

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

To: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 March 2014

Subject: Amalgamation of Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone: Proposal to discontinue the Junior School and enlarge and change the age range of the Infant School to cater for the whole primary age range.

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – as necessary

Electoral Division: Maidstone Rural North, Paul Carter

Summary: This report sets out the results of the public consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone by discontinuing the Junior School and enlarging and changing the age range of the Infant School to cater for the whole primary age range.

Recommendation(s): The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposals and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to; discontinue Madginford Park Junior School; and enlarge and change the age range of Madginford Park Infant School, to become a single all-through primary school.

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.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School are two separate community schools serving the Bearsted Ward of Maidstone. Madginford Park Infant School is currently judged by Ofsted as Outstanding.
- 1.2 On 24 September the Headteacher of Madginford Park Junior School tendered his resignation. The Junior School was subsequently inspected by Ofsted on 11 October 2013 and was found to require Special Measures.
- 1.3 Madginford Park Junior School held an Extra-Ordinary Full Governing Body Meeting on 22 October 2013 and a new Chair of Governors was elected.
- 1.4 The Governing Bodies of the Infant and Junior Schools supported the decision to appoint the Headteacher of Madginford Park Infant School as Interim Executive Headteacher of Madginford Park Junior School which took effect from 4 November 2013.

- 1.5 The Governing Bodies of Madginford Park Infant and Madginford Park Junior independently recommended to the Local Authority that the most appropriate solution to securing and maintaining outstanding education provision for both infant and junior age ranges at Madginford is to have a single all-through primary school.
- 1.6 The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 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.*”
- 1.7 Following receipt of letters of support from the Governing Bodies of both schools, the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agreed to proceed to public consultation on these proposals.
- 1.8 This report sets out the results of the public consultation, which took place between 13 January 2014 and 28 February 2014. Public meetings were held at Madginford Park Junior School on 23 January 2014 and Madginford Park Infant School on 5 February 2014.

2. Background

- 2.1 Madginford Park Infant and Madginford Park Junior are popular schools. According to the January 2013 census, Madginford Park Infant School has 269 pupils on roll and the Madginford Park Junior School has 383 pupils on roll.
- 2.2 Madginford Park Infant School is an outstanding school. Following the inspection which took place on 10 June 2008 Ofsted reported that:

‘This is an outstanding school in every way. As the headteacher has said, it is a place ‘where small children have big experiences’ and where the school motto of ‘be the best you can be’ is fulfilled by pupils on a daily basis. From broadly average attainment when they come into the Reception classes, pupils of all abilities make outstanding progress through the school. They reach standards far above national averages by the time they reach the end of Year 2.’
- 2.4 The subsequent interim assessment conducted by Ofsted on 7 January 2011 confirmed that the performance of the infant school had been sustained.
- 2.5 On 11 October 2013, Ofsted found that, since the previous inspection, Madginford Park Junior School had not demonstrated significant progress. It was identified that children are not well enough prepared for secondary school because leaders and managers have not been sufficiently focussed on getting key aspects of teaching sharp, so they have a positive impact on progress. Ofsted also recognised that, historically, the school had not engaged with the Local Authority and that recent engagement since the summer of 2013 had not had sufficient time to impact on pupil progress.

Site Issues

- 2.6 The two schools were built to serve the Madginford Estate in Bearsted, Maidstone. The schools occupy adjacent sites. There are two separate vehicular entrance points and both schools have separate pedestrian entrances.

- 2.7 The general state of the two school buildings is adequate.
- 2.8 There are several outside play areas and green spaces which the schools use for sports and environmental and science studies.

