

## **CABINET**

**15 JANUARY 2013**

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

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Wicks, Children's Services

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 initial consultation document proposed the closure of the infant school and the expansion of the age range and premises of the junior school. However following discussions with colleagues from school improvement the proposals have been reversed, with the infant school expanding and the junior school closing. This is due to underperformance at the Junior School, and the expanding school should be the one that is performing better. The Cabinet will be asked to approve the proposals on this basis, subject to responses to the statutory representation period.

- 3.4 This modification to the proposals is a technical amendment and would not alter the end result in practical terms, which would still be a single primary school with an age range of 3-11, operating within the current buildings of the two schools.
- 3.5 By amalgamating in this way the single primary school would retain the DfE number currently held by the infant school, which is the expanding school and the DfE number for the closing junior school would be deleted.
- 3.6 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 In November 2012, Ofsted carried out an inspection at Sherwin Knight Juniors and rated it as 'inadequate'. Previously the school was classed as 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 and mathematics were above the national average in 2011, whilst writing was below; the juniors attainment however was above the floor target threshold of 61%, an improvement upon 2011, but 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, a transcription of which is attached as Appendix 5
- 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.

Examples of work that will be funded include infrastructure works to lay cables between existing buildings and improvements to switches for communication systems.

- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 The meeting was chaired by Councillor Wicks, with an officer panel made up of Sally Morris (Assistant Director Commissioning and Strategy) and Chris McKenzie (Head of School Organisation and Student Services).
- 5.14 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 subsequent reports including this one.
- 5.15 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.
- 5.16 Members of the observer panel were invited to review the Overview and Scrutiny report for accuracy in relation to the public meeting; the panel gave no comments or made any amendments to the report.
- 5.17 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.
- 5.18 **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.
- 5.19 **What are the next stages in the process?**  
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.

**5.20 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.

**5.21 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).

**5.22 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.

**5.23 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.

- 5.24 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.
- 5.25 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.
- 5.26 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.
- 5.27 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.
- 5.28 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.
- 5.29 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.
- 5.30 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.

**5.31 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.

**5.32 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.

**5.33 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.

**5.34 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.

**5.35 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.

**5.36 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.

**5.37 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.

**5.38 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**

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**

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 Children and Young people Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

- 9.1 A report was presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting of 10 December 2012, which highlighted the outcomes of the consultation period. Following discussion the committee recommended that the amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools be recommended to Cabinet.
- 9.2 Reference was made to the importance of elected Members being able to listen to the views put forward at the public meeting and the view was expressed that the suggested amalgamation would be welcome and the hope was that it would have the added benefit of improving school results at Key Stage 2.

## **10 Risk management**

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Action to avoid or mitigate risk</b>
The council has both a moral and statutory duty to promote high standards and to ensure the sustained viability of its schools.	Implementation of proposals in this report
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.	Implementation of proposals in this report
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.	Implementation of proposals in this report
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.	Implementation of proposals in this report
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.	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.

## **11 Financial and Legal implications**

- 11.1 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.
- 11.2 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%).
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 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).
- 11.5 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.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 In the foreseeable future potential economies of scale and expected increases in pupil numbers could further offset any funding losses.
- 11.8 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.
- 11.9 The council has a statutory duty to provide sufficient good quality school places.

## **12 Recommendations**

- 12.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider the responses to the consultation together with the advice and analysis from officers and the recommendations from the

Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee, and to agree to proceed to formal representation, when statutory notices and full proposals as set out in section 3 of this report will be published.

- 12.2 The Cabinet is also requested to delegate authority to the Director of Children and Adults, in consultation with Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, to determine whether to approve the proposals at the end of the statutory consultation period, if no objections are received. However if any objections are received during that time then a report will be prepared and placed before Cabinet for determination

### **13 Suggested reason for decision**

- 13.1 Approval to proceed to a six-week period of statutory representation will ensure the council complies with its statutory duty to follow the full consultation process when proposing changes to school organisation.

#### **Lead officer contact**

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#### **Background papers**

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

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/doc/o/school%20organisation%20guidance%20making%20changes%20to%20maintained%20schools%20%20%20a%20guide%20for%20local%20authorities%20and%20governing%20bodies.doc>

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2007/1289/contents/made>

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

Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form

<http://media.education.gov.uk/assets/files/doc/e/so.doc>

#### **Appendices**

- 1) List of consultees
- 2) Consultation document
- 3) Governing Body response
- 4) Diversity Impact Assessment screening form
- 5) Transcription of public meeting



## Appendix 1

<b>Consultation list for Sherwin Infant and Junior Schools amalgamation</b>
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





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



*Raising achievement through quality  
learning environments*

**September 2012**

**[www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)**

## **Amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School**

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 "all 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.

## Staffing

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

### 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](mailto:prim.reorg@medway.gov.uk) Website: [www.medway.gov.uk/educationlearning](http://www.medway.gov.uk/educationlearning)



Minicom: 01634 333111

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

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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  
中文 331781  
ગુજરાતી 331782

हिंदी 331783  
ਪੰਜਾਬੀ 331784  
Polski 332373

کوردی 331841  
ଏଞ୍ଜ୍‌ଲ୍‌ସ୍‌କ୍‌ସ୍‌ 331786  
ارو 331785

فارسی 331840  
Русский 332374  
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)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_





# Amalgamation of Sherwin Knight Infant School with Sherwin Knight Junior School

Appendix 3

## 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: MIKE GRIFFIN

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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*

n n



## Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

<b>Directorate</b>	<b>Name of Function or Policy or Major Service Change</b>	
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
<b>Defining what is being assessed</b>		
<b>1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives</b>	<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"> <li>• A fully integrated curriculum;</li> <li>• Fully integrated arrangements for assessment for learning, including recording of progress and planning future provision;</li> <li>• A smooth transition for pupils transferring from infant/junior departments;</li> <li>• A robust senior leadership team drawing on experience from early years and foundation stage, key stages one and two.</li> </ul>	
<b>2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?</b>	As a consequence of the proposals it is expected that the outcomes for the children who attend the school, will be positive.	
<b>3. What outcomes are wanted?</b>	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.	
<b>4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?</b>	<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>
<b>5. Who are the main stakeholders?</b>	The pupils, parents, governors and staff of Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools and the local community.	

