

CABINET

15 JANUARY 2013

OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION FOR THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF SWINGATE INFANT SCHOOL WITH SPINNENS ACRE JUNIOR SCHOOL

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 Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School by way of prescribed alterations.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 The proposals to make prescribed alterations to Swingate Infant School and Spinnens Acre 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.
- 2.5 Currently, Swingate Infants and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools are federated with a single governing body and operate under the leadership of an Executive Head teacher, who previously was the head teacher at Swingate Infant School. The schools, both 3 Form Entry, are adjoining, on a good size site, serve the community at the southern end of Lordswood close to Medway's boundary with Kent, and sit within the Walderslade planning area for pupil place planning purposes.
- 2.6 Having federated on 1 September 2012 the natural step forward is to formalise the ongoing joint arrangements between the schools by amalgamation.

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 Spinnens Acre Junior School from 31 August 2013, in tandem with the expansion of the age range and the premises at Swingate Infant School. This will create an all through primary school with an age range of 3-11 from 1 September 2013 by way of statutory prescribed alterations.
- 3.3 The term 'enlarging the premises' does not mean that new buildings will be provided at the infant school, rather it is a technical term within the statutory prescribed alterations, which means that the buildings currently occupied by the junior school will transfer to the infant school to ensure sufficient accommodation is available for 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, and under the single governing body the aim will be to ensure positive outcomes for all children who attend the current schools.
- 4.2 Amalgamation will enable the school to operate under a single staffing structure which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the phases; creating a robust structure at the school and ensuring its viability.
- 4.3 Recent Ofsted ratings show that Swingate is an outstanding school, having achieved that rating in March 2008. This was confirmed as being maintained at an interim assessment in 2011. Spinnens Acre however was placed in special measures in September 2010; under the leadership of the Executive Head Teacher, good progress has been made which was confirmed following a monitoring inspection in March 2012 when the school was taken out of special measures and rated as satisfactory
- 4.4 Results for Swingate Infant School are above the national average when the children reach the end of Key Stage 1. At Spinnens Acre however, results at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that attainment was below the national average for 2012, and progress in both English and mathematics was also below the national average. It is expected that amalgamation will strengthen the management leadership and governance arrangements, and support continued improvement in the outcomes for all the children who attend the single school.
- 4.5 Analysis of the number of pupils in recent years shows that over 98% of the pupils on roll at Swingate Infant School transfer to Spinnens Acre Junior School, 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. Swingate Infant School has now been full (90 children) in reception for the past 2 years, and is full for September 2012. As these pupils progress through the school, the surplus places that have been a feature of Spinnens Acre Junior School over recent years will see a forecast reduction from the current level of 29.4% to 7.2% in 2016.
- 4.7 The governors have appointed the current executive head teacher of the federated schools as the head teacher of the single amalgamated school.

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 public meeting held at the school on 11 October 2012, a transcription of which is attached as Appendix 4.
- 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. This 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 Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School” or*
“ I object to the proposal to amalgamate Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School”
- 5.5 During the consultation period, 46 responses were received to this proposal, of which 45 were supportive and one objected.
- 5.6 Of the responses in support of the proposal, 41 were from parents, two from governors of other local schools, one was from a member of staff and there was a response from the Catholic Diocese.
- 5.7 The single objection came from a parent.
- 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:

23	No reason given
5	Benefit to the children
8	Single leadership team and staffing structure will aid pupil progress, shared resources

3	Schools on same site and considered as one anyway.
9	Ease of transition
6	No need to apply for a place in year 3
3	A good/great idea
2	Help the key stage 2 performance
3	Consistency across the schools e.g. policies and standards

Note; Some of the respondents, whilst in favour of the amalgamation for the benefits it offered to the children, did highlight concerns about the potential loss of funding for the single school, and how this may then negatively affect the school. This issue is addressed in sections 11.1 to 11.5.

Reasons for objection:

1	Amalgamation would cause distress to children
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- 5.9 The single objection received felt that the move would cause undue stress for the children. However, it is expected that the head teacher and senior leadership team will manage the transition to a single school effectively to minimise any disruption to pupils and staff, and longer term the amalgamation will lead to less disruption for children as the transition from key stages 1 to 2 will become seamless.
- 5.10 The public meeting held on 11 October 2012 was attended by six people; of which one was a parent, two members of staff, and one governor and a local resident. The meeting was recorded and a number of questions raised.
- 5.11 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).
- 5.12 An observer panel was in place and comprised of members from the four political groups represented on the Council. These were Councillors Smith, Cooper, Griffin and Price. The role of the observer panel was to ensure that all the points and concerns raised at the meeting, and the responses given, are accurately reflected in this and the subsequent Cabinet reports.
- 5.13 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.
- 5.14 Members of the observer panel were invited to review the Overview and Scrutiny report for accuracy in relation to the public meeting. Councillor Cooper raised one concern relating to future years funding, but recognised that until the council are aware of the future funding formulae from central government, it is difficult to give any assurances as to how the schools may be affected.