3. Financial Implications

- a. Capital
- i. The amalgamation can be implemented without the need for significant capital expenditure, as the expanded Madginford Park Infant School would operate as an all-through school on the existing Infant and Junior School sites.
- b. Revenue
- i. As a result of an amalgamation, the two predecessor schools would 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
- i. It is proposed that all teachers and support staff employed at Madginford Park Infant School (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) will automatically continue their employment in the primary school.
- ii. Pupil forecasts indicate that the primary school will require as many class bases as there are currently in the Infant and Junior schools combined. It is proposed that all teachers and support staff employed at Madinford Park 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 for Education Provision 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 concerning Madginford Park Junior School

- 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 Alterations and Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations until they have been implemented.
- 4.4 The legal process for the discontinuance of a school is under 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.
- 4.5 Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 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.

Legal Implications concerning Madginford Park Infant School

- 4.8 The legal process for the alteration of a school is under sections 18 to 24 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 and Regulations 4 to 6 and Schedules 2 to 5 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007.
- 4.9 The procedure for varying the name of a school is governed by section 20 of the Education Act 2002 and Regulations 26 to 31 of the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2012. This essentially prescribes the procedure for amending the Instrument of Government in which the name of the school must appear.
- 4.10 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. Under section 10 of the EIA 2006 the Schools Adjudicator is the decision maker for statutory proposals.

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 91 written responses were received with; 89 respondents supporting the proposal and 2 respondents objecting to the proposal. A summary of the comments is provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.3 Two public meetings were held during the consultation period, Thursday, 23 January 2014 at Madginford Park Junior School and Wednesday, 5 February 2014 at Madginford Park Infant School. Both meetings were attended by parents, governors, staff and interested parties, with approximately 50 people at the Junior School meeting and 150 at the Infant School meeting. A summary of the views and comments given at each public consultation meeting is attached at Appendices 2 and 3.

6. Views

Views of the Governing Bodies

- 6.1 The Governing Body of Madginford Park Junior School support the move to amalgamate the two schools to promote high standards of education and extend continuity for pupils within the Madginford community.
- 6.2 The Governing Body of Madginford Park Infant School support the Junior School proposal to amalgamate the two schools and become a through Primary school. The Governors believe this provides the best opportunities for children, families and the local community to raise standards, develop leadership and offer wider opportunities in a challenging and exciting curriculum.

Views of the Local Member

- 6.2 Having been informed of the proposal, Paul Carter, the Local Member for Maidstone Rural North has commented as follows:
“When the opportunity to link an infant and junior school has arisen, I have always supported the direction of travel towards amalgamation. The Infant School has a very positive track record and its knowledge and expertise could support improvement at the Junior School. Amalgamation therefore looks like it could be a good solution.”

Views of the School Council

- 6.3 The proposed changes to Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School were discussed with the School Council on 28 February 2014. A formal record of the meeting is attached at Appendix 4. The children were very positive about the changes that have happened so far and the proposed amalgamation. A summary of pupil opinions is attached at Appendix 5.

Views of the Pupils

- 6.4 A 'hands up' survey was carried out in classes, and individual 'random' children representing all groups were consulted on this process. The results were that 82% children were in favour of the two schools linking together, 6% not in favour and 12% did not know or were not sure. Ten children were asked their views from all vulnerable groups across the school. Children in all groups demonstrated a majority in favour of amalgamation (average overall 67%) with girls most in favour of those asked.

Views of the Principal Primary Adviser for Kent

- 6.3 The Principal Primary Adviser for Kent believes the best approach to secure improved standards for the pupils of Madginford Junior School is to proceed at pace in order to provide an all-through primary school. 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.

Views of the Area Education Officer

- 6.4 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 Madginford Park 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 Bodies of Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School independently support the proposal to establish a single, three form of entry primary school by closing the Junior School and enlarging and changing the character of the Infant School by changing the upper age limit from 7 to 11 years to enable it to become a 630 place community primary school. This proposal is aligned to the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision and Bold Steps for Education.

9. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s): The Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse the proposals and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform on the decision to:

- (i) Issue a public notice to discontinue Madginford Park Junior School; and enlarge and change the age range of Madginford Park Infant School, to become a single all through primary school.

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.