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

<b>Assessing impact</b>		
<b>7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial groups</i>?</b>		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	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.	
<b>8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>?</b>		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	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.	
<b>9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i>?</b>		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	

<p><b>What evidence exists for this?</b></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><b>10. Are there concerns there could be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>?</b></p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p><b>What evidence exists for this?</b></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><b>11. Are there concerns there could be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?</b></p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p><b>What evidence exists for this?</b></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><b>12. Are there concerns there could be a differential impact due to <i>people's age</i>?</b></p>	<p>NO</p>	<p>Brief statement of main issue</p>
<p><b>What evidence exists for this?</b></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>	

	ensuring equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	
<b>13. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>being transgendered or transsexual</i>?</b>		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	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.	
<b>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)?</b>		If yes, which group(s)?
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	N/A	
<b>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)?</b>		Brief statement of main issue
	NO	
<b>What evidence exists for this?</b>	N/A.	

### Conclusions & recommendation

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

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

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

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



**PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING**  
**FUTURE OF SHERWIN KNIGHT INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS**

**HELD ON 10th OCTOBER 2012**  
**AT SHERWIN KNIGHT INFANT SCHOOL**

Chaired by: Les Wicks, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services for Medway

Listening Panel: Diane Smith, Isaac Igwe, David Wildey

Officers: Chris McKenzie, Head of School Organisation, Sally Morris, Assistant Director

**Welcome by Les Wicks who chaired the proceedings.**

Good evening everybody, it's good to see a good crowd here and I can assure you it will be a business-like, friendly meeting. My name is Les Wicks, I am a Councillor on Medway Council and I am what they call Portfolio Holder for Children Services which includes Education and my job this evening is to be the facilitator, the MC if you like. We have various attendees this evening, can I say first of all, we have an interim headteacher, Lloyd Murphy, Junior Head, Mike Dawson, your chair of governors, Mike Griffin, Debbie Warrens and also Heather Millington. That is the front group. On my left I've got three Councillors, Diane Smith, Isaac Egree and David Wildey. We have a cross party listening panel who are here to observe and really to make sure that everything is done properly.

What we are doing is a statutory thing, it is something we have to do by law and therefore we are very particular about sticking to the process and with that in mind as well, I will go through what is the guide for the evening.

I am going to read it out, which may be boring but I think it's necessary. What's the purpose of the meeting? It is to give all of you here the opportunity to hear from the panel why this amalgamation is taking place and for you to ask questions. Your views are most welcome, I mean that and will be noted and it is important the questions are asked via the microphones, because the meeting is recorded that is so that we get everybody's view in.

It is also a meeting for the observation panel of reps of the Council's main groups to hear at first-hand what your comments on the future of Sherwin Knight Infants and Sherwin Knight Junior should be and the observation panel cannot be asked questions, they are here just to see what is going on and make a note of it. They themselves may well seek clarification if something is not clear and we have the meeting so that we can record comments and present them to members of the Council's Cabinet, who make the decisions in the end. I am a member of that Cabinet, so I am here and can see all that goes on as well.

If you would like to ask a question, it would be helpful if you could state whether you are a parent, a staff member, governor, resident or whoever you might be.

Chris MacKenzie outline the proposal with a presentation, we will then invite Chair of Governors to speak, Mike will do that, then it is time for questions and that is as much time as you want, there is no time pressure here and there is no coercion at all. It is also the time for the observation panel to ask for any clarification.

## **Chris McKenzie**

Good evening everybody, before taking questions, I thought it would be useful to start with a presentation really just to take you through the main part of the proposals. A lot of what I say is within the consultation document so you may already be familiar with it but hopefully give some clarification around certain points and then give you the opportunity to ask us any questions afterwards.

This is really to ensure that everyone understands what has been proposed and why, and also to explain what's going to happen next. I should reiterate first of all, that nothing has been decided yet, these are just proposals at this stage and the Council's Cabinet will carefully consider the points that are made before making a decision. So do please make your views known this evening or completing a consultation response form. I think we have some extra consultation papers here for people to take away to complete at the end of the evening.

In 2008 Medway Council consulted on a set of school organisation principles which were designed to guide the Council into making decisions into the organisation of schools in Medway. These principals were created to ensure that any changes to schools are based on improving schools and promoting high educational standards whilst also making sure schools are viable.

One of the things we know through our analysis of school's results data is that separate pairs of Infant and Junior schools do not perform as well as all through primary schools in Medway and that is also supported by national data as well and that is both in terms of the progress that children make and also the results of KS2.

Because of this one of our key school organisational principals is to seek to amalgamate all separate Infant and Junior schools over time to reduce the number of transitions or changes that children have to make during their time at school.

Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior Schools have already taken steps to work more closely together and are currently federated which means they have single governing body. In line with our School organisation principals the resignation of the Infant school headteacher earlier this year has triggered a review and following that review it was agreed that the Council should consult on a proposal to amalgamate the schools.

The summary of standards at the schools based on the last Ofsted inspection results and the last published results data from 2011 show that the Junior school has been judged as satisfactory whilst the Infant was rated satisfactory but making adequate improvements in 2011. It is also worth noting that the progress of children between these stages is below the national average.

Under the proposals, what we call the the published admission number so the number of public places the schools admit will remain at the current level of 75. I think it is also important to note that because of the recent increases in the number of children born locally this is resulting in an increase in demand for places at the school and therefore as a result, the surplus places, so the spare places which have been a feature particularly of the Junior school in recent years are likely to reduce, so we expect in the next few years and certainly by 2016, the majority of places in the school will be full.

So the proposal. What is presented on the screen and also in the consultation is the technical part of the proposal. When you are proposing to amalgamate schools you need to go through a process and in this case what we are proposing to do is alter the lower age limit of the Junior school and close the Infant school. That doesn't mean that the Infant school will physically close, or won't admit pupils, what it means is that the two schools will become a single school but the method of achieving that is by enlarging the Junior school. What it does mean is that your children will continue to attend the same schools, in the same buildings. It means that the children that currently attend the school will continue to attend the schools after the amalgamation as well and on the screen is the technical part of the proposal which is also in the consultation document.