5.15 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.

5.16 **Is the decision already made, and is the council just going through the motions with the consultation?**

No decision has been made in relation to the amalgamation of Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre 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.

5.17 **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 during 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.

5.18 **Will parents 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 incoming reception classes as is the norm.

5.19 **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 one unit, there will be no need for parents to apply as they do now at the point of transfer from key stage 1 to key stage 2.

5.20 **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 for 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.

5.21 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 even if the amalgamation does not go ahead. The process will include formal consultation with staff from both schools. 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.

5.22 How will the amalgamation affect the workload of the head teacher?

The amalgamated school will have a single 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.

5.23 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 facilitates this interaction, and gives the opportunity to share best practice.

5.24 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.

5.25 Will the size of the school be too big?

The admission number will remain at 90 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.

5.26 **Will the younger children mix with the older pupils.**

Concerns about the impact on younger children are noted and are addressed within primary schools by careful leadership and effective management of the school; 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.

5.27 **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 the best possible 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.

5.28 **What will the school be called?**

It will be for the federated governing body to decide upon the name they would like for the amalgamated school; this can be the name of one of the current schools; a fusion of the two, or something completely different. The proposed name will need to be approved by the Director of Children and Adult Services at Medway Council.

5.29 **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 Swingate and Spinnens Acre, the document estimated this to be £44,242 per annum from combined budgets of £1,979,707 (a reduction of approximately 2%).

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.

The government's Minimum Funding Guarantee ensures that the reduction in funding will take place gradually. The budget will be reduced by around £26,000 in the first year following amalgamation and by a further £26,000 in the second year. The government has not announced the protection arrangements that will apply in the third year so it is possible that the balance of the £108,430 will be deducted from the school's funding in the third year following amalgamation.

5.30 **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.

6 Diversity Impact Assessment

A Diversity Impact Assessment screening form is attached as Appendix 3. 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 Swingate Infant School and Spinnens Acre Junior School.

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 Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior School, 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 Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools be recommended to Cabinet.

10 Risk management

Risk	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
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
There is a risk that some division among the staff could arise and 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 Swingate and Spinnens Acre the document estimated this to be £44,242 per annum from combined budgets of £1,979,707 (a reduction of approximately 2%).
- 11.3 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.
- 11.4 The government's Minimum Funding Guarantee ensures that the reduction in funding will take place gradually. The budget will be reduced by around £26,000 in the first year following amalgamation and by a further £26,000 in the second year. The government has not announced the protection arrangements that will apply in the third year so it is possible that the balance of the £108,430 will be deducted from the school's funding in the third year following amalgamation.

- 11.5 Some of the funding losses could be offset by the expected increase in pupil numbers over the foreseeable future and by potential savings from economies of scale.
- 11.6 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.
- 11.7 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 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%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/ukxi/2007/1289/contents/made>

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

Appendices

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

Consultation list for Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools amalgamation
All Councillors which include the Leader, Portfolio Holders, Cabinet and Overview & Scrutiny Members
All Local MPs
Managing Director of Children, Families & Education Directorate at Kent County Council
Rochester Diocese
Southwark Diocese
Medway Youth Parliament
Chief Executive of Medway Council
Directors of Medway Council
Senior Management Team of Medway Council
All Governors, Staff & Parents of Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre 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 Providers including 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

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

The amalgamation of Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School



*Raising achievement through quality
learning environments*

September 2012

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Amalgamation of Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School

This document is designed to:

- **Notify you of Medway Council's proposals to amalgamate Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre 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 upper age limit at Swingate Infant School from 7 to 11, to incorporate the children attending Spinnens Acre Junior School.**
 - 2) **The enlargement of the premises at Swingate Infant School to incorporate the buildings currently associated with Spinnens Acre Junior School**
 - 3) **The closure of Spinnens Acre Junior School;**
- **Explain why these changes are being proposed**
- **Invite your comments on these proposals**
- **Advise you of a public meeting to be held in Swingate Infant School Hall, Sultan Road, Lordswood, ME5 8TJ on Thursday 11 October 2012 at 6.30pm.**

Why is the amalgamation of Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools being proposed?