10. Background Documents

10.1 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

10.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

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

10.3 Education Cabinet Committee report – 27 September 2013 – Commissioning Plan for Education 2013 - 2018

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=746&MIId=5033&Ver=4>

11. Contact details

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Proposed amalgamation of Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone.

Summary of written responses

Consultation documents (hard copies) distributed: 1000
Responses received: 91

	Support	Against	Undecided	Total
Parents/Carers	85	1	0	86
Governors	1	0	0	1
Members of Staff	1	0	0	1
Other Interested Parties	2	1	0	3
Total	89	2	0	91

In support of the proposal

Parents/carers

- It would be beneficial for the two schools to amalgamate.
- Looking forward to all the positives that the merger will bring, most importantly the progress of the school and the children.
- The circumstances of this proposal are unfortunate but it makes absolute sense for the Infant and Junior schools to merge.
- Brilliant idea, this proposal can only be good for our children's education.
- This is a very positive idea and move for both schools. The children would benefit from some good external pastoral care.
- It is hoped that the teachers will be given lots of support during all these changes. Things feel more positive already and the amalgamation will only be a good thing.
- Fully supportive of the proposal however, recommend a complete overhaul of governors as they have played a big part of the failure of the Junior school.
- This proposal makes absolute sense, they virtually occupy the same site and the PTFA are made up of parents of children from both schools. The schools are prominent in the local community and should remain community 'property'.
- Agree with the proposal, very pleased with the quality and level of teaching at the Infants and appalled by standards at the Junior School, the environment is much less child friendly. Standards at Infant School should be applied to the Junior School.
- The Junior school has been a great school in the past and under the right leadership could be great again.
- Where things in the past between the two schools may not have been in tandem, the continuation of quality of education and pastoral care would be smoother if the schools were merged.

- A positive move for the schools. However, children should be offered external pastoral care as lots of them are feeling insecure and confused about what is going on.
- Proposed amalgamation is definitely the best option. Very disappointed and frustrated to hear Mrs Guthrie leaving, especially after hearing her assurances at the meetings. Parents should have been told about her intention to leave prior to the meetings, surely she would have known before.
- Completely support the proposal and believe KCC do have the best interests of the children at heart.
- Agree with the proposal even though school would lose lump sum amount of funding savings could be achieved for example liability insurance, one policy instead of two etc.
- Agree with the proposal, if Junior is Academy it would be detrimental to the school and how the two schools would interact on the single grounds.
- Agree with the proposal, these schools enjoy consecutive generations of pupils. This proposal creates an opportunity to create an outstanding educational establishment.
- Madginford Park Junior School becoming an Academy would have a detrimental effect on this area, which a lot of people choose because of the schools. It would be more appealing to prospective parents as one primary school rather than Madginford Park Infant School (Years R,1 & 2) with an uncertain link to Madginford Park Academy (Years 3,4,5 and 6).

Other interested parties

- Agree with the proposal to amalgamate, however governors of the Junior School not trusted to run the new school.
- Teachers in Junior school should be trained in order to reach a good standard. If this does not happen would like reassurance, teachers will be asked to leave, preferably before new school starts in September.

Against the proposal

Other interested Parties

- Concerns over validity of the proposal. The Infant outstanding rating was achieved more than five years ago under a different head and different chair of governors. Leadership is questionable, Acting Executive Headteacher has resigned.
- Concerns as to whether, in the long term, it is in the best interests of current and future pupils

Parent/carer

- Following resignation of Executive Head, I have no faith in the proposal. Putting a special measures school with an outstanding school would possibly result in a mediocre school.
- Concerns raised about the way the amalgamation has been handled.

**Proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and
Madginford Park Junior School**

Notes of Public Consultation Meeting 23rd January 2014

Panel	Michael Northey (Chair)	Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform
	Jared Nehra	Area Education Officer (West Kent)
	Simon Webb	Principal Primary Adviser
	Michelle Hamilton	Area Schools Organisation Officer (West Kent)
	Deborah Ledniczky	Public Meeting Recorder
	Stephanie Guthrie	Interim Executive Head Teacher
	Anne-Marie Butler	Chair of Governors – Madginford Park Junior School

Introduction

Mr Northey welcomed parents, staff and members of the public to the meeting and introduced the supporting officers and principal speakers. Mr Northey explained that the meeting will be recorded and a transcript of the meeting will be presented to the Kent County Council Education Cabinet meeting and will be considered when the local authority is looking at whether to go ahead with this proposal.

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School to become a 630 place all-through community primary school
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

Proposal

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

It is proposed to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School. The Infant School is rated outstanding by Ofsted and has a strong leadership and governance. The Junior School was inspected by Ofsted in October 2013 and found to require Special Measures. It is therefore proposed that the most effective way to secure and sustain outstanding education provision for both infant and juniors at Madginford is to have a single primary school.

To achieve this proposal would involve the expansion of Madginford Park Infant School by increasing the upper age range from 7 to 11 and the discontinuation of Madginford Park Junior School. The Infant School would also be renamed Madginford Park Primary School.

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 school would have a total of 630 places.

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. The 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. The amalgamation would not result in changes to the admission arrangements at reception and year 2 children would automatically move into year 3 in the primary school.

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 the existing Junior School would close on the 31st August 2014 and the Infant School become a renamed primary school on the existing sites on 1st September 2014.

No final decision will be taken until the consultation process has finished. The deadline for the response forms is the 28th February 2014.

Statement from the Head teacher, Mrs Guthrie

I would like to say a few words about the perspective of school, staff and children from an education point of view. We are in a climate of huge change in education and are working to make the most of this opportunity to form the most effective school going forward. Cohesive practice whether it is this school or another is a huge part of that move forward and response to political change in education. For the staff, community and children at this school that collaboration is hugely beneficial and I can see that the staff agree. Collaboration will offer us the opportunity to do things in different ways. In terms of assessment, using one cohesive system right the way through education will allow us to track the progress of a child right the way through their primary education. In terms of the way we are working with the new curriculum, it is important that the opportunities for the children are the best they can possibly be. We have a great site here and the children are very lucky to have the opportunities that that provides and this is reflective of the community we are in. We need to work for the benefit of all the children together using that facility to give them the best way forward. In terms of assessment; progress and rapid improvement are areas that we are working on.

It is important financially that the school is looked after in the best way possible which means being creative and strategic about the use of finances and using them effectively. All schools are looking at how they spend their budgets to the benefit of all the children and as money becomes tighter for all schools moving forward collaboratively will be important. We are focusing on training as two separate schools. Continuing professional development in this current financial climate is important for our teaching staff, teaching assistants and children and being able to collaborate and use the existing staff to share that practice and us with the other schools in the area together with the LA to make sure that we are to make sure we are using staff in the best way and across the key stages is important, the benefit of which can be seen straight away and for staff that wish to work together being allowed to do so. This proposal will enable the children as one community to celebrate the opportunities that will present themselves from being linked together and look closely at the achievements at different stages and celebrate those across the school, i.e. using those opportunities they may have from being an older child to taking forward learning, reflection on spirituality, the whole child experience of school in the Infant, that sharing I feel is moving forward.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Mrs Butler

It is good to know that the school has the support of parents who have been very supportive of the school and children during this difficult time for the Junior school. This proposal is partly a standards driven amalgamation with regard to the Junior school but I have to say that we are already feeling the benefits, and I know that Mrs Guthrie alluded to it in her statement, sharing of the outstanding teaching and practice that is already coming up from the Infant School, is driving things forward here and I don't believe there is a better way forward, I think it will be very beneficial for the Junior School to move forward it this way. We do share: one site, our community, our parents, our families, so in many ways it is a shame that we are separate but hopefully the proposal will be accepted and we can move forward as one.

