

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 DECEMBER 2012

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION FOR THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF SHERWIN KNIGHT INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Report from: Barbara Peacock, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Paul Clarke, School Organisation Officer

Summary

This report outlines the outcomes of the initial consultation period on the council's proposals to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School by way of prescribed alterations.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 The proposals to make prescribed alterations to Sherwin Knight Infant School and Sherwin Knight Junior School are consistent with the provisions of the School Organisation Plan 2011-16, which flows from the Children and Young People's Plan (policy framework) and is within budget, therefore this is a matter for Cabinet.

2. Background

- 2.1 In 2008 Medway's School Organisation Plan Principles, which were established following extensive consultation, contained a set of guidelines to be used when considering school organisational issues, thereby ensuring that decision-making is clear and consistent, enabling the council to comply with its statutory duty to provide sufficient good school places. The core of these principles ensures that any changes to schools are based upon improving schools and raising standards.
- 2.2 Within the primary phase Medway's School Organisation Plan Principles are:
- To review the future of schools with low standards;
 - All infant and junior schools should be amalgamated over time;
 - To review the future of schools that are at risk of becoming unviable;
 - To enable popular and successful schools to expand.

- 2.3 The main reason for moving to all through primary schools is to provide smoother transitions between the primary phases of education. An amalgamated school provides for:
- A fully integrated curriculum;
 - Fully integrated arrangements for assessment for learning, including recording of progress and planning future provision;
 - A smooth transition for pupils transferring from infant to junior departments;
 - A robust senior leadership team drawing on experience from early years and foundation stage, key stages one and two.
- 2.4 The amalgamation of schools is proving to be a successful aspect of our School Organisation Plan Principles. Medway Council will always review the options including the potential for federation or amalgamation following the resignation or retirement of a head teacher at an infant or junior school. The head teacher at Sherwin Knight Infant School tendered her resignation with effect from 30 April 2012, and an interim head teacher is currently in place.
- 2.5 Currently, Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools are federated with a single governing body, but operate under the leadership of separate head teachers. The schools, both with a published admission number (PAN) of 75, are situated on a good size site, serve the community at the south eastern area of Strood close to the Darnley Road Estate, and sit within the Strood planning area for pupil place planning purposes.

3. The Proposals

- 3.1 Local authorities can amalgamate schools in two ways;
- 1) By closing both schools and opening a new school in their place. Under current government legislation, any new school would need to be an Academy or Free School.
 - 2) By closing one school and expanding the age range and enlarging the premises at the other following the statutory procedures as set out in 'The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007', and in 'The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007'.
- 3.2 In this case, it is recommended that the proposals follow the second option above, with the closure of one of the schools from 31 August 2013, in tandem with the expansion of the age range and the premises at the other school. This will create an all through primary school with an age range of 3-11 from 1 September 2013 by way of statutory prescribed alterations.
- 3.3 The term 'enlarging the premises' does not mean that new buildings will be provided at the expanding school, rather it is a technical term within the statutory prescribed alterations, which means that the buildings currently occupied by the closing school will transfer to the expanding school to ensure sufficient accommodation is available to the single school.

- 3.4 It will be for the governing body to decide on a name for the new school, which will need to be confirmed in writing the local authority in advance of the amalgamation, and approved by the Director of Children and Adults Services.

4. Analysis

- 4.1 Amalgamation will formalise the partnerships already in place between the schools under the single governing body with the aim of ensuring positive outcomes for all children who attend the current schools.
- 4.2 Amalgamation will enable the school to operate under a single staffing structure which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the phases; creating a robust structure at the school and ensuring its viability.
- 4.3 Recent Ofsted ratings show that Sherwin Knight Juniors is a 'satisfactory' school, having achieved that rating in July 2010. Previously in May 2007 the school achieved a rating of 'Good'. The Infant school was rated as 'satisfactory' in July 2010, and a section 8 report in October 2011 noted that "inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement" was being made. In October 2012 the school was graded as "requires improvement".
- 4.4 Results indicate that at the infant school, level 2Plus reading, writing and mathematics were below the national average in 2011, with mathematics showing a 3 year decline; the juniors attainment however was close to the floor target threshold of 61% and progress between Key Stage 1 and 2 was low compared to the national average. It is expected that amalgamation will lead to more robust management and leadership, which in turn will lead to improved performance and positive outcomes for the children who attend the single school.
- 4.5 Analysis of the number of pupils transferring from the infant school to the junior school in recent years, shows that virtually all children transfer and so amalgamation will further strengthen the transition between key stages 1 and 2.
- 4.6 Pupil numbers at the schools are expected to continue to increase as they have done over recent years. Forecasts indicate that from September 2013 that the reception age group could be over-subscribed. As these pupils progress through the school, the surplus places that have been a feature of the junior school over recent years will see a forecast reduction from the current level of 21% to 2.5% in 2016.
- 4.7 The governing body have appointed a new head teacher for the federated schools, who will take up the post on 1 April 2013 and who will remain as the head teacher if the decision is taken to amalgamate the schools from 1 September 2013.