In our view there are many benefits arising from amalgamation all of which support high educational standards. Amalgamation allows for a fully integrated curriculum and fully integrated arrangements for the assessment of pupils and policies and practices. A single staffing structure will ensure the most effective use of staff across the school and a single leadership team will draw experience from all the key stages. A single school will mean a smoother transition for children from the Infant to Junior phase which will help minimise disruption and will ensure that staff can better plan that transition. There will be no need for parents to apply for a place in Year 3 when their children transfer from the Infant phase to the Junior phase. So at the moment some of you will be aware that you do have to apply for a place in the Junior school. As an amalgamated school children will simply transfer from the Infant to Junior schools.

Amalgamation of the schools will ensure their long term viability and ensures we are making the best use of resources.

Just a small bit on financial and staffing implications. It is important to understand that we are in a context of significant changes nationally in terms of education. One very recent change is the national funding formula for schools, this will change the way in which funding is allocated to schools and what it means is there will be implications for schools which are amalgamating in terms of the financial impact on these schools. It is very difficult to give a lot of detail this evening because those changes are very recent and Medway Council's schools that make decisions about funding for schools only met yesterday to decide how the finances work. What I can say is there will be a financial implication for the schools in that they will receive less money overall and we have presented in the consultation paper what we believe that amount of money to be at the point at which we published the consultation document, that may change as a result of the changes to the national funding formulas. If anyone has any questions specifically on that, I'd be quite happy to answer that.

It is also worth making the point that governors remain responsible for making decisions on staffing it is not the local authority that decides which staff will run the school, it's a decision for governors and will continue to be a decision for what is currently the federated governing body which will become the amalgamated schools governing body.

Just a quick slide on the process and the next steps. The stage we're at currently is the first stage, the public consultation period which runs until 21<sup>st</sup> October, which is just a week away, the end of the consultation process. So please do make sure you make your views known, do submit your consultation responses or let us know this evening what you think of the proposals or ask any questions.

After the consultation period has ended the Council's children and young people's overview and scrutiny committee, which is a committee of Councillors, cross party Councillors, so there is representation from all the political groups will have the opportunity to consider the proposals, look at the responses we've received, scrutinise those and ask officers questions on the proposals before they go on to the Council's Cabinet. It is the Council's Cabinet who will make the decision to move to the next stage and as I said earlier, nothing is pre-ordained or pre decided the Cabinet will listen to the views put across and make a decision on the basis of the views of all the people we are consulting with. If they do decide to move to the next stage we enter the period of what is called statutory consultation, which is where we publish more formal proposals, and there is a further opportunity for people either to comment or object to the proposals before they go further forward. Following that period then there is further consideration of any objections or comments, at which time the proposals can either be approved, withdrawn or amended. If approved they will be implemented to take effect from September 2013.

Thank you very much for listening, I am very happy now to answer any questions but I think Cllr Wicks will introduce Mike, who is the Chair of Governors to say a few words first.

## **Mike Griffin**

Could I firstly thank everyone for attending.

Cllr Wicks mentioned about three governors, but there are a number of governors here, so I thank them also.

The federated governing body took up office in May last year, it followed separate governing bodies, one for the Infant school and one for the Junior school. One of the reasons for federating the governing body was to help the schools work together more closely with the possible view of amalgamation. One of the early decisions of the new governing body was to feel that we should recommend the schools should amalgamate at an appropriate time. The appropriate time in our view was when one of the headteacher posts became vacant, which was April and we then put forward the proposal to Medway Council that there should be consultation with regard to the possibility of amalgamation and of course this meeting tonight is part of that consultation.

I think the governors would also want to thank the staff of both schools for their excellent work, particularly in the last few months which has been a very difficult and unsettling time, they have worked splendidly and we do thank you but the governors feel that to accelerate the pupil progress, and to bring the schools closer together, to bring together consistencies, practices and policies, we would recommend amalgamation. Really, I think from the governors' point of view, the reasons in the consultation document are those we would favour as a way leading to amalgamation.

An important thing to say though is it is not the governors' decision to amalgamate, it is Medway Council's. I would also urge if you to support the amalgamation, to fill in this form and explain why, if you don't support the amalgamation, please also fill in the form and give your reasons why because as governors we do want to see this as a genuine consultation.

## **Cllr Wicks**

That's the presentation from officers and from the chair of governors and now it's everybody's chance to ask a question.

## **Teacher in Infant School**

I want to know, do we have to reapply for our jobs if the Infant school is closing?

## **Chris McKenzie**

Mike might want to come in on this one as to an extent that is a matter for the governors rather than the Ia. Because the schools are already federated, I know that the governors are already working towards implementing a single staffing structure for the schools which may require some reorganisation of resources, that's entirely a matter for the governors. So yes, there would need to be a single staffing structure in the amalgamated schools but obviously the governors are working towards the single staffing structure already in terms of the plans that they are making.

Teacher in Infant School

I want to know, do we have to reapply for jobs?

## **Mike Griffin**

Obviously we've taken HR advice from Medway Council and it depends on what job you're in. The majority of jobs, if your job doesn't change by a certain percentage and I'm not sure what percentage that is off hand, about 75%, then you would automatically be slotted into a post in the amalgamated school.

**Cllr Wicks**

So it's an individual thing?

**Mike Griffin**

It's not so much an individual; it depends on the level of post that you're in. The majority of people will be slotted into their existing post.

**Barbara Reeves, Business Manager Infant School**

I was wondering when you would know about the proposed staffing structure as obviously the new head whoever he or she will be won't be in place until April and that is rather a long time for us to wait to find out if we are going to be allotted a job in the new federated school.

**Mike Griffin**

The answer again Barbara is, it depends on what post you are in.

**Barbara Reeves, Business Manager Infant School**

I'm a Business Manager

**Mike Griffin**

I was answering generally, for other people, it depends how the post will fit into the new structure and what level it is, so I can't answer your question at the moment.

**Barbara Reeves, Business Manager Infant School**

Do you know the timescale of that?