Question	Response
<p>Parent What options are available and what were considered and then dismissed in order to proceed with this?</p> <p>Interested to hear the views of governing body on how those options were considered and how they arrived at their decision</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Alternative options: (i) stay as you are with two separate schools. The likelihood of staying as such would be that the Junior school may possibly receive an academy order and a push to convert to academy status at some point (ii) Federation of the two schools rather than full amalgamation. Governing body may have considered but felt that amalgamation was the way forward.</p> <p>Mrs Butler - Chair of Governors, Junior School We were guided on what the various options were and other options were considered. The governing body felt that the best way forward for driving standards was the full amalgamation.</p>
<p>Parent If the school became an academy what would that entail and what is the difference in becoming an academy and a federation of the two schools</p> <p>Would an academy demand more accountability from the staff and then general standards for the school?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Federation: the two schools would remain separate schools but would have one governing body but could have a shared leadership structure. Parents would still be the need to apply for a Yr 3 place and each school would be subject to separate Ofsted inspections which would not be the case under amalgamation. Academy: not a community school, not part of the LA. Funding agreement is with Education Funding Agency which is part of the Department for Education (DfE) and funding is provided directly from DfE. Academy Trust would operate the school through that agreement with the Secretary of State for Education.</p> <p>Not aware of any change in accountability. The accountability for the leadership of the school remains the same in the expectation of delivering high quality education.</p>
<p>Parent At last meeting it was alluded to that if the proposal was rejected that the school could perhaps go into consultation in terms of academy status. The consultation paper sets out clearly</p>	<p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member Agreed that others in the room would be in favour of this.</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</p>

<p>what will happen if the schools amalgamate but for those parents who have not attended either of the meetings I am not sure that there has been enough information about the consequences of rejecting the proposal. Can more information be sent out to parents so that they can fully understand the implications of Academy status/Federation so that they are able to make an educated and informed decision because if they rejected it they may think that the status quo remains the same, and as I understand it, it is not that clear cut?</p> <p>Reiterated the point made above add that a full explanation of what the implications will be if they said no is needed.</p>	<p>Mr Nehra stated that he will work with school to provide that information to send out. He explained that the proposal and consultation document focus on amalgamation rather than on any alternatives because that is the option that KCC and the Governing Bodies of both schools feel is the best way forward to secure and maintain outstanding education provision.</p> <p>Mr Northey -Deputy Cabinet Member Assured that the point will be taken on board.</p>
<p>Vicar of Bearsted Feels publicity has been very poor, he personally did not receive notification and the consultation document does not give any information about the other options. If the option is truly between the DofE forcing an academy and amalgamation then people need to know what the merger would achieve. If the school reformed in the way suggested what is the recruitment process in terms of the Executive Headteacher and implications for staff members?</p> <p>In terms of the Ofsted report being available in the public domain, I think it is very poor that it was only published on the web yesterday. Is it a question that the DofE are forcing an academy order or this solution and what is the procedure of appointing a Head teacher and staff.</p> <p>Put it to Mr Webb that what the LA are doing is avoiding an academy order by closing the Junior school and expanding the Infant school to include the Juniors.</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer The consultation has been widely publicised, it is on the Council's website, a press statement have been provided to all local media organisations and an article has appeared in the Kent Messenger.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Explained that there are only two options; academy or amalgamation. The schools would only be able to federate for a short period of time because the Junior school has gone into 'Special Measures' and if it doesn't amalgamate it will receive an academy order and the Junior School will have to become a sponsored academy absorbed by an academy chain, the majority of which are managed and led by secondary schools. The proposal is unusual in the way it is proposed because we would be closing the Junior School and enlarging the Infants to become a through primary school. This would bring the Headteacher automatically into the post and the staff in the Junior school will automatically transferred into the new school because the number of classes in the Primary school has to remain the same. The Headteacher is guaranteed the post and this was a point the governing body were clear about.</p> <p>Reiterated the points made above adding: Legally that is correct but from a professional point I feel the continuity of education from the age of 4-11 years in a single Primary School is more important because it offers continuity of: education and policy under one Headteacher and parents not having to worry about applying for a junior place. Acknowledged that the Ofsted report was not made available earlier was disappointing. As stated at the last parents evening, progress and impact meetings will be held every 6 weeks. First meeting has been held and teaching in Junior School has gone from 25% good to 50% since the inspection. Credit for that goes to the teaching</p>