5. Results of the Consultation

- 5.1 There is a requirement to conduct an informal consultation where the views of all interested parties can be expressed and taken into consideration.
- 5.2 The period of informal public consultation, where proposals were published and made available to interested parties, ran for six weeks from 10 September 2012 to 21 October 2012. The process included;
- public consultation documents circulated to the stakeholders and organisations listed in Appendix 1;
 - publication of the consultation document (Appendix 2) on Medway Council's website, and on the schools forum;
 - a press notice placed in a local newspaper to notify the public of the consultation period and the public meeting;
 - a meeting between officers and governors on 23 May 2012;
 - a meeting with the staff from both schools on 2 July 2012;
 - a public meeting held at the school on 10 October 2012.
- 5.3 In response to comments raised during the course of the consultation period and at the public meeting, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document has been prepared to give response and further explanation to the concerns raised, and is published on the council's website in conjunction with the consultation document. The FAQ's have also been circulated to all parents, staff and governors at the school, and will accompany the full proposals sent to interested stakeholders should The Cabinet decide to progress to a period of statutory representation, the next step in the statutory process.
- 5.4 The public consultation document (attached as Appendix 2) asked for a ticked response to one or other of the following statements:
- “ I approve of the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School” or*
“ I object to the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School”
- 5.5 During the consultation period, eight responses were received to this proposal, of which six were supportive and two objected.
- 5.6 Of the responses in support of the proposal, two were from parents, two from governors, including one unanimous joint response (attached as appendix 3), one was from a local resident and there was a response from the Catholic Diocese.
- 5.7 The objections came from one parent and one member of staff.
- 5.8 The response form also provided space for further comment. The comments have been summarised against a series of categories matching the comments and concerns of the respondents in the tables below. *Some respondents offered more than one comment, and some reasons were included in more than one response, which results in the*

total number of reasons in the table below not matching exactly with the number of response sheets received.

Reasons for approval:

3	No reason given
3	Benefit to the children
1	Single leadership team will aid pupil progress

Reasons for objection:

1	No reason given
1	Budget cuts could affect the ability of the school to function effectively
1	Buildings are separate, so likely to cause unnecessary disruption to pupils and staff.

- 5.9 The objection in relation to budget cuts is addressed in sections 10.2 to 10.7
- 5.10 Significant recent reductions in the council's capital grant from central government, has meant that funding has been prioritised for essential basic need and condition works, leaving insufficient funding available for a project to physically join the separate school buildings. It is expected that the new head teacher and the senior leadership team will effectively manage any movement of pupils between the buildings to minimise disruption to pupils and staff.
- 5.11 However, as part of school amalgamations, reasonable agreed costs will be funded to support ICT developments which are essential to school effectiveness at the point of amalgamation;
- 1) Consultancy to establish required and appropriate works;
 - 2) School management, organisation and efficiency:
 - Communication between predecessor schools with LA and other relevant organisations;
 - Efficient access to school management information systems.
 - 3) Education and learning:
 - Shared access to resources for planning, preparation and delivery;
 - Ease of access to curriculum ICT systems;
 - Joint access to school intranet.
- 5.12 Examples of work that will be funded include infrastructure works to lay cables between existing buildings and improvements to switches for communication systems.
- 5.13 The public meeting, held on 10 October 2012, was attended by 40 people; of whom 15 were parents, 17 members of staff, and 8 governors. The meeting was recorded and a number of concerns and questions raised.

- 5.14 The meeting was chaired by Councillor Wicks, with an officer panel made up of the Assistant Director Commissioning and Strategy and the Head of School Organisation and Student Services.
- 5.15 An Observer Panel was in place and comprised of members from three of the four political groups represented on the Council. These were Councillors Smith, Igwe and Wildey. The role of the observer panel was to ensure that all the points and concerns raised at the meeting, and the responses given, are accurately reflected in this report and those subsequently presented to The Cabinet.
- 5.16 A drop-in open session was held on Wednesday 31 October 2012 at Gun Wharf, whereby Members were invited to review the written responses to the consultation and the Frequently Asked Questions document. Councillors Royle, Cooper, Wildey and Smith attended the session.
- 5.17 Members of the observer panel were invited to review this report for accuracy in relation to the public meeting; the panel gave no comments or made any amendments to the report.
- 5.18 The remainder of this section highlights concerns and questions raised at the public meeting, and the meetings with staff and governors, together with the answers given. The financial information given was based upon the situation at the time. Some of this has since changed following amendments to the funding formula prescribed by central government, and the current status is explained in section 10. Also included are some generic questions relating to amalgamations asked at other similar meetings.
- 5.19 **Is the decision already made?**
No decision has been made in relation to the amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools. At the moment these are just proposals, and can be progressed, amended or withdrawn. This consultation is just the first stage in the democratic and statutory process, and all opinions will be carefully considered at each stage before a decision is taken to progress to the next.
- 5.20 **What are the next stages in the process?**
Following the completion of the consultation period (21 October 2012) reports will be presented to the council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11 December 2012) who will look at all the responses to the consultation and give their views; and then to Cabinet on 15 January 2013 where the outcome of the consultation will highlight the responses received to the proposals.