**Mike Griffin**

It hasn't been resolved yet it depends upon the appointment of the new headteacher and everything will follow from there.

**Barbara Reeves, Business Manager Infant School**

I do have another question. You keep referring to us as a federated school. I know the governing body is federated but as yet that is as far as I am aware, the only part of the schools that are federated, can you tell us what you intend to do to make the schools different from amalgamated to federated.

**Chris McKenzie**

Federation means the bringing together of the governing bodies to form a single governing body. So actually, in terms of what federation means, that is that. For amalgamation what that does do is bring the schools together as a single school, with a single budget, single staffing structure. Clearly in between there and moving through that whole process, it is for the governors and the leadership team at the school to work to bring the two schools together to operate as a single school. So it is still very much the responsibility of governors and the senior leadership team to make that work and clearly you are at the start of that journey in terms of having a single federated governing body, who are seeking to appoint a single executive headteacher for the schools and then establish a single staffing structure for the school. So it is similar to any change, so it will take place over a period of time and will impact different people at different stages along the journey. It

is important that the governors and the staff and senior leadership team work together to make sure that transition is planned effectively.

### **Kevin Bailey, parent**

Having spent four years as a governor in the school and having four children going through this school, I actually came up in favour of the amalgamation, that was right up to the point until I found out up to £60K roughly was being taken out of the budget and I'm really surprised that the governing body is in favour of this. That is my first question.

The second one is Medway Council going to take this opportunity to ensure that they move the school from satisfactory to a higher performing school? If that is the case, you really do need a very strong leadership team, so what are you going to do around the leadership team?

### **Chris McKenzie**

On the funding issue, you will hopefully have picked up from the presentation that actually there are some emerging changes in terms of the way funding works for schools. There are new national funding formulas which will have a significant impact on the way schools are funded. One of the things that will be impacted on is what is called the lump sum funding that schools receive. Now currently certain schools receive different amounts of lump funding depending on the size of the schools, so for separate Infant and Junior schools, typically they would receive an amount of lump funding to compensate for the fact they are a smaller school.

And that is why when schools amalgamate they would lose some funding because they lose that funding allocated to schools on account of their size. When we calculated the impact of that for the Sherwin Knight Infant and Junior we calculated the impact to be around £58K which was the figure quite rightly that was written into the consultation document. It has always been our view that that amount of money and it is different from one school to another is an amount of money that is able to be managed by the school, that reduction in funding as a result of becoming a single school and larger school and therefore having the ability to make better use of their resources. What that may mean is that over time, as part of their planning and management of the budget, that it may be that they may be able to use resources, both in terms of resources that they procure, services that they buy in, books and equipment and so on and so forth, but possibly in terms of staffing costs as well, that there would be opportunities to make savings as a result of being a larger school. It is very much for the governing body again, that transition and manage the budget through that process. We have always found that is manageable for amalgamating schools.

The impact of the national funding formula means that rather than just small schools receiving a lump sum element, all schools across Medway regardless of their size will receive a lump sum element and that will be exactly the same amount of money for every school, regardless of whether they are a tiny Infant school or a large secondary school. This is not something Medway Council is bringing in this is a national change to the way funding works that has been decided at a national level. What that does mean is the impact of amalgamation will be different than the £58K that is set out in the report. This is something we have only know about very recently and in fact, the schools that meet on an annual basis to decide how funding will work in Medway only met yesterday to discuss the implications of that.

What that potentially means is that the impact in the short term will not be as significant, so actually the reduction to the school's budget will be less than £58K. I can't give you an exact figure but it will be less, but in the longer term it would potential be larger but what the schools forum have agreed is that there will be some transition payments to help schools to manage the impact in the short term. So unfortunately I can't give you exact figures but what I can say is that £58K was what we understood at the time we published the consultation document. The situation has changed, not as a result of actions Medway Council have taken but as a result of national changes, but we are seeking, with the agreement of our schools to manage that transition and to support schools so that they are able to manage that and there is not a big hit on the schools' budget immediately.

So that is on the funding and budget side.

In terms of the responsibility for school improvement at the schools. First thing to say is that schools themselves are responsible for school improvement, and obviously the governors and leadership team are the prime people with responsibility for improving standards at the school. Having said that Medway Council does provide schools with support. We don't have unlimited resources so it's on the basis on the schools with the greatest need, but we do provide support to schools to help in raising standards but ultimately it is a matter for governors and senior leadership at the school.

What we do think though, is by amalgamating the school, the schools will be much better able to impact on education achievement at school and with the single robust senior leadership team, will be able to take the experience of all the great staff across both schools in helping to improve attainment and achievement at both schools.

**Jill, parent**

I think you have just answered my question, but it was earlier you said that the children would progress better if the two schools are joined, than singly, do you mean educationally and if so, why is that. I know you just hit on that a second ago but.....

**Chris McKenzie**

I did absolutely mean educationally. What we have seen in our analysis of the results that children obtain at KS2, so when we assess the SATS results for children at KS2 we can see in m schools on average children attend, and this is looking at the schools overall, not individual schools, but looking at primary schools overall children achieve better than they do at separate junior schools and the progress that children make is better. Now that's not to say there aren't junior schools that get excellent results and there aren't primary schools that don't have children that do less well but if we look at the results overall, that picture is also supported nationally, so there is national evidence and data that children at all through primary schools do do better.

Some of the reasons for that are some of the reasons I've already spoken about, so having a single leadership team, a single governing body, better able to use the collective resources to really focus on how they can help to improve the educational performance of the children at the school.

**Jill, Parent**

They've got a lot more teachers, etc. to make that work, more so than when they're separate, is that correct?

Yes, because you are joining your resources together and also there are opportunities to learn from across the different phases of education. So you may have some fantastic practice in the Infant school and some great practice in different areas of the junior school and it gives you opportunities to learn from that really excellent practice that perhaps exists in pockets.

The other thing it really helps a school to do is to manage that transition. What we know is that sometimes that transition for children between an infant school and junior school can be unsettling. Even when schools are on the same site, even when the same children are moving from an infant school to a junior school, sometimes because there are different systems in place, different policies, different styles of teaching, different mechanisms for assessing learning, different interventions for children that need extra support and that can mean that some children find that change a bit of a shock and means at that transition point they don't make the steady progress that

we would want and expect them to make. By having a single amalgamated primary school it means the school can much better support that transition.

