

From: Patrick Leeson, Corporate Director for Education, Learning and Skills

To: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 March 2014

Subject: Amalgamation of Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School, Maidstone: Proposal to discontinue Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establish a single, three form of entry community primary school.

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway Paper: None

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: Maidstone Rural South, Eric Hotson

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School, Maidstone, by closing the current Infant and Junior Schools and establishing a three form entry, single community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years.

Recommendation:

The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposals or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establish a single, three form of entry community primary school by September 2014.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice

- (ii) Make recommendations to the Schools Adjudicator for determination for implementation by September 2014.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council, with the support of the Loose Schools' Federation Governing Body, are proposing to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a three form entry, single community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years.

1.2 Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School are two separate schools serving the Loose Ward of Maidstone. Both schools are popular community schools. Currently Loose Infant School has 270 pupils on roll and the Loose Junior School has 368 pupils on roll.

1.3 Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School have been federated since 2011 and share a Governing Body and an Executive Headteacher. The schools occupy the same site with a single vehicular entrance point and both schools have pedestrian entrances.

- 1.4 Loose Junior School was judged as good by Ofsted on 9 June 2011.
- 1.5 Loose Infant School was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. The subsequent monitoring assessment conducted by Ofsted on 8 November 2013 confirmed that decisive action had been taken to ensure that the school will progress rapidly to an Ofsted judgment of good. However, the report recognised the need for a more effective model of leadership to underpin the necessary improvements at the school.
- 1.6 The Governing Body of The Loose Schools' Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils. The Kent Commissioning Plan's recommendation for linked Junior and Infant schools is "when the opportunity arises the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school or federation of the schools."
- 1.7 The Executive Headteacher notified the Governing Body of her intention to retire by the end of the academic year. Due to this change, the Governors believe that there is an opportunity to review the leadership and governance arrangements.
- 1.8 Following receipt of a letter of support from the Governing Body of the two schools, the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agreed to proceed to public consultation on these proposals.
- 1.9 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 10 January 2014 and 26 February 2014. A public meeting was held at Loose Infant School on 28 January 2014 and Loose Junior School on 30 January 2014.

3. Financial Implications

a. Capital

- i. The proposals can be implemented without the need for significant capital expenditure as the new primary school could operate as an all-through school on the existing Infant and Junior school sites.

b. Revenue

- ii. As a result of an amalgamation the two predecessor schools will become one school and consequently this would result in the removal of one of the lump sum funding allocations (£120,000). The amalgamated school would continue to be funded at 100% of the two lump sums for the remainder of the 2014/15 financial year from September 2014 to March 2015. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013 provide funding protection for amalgamating schools for the first academic year. Therefore, it is proposed that protection will be provided on the lump sums at 85% from April 2015 to March 2016. ($2 \times £120,000 \times 85\% = £204,000$). From April 2016 the amalgamated primary school would receive one lump sum, currently £120,000.

c. Human

- iii. It is proposed that all teachers and support staff employed at Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) will transfer to the primary school.

4. Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

- 4.1 The 'Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision, 2013-2018 sets out KCC's ambition "to ensure every child will go to a good school where they make good progress and can have fair access to school places" as set out in 'Bold Steps for Education'.
- 4.2 This proposal is also aligned to Kent County Council's commitment to maximising the educational opportunities for children as set out in the Kent Commissioning Plan 2013-2018 which recommends the consideration of the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools to provide all-through primary schools where appropriate because of the benefits they offer.

Legal Implications

- 4.3 The new School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations and (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 came into force on 28 January 2014. However, proposers who have published proposals before 28 January 2014 are required to follow the process set out in the 2007 Prescribed Alternations and Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations until they have been implemented.
- 4.4 The legal process for the discontinuance of a school is described in sections 15 to 17 and Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Parts IV and V and Schedule 4 of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007. Therefore, the proposal to establish a new school outside of academy presumption and competitions, is proposed as a Section 10 special case as described in Section 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- 4.5 Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA) requires a Local Authority to publish statutory proposals where it is considering discontinuing a maintained school. Section 16 of the Act requires the local authority to consult such people as they feel to be appropriate and to have regard to Guidance published by the Secretary of State, before publishing such proposals
- 4.6 The process for publishing statutory proposals is set out in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007. Those Regulations only apply to schools maintained by a local authority, and not to Academies which are independent of the local authority.
- 4.7 The Guidance, referred to in 4.5 above, sets out requirements for consultation in paragraphs 1.1 – 1.8. At Stage One the local authority is required to consult interested parties and in so doing must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance.