From 1 September 2012, following consultation with interested stakeholders, Swingate Infants and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools have been federated with a single governing body and under the leadership of an Executive head teacher, who previously was the head teacher at Swingate Infant School. The schools, both with a published admission number (PAN) of 90, with 3 forms of entry, are adjoining, on a good size site, serve the community at the southern end of Lordswood close to Medway's boundary with Kent.

Recent Ofsted ratings show that Swingate is an outstanding school, having achieved that rating in March 2008. This was confirmed as being maintained at an interim assessment in 2011. Spinnens Acre however was placed in special measures in September 2010; since then good progress has been made which was confirmed following a recent monitoring inspection when the school was taken out of special measures.

Results for Swingate Infant School are above average when the children reach the end of Key Stage 1. At Spinnens Acre however, results at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that attainment was broadly in line with the national average at 75% in 2011, but progress in both English and mathematics was below the national average.

The proposals for amalgamation 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;
- 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 Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools will continue to attend the amalgamated school and parents will not need to reapply for a place.

The admission number for the school will remain at 90. Pupil numbers at the schools are expected to continue to increase as they have done over recent years. Swingate has now been full (90 children) in the Reception year group for the past 2 years, and is full for September 2012. As these pupils progress through the school, the surplus places that have been a feature of Spinnens Acre over recent years will see a forecast reduction from the current level of 29.4% to 7.2% 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 the older pupils in a managed way.

When the schools amalgamate they will continue to receive funding on a per-pupil basis at the same rate, however they will lose £44,242 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 wide remit in overseeing the single school. 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 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.

The next stages

No decision has been made in relation to the amalgamation of Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre 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.

Timetable

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

How to make comments

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

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

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

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

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

Unfortunately it will not be possible to acknowledge receipt.



Who to contact



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



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



Minicom: 01634 333111

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

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

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

Amalgamation of Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre 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 Swingate Infant or Spinnens Acre Junior Schools who will forward it on your behalf.

The Proposal to amalgamate Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School

Please tick one box

I approve of the proposal to amalgamate Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre Junior School

I object to the proposal to amalgamate Swingate Infant School with Spinnens Acre 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)

Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

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

5. Who are the main stakeholders?	The pupils, parents, governors and staff of Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools and the local community.
6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Barbara Peacock - Director of Children and Adults Services

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

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

Conclusions & recommendation

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

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

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

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

PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING
FUTURE OF SWINGATE INFANT AND SPINNENS ACRE JUNIOR SCHOOLS

HELD ON 11th OCTOBER 2012
AT SCHOOL

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

Listening Panel: Diane Smith, Sylvia Griffin, Adam Price

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

Welcome by Les Wicks who chaired the proceedings.

Ladies and gentleman I would like to make start. Now we have a small audience, a very select one if I may say and the reason I think, is very clear to everybody, there is a very large meeting next door. This was due to start at 6.30 and we've waited a bit and I think if anybody had wanted to swap they would have done by now and if someone has been in a talk from 5 to 7, I'm not sure they would have planned to come in here for a bit longer.

In agreement with colleagues really, we will do what we have to do.

Let me just start by introducing everybody, I am Les Wicks, I am Portfolio Holder for Children Services.

I follow a routine which is a set routine, because this is a statutory process. It is recorded; everything we are saying goes on the record. We follow the statutory process that we have in Medway and for that reason I follow a pretty strict script which one or two people will have heard several times before.

My duty is to say welcome to everybody, glad to see everyone those of you who are here.

My colleagues on the right are from the council, they are an observation panel. Their job is to listen, if they need to ask questions and clarify, that's fine. On the far side is Cllr Diane Smith, Lib Dem, Sylvia who is the Conservative member, next to her is Adam Price, Labour member and in the number three position from here is Pat Cooper, an Independent. It is if you like, cross chamber, cross politics and they are here really to make sure that they take notice of everything and things are done in a proper fashion.

Towards the end of the meeting there is a chance for them to clarify, but if there's something in the middle that they want clarification on, that can be accommodated of course.

We have officers with us, Sally Morris, Assistant Director and Chris MacKenzie who is Head of School Organisation who will do a presentation in a minute.

The purpose of the meeting is to give the opportunity to hear from the panel of why this amalgamation is taking place and to ask questions. Your views are welcome and will be noted and as I've said will be recorded and are transcribed as well.