**Catherine, Bursar Infant School**

I'm just wondering what will happen when the budgets are issued in April, because at the moment we have got two separate budgets but the amalgamation won't take place until sept so will we be issued with two separate budgets this coming april?

**Chris McKenzie**

I will probably need to get clear advice from my finance colleagues on that, to an extent it's possibly a matter for the governing body as well because as a federated school we can issue the school with a single budget, so there would be the potential for the schools to be issued with a single budget from April.

**Catherine, Bursar Infant School**

When would we know that?

**Chris McKenzie**

I think it is probably a matter for the governors to discuss in more detail with colleagues in finance and for the governors to inform staff at the school to take that forward. I don't know if mike would want to add anything to that.

**Mike Griffin**

Yes that was a very good question and it is something, yes we do need to take on board very soon.

**Barbara Reeves**

To support the high standards that we all hope our children will achieve by amalgamating, you have to have a strong support service to support the teachers and I was wondering when the decisions will be made as there is no capital funding, when the governing body will look at the practical side of children going from one building to another. The time, if you like, the staff to get together, how is that going to happen, we haven't got a big enough staff room for everybody. It is all those practical things that need looking at, to make what you want to happen, successful.

**Mike Griffin**

I can say that I absolutely agree with you and this will be a matter that the governors will work with the new headteacher or new headteacher elect. There are practical issues, there is no doubt about it, but those issues will be there before we amalgamate, if we are going to appoint an overall headteacher and an overall leadership team. Again, thank you for raising that, it is an issue we are aware of and is an issue we will be dealing with as soon as the headteacher is appointed.

**Barbara Reeves**

As the consultation finishes on 21<sup>st</sup> October, will you wait for the new Head to be in place to discuss those issues?

**Mike Griffin**

It is not intended to wait until the headteacher is in post, that we will have discussions and meetings with the headteacher elect.



## **Toni Cappochi, Teacher Infant School**

A few years ago there was discussion about amalgamating the schools and nothing happened because it was decided it wasn't a viable proposition. Why is it now when it wasn't then?

## **Mike Griffin**

A more personal view than a governor's view, I am surprised that Medway Council, when the post of the Junior school became vacant decided that amalgamation wasn't a consideration, that's the only answer I can give you, if people from Medway Council can answer that, I certainly can't....

## **Chris McKenzie**

Any decisions we take in terms of whether to review the future of a school is based on our school organisational principals at that time. I wasn't involved actually around the discussions that took place when it was considered previously, so I can't give a specific answer unfortunately in terms of why it wasn't decided to progress proposals at that stage. There are various factors that we take into account when we are undertaking a review and one of the really important things from our prospective is understanding the views of the governors and their readiness to lead on that change and what we believe now is we have a really strong single federated governing body who can effect that change and manage that change effectively. That is one of the reasons why when we conducted our review this time we absolutely felt it was the right time to progress with the amalgamation and as Mike said earlier it was partly as a result of governors approaching the LEA and asking us to look at it and take it forward, that we took that decision at this time.

## **Kevin Bailey**

Are you looking at improving the education at the school or is it a way of cost cutting? Like Medway Council getting more money. I've just read this again and this £58K or £60K, I know you are saying that is a figure that you've plucked from the air, but it's saying it is going to be released for reinvestment in other Medway schools. Surely if we are going to amalgamate the two schools and we want to push from the two schools to go from satisfactory, by taking that money away, surely it should be reinvested in this school for the next say, two years, and ring-fence that budget.

The other thing is that was a great question about the budget. You should be able to say now that it is either going to be set in April for two schools or it's not because my understanding is that it should be set for two schools if you are setting your budget now.

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I think Chris McKenzie was saying that he would clarify the answer to that last question because it is a part year change, then part of the year is for two schools and part of the year is for one school. We will clarify the responses and will let you all know via the school and it will be very important for you to understand that.

Going back on the school improvement point and again as CHRIS MCKENZIE said, it isn't really now because of the national policy changes; it isn't the local authority's responsibility to actually select schools for school improvement. They have a specific responsibility for schools that are failing, so they will intervene when a school is failing. But these schools are satisfactory at the moment and although the LA does offer help and support to all schools to improve their performance and get much better results for their children, they have no specific responsibility or role to intervene in that because the responsibility, the government has given responsibility for that to the governors and the school senior management team. So those are the people that you as parents should be asking what is happening about improving the educational performance improvement of our school, because we want to see that happen.

The other thing about the money is a very good question as well. Again, unfortunately that is in response to a national policy change. So that is not something that the Local Authority or the Council has chosen to do, that is in response to a national policy change on school funding. So that will be something that will be implemented in all schools across Medway and indeed, in all schools across the country that we have got to readjust the funding base for schools.

Fortunately schools will be getting more direct funding from the government in terms of helping them to support the school improvement work they will be leading on.

**Sue Chandler, Governor**

I have in previous disguise been a teacher and a headteacher, and if I can reassure the gentleman at the back that no teacher, no headteacher and no governing body would willingly go down the road of amalgamating two schools with all the hard work it is going to involve merely to save the Council money we would not go there, we are doing this for the benefit of the children not for Medway Council.

**Kay, Parent**

I was just wondering how much disruption there's going to be for the children. Are the teachers going to be in and out as these things going on, is their learning going to be interrupted?

**Chris McKenzie**

A really good question, Mike might want to come in on this one as well because again it is a matter for the governors and senior leadership team to manage that transition.

**Mike Griffin**

The answer is that we need to ensure that it doesn't, as Sue said we are not amalgamating for the sake of it, we are amalgamating for developments and improvements and to enhance pupils' learning. Yes that is an issue, there will be changes but there mustn't be disruption.

**Kim, Parent**

With the budgets, if you are going changing, if teachers are combining together, are the classes going to be bigger and if so, more teaching assistants.....

**Chris McKenzie**

Again, Mike may want to come in on that, because again, class sizes are a matter for the governors.....