- 4.8 Decisions will be taken according to statutory procedures, including a 5 day proposed decision publication period before the decision is taken and a 5 day call-in period after the decision is taken. This proposed change is conditional on the establishment of a new school under section 10 of the EIA 2006, therefore, the proposal must be decided by the Schools Adjudicator.

5. Consultation Outcomes

- 5.1 Approximately 1,000 hard copies of the public consultation document were circulated, which included a form for written responses. The consultation document was distributed to parents/carers, staff and governors of both schools, County Councillors, Member of Parliament, the Diocesan Authorities, local library, Maidstone Borough Council, and others, in accordance with the agreed County policy. The document was posted on the KCC website and the link to the website widely circulated. An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was provided.
- 5.2 A total of 37 written responses were received with; 35 respondents supporting the proposal; 0 respondents objecting to the proposal; 2 respondents undecided. A summary of the comments is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 Two public meetings were held during the consultation period, Tuesday, 28 January 2014 at Loose Infant School and Thursday, 30 January 2014 at Loose Junior School. Both meetings were attended by parents, governors, staff and interested parties, with approximately 22 people at the Infant School meeting and 27 at the Junior School meeting. A summary of the views and comments given at each public consultation meeting is attached at Appendices 2 and 3.

6. Views

The view of the Local Member

- 6.1 Eric Hotson the Local Member for Maidstone Rural South has been made aware of the possibility of the amalgamation for some time while having had a close interest in the two schools for many years. Having been formally consulted he is fully supportive of the proposal.

The view of the Executive Headteacher and Governing Body

- 6.2 The Governing Body initiated the move to amalgamate the two schools with the LA and supports the proposal to become a through Primary school. The Governors believe this will enable the school to; raise standards, develop new leadership structures and offer children further opportunities to experience a challenging and exciting curriculum.

The view of the School Council

- 6.3 The Junior School Council was consulted on the proposal to amalgamate the schools and was very positive about the changes. A summary of comments is included in Appendix 1.

The view of the Principal Primary Adviser for Kent

- 6.4 The Principal Primary Adviser for Kent supports the proposal put forward by the governing body of the Loose Schools' Federation and believes amalgamation is the best approach to secure improved standards for the pupils of Loose. The benefits of considering this proposal include greater consistency of approach to teaching and learning from ages from 4 to 11; seamless monitoring of pupil progress from ages 4 to 11; increased potential for strong leadership and governance and continuity of experiences for young children.

The view of the Area Education Officer

- 6.5 The Area Education Officer for West Kent considers that the most appropriate solution to securing and sustaining outstanding education provision for both infant and junior age ranges at Loose Infant School and Loose Junior is to have a single all-through primary school.

7. Proposal

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was completed. Changes were made to the Equality Impact Assessment following comments received during the consultation period.
- 7.2 The conclusion following the public consultation is that the presumptions made in the initial assessment still remain and that it is not necessary to initiate a further Equality Impact Assessment.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1 The Governing Body of the Loose Schools Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils. Furthermore, this proposal is aligned to Kent County Council's commitment to maximising the educational opportunities for children as set out in the Kent Commissioning Plan 2013-2018 which recommends the consideration of the amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools to provide through primary schools, where appropriate because of the benefits they offer.

9. Recommendation

Recommendation: The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establish a single, three form of entry community primary school by September 2014.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice

- (ii) Make recommendations to the Schools Adjudicator for determination for implementation by September 2014.

11. Background Documents

11.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

http://www.kent.gov.uk/your_council/priorities_policies_and_plans/priorities_and_plans/bold_steps_for_kent.aspx

11.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

http://www.kent.gov.uk/education_and_learning/plans_and_consultations/education_plans.aspx

11.3 Consultation Document and Equalities Impact Assessment

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/Loose/consultationHome>

12. Contact details

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**Proposed amalgamation:
Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School, Maidstone**

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 1000
Responses received: 37

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	22			22
Governors	4			4
Members of Staff	8		1	9
Junior School Council	1			1
Interested Parties			1	1
Total	35		2	37

In support of the proposal

Parents & carers

- The two schools have already seen the benefits of working together. Amalgamation is the sensible next step to enable schools to work even more closely for the benefit of the children and families.
- Transition from Year 2 to Year 3 will benefit from the proposed amalgamation. Having to apply to attend the Junior school was an unnecessary and stressful step which allowed people coming into the borough to gazump children who had been at the infants school for years and rightly expected to progress with their friends.
- This is a natural progression from the Federation. It will ensure continuity across the schools and simplify the transition from KS1- KS2 for pupils and parents.
- This proposal is the best way to move forward and further align the two schools for the benefits of pupils and the local community.
- This should have happened instead of the schools being federated.
- By combining the Head of School and Executive Headteacher wages the chance of headship at Loose Primary School may be a more attractive prospect to high quality candidates.
- With the right person taking the position of Head Teacher, there will be many benefits in the amalgamation such as shared resources, a wealth of experience in the excellent teaching staff.
- Very much in favour of the two schools merging and feel it will provide many benefits to everyone involved. An opportunity to reshuffle and strengthen the management and staff structure can only be welcomed given the recent and pending staff changes.
- The amalgamation is a positive move for the children and future of the schools. Experience of the infant school has been fairly poor and therefore welcome any planned improvement to hopefully raise standards and stability going forward.