Should the Cabinet agree to move to the next stage in the process after considering the responses, then a further period of consultation known as Statutory Representation will take place. This will last for six weeks; notices and full proposals will be published giving interested parties the opportunity to formally comment and object to the proposals.

There will then be another report presented to Medway Council's Cabinet in the spring of 2013 highlighting the responses and comments. The proposals can be approved, modified or withdrawn in the light of feedback received. Should the proposals be approved they will take effect from 1 September 2013.

5.21 Will parents with children already at the schools have to apply for a place at the amalgamated school?

No, all children currently attending both schools will automatically transfer to the new school. The only application for places will be for the new Reception year group intake.

5.22 Will parents still have to apply for a place in year 3 when their child is already attending year 2?

No, as the school will be a single school, there will be no need for parents to apply as they do now at the point of transfer from key stage 1 (Infant age group) to key stage 2 (Junior age group).

5.23 What are the benefits of amalgamation?

The two schools have already come together as a federation under a single governing body. By formalising this arrangement the benefits are: -

- Having a larger staff organisation provides better opportunities to share resources, best practice, experience and expertise across the whole of the school, ultimately for the benefit of the outcome for the children.
- As the school would be consistently managed it would ensure a smooth transition from key stage 1 to key stage 2. Amalgamation reduces the impact of the transition between key stages 1 and 2, which creates a potential for a disruption to learning and progress. Where pupils remain within the same overall school structure, there is better chance to minimise any disruption during the transition. Teachers are also better able to discuss and plan for the change and develop a better understanding of the needs of pupils in a different key stage.
- As a single primary school it would be stronger and less vulnerable to any impact from a future drop in roll numbers in any one year group.
- A fully integrated curriculum with consistently managed arrangements for assessment of learning, including recording of progress and planning future provision;
- A robust senior leadership team drawing on experience from early years and foundation stage, key stages one and two, who will strive to raise standards, improve performance and give all the children who attend the school the best possible start to their education.

5.24 How will the staff be structured at the amalgamated school?

The governing body of the federated schools are already working on a single staffing structure, which will be implemented, subject to separate formal consultation with staff from both schools, even if the amalgamation does not go ahead. The local authority will continue to be the employer and all terms and conditions of length of service will

remain. The governing body will keep staffing under review as circumstances change, and will make any appropriate decisions regarding staffing.

5.25 How will the amalgamation affect the workload of the head teacher and staff?

The amalgamated school will have one head teacher who will therefore have a wider remit than is the case for the existing schools. However there will be a larger senior leadership team to support the head teacher, and the staffing structure across the whole school will be organised accordingly to ensure the most effective delivery of the best education possible for all the children who attend the single school.

5.26 Significant differences exist between the teaching skills required for key stage 1 and 2; how will this fit with the new structure?

Although there are important differences between the teaching of key stages 1 and 2, teachers benefit significantly from having the opportunity to mix with and discuss teaching issues with teachers from other key stages. Working within a single team will help this to happen, and gives the opportunity to share best practice.

5.27 Will staff have to reapply for their posts?

Whilst there may be some changes to some posts it would be expected that the posts will be ring fenced to existing staff and the majority of staff will be assimilated into posts in the new school. Given that there is no proposed reduction in the number of children attending the school, it is likely that the same number of classes will be needed as now. Salary safeguarding will be available for all staff who, as a result of the amalgamation, are deployed to a post at a lower salary. For teachers this will be for a three year period in accordance with the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and for support staff on a three year sliding scale in accordance with Medway Council Policy.

5.28 Will the size of the school be too big?

The admission number will remain at 75 for the amalgamated school; whilst this is a large school there will be governance, leadership team and staffing levels appropriate for the size of the school, which will ensure that children feel welcome and can learn in a safe supportive environment.

5.29 Will the younger children mix with the older pupils.

Concerns about the impact on younger children are addressed within primary schools by careful leadership and effective management; this will enable younger pupils to be supported appropriately as they start their school career, including having the opportunity to mix with, and learn from older pupils in a managed way.