**Kim, Parent**

But if you're saying it's all on budgets but obviously budgets are for the school papers, the books..... The bigger the class sizes you're going to be using more, so where is the money going to come from.

**Mike Griffin**

There is an issue at these schools at the moment, because of this PAN of 75, the class sizes in my view are too large anyway, I'm sure the Junior colleagues would agree with that.

**Kim, Parent**

That's what I'm saying, are there going to be more ta to help out in the classes if they are going to be bigger.

**Mike Griffin**

The answer is we need to ensure they are within the legal requirements and there are legal requirements for an infant school. We need to completely relook at not one school, but schools overall. So that if any way we can reallocate resources across the two schools. It is an issue with a PAN of 75, but yes, if we can't afford extra teachers, then we will need to look at extra support staff in the classrooms.

**Kim, Parent**

Without the budget then, you wouldn't be able to afford more teachers.....which is then what the Council should be providing for you, not cutting it.....

**Mike Griffin**

We can't argue with the amount we get from the Council, we have just got to make sure it's used in the most efficient way

**Kim, Parent**

If they give the schools the budget and if they are going to cut the budget there's not going to be many teachers to.....

**Mike Griffin**

That amount does seem a lot but I don't know what it is as a percentage of the overall budget, it probably is very small I would have thought.

**Cllr Wicks**

I don't normally speak but can I just say clearly that school's money is entirely separate from the normal running of the Council. We get school's money through the Council bank account, it is called the DSG and that's what this formula meeting you and I were at yesterday was discussing and that is shared out by a group called the School's Forum, they are teachers and reps and so on. The money has nothing to do with the Council, I can hear people saying the Council's saving money, but it has nothing to do with it. That money we're talking about is the DSG.

**Kim, Parent**

What will be the bigger improvements to the school? Are the children moving over to the Junior side?

**Cllr Wicks**

That is a matter for the governors. I just want to get clear with people. This is nothing to do with Medway Council saving money. The amount of money not to be given out again as a lump sum goes back into the DSG and it is used by schools or however the Forum cares to work it. But as for arranging buildings and that sort of thing, that is up to the school management.

**Mike Griffin**

I can't comment any more except as governors and the management of the school we need to ensure that whatever funds we get we need to spend efficiently and effectively and we also need to look at further ways of raising income at the school as well.

**Mike Griffin**

I was wondering that the teachers at the moment have enough to do in their day with what they have to do now, would that not make that to then with more people, more children, would that make that a not so good move because they can only do so much in so much time right?

**Chris McKenzie**

They can absolutely and I think again, one of the benefits of amalgamation is that you've got a bigger pool of staff so you are able to use those staff more effectively.....

**Parent**

If that leader uses it correctly and it goes smoothly yes.

**Chris McKenzie**

Well yes it relies absolutely on strong leadership and strong governance of the school.

**Parent**

If they are full in their day now, how will they have time to go and discuss other things that you were saying about, if their day is already, hopefully we would like to think, in the classroom etc. things I don't even know about, you are giving them more things to do.

**Chris McKenzie**

One thing to be really clear on is that the new school will have the same number of pupils as the predecessor schools and the same number of teaching staff. Well certainly in terms of needing a teacher for each class, that won't change, it won't be a case of sharing teachers between classes, you will still need a teacher to teach a class of children.

What you do get from amalgamation is a kind of economy of scale where you are better able to use staff from across both sites and both schools to do things more effectively.

**Parent**

When do they do that, do they do it in their free time. Teachers often go and do training, etc. which is much needed I am sure, when do they do these extra things that are obviously vital at this time?

**Chris McKenzie**

Again it is a matter for the senior leadership of the school to manage that. Yes staff definitely need training and that is an important part of their development and it is important that the leadership at the school allow for that to take place.

**Parent**

I think it is time as well, it's not just leadership, would that be right, it's also just time, not just the leadership?

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I think it is a question of how the staff are allocated isn't it, because some staff are dedicated to teaching all the time but other staff are doing other things in the school to keep it running and managing the overall set up in the school. I think that would still happen. You would probably have less people managing and more people teaching which is the overall theory of the amalgamation which is you could release more resources for teaching. I don't know if the chair of governors wants to come in there?

**Mike Griffin**

I would just actually support what you say. There are issues, but they are similar issues, whether or not the schools amalgamate. Because we as governors as I say, have got to look at the budget being spent efficiently and effectively. You have got to look at ways where we should spend more money, presumably on the classroom when we can and take it from other areas. It's not going to be easy but the bottom line is we have got to work in accordance with the budget we get, the only way we can get any further money is by income and that is an area I think which needs to be explored more.

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Just to coin your phrase Mike, you just said the bottom line is this is going to affect the children and the staff. Nobody has asked the staff how they feel about this, there should have been some consultation with all the staff before it went public. Sorry, I feel quite cross.

**Mike Griffin**

Sorry, I thought we had a meeting with staff.....

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Not with staff, all the staff?

**Mike Griffin**

You were all invited to a meeting.

??

There was a little staff meeting upstairs, maybe it was when I was off sick.....

**Mike Griffin**

Yes we had a meeting with staff; we understand that we legally didn't have to

??

It must have been when I wasn't here, as I don't recall there being a meeting with staff and it's going to affect the staff and we haven't been, as far as I am aware, we haven't been asked our opinions....

**Mike Griffin**

Yes you have....

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As far as I am aware, we were asked our opinion on amalgamation, but were we asked our opinion on the amalgamation?

**Chris McKenzie**

As part as this part of the process, we are consulting with the governors and parents and most certainly with staff as well. So if you as staff have views on the proposed amalgamation, as I said at the start of the meeting it is really important that you put your views across and Mike said exactly the same. Whether you are in favour of the proposals or not in favour of the proposals, it is really important that we hear the views of all people who are potentially affected. So if you have a view then please do complete a consultation response form and I can assure you that those views will absolutely be taken into account as part of this process.

**Chris McKenzie**

We did discuss it after it was decided I thought, there was that meeting but not before it was decided.....

**Chris McKenzie**

Let me be really clear on this point, nothing has been decided. What has been decided is that we will consult on a proposal to amalgamate the schools. There has been no decision taken at this stage and there will be several opportunities for decisions to be taken by the Council's Cabinet as we move through this process in considering people's views.