I have explained the purpose of the panel. They are not meant to be asked questions, but like I've said they can clarify and we can have this meeting to record the comments of everybody and present them to Members of the Council's Cabinet because that is where decisions will be made.

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 is going to do a presentation first of all then, we will then invite the Chair of Governors, David to speak, if he wishes, which I'm sure he does, then questions from the audience and then anything that needs clarification at the end.

Kirsty is the Executive Head and David is the new Chair of Governors, I think, newly elected. I will hand over to Chris to make the presentation.

Chris McKenzie

Thank you very much and good evening everybody. It is to ensure and understand what is being proposed and why and what happens next. Following the presentation we will then invite questions from the floor. It is really important to reiterate at this stage that nothing has been decided, at this stage they are just proposals and the councils cabinet will fully consider the points made both at this public meeting and in response received. I would really encourage people to let their thoughts known and also to make sure that they complete a comments form to let us know what they think of the proposals and whether you agree with them or disagree with them.

In 2008 Medway council consulted on a set of school organisational principals these were intended to guide the council's decision making when looking how to organise schools in Medway. The principals were created to ensure that any changes to schools were based on improving schools and promoting high educational standards whilst also making schools are viable.

When we've looked at the performance of separate infant and junior schools in Medway compared to the performance of junior schools, what we have found is that overall, primary schools, all through primary schools do perform better than separate infant and junior schools. that doesn't mean to say there are individual primary schools that perform less well and junior schools that don't perform better but what we have found is that overall when we have analysed that is that all through primaries do perform better and that is backed up by national analysis of results as well.

Because of this one of our key school organisation principals is to amalgamate all separate infant and junior schools over time and this is also to help to reduce the number of changes that children need to make or transitions during their time at school.

It is worth pointing out that Spinnens Acre and Swingate have obviously are already taken some steps to work more close together and to manage that transition for children more effectively.

The schools are now federated and operate with a single governing body and following discussions with the governing body the local authority has decided to publish proposals to amalgamate the schools to further strengthen those links that already exist between the two schools.

A summary of standards at the school show a fairly mixed position, based on the latest Ofsted inspection results and the last published results data in 2011 it shows that the infant school has been judged as an outstanding school whilst the junior school was recently taken out of special measures and is now a satisfactory school.

It is also worth noting that the progress children make in educational terms is below the national average.

Under the proposals the PAN number of the schools would remain at the current level of 90 and what we have seen in the area and also more specifically with these schools is the recent increases in the demand for places means that the number of surplus places within schools has

been reducing and we expect that trend to continue. So the surplus places highlighted on the screen there of around 30% currently in the junior school are expected to reduce to around 7% by 2016.

So the proposal is to amalgamate Swingate Infant and Spinnens Acre Junior Schools and the text on the screen explains the technical process by which we will be amalgamating the two schools. What this really means is the two schools would operate as a single entity or a single school from September 2013 with a single headteacher, a single governing body formed from the current governing body and in the current buildings with all children who currently attend both schools continuing to attend the new school. There won't be the need for parents to apply for places for example for their children to move from the old school to the new school; all children would continue to attend.

There are many benefits to be gained from amalgamation, all of which support high educational standards and the key reason why the local authority has a policy to amalgamate schools is because we believe it has significant benefits for children and young people.

Amalgamation allows for a fully integrated curriculum and arrangements for the assessment of pupils and fully integrated policies and practices. A single staffing structure will ensure the most effective use of staff resources and a single leadership team drawing from experience across all key stages.

A single school means a smoother transition from the infant to the junior stage which will help minimise disruption and ensure that staff can better plan the transition. There will no longer be any need for parents to apply for a place in year 3 when children are due to transfer from the infant to the juniors. It may seem a minor thing but actually removes a major source of inconvenience for parents and also strengthens that feeling of a single school working together for the benefit of all children.

And finally the amalgamation of schools helps support their long term viability and that ensures we are making the best use of our resources.

Just a little bit on financial and staffing implications. I think probably worth saying that there is a changing national context in terms of the educational system nationally. One of the more recent changes is that there is going to be changes to the way schools are funded and a new national funding formula for schools and what this will do is change the way schools are funded and in particular change things such as the lump funding that schools receive. What this means is that there will be some different financial implications for the schools than those presented within the consultation paper. This is something that we have only recently become aware of and actually it was only on Tuesday that Medway Council's School Forum met to decide on the level of funding for schools within Medway and I would be very happy to answer further questions on that if anyone wanted to understand the implications more.