- Cannot see any negative reasons to proceed with this proposal. Most people see the school as one as both schools are on the same site.
- Have already seen the benefits of the federation. Would want to see recognition that each department of the new school may still have its own characteristics that are relevant to its age range.
- Agree with the proposal but would like to see SATs tests results published and carried forward for the school. Whilst proposal is to establish a new school, existing parents and prospective parents will still expect to see the academic and OfSTED history of the school;
- The proposal is in the best interests of all concerned and gives the best value to the taxpayer

Staff

- It makes sense to pool resources between both schools for the benefit of the children and the staff.
- The lack of strong leadership has been a problem at the school for many years. High turnover of staff particularly at Year R. Interview procedures and recruitment techniques to be reviewed.
- All efforts must be made to find strong Headteacher with experience of such a large school.
- Amalgamation should go ahead without current Chair of Governors at the helm.
- Chair of Governors should be held accountable for poor decisions over recent years. Recent appointment of Head of School has destroyed infant school reputation. Staff, both teaching and support, have never been more demoralised.
- Agree with the proposal however, it seems more than unfortunate that the 2014 SATs results, Phonic Test results will not be on Raiseonline of MFS when the staff have worked so hard to successfully raise standards. The schools results were well above the national average in 2013 and will be in 2014.

Governors

- The proposal has the full support of the Loose Federation Governors
- The school curriculum will be set against both schools.
- This is a natural progression from the Federation. It will continue to ensure continuity across the schools and simplify the transition from KS1 – KS2 for pupils and parents.

School Council (Junior School)

- Schools will work together well and will be very similar
- There will be a new school name, logo on jumpers and Headteacher but these will all be new and fun.
- Would like 'houses' at the Infants, like the Junior School
- Good to have massive events e.g. fayres, sports days and trips.
- Cannot think of anything bad about the proposal as most things (e.g. buildings and staff) will stay the same.

Undecided

- Do not feel federation has been a success and fail to see how this next step would be any better. Concerns including the future leadership, current performance of the Junior school and position of the governors.
- A fresh start should include staff (SMT) and governors.
- In view of proposed changes an onsite pick up and drop off point should be considered especially if separate entrances are not maintained.

Against the proposal

- None

Proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant School & Loose Junior School

Notes of Public Consultation Meeting - 28th January 2014 at Loose Infant School

Panel	Mr Kevin Shovelton	Director of Education Planning & Access (Chair)
	Mr Jared Nehra	Area Education Officer (West Kent)
	Mr Simon Webb	Principal Primary Adviser
	Mrs Michelle Hamilton	Area Schools Organisation Officer (West Kent)
	Mrs Deborah Ledniczky	Public Meeting Recorder
	Mrs Janeen Pye	Executive Head Teacher
	Mrs Carole Hardy	Chair of Governors

Introduction

Mr Shovelton welcomed parents, staff and members of the public to the meeting and introduced the supporting officers and principal speakers. The Public Consultation was to give people the opportunity to hear about the proposal first hand and ask questions and make any comments about the school proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant and Loose Junior to become a single three form entry.

The meeting will be recorded because it is a public consultation and all comments will be taken into account by our elective members when the decision is made about the school and it is important that views and comments are on record.

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a three form of entry Community Primary School
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

Background & Proposal

A short presentation outlining the background to the proposal was given by Mr Nehra.

Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School have been federated since 2011. The two schools are on the same site and currently share a Governing Body and an Executive Headteacher. The Governing Body of Loose Schools' Federation and Kent County Council are jointly proposing to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to form a single, 3 form entry community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years. The Governing Body of The Loose Schools' Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils.

The key features of previous successful amalgamations have been:

- strong leadership and governance;
- promotion of high educational standards;
- high quality, good teaching as a minimum;
- consistency of approach to learning policies, curriculum planning and behaviour management;
- stability of staffing and improved staffing structures and opportunities for staff development;

- improved use of facilities – specialist teaching spaces, reception areas, outdoor area.

This proposal is in line with the Kent County Council policy as set out in the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018, which states:

“when the opportunity arises, the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school; or federation of the schools.”

To amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a single, 3 form of entry community primary school. This proposal would be achieved by discontinuing Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establishing a new community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years on the existing site. The new primary school will be able to use the existing buildings more effectively as a single school. The primary school would admit up to 90 pupils into the reception year each September, as the infant school does now, and the new school would have a total of 630 places.

Admission Arrangements: Kent County Council will be the admission authority for the primary school and will set the admission arrangements, as it does for the existing schools. This proposal does not include any changes to the number of pupils admitted across the 4-11 age range or the current class structure of the school. Mr Nehra added that there will be no change to the total number of pupils on roll. A new Instrument of Government would be established to secure effective governance arrangements for the new school. A separate consultation will be held with staff about the proposal.

It is proposed that both Schools would close on 31 August 2014 and the new primary school would open on the existing sites on 1 September 2014. The amalgamation would not result in changes to the admission arrangements at reception. Year 2 children would automatically move into year 3 in the primary school.

Mr Nehra reiterated the need for people to send their comments in by the 26th February 2014 and that in May/June the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, Roger Gough, will consider all responses made and decide whether to go ahead. Subject to agreement, the Schools Adjudicator will be asked to make the final decision in June/July.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Mrs Carole Hardy

Governors were in unanimous agreement to ask the Local Authority to consider this amalgamation and start taking us through this process. In 2011 when we federated we did consider amalgamation but at that time for whatever reason we decided not to take that route. The two schools working together has been very successful with curriculum policy, staff and curriculum leaders moving between the two schools, professional development for staff and it feels a natural progression for us to now become one school. The Governing Body feel that the parents will welcome the idea of not having to reapply to the Junior School. This process for the Governors is about formalising the process to become one school. All new staff members since we federated are employed on a federated contract which means that they are employed to work for the Federated Governing Body and federated schools so there will be no change there, they will now come under Loose Primary School. The Governing Body discussed the proposal to amalgamate and could see only positives. We feel that it is the right move to be able to develop future structures to lead and manage the school but we are very interested to hear the views from anyone of feels that this should not go ahead because

those views need to be considered. My colleague Governors are also here tonight to hear your views whether in the public forum or with them after the meeting. On behalf of the Governors I would like to ask for your support.

Statement from the Executive Head teacher, Mrs Janeen Pye

The amalgamation is a fantastic next step for the two schools and it should possibly have been done two years ago. I fully support the proposal and am excited about the one Loose Primary School and interested to hear people's views about the proposal.

Question	Response
<p>Parent</p> <p>Will there be two Headteachers or one Executive Headteacher in charge of the new school?</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors</p> <p>Mrs Pye is retiring and that will mean a change in the senior leadership. Meetings are taking place with the Governors to discuss what they might be looking for in the future if we are to become one school and how we manage that. We want to promote the one school and have people responsible for specific areas of work such as curriculum planning. We will share the new structure with you when we know what it will look like. There will be one Headteacher. We want to look at areas of importance within the school. We will look to have an answer in the next couple of weeks.</p>
<p>Member of Staff</p> <p>I am concerned that key members of staff and staff who have created stability in the school will be worried about the change and will leave. Parents also appear not to know what is going on and that is a worry. Telling people how the staff structure will change or not change is important.</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors</p> <p>Once the new structure has been agreed we will tell staff and share with parents. Governors will continue sending you letters letting you know what is going on. Staffing changes and changes in the school are difficult. Staff do move on, often for their own reasons. Unfortunately we have recently had various reasons for staff going and this is not satisfactory. I appreciate your point of view about stability and the Governors will share what we are planning to do as soon as soon as it is finalised so you feel that you are a part of the way we want to take the school forward. Can I please encourage parents and staff to talk to either myself or Mrs Pye.</p>
<p>Member of Staff</p> <p>Can you give us any more information about a time line when the senior management will be confirmed for everybody?</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors</p> <p>Reiterated that there will not be changes in class teachers and class numbers as the school will remain a three form entry and the number of pupils fixed. What we are looking at is the senior management team and I envisage that this will take a couple of weeks. Two meetings have been held and the next is scheduled for Monday after which I will then advise from LA and seek approval from</p>