5.30 Is this just a money saving exercise?

Not at all, the proposals are driven foremost by the desire to raise standards at the school and to produce positive outcomes for all of the children who attend the single school. Any financial savings that are realised by the amalgamation of the schools will be re-invested back

into Medway schools as part of the ring fenced Dedicated Schools Grant.

5.31 How will the new national funding formula affect the school budgets, once the schools are amalgamated?

The consultation document explained that the amalgamated school would lose funding currently received by the infant and junior schools on account of their small size. For Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools the document estimated this to be £58,597 per annum from combined budgets of £1,944,258 (a reduction of approximately 3%).

Central Government has introduced some changes to the way in which schools are funded, which means that rather than receiving additional funding to compensate for the size of the school, all schools will receive the same lump sum payment of £108,430. This means that when schools amalgamate, they will lose £108,430 of funding as a result of changing from two separate schools to a single school.

In the first year following amalgamation a protection arrangement will ensure that the reduction in the lump sum is limited to £35,000. In the second year following amalgamation the remaining element of the lump sum of £108,430 will be taken from the schools budget. However, other changes to the funding arrangements are expected to benefit the Sherwin Knight schools by around £99,000 so, even after losing the lump sum of £108,430, the amalgamated school's total budget will only drop by about £9,000.

5.32 When will the amalgamated schools start to receive a single budget?

Under the previous financial regulations, the council would have been able to set a separate budget for each separate school for the financial year in which they amalgamate. This would mean that in the 2013/14 financial year during which the schools amalgamate, there would be no reduction in the funds available.

We are currently assessing the implications of the new national funding arrangements, and cannot say for certain whether this will still be the case. The council's finance team will work with the schools and the governing body in advance of amalgamation to ensure that any financial implications are clearly understood and planned for.

5.33 How much disruption will there be for children; if teachers are out of the class training etc this could affect the children's learning?

The Governing Body and the senior leadership team will manage this to ensure it doesn't disrupt the pupil's education.

5.34 Some staff are only trained to a certain key stage level. If the schools receive less funding, where will the budget come from to develop staff so that they can work across both schools?

If schools amalgamate, staff will not be expected to work across both sites. Some may wish to however and this will need to be factored into the school budget.

- 5.35 **To support high standards, you need a strong support service for teachers. When will the Governing Body look at the practical side of children moving across sites; also for staff, there isn't a room of sufficient size for staff across both sites?**

The Governing Body are already aware of this and will work with the Head Teacher elect to deal with this.

- 5.36 **Amalgamation was discussed a few years ago and deemed not viable, why is it now when it wasn't then?**

There is a strong federated Governing Body in place now and in fact it was this Governing Body that approached the Local Authority about considering an amalgamation when the Infant Head Teacher left.

- 5.37 **When will you know about the staffing structure?**

It will depend on the post and how that post will fit into the new structure. The time scale has not been resolved as it is dependent on the appointment of the new head teacher first.

- 5.38 **You mentioned a federated school and the Governing Body is but it doesn't feel as though the schools are. What do you intend to do to get them 'amalgamated'?**

The Governing Body, staff & the senior leadership team will work to bring the two teams of staff together as one, but this will take place over a period of time.

- 5.39 **If £60,000 is being taken out of the budget when schools amalgamated, how is Medway Council going to ensure the school moves from satisfactory upwards, as a strong leadership team will be needed to improve successfully?**

Schools are responsible for their own school improvement with support from their Governing Body, senior management team & staff. Medway Council do provide support but don't have unlimited resources so prioritise schools who have the greater need. By amalgamating, they will be able to impact better upon educational achievement with a single, robust leadership team and with experienced staff in place from across both sites.

6 Diversity Impact Assessment

- 6.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix 4. The DIA looks at how the proposed changes could impact upon various groups. The report shows that there could potentially be some impact upon certain groups, however it shows that any impacts are expected to be positive ones.

7 Impact of the proposal on arrangements for looked after children

- 7.1 Looked after children receive the highest priority for admission to all Medway schools. If necessary, the Admissions Code allows the council to place looked after children in schools that would otherwise be deemed to be full. This ensures that the council can secure appropriate provision for children that are looked after by the local authority. This

strategy covers both mainstream and special schools and as such includes Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools.

8 Publication of a statutory notice

- 8.1 If Cabinet decides to progress the proposals further, it would be necessary to publish a statutory notice and formal proposals of the proposed changes to Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools, by way of prescribed alterations, to provide an opportunity for formal objection. This would run for a six-week period from 11 February 2013 through to 24 March 2013. The process would follow the guidelines set out in "Making changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (A guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies)", and "The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007".
- 8.2 Cabinet will be requested to approve that should no objections be raised during the statutory period, the determination on the proposals be delegated to the Director of Children and Adults in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services. However if any formal objections are received during that time then the decision will revert to Cabinet.

