

CABINET

17 JANUARY 2012

MODIFICATION TO THE DECISION TO AMALGAMATE BARNSOLE INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Les Wicks, Children's Services

Report from: Rose Collinson, Director of Children and Adults

Author: Paul Clarke, School Organisation Officer

Summary

This report requests that Cabinet approve the modification of the original decision to amalgamate Barnsole Infant and Junior Schools, by advancement of the implementation date by one calendar year from 1 September 2013 to 1 September 2012.

1. Budget and policy framework

- 1.1 The original proposals to amalgamate Barnsole Infant School and Barnsole Junior School were consistent with the provisions of the School Organisation Plan Principles, which flowed from the Children and Young People's Plan (policy framework) and were within budget; therefore this was a matter for Cabinet.
- 1.2 Cabinet were the decision makers for the original proposals in 2010, and as required by The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA2006) and The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007, any modification to decisions made under this legislation must be referred back to the original decision maker for determination.
- 1.3 At the Cabinet meeting on 15 December 2009 (decision: 209/2009) the Cabinet delegated authority to the Director of Children and Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services to determine whether to approve the closure and prescribed alteration proposals at the end of the statutory representation period, if no objections were received.
- 1.4 No objections were received during the representation period and so on 30 March 2010 the Director of Children and Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, approved the proposals to amalgamate the Barnsole Schools with effect from 1 September 2013.

1.5 However, whilst the original proposals were determined by the Director of Children and Adult Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, under the delegated authority of the Cabinet, they were not delegated any powers to approve any variations to the proposals and therefore any modification to decisions must be referred back to the Cabinet for determination.

2. Background

2.1 In 2010, as part of The Council's Primary Strategy for Change Programme, it was decided, following completion of the full statutory process, to approve the proposals to amalgamate the federated Barnsole Infant and Junior Schools on 1 September 2013, by making prescribed alterations to close Barnsole Junior School and to expand the age range of Barnsole Infant School from 4-7 to 3-11.

2.2 The date of the amalgamation was set to coincide with proposed building works as part of the council's Primary Strategy for Change. The decision to amalgamate the two schools was not however conditional on the building works being undertaken.

2.3 Medway Council's Primary Strategy for Change was developed and submitted to the (then) DCSF to secure capital investment for a number of school projects. In order to secure the investment the strategy had to set out proposed building projects over a 6-year period, from 2008 to 2014. This programme allowed the local authority to be ambitious and strategic in planning our capital expenditure for Schools, and projects were phased based on the expected availability of funding.

2.4 Medway Council took the decision to prioritise some of this funding to support amalgamations of schools, including the amalgamation of Barnsole Infant and Junior Schools.

2.5 Medway Council's capital grant allocations have been significantly reduced following the Coalition Government's spending review. As part of this reduction in capital allocations, the funding to support the Primary Strategy for Change has been completely cut and this alone represents a reduction in school capital funding for Medway Council of £2m for 2011/12 and each subsequent year.

2.6 This means that it has not been possible to allocate any further funding to the council's Primary Capital Programme, including the proposed project at Barnsole.

2.7 The governing body of the Barnsole federation have written to the council requesting that the amalgamation date be brought forward, as there is now no advantage in waiting until September 2013. By advancing the date, the school can combine its resources and allow the single school to strengthen the ongoing working relationships between the two current schools. The letter from the governing body is attached as Appendix 1.

3 Options

3.1 The options are;

- a) To approve the modification request to advance the implementation date by one year, to enable the schools to push forward with their single status and the benefits that this brings.
- b) Not to approve the request and leave the implementation date as 1 September 2013.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 The amalgamation is intended to benefit the children who attend the school in a number of ways, and the school has recognised these in their letter requesting the advancement of the amalgamation date. The benefits to the school will be:

- The amalgamation will reduce the number of transitions between the stages of education;
- The reinforcement of the sharing of knowledge, experience, resources and good practice that already takes place across the two schools;
- That the schools have been federated since 1 April 2010 and as such parents, staff, governors and pupils already consider the school to be one. Amalgamation will further strengthen the existing arrangements.

4.2 The schools have already developed a shared leadership team, which operates effectively across both sites and ensures consistency of educational provision.

5. Risk Management

5.1 The following risks arise if the recommendations in this report are not implemented. These are principally:

- A risk that until the schools are amalgamated the current federation cannot fully integrate, which could lead to uncertainty amongst parents, staff and pupils; this in turn could have an adverse effect upon the education of the pupils.
- 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.

5.2 The council has both a moral and statutory duty to promote high standards and to ensure the sustained viability of its schools.

6. Consultation

6.1 Whilst full public and statutory consultations took place as part of the original decision making process, the only requirement to consult in respect of such a modification, is a requirement to consult the governing body. In this case the request came from the governing body, who are therefore clearly supportive of the proposed modification.

7 Diversity Impact Assessment

- 7.1 A Diversity Impact Assessment (DIA) was completed and submitted with the original proposals, and the change to the implementation date will not alter any of the findings in that report and therefore no new DIA will be necessary. A copy of the original DIA is attached as Appendix 2.

8 Financial and legal implications

- 8.1 Funding for our 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.
- 8.2 As an amalgamated school Barnsole will receive a reduced amount of overall funding as they currently receive funding as separate schools. The Governing Body is aware of this and understands the implications of this, and has requested that the implementation date be brought forward.
- 8.3 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. The council also has the power to close a school under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. The procedure for closing a school is set out in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007. These regulations state that any proposed modifications to statutory decisions, must be referred back to the original decision maker for determination.

9. Recommendations

- 9.1 Cabinet are requested to approve the modification to the implementation date of the amalgamation of Barnsole Infant and Junior Schools, by advancement of one calendar year from 1 September 2013 to 1 September 2012 of the original related proposals to (i) close Barnsole Junior School and (ii) expand the upper and lower age limits of Barnsole Infant School.