	governors. We will be looking to advertise the Headteacher post as soon as possible but to be able to do that the new structure needs to have been agreed.
<p>Member of Staff</p> <p>With closure of Loose Infants will our excellent results in writing and maths from the summer SATS and summer teacher assessments still be put on line as these were above the national average and it looks like it is going that way this year. It would be lovely to see the hard work of staff recognised.</p>	<p>Mr Webb, Principal Primary Adviser</p> <p>Unfortunately when a school closes the results/historic data officially disappear. The Infant School is currently rated as 'Requires Improvement'. When the new Primary school opens it does so without an Ofsted rating because it is a 'new' school. Ofsted will visit approximately one year after it has opened and it will then receive a new rating but the school will have that data for the children as they move through the primary school. When Ofsted come in and check on the pupil progress and quality of teaching and learning then that data is readily available in the school.</p> <p>It is right to go for the Headteacher appointment as soon as we can and I have discussed with the Governors that the right person may not necessarily be forthcoming first time round. Please do not worry if it takes time to appoint the right person. I will be working closely with the Governing Body on the appointment process and we will not be interviewing any Headteacher that has less than a Good rating by Ofsted in their current school; that is a County policy. We will look to put a strong structure broadly in place so that when the Headteacher is appointed from September they are not constricted and have the opportunities to make changes to that structure as they feel is right.</p> <p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors</p> <p>That's not to say that we cannot share good news with parents. Governors will continue to write out to parents to let them know about what is going on and school achievements.</p>
<p>(i) KCC agenda would be to make sure that no school is in special measures or in a category by 2015; it therefore seems a little convenient that if you close a school that 'requires improvement' then there is no data on that school anymore from the County's point of view.</p> <p>(ii) If a head teacher is not going to be appointed on the first round of interviews how are you going to secure the stability of the school while you go through the recruitment process?</p>	<p>Mr Webb, Principal Primary Adviser</p> <p>Stated that there is no hidden agenda by the Local Authority. Loose Federated Governing Body approached the Local Authority and the Local Authority fully supports the amalgamation because it considers that it is the right next move. A 'requires improvement' school is not in an Ofsted 'category'. It is the new name for the judgement previously referred to as 'satisfactory'. The Infant School would need to achieve 'good' within the two year time frame; June 2015. That could be</p>

	<p>achieved in a year. Although the results will not be published parents will know exactly how their children are progressing from the age of 5 to 11 because the school will have that data to chart progress and report to parents.</p> <p>We will look to get the advert out by the end of February and appoint a Headteacher as of the 30th April 2014. If we are not successful we might appoint at the second interview. If this were to be the case then we would talk to the Governing Body of the Headteacher's current school and ask them to let us have their Headteacher from September, rather than January. If it is a Kent school we can normally back fill that post but if the Headteacher is from outside the Authority they do not have to comply although they generally understand and will release the person from their post. If we don't appoint we have a bank of people we can bring in as acting Headteachers. We do have contingency plans and will fully support the new school and Federated Governing Body and will prioritise whatever it is that you need.</p>
<p>Member of Staff</p> <p>In the Junior School we sometimes have 31/32 pupils in a class. Is it going to be a fixed 630 number of places or will there be flexibility around that number?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer</p> <p>The schools jointly have 630 places. However, in certain instances the school will admit over the published admissions number, for example an independent appeals panel has found in favour of a case brought by the parents. That child would not be counted within the admitted number because it would be considered an 'excepted' pupil. In other exceptional cases the Local Authority can agree for the school to admit over the admissions number and that would tend to be on the specific circumstances of each child.</p>
<p>Member of Staff</p> <p>The Infant School is losing its Head of School at Easter then in the summer we will be losing Mrs Pye. Will the Infant School have the necessary support whilst this process is going through to carry on running the school and getting the levels and results that we need to get for the children?</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors</p> <p>Yes. The Governing Body is already looking at interim arrangements to have senior leadership in place in the Infant School. Discussions are not yet finalised but we do recognise that there is a lot of work to be done and the need to concentrate on standards and take the school forward. Mr Pye has the underlying administration and paperwork in hand and we are seeking support from the Local Authority in slotting someone in short term.</p> <p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer</p> <p>In terms of the process set out and the</p>

	<p>formalities of the consultation process that will be done by KCC, either by myself or a member of my team. The Local Authority will try and relieve the pressure on the school by undertaking the practicalities of getting to the new primary school.</p> <p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors There are no plans for a new school uniform in September. It maybe something that will be considered but first we need to get our management structure and new Headteacher in place before we look at the school uniform.</p>
<p>Will the two separate budgets be reduced when the school becomes one?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer Each school currently has a delegated budget which is separate from Local Authority resources. Currently under the federated model there will be some pooling of resource. Under the amalgamation there would be one delegated budget for the benefit of the new primary school. There is a change in terms funding that is called 'lump sum' funding which each school receives. Under the amalgamation model, one of those lump sums would cease in time. A level of protection can be applied for a period of 19 months and we will look to apply the maximum amount that is allowed within the Regulations. This allows full funding at 100% of the two lump sums funding for 7 months and 85% of the two lump sums for 12 months; as set out in National Funding Regulations for schools and early years to give schools time to adjust and implement the new structure.</p>
<p>Member of Staff Is there any way you can guarantee that any person currently employed across both schools will be able to retain their positions?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer This proposal is not considering any changes to teaching or support staff. The expectation is that there will be separate consultation with staff and that all teaching and support staff will transfer to the new primary.</p>
<p>Member of Staff They have been rumours that people need to re-apply for their job?</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors Absolutely not. There will be no change to teaching, classes or support staff in those classes; this proposal is about joining the two schools together. The main changes will be to the leadership and management and overall organisation of the school. For the Governors, managing two budgets has been more challenging rather than looking after one. The running of the Infant and Junior schools is more than just about standards; it is about giving our young people in our school the right opportunities and being ready to move on</p>