**Mike Griffin**

I'm sorry; I obviously didn't make myself clear. This meeting is part of a proposal, it is not a decision making meeting. It is for people to put their proposals. The governors feel the schools should amalgamate, it is not our decision and I am sure the Council will take into account all views for and against before they make that decision.

Also, if the other staff could confirm that we did have a meeting please.

After it was decided to consult, yes.....

**Kevin**

I think we're all here for the same reason; it is for the education of our kids that goes without saying. There's the 'for' and 'against' of amalgamating the school, there's for and against about the budget etc. Again, sorry for repeating myself, but we are a satisfactory school at this moment in time. In my view that isn't good enough. With all the effort the teachers, the kids are putting in, in my opinion that's not good enough. So what I'm looking at is for moving the school's satisfactory to good, to higher performing. With what's going on, how can you assure us that it's not going to go the other way? Because, to be quite frank the 11+ results that this school has had over the last few years, has been appalling.

**Chris McKenzie**

I don't think there's anyone in the room that wouldn't agree with your sentiment that this is about improving and supporting educational improvement at the school. We would support that and the governors have made very clear that is what they're about as well and that is what they want for children that attend the school.

Medway Council wouldn't use the results of the 11+ as an indicator of overall educational performance or achievement at a school; I think that is really important to say.

Do we think satisfactory is satisfactory, no, I am sure again the governors would support that as well. We the la, the governors I am sure, are also striving for the school to become at least a good school and that is what we want and hope that the amalgamation will support that process. But it is not amalgamation on its own that will achieve that but we will hope that it supports and helps in moves towards that.

Firstly, not all children take the 11+ and it is actually a parental choice whether their children take the 11+ or not. First of all not all children do, so you are not measuring all children and the performance of all children. The 11+ is designed to select the top 25% of children across Medway and it doesn't take into account things like the starting position of children when they first join a school, the progress the children make, there are many other measures that are much better at assessing how effective a school is rather than the 11+ because it is not a sample of all children that attend Medway schools.

### **Barbara Reeves**

Just a question to the governing body about performance, professional development amongst the staff at both schools. Some of our staff are only trained in certain Key Stages so I would imagine that a good percentage of the budget will have to be used to train staff so that they can go between all of the key stages and if we are going to lose some of our budget where is that money going to come from to develop the staff, thank you?

### **Mike Griffin**

I don't believe that when the school amalgamates all staff will be asked to work across all key stages; obviously that is a decision for the head and the management team. We also need to take into account that some staff may, so that is obviously something we are going to have to factor into the budget.

### **Mrs Pring, Parent**

I have to say when I first heard of it, I thought, yes great it could be good. However after reading the document, coming and listening, I still feel the bottom line, questions that are being asked aren't being answered and really we should have been able to get these answers at this meeting. So I just want to know when really are we going to get these answers, before it all goes ahead in April or September.

### **Chris McKenzie**

I am aware of the question that we have agreed to get real clarification on and come back to the school around the budget for next year and whether that will be set as two separate budgets in April and at what point it will become a single budget, I'm not aware there are any more answered questions.

### **Mrs Pring**

I don't feel that the teachers actually don't feel that they've got an answer they want, they're quite uncertain from the infants, I'm not sure from the Junior side, I don't know from that side. But you can see from the teachers here that have asked questions, they still feel sure.

I'm a parent with a child from the infant and the juniors and I feel quite unsure about how exactly it's going to work will both my children go to the Junior site, there's nitty, gritty questions like that I feel haven't been outlined in the report and aren't being answered here either. I get the money side of it and everything and I appreciate that but I'm looking at it on the nitty gritty and I just feel

we're not getting down to that and getting the answers to that. There's more questions that 'I don't know', but if you don't know who is>

### **Heather Millington, have been a teacher, am a governor here**

We are not doing this lightly as a governing body. We have looked at the implications of the changes to the funding formula, in that setup if two schools remain on two separate budgets, one of them loses significantly, one of them gains. I know there's going to be a period of change and I know that's unsettling as a teacher, I've been through it but what I can tell you is we are doing this for the children. As soon as we get to having one headteacher instead of two, one leadership instead of two, one vision for the school and the way that things are done it will be clearer for parents, it will be clearer for children and the progress we can hold everyone accountable because we are working to one system instead of two.

So at the moment we are sort of working with Tesco's and Sainsbury's if that's an analogy I am allowed to use, and we need to get to one system so that we can hold them to account properly.

### **Parent**

Okay so I get that and I'm all for that that is what I said at the beginning, when I first heard of it I thought it could be good. From my point of view how is that going to work with regards to where the children will be based? Will all the children, the whole of infant the whole of Juniors be based in one school or are we going to be separated still?

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At the moment the plan is that there will still be the two buildings. As to who will occupy the two buildings the governing body with the leadership team will work upon that organisation, it won't be an overnight change where you turn up and bring your children and drop them off at the wrong place. There will be a process of change which will be managed. There will be information to parents about those changes and when they are going to happen. There will be transparent consultation with staff, we have to give them due notice that their jobs are at risk, we will not be doing things to people overnight.

### **Cllr Wicks**

If there are no more questions for the moment. I thank everybody for their questions and comments and what I like to call a civilised meeting, conducted in a fairly friendly manner. I would draw your attention to the back sheet of the document that was put out, talking about the amalgamation. What I am trying to say is there is an answer sheet, comment sheet, but down the bottom I would recommend that those of you who feel that there are elements that have not been answered, some of which probably cannot be answered until a head is in place and so on but the questions you feel have not been answered would you put them there and send them in to us at Gun Wharf and we can get the answers specifically if you have an address on there if you want a specific answer we can do that but we will also then get the bits where consultation could be more complete than it has been in some people's view. So I would ask you to make use of that and feed information, it is taken note of.

Members I would say, on the platform have been made aware of your comments about not getting answers. There is still quite a lot of time in which to make that submission. This is the sort of meeting you go away from and think of things, aspects that have provoked thoughts I think and you may want to go further with your comments and questions.

