stakeholders.

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