10. Suggested reasons for decision

- 10.1 By approving the modification to the implementation date as set out above, the Cabinet will be endorsing the School Organisation Plan Principles, approved by Cabinet in 2009, which intend where possible and practical to reduce the number of transitions for pupils between the various stages of education.
- 10.2 The advancement of the implementation date will enable the school to avoid unnecessary delays in operating as one school, which will afford the school the opportunity to strengthen its combined teaching and learning practices sooner, which it is expected will have a positive impact on the outcomes of the children attending the school.

Lead officer contact

Paul Clarke, School Organisation Officer, 01634 331031, email
paul.clarke@medway.gov.uk

Background papers

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

Appendices

- 1) Letter from governing body of the Barnsole Schools Federation
- 2) Original Diversity Impact Assessment



Barnsole Schools Federation



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2nd December 2011

Mr Paul Clarke
Schools Organisation Team
Medway Council
Gun Wharf
Dock Road
Chatham
Kent
ME4 4TR

Dear Mr Clarke,

Re: Amalgamation of Barnsole Schools

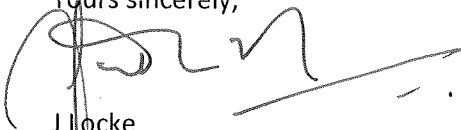
Further to our meeting on Friday 2nd December at Barnsole Junior School, I can confirm that we still intend that our amalgamation date should be 1st September 2012, as noted previously.

Our guiding principles for bringing the date forward are:

- A single identify for both schools.
- The reduction, as soon as possible of transition stage in education. ✓
- The sharing of knowledge and information, resources, experience and good practice across both schools. ✓
- The two schools have developed a shared leadership team which operate effectively across both sites and ensures consistency of educational provision.
- Parents already consider the schools to be one.
- Staff, governors and children also share the view of the above point.

Should you wish to clarify any of the above points, please contact the school to arrange a mutually convenient appointment or written response.

Yours sincerely,



J Locke
Chairman of Governors



Diversity Impact Assessment: Screening Form

Directorate Children & Adults Services	Name of Consultation Amalgamation of Barnsole Infant school and Barnsole Junior school	
Officer responsible for assessment Chris McKenzie	Date of assessment 26 November 2009	New or existing? New
Defining what is being assessed		
1. Briefly describe the purpose and objectives	The proposal is to amalgamate Barnsole Infant School and Barnsole Junior School, on the existing school sites, as part of a programme to reorganise primary school education in Medway. The proposal is consistent with the provisions of the School Organisation Principles, which flow from the Children and Young People's plan.	
2. Who is intended to benefit, and in what way?	The amalgamation of Barnsole Infant and Junior schools will secure continued and sustained improvement of outcomes for children attending both schools.	
3. What outcomes are wanted?	The amalgamation of Barnsole Infant and Junior schools in September 2013.	
4. What factors/forces could contribute/detract from the outcomes?	Contribute Funding from government for the Primary Strategy for Change.	Detract None
5. Who are the main stakeholders?	Students, parents, governors and staff of Barnsole Infant and Junior schools, the local community, all Medway primary age pupils and their families.	
6. Who implements this and who is responsible?	Rose Collinson - Director of Children & Adults Services	
Assessing impact		
7. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>racial groups</i>?		
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?	A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.	

<p>8. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>disability</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Where necessary changes to the accessibility of the schools will be undertaken through Medway's Primary Capital Programme. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>9. Are there concerns that there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>gender</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>10. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a differential impact due to <i>sexual orientation</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure equality in their schools and for promoting community cohesion.</p>	
<p>11. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>religion or belief</i>?</p>	<p>NO</p>	
<p>What evidence exists for this?</p>	<p>A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all</p>	

		relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure 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 age?		
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure 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>?		
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		A public meeting was held during the six week consultation period and leaflets were distributed to all relevant groups asking for their views and no concerns were raised regarding this issue. If the proposal is approved by Cabinet, then upon amalgamation, pupils attending Barnsole Infant and Barnsole Junior School would continue to attend the amalgamated school. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to promote equality and all schools in Medway are responsible for ensure 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. people with caring responsibilities or dependants, those with an offending past, or people living in rural areas)?		
	NO	
What evidence exists for this?		Not applicable
15. Are there concerns there <u>could</u> be a have a differential impact due to <i>multiple discriminations</i> (e.g. disability <u>and</u> age)?		
	NO	

What evidence exists for this?	This proposal is designed to ensure primary age children across Medway are provided with opportunities within first class learning environments to succeed in learning.	
Conclusions & recommendation		
16. Could the differential impacts identified in questions 7-15 amount to there being the potential for adverse impact?	NO	
17. Can the adverse impact be justified on the grounds of promoting equality of opportunity for one group? Or another reason?	NO	
Recommendation to proceed to a full impact assessment?		
NO	This service change complies with the requirements of the legislation and there is evidence to show this is the case.	
Action plan to make Minor modifications		
Outcome	Actions (with date of completion)	Officer responsible
None	None	N/A
Planning ahead: Reminders for the next review		
Date of next review	Not applicable	
Areas to check at next review (e.g. new census information, new legislation due)	To be determined.	
Is there <i>another</i> group (e.g. new communities) that is relevant and ought to be considered next time?	None	
Signed (completing officer/service manager)	Date	26/11/2009
Chris McKenzie		
Signed (service manager/Assistant Director)	Date	26/11/2009
Simon Trotter		

Relevant Documents held:

Transcripts of Public Meetings – Planning & Review Children & Adults Services

Consultation Replies – Planning & Review Children & Adults Services