	<p>staff and Mrs Guthrie in instructing, challenging and directing the school. Mrs Guthrie and the teaching staff were thanked for their efforts.</p> <p>The reason Ofsted report did not appear until yesterday is purely the accountability of Ofsted and not the Local Authority. HMI changed the supplementary guidance for Ofsted inspections from 1st January 2014 which has meant that reports that had been collated but not published have had to be quality assured again. Agreed that the report should be available to view within a three week time scale following an inspection.</p>
<p>Parent Cautiously in favour. Could the Junior school remain a Junior School if it showed progress when Ofsted next inspected rather than it becoming an academy and being given an academy order straight away? Can you clarify what all the options are?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The academy act, in law is very clear and states that if a school goes into a category or special measures that school has to become an academy. No redress, the order is made. We have received the letter from the Academies saying that they are expecting Madginford Junior to become an academy. The academies division been informed that the junior school is in consultation to close in favour of an amalgamation and they have no issues with this decision.</p>
<p>Parent (i) Feels from what has been said the decision has been made (ii) At last week's meeting we heard that the aim for the Junior school was to have the education standard up to good in at least 9-12 months. Would like to see the legal documentation that states that an academy order has to be placed on a school if they are inspected in September and judged to be good.</p>	<p>Mr Simon Webb – Principal Primary Advisor The amalgamation is not a 'fait accompli' or a 'done deal' but in order to deflect the academies division away from seeking a sponsor for the school I informed them that we were going to go through a process to consult on amalgamation and therefore to wait for the outcome of the consultation. I will try and locate the order and will put a reference through to Mrs Guthrie to put out in a letter to parents. Reiterated the process of what happens when a school goes into category. Ofsted would not re-inspect before 12 months, if amalgamation was the outcome. HMI would visit twice before they make the decision that this school is ready for inspection. The report has now been published and they would look to visit in 6 - 12 weeks, first visit would look at progress, if adequate progress has been made they would wait for 12 weeks then return to do a deep dive and if found to still be making good progress will come back again. The Junior needs to become an academy if parents don't wish to amalgamate.</p>
<p>Parent This school is KS2, Infant School is KS1. Ordinarily to turn around a KS2 school, wouldn't you be looking for someone with that experience?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Any Headteacher that is employed in the primary sector (infant, junior or early years) has been trained in the primary sector throughout. What is important is that the person has high qualifications, background of high quality education and leadership and we know with Mrs Guthrie that that is already there.</p> <p>Mrs Guthrie – Interim Executive Headteacher Prior to my infant role I was the acting</p>