9 Risk management

- 9.1 The following risks arise if the proposals as stated in this report are not implemented. These are:
- The council has both a moral and statutory duty to promote high standards and to ensure the sustained viability of its schools.
 - A risk that it could undermine the council's need to ensure the most effective use of resources, and in turn raise standards across all schools.
 - By not approving consultation, the Cabinet would not be acting in accordance with the School Organisation Plan and Principles, which Cabinet approved under decision 142/2011.
 - Because the governing body are fully supportive of the amalgamation, it could lead to a strain in the relationship between the council and the school if the proposals are not implemented.
- 9.2 The following risks could arise if the proposals are implemented:
- A number of staff expressed concerns at the amalgamation and there is a risk that some division among the staff could lead to some negativity towards changes made at the school and lead to negative outcomes for some or all of the children who attend the single school. To mitigate this risk the head teacher, along with the governors and senior leadership team, will work to create a positive attitude amongst the staff ensuring that they work as a team for the benefit of the pupils who attend the school.

10 Financial and Legal implications

- 10.1 Funding for Medway's maintained schools comes from central Government via the local authority in the form of the dedicated schools grant, which is a ring-fenced sum of money for the provision of education across all of our schools. This money can only be used for schools (and certain specified services to schools), and cannot be used to fund other council services.
- 10.2 The consultation document explained that the amalgamated school would lose funding currently received by the infant and junior schools on account of their small size. For Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools the document estimated this to be £58,597 per annum from combined budgets of £1,944,258 (a reduction of approximately 3%).
- 10.3 Since then central government has introduced some changes to the way in which schools are funded, which means that rather than receiving additional funding to compensate for the size of the school, all schools will receive the same lump sum payment of £108,430. This means that when schools amalgamate, they will lose £108,430 of funding as a result of changing from two separate schools to a single school.
- 10.4 However, if the federated schools opt for a single budget from April 2013, they would receive the same amount as if the schools had stayed separate. Initial modelling of the new funding formula suggests that the federation would gain by up to £99,000; this would be capped to 1.5% so the actual gain is more likely to be £27,000 (subject to pupil number changes and data from the October 2012 census).
- 10.5 In 2014/15 following amalgamation, the single school would lose one lump sum of £108,430, but receive protection of £75,000 for that year. It is also likely to be able to keep another £27,000 of its overall gain as described in 11.4 above. 2014/15 is therefore likely to be fairly neutral.
- 10.6 For 2015/16 the school is likely to lose the protection of £75,000 (subject to the levels the government sets as the Minimum Funding Guarantee) but this will be offset by gaining the remainder of the £99,000, so a net loss of about £30,000.
- 10.7 In the foreseeable future potential economies of scale and expected increases in pupil numbers could further offset any funding losses.
- 10.8 The council has the power under sections 18 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to make "prescribed alterations" to a maintained school. The procedure for making prescribed alterations is set out in the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007. Before publishing a statutory notice relating to proposals to make prescribed alterations to a school, the council must undertake the consultation required by Schedule 5 of these regulations.

10.9 The council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient good quality school places.

11 Recommendations

11.1 The committee is asked to consider the responses to the consultation together with the advice and analysis from officers and to forward comments for consideration by the Cabinet.

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Background papers:

Making changes to a Maintained Mainstream School (A guide for Local Authorities and Governing Bodies).

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007.

Closing a Maintained Mainstream School (A guide for Local authorities and Governing Bodies)

Appendices:

List of consultees

Consultation document

Governing Body response

Diversity Impact Assessment screening form

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Appendix 1

Consultation list for Sherwin Infant and Junior Schools amalgamation
All Councillors which include the Leader, Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Members
All Local MPs
Managing Director of Children, Families & Education Directorate at Kent County Council
Rochester Diocese
Southwark Diocese
Medway Youth Parliament
Chief Executive of Medway Council
Directors of Medway Council
Senior Management Team of Medway Council
All Governors, Staff & Parents of Sherwin Infant and Junior Schools
All Chairs of Governors at Medway Schools
All Headteachers at Medway Schools
All Medway Schools- Infant, Junior, Primary, Secondary & Special
Medway Early Years Provider
All Preschools, Nurseries & Playgroups,
All Medway Minority Ethnic Groups
All Medway Libraries, Leisure Centres & Contact Points
Medway Council Press Office
Director of Primary Care- Medway Primary Care Trust
Unions representing the staff and teachers at Medway Schools
Chief Executive of Medway NHS Foundation Trust
ATC on site

On;
Schools Forum
Medway Website
In;
Local press
School Information Bulletin
On show at;
Local libraries, leisure centres, contact points

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The amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School



*Raising achievement through quality
learning environments*

September 2012

www.medway.gov.uk

This document is designed to:

- **Notify you of Medway Council's proposals to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School with effect from 1 September 2013. The amalgamation will follow the statutory process by way of prescribed alterations, which will result in:**
 - 1) **The alteration to the lower age limit at the junior school from 7 to 3, to incorporate the children attending Sherwin Knight Infant School.**
 - 2) **The enlargement of the premises at Sherwin Knight Junior School to incorporate the buildings currently associated with Sherwin Knight Infant School**
 - 3) **The closure of Sherwin Knight Infant School;**
- **Explain why these changes are being proposed**
- **Invite your comments on these proposals**
- **Advise you of a public meeting to be held in Sherwin Knight Infant School hall, Cedar Road, Strood, ME2 2JP on 10 October 2012 at 6.30pm**

Why is the amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools being proposed?