Protections do exist for schools though to ensure that if there is any reduction in available funding that this is phased over time to allow governors to manage the change and it is also worth making people aware, making people clear that governors remain responsible for making decisions on staffing, not the local authority.

As for the process, there is a timetable on the screen which is the same as in the consultation document. We are in the informal stage of the process which is known as the public consultation period and this ends on 21st October which is just over a week away. I would really encourage you to make your views known. Obviously there are not many here this evening so I really would want you to encourage others to try and respond to the consultation even if they have not been able to come to the meeting this evening. Particularly important to encourage people regardless of their view, whether they are in favour or against the proposal to ensure that we get a really balanced and accurate view.

After the consultation period ends on 21st October the Councils Children and Young People's overview and Scrutiny committee then have the opportunity to scrutinise the proposal and also look at the comments that have been made in response to the consultation. They will have the opportunity to ask their own questions of officers and that is an open public meeting so you are very welcome to come and attend that meeting.

As I said earlier, nothing has yet been decided, we will take the report to the Council's Cabinet on 15th January and it is at that point that the Cabinet will decide what to do with the proposals. They can either withdraw them at that stage or move to the next stage which is the statutory notice period which will run from early February to mid-March. This is a further opportunity for people to comment on the proposals or object to the proposals and following that period again, a decision will be taken as to whether the proposals are to be approved, withdrawing or amended in some ways in response to the comments that have been received.

It does seem quite a long process but it is a statutory process we have to follow and it does make sure that everybody does have sufficient opportunity to make sure their views are clearly known.

Thank you for listening to the proposals. Happy to listen to your comments and obviously to answer any questions but first of all, David I wonder if you would care speak.....

??

It's point two, under 'this document is designed to'.the amalgamation will follow the statutory process by way of prescribed alterations which will result in, the enlargement of the premises at Swingate Infant School to incorporate the buildings currently associated with Spinnens Acre Junior School which almost suggests to me that you are going to be providing some funding to do something to enlarge this school and this simply is not the case, perhaps this is just bad wording.

Chris MacKenzie

Unfortunately it is not our wording it is wording we have to use when we are consulting on the change because technically it does involve the enlargement of the premises. Because we are in actual fact technically closing the junior school and enlarging the infant school, we have to, as part of the consultation formally consult on the proposal to enlarge the premises to incorporate the buildings from the Junior School. I agree the wording could be misconstrued and we have tried to really clearly explain within the consultation document what we mean. Actually we very clearly explained in the consultation document that unfortunately because of the cut backs to capital funding we would not be in a position to fund any significant building enhancements.

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Any building enhancements, let's be accurate about this.....

Chris MacKenzie

But what we will fund, is if there were ICT infrastructure works necessary to allow the schools to communicate more effectively together, they are works we would fund.

Mrs Mills, Resident

I have lived here for 30 years. If this is about the closure of the Junior School, what will happen to that will it be redeveloped for residential housing or anything like that because in late 1989 and beginning of 1990, the KCC wanted to build 500 houses on the Junior School field and I was involved in the petition and the media and we succeeded in them not building on it and it wouldn't be appropriate because the doctors, can't cope with what we have got now and the schools can't cope with extra children coming in. Because I have noticed since I've been here, that where we live now just outside, by the school gate, you can't even get into the school because you are out of

the catchment area and some people have to go to Lordswood Junior School which I think is very unfair because they are locals, it is a local school and local children should get priority.

Chris MacKenzie

I can give a really clear answer to that question. In terms, first of all there is absolutely no plans to sell off any part of the currently site; so that is absolutely not happening, we won't be selling any of the site for redevelopment. The overall size of the school will remain the same. I think it is more to do with the wording of the more technical part of the proposal which we have to by law include within the consultation document which talks about the closure of Spinnens Acre Junior school. We are not actually going to be closing any of the buildings. So what will happen is that the Infant School expands at the same time to become an bigger all through primary school to accommodate all of the children who currently attend both the Infant School and the Junior School so all of the buildings will remain as they are, the same number of children will attend the school it won't reduce the size of the school to mean that other schools have to meet the demand and we certainly won't be selling off any part of the site for redevelopment.

Cllr Wicks

Are there any other comments at all?

Members of the panel are you content with what you have heard so far. Any clarifications?

David??

It has been made very clear that there is not any finance for enlarging the premises but I do think the cabinet and overview and scrutiny should be made aware that there is a wish list and that if money could be found to help the amalgamation of the schools.