	through their schooling life and wanting to learn.
Is there any significance in the word 'community' in the school title?	Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer The anticipate title is Loose Primary School. Reference to 'community' clarifies that the new primary school would continue to be a community school. No impact on staff as staff currently work for KCC and that would continue.
Parent Can you tell me how you sought the views of the wider community because I only know about it because I am a parent?	Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer We aim to promote and publish the proposal and consultation as widely as we can. Any consultation that we run will appear on the KCC website, a press release will be given to all the major local press organisations, Parish Council and local Members. Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors Tovil Parish Council has been in touch to say they have received a consultation request and will be responding.
	Mr Webb, Principal Primary Adviser On behalf of the Local Authority I would like to say thank you to Mrs Pye for her excellent work that she has done, not only as Headteacher of the Junior School but also taking the two schools through as Executive Headteacher.

Mr Shovelton thanked everyone for attending and hoped that the evening had been helpful and informative. The consultation lasts until the 26th February so please do use the return form if you wish to make any further comments.

The meeting was attended by approximately 22 people

Meeting closed at 7.55pm

Proposal to Amalgamate Loose Infant School & Loose Junior School

Notes of Public Consultation Meeting - 30th January 2014 at Loose Junior School

Panel	Mr Kevin Shovelton	Director of Education Planning and Access (Chair)
	Mr Jared Nehra	Area Education Officer (West Kent)
	Mr Simon Webb	Principal Primary Adviser
	Mrs Michelle Hamilton	Area Schools Organisation Officer (West Kent)
	Mrs Deborah Ledniczky	Public Meeting Recorder
	Mrs Janeen Pye	Executive Head Teacher
	Mrs Carole Hardy	Chair of Governors

Introduction

Mr Shovelton welcomed parents, staff and members of the public to the meeting and introduced the supporting officers and principal speakers and explained that Mr Webb, Principal Primary Adviser, will be joining the meeting shortly. The Public Consultation was to give people the opportunity to hear about the proposal first hand and to ask questions and make any comments about the proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant and Loose Junior School. This is part of the public consultation that will run over several weeks for people to be able to put their views to KCC.

The meeting will be recorded because it is a public consultation and all comments will be taken into account by our elective members when the decision is made about the school and it is important that views and comments are on record.

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a three form of entry Community Primary School
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

Background & Proposal

A short presentation outlining the background to the proposal was given by Mr Nehra.

Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School have been federated since 2011. The two schools are on the same site and currently share a Governing Body and an Executive Headteacher. The Governing Body of Loose Schools' Federation and Kent County Council are jointly proposing to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to form a single, 3 form entry community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years. The Governing Body of The Loose Schools' Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils.

The key features of previous successful amalgamations have been:

- strong leadership and governance;
- promotion of high educational standards;
- high quality, good teaching as a minimum;
- consistency of approach to learning policies, curriculum planning and behaviour management;

- stability of staffing and improved staffing structures and opportunities for staff development;
- improved use of facilities – specialist teaching spaces, reception areas, outdoor area.

This proposal is in line with the Kent County Council policy as set out in the Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018, which states:

“when the opportunity arises, the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school; or federation of the schools.”

To amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a single, 3 form of entry community primary school. This proposal would be achieved by discontinuing Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establishing a new community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years on the existing site. The new primary school will be able to use the existing buildings more effectively as a single school. The primary school would admit up to 90 pupils into the reception year each September, as the infant school does now, and the new school would have a total of 630 places.

Admission Arrangements: Kent County Council will be the admission authority for the primary school and will set the admission arrangements, as it does for the existing schools. This proposal does not include any changes to the number of pupils admitted across the 4-11 age range or the current class structure of the school. Mr Nehra added that there will be no change to the total number of pupils on roll. A new Instrument of Government would be established to secure effective governance arrangements for the new school. A separate consultation will be held with staff about the proposal.