Currently, Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools are individual schools federated under a single governing body, but operating under the leadership of separate head teachers. The schools, both with a published admission number (PAN) of 75, are situated on a good size site, and serve the community in the southern area of Strood close to the Darnley Road Estate.

Recent Ofsted ratings show that Sherwin Knight Juniors is a 'Satisfactory' school, having achieved that rating in July 2010; previously in May 2007 the school achieved a rating of 'Good'. The Infant school was rated as 'Satisfactory' in July 2010, and an interim monitoring report in October 2011 noted that inadequate progress was being made in making improvements and only satisfactory progress was being made in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Results indicate that at the infant school, level 2Plus reading, writing and mathematics were below the national average in 2011, with mathematics showing a 3 year decline; the juniors attainment however was close to the floor target threshold of 61% and progress between Key Stage 1 (infant age group) and key stage 2 (junior age group) was low compared to the national average.

The infant school head teacher tendered her resignation with effect from 30 April 2012, and an interim head teacher is in place. Medway Council will always review the options, including the potential for federation or amalgamation, following the resignation or retirement of a head teacher at an infant or junior school. As Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools are already federated, the next step would be amalgamation, which is the merger of two separate schools into a single one.

The proposals support Medway's School Organisation Principles, which state that "Infant and Junior Schools should be amalgamated over time", and are driven foremost by the desire to raise standards at the school; the proposals have the full support of the federated governing body.

An amalgamated school provides the following benefits:

- A fully integrated curriculum with arrangements for assessment for learning, including recording of progress and planning future provision;
- A smooth transition for pupils transferring from infant to junior departments; amalgamation reduces the impact of the transition from key stage 1 to key stage 2, which creates a potential disruption to learning and progress. Where pupils remain within the same overall school structure, there is a better chance to minimise any disruption. Teachers are also better placed to discuss and plan for the change and develop a better understanding of the needs of the pupils in a different key stage;
- A robust senior leadership team drawing on experience from early years and foundation stage, key stages one and two
- A single staffing structure, which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the phases; as well as the standardisation of policies and practices.
- There is no need for parents to apply for a place at the junior school when their child transfers from year 2 to year 3.

Those children already attending Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools will continue to attend the amalgamated school and parents will not need to reapply for a place.

The admission number for the amalgamated school will remain at 75. Pupil numbers at the schools are expected to continue to rise as they have done over recent years. The infant school has some spaces currently in the Reception year group, but forecasts indicate that from September 2013 the Reception year group will be over subscribed. Current years 1 and 2 have healthy pupil numbers and as these pupils progress through the school, the surplus places that have been a feature of the junior school over recent years are forecast to reduce from 21% currently to 2.5% in 2016. The amalgamated school will have governance, leadership and staffing levels appropriate for the size of the school, which will ensure that children feel welcome and can learn in a safe supportive environment.

Careful leadership and effective management will enable younger pupils to be supported appropriately as they start their school career, and they will have the opportunity to mix with and learn from older pupils in a managed way.

When the schools amalgamate they continue to receive funding on a per-pupil basis at the same rate, however they will lose £58,597 of funding that they currently receive to compensate for the relatively small size of the schools, and this money will be released for re-investment in other Medway Schools. However, as a single school they will be able to make better use of their shared resources, and may gain some additional funding from the increase in pupils over time.

Due to government cut backs, there is no longer any capital funding available for significant building projects to support amalgamation, unlike some others that have happened in the past. There may however be some funding available to support development of appropriate ICT infrastructure if required.

The governing body of the federated schools are already working on a single staffing structure, which will be implemented, subject to separate formal consultation with staff from both schools, even if the amalgamation does not go ahead. The local authority will continue to be the employer and all terms and conditions of length of service will remain. The governing body will keep staffing under review as circumstances change, and will make any appropriate decisions regarding staffing.

The amalgamated school will have one head teacher who will therefore have a wider remit than is the case for the existing schools. However there will be a larger senior leadership team to support the head teacher, and the staffing structure across the whole school will be organised accordingly to ensure the most effective delivery of the best education possible for all the children who attend the single school.