Another local school had a considerable sum spent on it when that was amalgamated, as in Lordswood and it would only be fair that this school got considered for something. Just because the governors and Head have been made aware that it is unlikely to happen and as a cabinet member I know it is unlikely to happen but as a Ward Member we should push for that, all of us. I think if anyone fills in the consultation papers they should say that.

Cllr Wicks

That was very helpful. Chris, could you respond to that, in terms of wish list, to show we are aware.

Chris MacKenzie

Ultimately it is a decision for members, who make the decisions around funding and we can make sure those comments are passed on to both Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet for their consideration.

Cllr Wicks

I see no more questions and nothing further from the Panel. It really remains for me to close the meeting, or wind it up a little bit just to say and make sure I've said it really. Everyone should know as Chris has said, there is further time for our audience in the other room if they have the wish to make their comments on the back of the presentation paper send that in to Gun Wharf, to the Children's Services and that will be taken into account so there is a chance for everybody to make their views known. It is a pity that we don't have a bigger audience, it feels more satisfying that we have covered the ground then.

Kirsty, Headteacher

Can I just check, seeing it is going on public record, Chris was talking about the funding formula changing, in the book it says £45k the school would lose but in a meeting with Richard Unsworth, he has made it clear the school will lose £108,000 and no sign of any pennies coming in apart from helping us out with our ICT and telephone lines.

Chris McKenzie

The impact overall in the future will be a difference of £108k per year, that is absolutely right because the new funding formula means every school, regardless of their size gets a lump sum funding of £108k so when two schools become one, then they would lose that amount of funding. A couple of things on that though is that the Schools Forum agreed earlier in the week is there would be funding made available and held back in the dedicated support grant to support the transition for schools. So what that would mean in the first year is that you would only lose £35k and so the amount in the first year is actually less than the amount that is shown in the consultation document but in future years it would be up to £108k. The other thing to bear in mind is that the minimum funding guarantee would offer some protection to the schools overall and I would make a clear offer to the school for Richard Unsworth and myself to come in. Richard said on the back of the Schools Forum on Tuesday, that he would do some budget modelling which we can provide to the school to show what the impact would be over time, but obviously because the meeting was only on Tuesday we haven't been able to do that full modelling at this stage but very happy to meet with yourself, with the governors with Richard to talk that through in more detail to make sure it is fully understood.

Margaret Hiller, School Bursar

Can you guarantee that the money you give us for ICT etc. will be exactly the same, whatever our budget is?

Chris MacKenzie

The amount we would provide for improving the ICT infrastructure would depend on the needs of the school and we do it is provided against some criteria that you would use for assessing that so it would be different from one school to another depending on the need. What it is about is supporting and improving a school's infrastructure but what it won't provide is new hardware, so we won't typically provide a school with new phones, new whiteboards, new PCs but what we would typically fund is new cabling, new networking, to ensure that the two schools could communicate with each other.

I don't know whether you are on separate phone systems or whether the schools operate on a single phone system. The work we would do would support the school in operating with a single system effectively.

??

I just wanted to ask Cllr Wicks and myself held a meeting with the former Director before we had the schools reorganisation at Wainscott and there we were trying to draw on the lessons learnt at previous school organisations and how we consult with people and I think one of the things that we agreed at that meeting was that during the course of the consultation where comments were made by the public they would be made available on the website as FAQ with a response during that because obviously not everybody is able to get to meetings like this and it does inform members of the public also but it shouldn't be the case that people make comments to the Council and we wait until the end that you actually find out what those comments were.

Many other organisations have that facility where you can easily see what has been said and that can actually inspire you to make different comments or reinforce those comments as well so I would just ask is that still likely to happen.

Cllr Wicks

Yes I have got that on public record. Yes we did agree at quite a few previous meetings over the last couple of years as some of you know, we made sure that our process was as good as it could be and yes you are right, we included that.

I am sure that would cost you quite a chunk on the website if we put all that on.

It just shows how we work non-politically sometimes, Adam and I working together.

Having said all that I think we have reached the point. As I said anybody has the opportunity to make comments further and there is that meeting, I would remind you of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11th December and if you have a further interest in how members see the thing that is a good occasion to find out what the progress is of the project.

Cllr Cooper

The agendas will be available also on the website so that you can actually have a look at them before the meeting is on so that you can see what time the meeting is starting and where you are on the actual meeting list.

Cllr Wicks

With that I would thank Kirsty and David for hosting the meeting and do thank everybody and I would close the meeting.