It is proposed that both Schools would close on 31 August 2014 and the new primary school would open on the existing sites on 1 September 2014. The amalgamation would not result in changes to the admission arrangements at reception. Year 2 children would automatically move into year 3 in the primary school.

Mr Nehra reiterated the need for people to send their comments in by the 26th February 2014 and that in May/June the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, Roger Gough, will consider all responses made and decide whether to go ahead. Subject to agreement, the Schools Adjudicator will be asked to make the final decision in June/July.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Mrs Hardy

The Governing Body initiated the process with the Local Authority because they felt that it was the right next step forward for the two schools. At the time when we were seeking a new head of the Infant School we also looked at moving the two schools together to work collaboratively. That has worked well and since 2011 we have moved along with having staff working across both schools as curriculum leaders as well as joint initiatives and management. We currently have two separate budgets and two of everything and that incurs a lot of time for governors and management to manage. The amalgamation would allow us to put the two schools together and work as a whole and have a workforce that work for the through-primary school. Parents whose children are currently in the Infant School will no longer have to apply for a Year 3 place; we will be one school sharing one site. The Governing Body feel that this is a positive move for the school and tonight’s forum is for you to voice any questions and ideas that you may have about the proposal and for us to hear those views. We do recommend the

proposal to you and are happy to answer any questions or concerns that that you may have.

Statement from the Executive Head teacher, Mrs Pye

Thank you everyone for coming. I fully support the view of the Governing Body that the amalgamation is very much the next step to get schools working totally together. The school works well now but the two schools will work even better as one. This is a very exciting next step for the schools and I thoroughly recommend it. I am happy to answer any questions anyone might have.

Question	Response
<p>Parent How will the management structure change in terms of headship across the school and what will be the cost involved. Will there be a new head and will the job change?</p>	<p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors If there are changes to the management structure it is not necessarily to do with the amalgamation. Mrs Pye is retiring after many years and this gives the Governing Body the opportunity to look at the structure and we have started that process. I have met with the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the Local Authority and a further meeting with Schools Personnel is planned for next week. There will be no changes to the classrooms or teaching because pupil numbers will remain the same and I can assure you that no teachers will have to re-apply for their job, they will automatically be transferred across and become part of the new amalgamated school, subject to approval. There will be changes to the management structure and I would like to assure parents and staff that they will have sight of that structure. We will be looking to get the advertisement for a new Headteacher out in the next couple of weeks and will be looking to recruit a quality leader for our new primary school to take the school forward in the way we would want. The Local Authority will be part of the recruit process supporting us in finding the right person.</p>
<p>Teacher & Parent How does the amalgamation affect the school budget? Currently we have two schools with two budgets, what happens if two become one?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer Currently the two schools each have a delegated budget which is separate from the Local Authority budget. Under the Federated model there can be a pooling of resources. It is at the discretion of the Governing Body how much funding to pool, but each school retains a delegated budget, which is separate to the County Council's budgets. Each school with a DfE number attracts 'lump sum' funding. If two schools become one then one of the lump sum funds would cease. Therefore the new primary would receive one lump sum. The Finance Regulations for 2014 allow for a level of protection to apply. Because of the difference between the financial and academic year it is calculated: 7 months at 100% then 12 months at 85% of the two lump sums. At the end of the 19 month period one lump sum would cease as set out in the National Funding Regulations. That time allow for the new school to consider its structure</p>

	<p>and to become one school.</p> <p>Mrs Pye – Executive Head Teacher There will be potential savings made by moving from two separate schools to one school such as service packages, something that currently costs a considerable amount of money. This would be something that the new Headteacher would look at and also how to use the budget most economically.</p>
<p>Teacher When the school closes do we get a new governing body and if so how does that work?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer Yes, there would be. There would be a new Instrument of Government. What that means is that there is a re-constitution of the Body but that does not mean to say it would be a totally new governing body. There is a requirement under the new governance Regulations that a new governing body is based on skill sets rather than on roles. The current Governing Body will continue to the point of its dissolution. It may be the case that there are two governing bodies for a short time. The aim of the new governing body will be to effectively drive the school forward including the proposal, if it succeeds.</p>
<p>Teacher Does the six week notice allow for someone who is not associated with the school but who lives in Loose to have the opportunity to make a comment within that period?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer The statutory process requires that for changes such as this, a Public Notice is published in local newspapers. The Public Notice is sets out in statue, to allow full representation from the community to that consultation. Any member of the public in the community has the right to express their views on the proposal.</p>
<p>Parent Is there any possibility that the amalgamation will not go ahead and if so what would happen?</p>	<p>Mr Shovelton There is always a possibility that a decision will not go ahead.</p> <p>Mr Nehra, WK AEO No decision will be taken until the end of the consultation period. The Schools Adjudicator takes the final decision. In terms of the closure of the two schools and establishing a new school, yes there is a chance it may not precede. If it did not go ahead the schools would continue in their existing forms.</p>
<p>Junior Staff Member Can someone who is not connected to the school have option to make a comment?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra, Area Education Officer Yes, anyone can make a comment, this is a public meeting.</p> <p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors I hope that parents will give the proposal serious consideration and feel able to support the direction that the governing body in taking the school. If you do have a concern and want to raise this in a less public forum then please contact the governing body or Headteacher independently to talk through your concerns or questions. The Governing Body hope that people will support the</p>