Although there are important differences between the teaching of key stages 1 and 2, teachers benefit significantly from having the opportunity to mix with and discuss teaching issues with teachers from other key stages. Working within a single team will help this to happen, and gives the opportunity to share best practice.

Whilst there are likely to be some changes to some posts it would be expected that the posts will be ring fenced to existing staff and the majority of staff will be assimilated into posts in the new school. Given that there is no proposed reduction in the number of children attending the school, it is likely that at least the same number of classes will be needed as now. Salary safeguarding will be available for all staff who, as a result of the amalgamation, are deployed to a post at a lower salary. For teachers this will be for a three year period in accordance with the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document and for support staff on a three year sliding scale in accordance with Medway Council Policy.

The next stages

No decision has been made in relation to the amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools. At the moment these are just proposals, and can be progressed, amended or withdrawn at each stage of the process. This consultation is just the first stage in the democratic and statutory process, and all opinions will be carefully considered at each stage before a decision is taken to progress to the next.

During the consultation period there will be a public meeting held at the infant school, at which interested stakeholders will be able to ask questions about the proposals. There will be an observer panel in attendance to ensure clarity and accuracy in the reports that follow. This panel will be made up of councillors from each of the political groups within the council.

Following the completion of the consultation period (21 October 2012) reports will be presented to the council's Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee (11 December 2012) who will look at all the responses to the consultation and give their views; and then to Cabinet on 15 January 2013 where the outcome of the consultation will highlight the responses received to the proposals.

Should the Cabinet agree to move to the next stage in the process after considering the responses, then a further period of consultation known as Statutory Representation will take place. This will last for six weeks; public notices and full proposals will be published giving interested parties the opportunity to formally comment and object to the proposals.

There will then be another report presented to Medway Council's Cabinet in the spring of 2013 highlighting the responses and comments. The proposals will then be approved, modified or withdrawn in the light of feedback received. Should the proposals be approved they will take effect from 1 September 2013. No decisions will be made until the consultation has been completed and local views have been carefully considered.

Timetable

Public Consultation period	10 September to 21 October 2012
Public Consultation meeting in Sherwin Knight Infant School Hall	10 October 2012 at 6.30pm
Report to Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee with Outcomes of Consultation	11 December 2012
Report on Outcome of Consultation to Cabinet	15 January 2013
Statutory Notice period	Early February to Mid-March 2013
Implementation of alterations	1 September 2013

How to make comments

We would like to hear your views on these proposals. Please let us know by:

- Completing the reply slips at the end of this leaflet or by writing a letter to:

**School Organisation and Student Services
Medway Council
FREEPOST RRUY-ZBTJ-CZZC
Level 4, Gun Wharf
Dock Road
CHATHAM ME4 4TR**

Alternatively hand the form or letter in at the School Offices at either Sherwin Knight Infant or Junior Schools, who will forward it on your behalf.

Letters and slips must be received by **Sunday, 21 October 2012**.

Unfortunately it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt.



Who to contact

 School Organisation and Student Services, Medway Council, Level 4, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR

 Email: prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk Website: www.medway.gov.uk/educationlearning

 Minicom: 01634 333111

This information can be made available in other formats from **01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring **01634 335577**

বাংলা	331780	हिंदी	331783	کوردی	331841	فارسی	331840
中文	331781	ਪੰਜਾਬੀ	331784	ଏଞ୍ଚ୍‌ଶ‌ଞ୍ଚ୍‌ବ	331786	Русский	332374
ગુજરાતી	331782	Polski	332373	ارو	331785	Lietuviškai	332372

Amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

REPLY SLIP

Please complete this form, and add any comments you wish below.
Forms and letters should reach us by **Sunday, 21 October 2012.**

Please return to:

School Organisation and Student Services

Medway Council

FREEPOST RRUY-ZBTJ-CZZC

Level 4, Gun Wharf

Dock Road

CHATHAM ME4 4TR

Alternatively hand the form or letter in at the School Offices at Sherwin Knight Infant or Junior Schools who will forward it on your behalf.

The Proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

Please tick one box

I approve of the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

I object to the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

Please give your reasons as fully as possible. This will help careful consideration to be given to the arguments in favour and against the proposal.
It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

I am (please tick)

Parent / Guardian

Governor

Member of Staff

Local Resident

None of the above (please specify) _____

Comments

Please use this space to add any further comments (you may use additional paper if required)

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Amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

REPLY SLIP

Please complete this form, and add any comments you wish below.
Forms and letters should reach us by **Sunday 21 October 2012**.

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Level 4, Gun Wharf
Dock Road
CHATHAM ME4 4TR**

Alternatively hand the form or letter in at the School Offices at Sherwin Knight Infant or Junior Schools who will forward it on your behalf.

The Proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

Please tick one box

I approve of the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

I object to the proposal to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

Please give your reasons as fully as possible. This will help careful consideration to be given to the arguments in favour and against the proposal.

It would be helpful to have the following information:

Name: MIKE GRIFFIN

Address: 13, HEVER CROFT, STROOD, ROCHESTER ME2 2NW

I am (please tick)

Parent / Guardian

Governor

None of the above (please specify)

Member of Staff

Local Resident

Comments

Please use this space to add any further comments (you may use additional paper if required)

On behalf of the governors, I confirm we are unanimous in the view that the schools should amalgamate from September 2013. We feel that the necessary pupil progress can only be achieved in an amalgamated school under one leadership team.

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Directorate	Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change		
Children and Adults Services.	Amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools		
Officer responsible for assessment	Date of assessment	New or existing?	
Paul Clarke	5 November 2012	New	
Defining what is being assessed			
1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives	<p>The proposals are to amalgamate Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools into a single primary school. The proposals are in line with Medway's School Organisation Plan Principles as set out in The School Organisation Plan 2011-16 which flows from the Medway Children and Young People's Plan. The benefits are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fully integrated curriculum; • Fully integrated arrangements for assessment for learning, including recording of progress and planning future provision; • A smooth transition for pupils transferring from infant/junior departments; • A robust senior leadership team drawing on experience from early years and foundation stage, key stages one and two. 		
2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?	As a consequence of the proposals it is expected that the outcomes for the children who attend the school, will be positive.		
3. What outcomes are wanted?	It is expected that the amalgamation of the schools will provide a seamless journey through the primary phase of education for the children who attend the school, coupled with fully integrated policies at the school which will provide a good standard of education for those children who attend the school giving them the best possible start to their education career.		
4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	<p>Contribute</p> <p>Strong leadership at the school to minimise disruption during the transition and to bring the two teams of staff into one</p>	<p>Detract</p> <p>Resistance from some staff to embrace the amalgamation positively.</p>	
5. Who are the main stakeholders?	The pupils, parents, governors and staff of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools and the local community.		

6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Barbara Peacock - Director of Children and Adults Services

Assessing impact		
7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial groups</i>?		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	No pupils are intended to be displaced as a result of these proposals, as all pupils currently on roll at both schools will remain in place at the single school. A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue could have been raised. Of a number of concerns raised and comments made, none related to the potential for any differential impact due to racial groups. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	
8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>?		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced and there will be no reduction to teaching staff numbers made as part of this proposal. The single school will standardise all policies including their SEN policy and as such no differential impact towards children or staff with disabilities is expected. A public consultation has been carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and concerns regarding this issue raised. No concerns were raised during this time relating to the differential impact due to disability. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	
9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i>?		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	

Appendix 4

<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced as part of this proposal. Pupils will attend the school on the basis of need irrespective of their gender. A public consultation was carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue raised. There were no concerns highlighted where there could be a differential impact due to gender. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>10. Are there concerns there could be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced as part of this proposal. Pupils will attend the school on the basis of need irrespective of their sexual orientation. A public consultation was carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue raised. During the consultation no concerns were raised regarding the impact there could due to sexual orientation. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>11. Are there concerns there could be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced as part of this proposal. Pupils will attend the school on the basis of need irrespective of their religion or belief. A public consultation was carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue raised. No concerns were indicated during the consultation that there could be a differential impact due to religion and belief. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>12. Are there concerns there could be a differential impact due to <i>people's age</i>?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced. A public consultation was carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and no concerns regarding this issue were raised. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for</p>	

Appendix 4

	ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	
13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i>?		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	None of the current pupils are intended to be displaced. Pupils will attend the school on the basis of need irrespective of any transgender or transsexual issues. A public consultation was carried out over a 6-week period when views were expressed and any concerns regarding this issue raised. No concerns were highlighted during the consultation that there could be any differential impact due to people being transgendered or transsexual. Local authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	
14. Are there any <i>other</i> groups that would find it difficult to access/make use of the function (e.g. young parents, commuters, people with caring responsibilities or dependants, young carers, or people living in rural areas)?		If yes, which group(s)?
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	N/A	
15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	N/A.	

Conclusions & recommendation

16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?		Whilst some concerns were raised about the amalgamation itself, none of these related to any of the impacts identified in sections 7-15.
	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?		N/A
	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment?		

NO	This function/ policy/ service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case.	
NO	What is required to ensure this complies with the requirements of the legislation? (see DIA Guidance Notes)?)
N/A	Give details of key person responsible and target date for carrying out full impact assessment (see DIA Guidance Notes)	

Action plan to make Minor modifications		
Outcome	Actions (with date of completion)	Officer responsible

Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review		
Date of next review		
Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)		
Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?		
Signed (completing officer/service manager)	Date	
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)	Date	