Now, I think one of my colleagues on the platform wanted to clarify, Cllr Egree.



## **Cllr Igwe**

I think there are a few things I want to be clarified here. First of all there is nobody from the Council that is taking down the minutes or the questions that have been asked.

The first question that was asked, the seventh question that was asked and the ninth question asked, I want to put them together so that I make it one question I need to be clarified. That question is around the teaching staff and around the subjects and curriculums when the school is amalgamated. That question is around why the amalgamation is now and why it was opposed in the past. Staff development, all these things are tied together. So what I want to clarify in this instance is there should be some level of openness in terms of reassuring the staff of the school that this action..... what I am saying is this question is you have to clarify, you need to carry the school along because it seems there are gaps in the information here. These questions need to be tied up together, how the teachers are going to be affected, where the curriculums are going to be changed and whether the staff are going to be developed to meet up with the amalgamated programme.

## **Sally**

Because actually it isn't the LA who would decide those things it is actually the governing body and as I think Heather said that would be about developing a full plan for how they would formulate the implementation of the amalgamation and that would be something they would need to talk to staff about, because they can't do it on their own, they would have to engage the staff and they would also have to talk to parents and inform parents, about if there are any choices, ask them their opinions. It's not something they can do in a dark room; they've got to really engage people in that process.

At the moment we are talking about the actual principle here of, do we think there are enough benefits to go through a change process in order to benefit children and their educational outcomes which is what we're talking about here. Do we think that in general that sounds like a good idea, are there enough things in favour. There are going to be things against it, which are things like the uncomfortable things of changing the overall management of the school but I think we are talking about those general things. We will come back on the specific question that we said we needed to clarify and we will also look and see if there is any information about the previous proposal for amalgamation but each proposal has to be taken on its own merit.

Just for information we are not taking notes but we are recording this, we are taping it so we will have a full record.

## **Jill, parent**

I know everyone has their own opinions but I wondered what the teachers and headteachers think of it generally, because obviously they're the people that are educating our children and are responsible for them.

## **Mike Griffin**

I think it is a bit unfair to ask them now what their views are, if they want to talk to you privately then there is no reason why they shouldn't do, unless they are willing to announce it now, what their views are.

## **Jill**

I don't think Mr Murphy's here now, I understand he sees different schools, and wondered in his experience what he might think about it as well?

**Cllr Wicks**

Yes, in your own time. Again a lot of this has to do with how the school ends up organising itself when it's got the senior management in place. Yes, individually afterwards if you want. I don't normally conduct a straw poll of staff, but I'm not against it, if any teacher wants to express, I think the question is are you for or against it, by all means do so now.

**Barbara Reeves**

Previously our governing body as most of us know was failing and I know that the new governing body have done a tremendous amount of work recently. Do they feel that they've now got the right team together to be able to make these decisions or will they have to bring in more expertise?

**Mike Griffin**

I personally think we've got the right expertise, but we need help and normally that help comes through Medway Council officers. We will not be doing these changes alone we will be seeking help, particularly HR help because there are questions of the legalities and there's also matters of well-being of staff as well to be taken into account. I personally think we have got the right mix. I do understand if we amalgamate the governing body has to be reconstituted anyway.

**Cllr Wicks**

Of course, there should be teaching reps on the governing body, which you do have I think, which is a channel of communication

**Mrs Jeffries**

Can I just say my opinion about this was the same as the others; yes it might be a good thing to come together. But obviously at the moment the teaching staff are unaware of what is going on so the morale of the Infant school is at negative, so our children are actually struggling now because obviously the teachers don't know whether they are coming or going, so really this decision needs to be made immediately and not linger on and on since the headteacher left.

**Cllr Wicks**

I can only say there is a legal process as I said at the beginning, this is not our choice it is what the law says we have to do....

**Parent**

It is all about the children apparently but our children are suffering.

**Cllr Wicks**

Of course it is, and I personally have great faith in my teaching colleagues in terms of their professionalism...

**Parent**

They're great, but they don't know if they're coming or going.....

**Mike Griffin**

I confirm what you said, I think the staff are working marvellously despite of these circumstances and I do not think they would let the children's education suffer while this is going on.

**Cllr Wicks**

Did we answer the question?

**Parent**

Well you threw it back in my face.... I wasn't saying that about the teachers, I wasn't being negative about the teachers.....all these unanswered questions are bringing down the morale of the school.

**Cllr Wicks**

Mike says the Council can help him and we'll see what we can do to help him get things a bit further along the path.

Are there any further questions or comments you would like to make, otherwise I will close the meeting.

**Cllr Smith**

I just want to clarify that we will be able to speak at the overview and scrutiny meeting which is the first meeting that takes place so we will be able to feed-back from this. Also all the questions that you ask I clarify, will be taken into account and will be answered. So it is worth asking your questions and I am sure that Chris and his officers will make sure all the questions will be answered. So can I have clarification on that?

**Chris McKenzie**

Yes I can confirm that. There will be a transcript of this meeting which will be attached to the papers that go to overview and scrutiny committee and Cabinet. As Cllr Smith said, she and other members will be present at Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make sure they are presented and they also have the opportunity to review the report before it goes on to make sure that officers have accurately captured the views of all people before they are presented to the committee as well.

**Cllr Wicks**

Can I draw your attention to what is called Overview and Scrutiny Committee, 11<sup>th</sup> December, it is a public meeting and whilst the public can't necessarily ask questions, maybe a rep of residents and those who are interested, if they can have a word with the chairman may be allowed to speak at that meeting, it has happened. It seems to me it is important for me to draw that to your attention so, as I said earlier, if you go from this meeting thinking you want to do some more questioning, that will be a suitable occasion.

**Cllr Wildey**

Sorry, just for accuracy, I am a member of the Cabinet, I am not allowed to pass comment at the Overview and Scrutiny and two people have said we will speak at the Overview and Scrutiny and I'm not allowed, but I will represent your views on Cabinet as well as Cllr Wicks.

**Cllr Wicks**

So there is quite a precise process and it will follow on from this meeting this evening.

It remains only for me to thank the heads and the governors for hosting this meeting, and like I said for a very sensible meeting and I will now with that, close the meeting, thank you.