<p>Parent What are your plans to make better use of the outside facilities and how will that work?</p>	<p>direction that we would like to take the schools in.</p> <p>Mrs Hardy, Chair of Governors There are no plans to do anything with the land. We will be keeping the swimming pool and the Governing body will ask parents and children about the sort of things they would like to see i.e. playground equipment, Astro Turf. We feel that the amalgamation will give us the opportunity to do things on a wider scale and give the new headteacher the opportunity to look and plan for such developments.</p>
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Mr Nehra read back through the time line reminding people that the deadline for returning response forms is the 26th February should they wish to make any further comments.

Mr Shovelton thanked everyone for attending and hoped that the evening had been helpful and informative. Thanks were given to Mrs Pye and Mrs Hardy for hosting the two events and Mr Nehra for his contribution.

The meeting was attended by approximately 27 people.

Meeting closed at 7.40pm

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough,
Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

DECISION NO:

For publication

**Subject: Amalgamation of Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School, Maidstone:
Proposal to discontinue Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and
establish a single, three form of entry community primary school.**

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform I agree to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School and establish a single, three form of entry community primary school by September 2014.

And, subject to no objections being received to the public notice

- (ii) Make recommendation to the Schools Adjudicator for determination for implementation by September 2014.

Should objections, not already considered by the cabinet member when taking this decision, be received during the notice period a separate decision will be required in order to continue the proposal and amalgamate the schools to allow for proper consideration of the points raised.

Reason(s) for decision:

- 1.1 Kent County Council, with the support of the Loose Schools' Federation Governing Body, are proposing to amalgamate Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School to become a three form entry, single community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years.
- 1.2 Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School are two separate schools serving the Loose Ward of Maidstone. Both schools are popular community schools. Currently Loose Infant School has 270 pupils on roll and the Loose Junior School has 368 pupils on roll.
- 1.3 Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School have been federated since 2011 and share a Governing Body and an Executive Headteacher. The schools occupy the same site with a single vehicular entrance point and both schools have pedestrian entrances.
- 1.4 Loose Junior School was judged as good by Ofsted on 9 June 2011.
- 1.5 Loose Infant School was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2013. The subsequent monitoring assessment conducted by Ofsted on 8 November 2013 confirmed that decisive action had been taken to ensure that the school will progress rapidly to an Ofsted judgment of good. However, the report recognised the need for a more effective model of leadership to underpin the necessary improvements at the school.
- 1.6 The Governing Body of The Loose Schools' Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils. The Kent Commissioning

Plan's recommendation for linked Junior and Infant schools is "when the opportunity arises the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school or federation of the schools."

1.7 The Executive Headteacher notified the Governing Body of her intention to retire by the end of the academic year. Due to this change, the Governors believe that there is an opportunity to review the leadership and governance arrangements.

Financial Implications:

Capital

The proposals can be implemented without the need for significant capital expenditure as the new primary school could operate as an all-through school on the existing Infant and Junior school sites.

Revenue

As a result of an amalgamation the two predecessor schools will become one school and consequently this would result in the removal of one of the lump sum funding allocations (£120,000). The amalgamated school would continue to be funded at 100% of the two lump sums for the remainder of the 2014/15 financial year from September 2014 to March 2015. The School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013 provide funding protection for amalgamating schools for the first academic year. Therefore, it is proposed that protection will be provided on the lump sums at 85% from April 2015 to March 2016. ($2 \times £120,000 \times 85\% = £204,000$). From April 2016 the amalgamated primary school would receive one lump sum, currently £120,000.

Human

It is proposed that all teachers and support staff employed at Loose Infant School and Loose Junior School (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) will transfer to the primary school.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

14 March 2014

To be added after Committee meeting

The Local Member:

Eric Hotson the local member for Maidstone Rural South is fully supportive of the proposal.

Any alternatives considered:

The Governing Body of The Loose Schools' Federation view this proposal as a natural progression, which will further secure benefits for staff and pupils. The Kent Commissioning Plan's recommendation for linked Junior and Infant schools is "when the opportunity arises the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school or federation of the schools."

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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Signed

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Date