	Headteacher of a primary school. Important to think about what is right for your children rather than the individual staff.
<p>Parent Very pleased to hear that Mrs Guthrie is to be the Executive Headteacher. As Headteacher looking after 630 children, how will the intimate level that Mrs Guthrie and the previous Headteacher have/have had with the children be maintained</p>	<p>Mrs Guthrie – Interim Executive Headteacher It is all about the team of teachers and leaders that you have around you. Every confidence that staff from across both schools will form an effective team. Paramount to improvement and sustaining a nurturing and supportive environment all the way through KS1 & 2. Recent experience of the whole team leads me to believe that we are capable of maintaining that relationship.</p>
<p>Parent Observation: (i) before I understood that Madginford is two schools I thought that they were one school and believe that they should be (ii) It needs to be amalgamated, only way forward, Mrs Guthrie is the exact person to do it</p>	
<p>Parent Would like to know how the final decision is taken</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Went back through the process as detailed on the power point presentation slides, confirming that because this process does require the discontinuation of Junior School and amendment of an existing school the age range, changing the age range from 7-11 it would also require a decision from the Schools Adjudicator. As Mr Northey stated, that is set out in statute and that is the statutory process that we follow.</p> <p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member Whole series of steps to be taken before any final decision is taken. This consultation which is important and, if it goes further, onto a second consultation for further opinion. The Cabinet member is always guided by the weight of opinion from all directions and the final person is the Schools Adjudicator, if it gets that far.</p>
<p>Parent Will you be giving Mrs Guthrie support? Replacing two headteachers with one headteacher could be seen as a money saving exercise for the LA. Would you be putting in place a Deputy Headteacher because it would not be fair if Ofsted were to inspect and the standard is found to have fallen.</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Assure this is not a cost saving exercise. The funding model for each school in the country is that they have a separate delegated budget. It is not part of KCC's budget so there is no saving to the LA. Schools have their own delegated budget, that is the responsibility of the school's headteacher and governing body.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser LA will continue to support Mrs Guthrie and her staff. If the two schools amalgamate it will become a new school and will have an Ofsted inspection within the first year. Whatever the Executive Head and her staff needs for the children and staff of the new school, the LA will support and bring in those resources as necessary. LA will support the Junior if it doesn't amalgamate until it becomes an academy. If it amalgamates then the high support</p>

<p>Am I correct in thinking that if the two schools join probably the Infant school will not be inspected before September, it will become a Primary School and the new school will be inspected within a year?</p> <p>If the two schools amalgamate Mrs Guthrie will be taking over the whole school and will be under so much more pressure, maintaining the standard of the Infant school whilst raising the standard of the Junior school to that of the Infants. Can you guarantee that the standards in the new Primary School will not have fallen when Ofsted inspect and that you will support Mrs Guthrie and her staff with the support they need long term as she will feel that she has let both schools down?</p>	<p>in the Juniors will continue and support for the infant will be provided, if necessary, despite it being outstanding.</p> <p>The Infant School could have an inspection at any time if it remains separate from the Junior. If amalgamated Ofsted allow the new school a period of time to settle. Although you will have the same headteacher and staff there will be a new management structure. In addition to the support we will put in we will work alongside Mrs Guthrie to examine what the structure will look like and that is where the difference in the wages paid will go. Mrs Guthrie will make recommendations about how the money is to be spent to the Governing Body i.e. Deputy Heads, middle management.</p> <p>I guarantee that my team will continue at a high level of support in whatever school remains on this site. I cannot guarantee what the Ofsted judgement will be but through working with the governors and senior staff challenge the processes, look at the quality of teaching and learning, pay for external reviews to be undertaken by HMI in either Junior, Infant or through Primary School to ensure that the school is going in the right direction. This will give the headteacher and governors indicators of how well the developments have embedded in the school. I can be extremely confident that as long as the good teachers remain and are happy to be developed into outstanding teachers when the school is next inspected it will be judged to be at least good.</p>
<p>Parent & Governor Looking at the time scales we could be into the summer holidays and still not know the outcome. Schools Adjudicator for the final decision could be the end of July. Will parents be told of the final decision before the school breaks for the summer holidays?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer We would hope so. There are expected time scales by which the schools adjudicator would respond but we would need to wait for that. We can work with the school to ensure that that information is sent out to parents, if this is during the summer holidays then we can look at the most appropriate way of getting that information out to parents, i.e. parent mail</p> <p>Mr Northey- Deputy Cabinet Member The Cabinet Member would have made his decision sometime in May or June.</p>
<p>Parent My concern is about the way this is communicated externally to different stake holders and children and how people perceive what is written by the press. The children are very proud of their junior school and the parents are supportive of the teaching staff but they are starting to realise there are issues and challenges. I am sure the school</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer I am sure that the issue will be handled sensitively in the school. In terms of the wider stakeholders and community the consultation document has to refer to the legal terminology and worded as it appears because that is the legal definition and if we didn't consult on that basis the consultation might be null and void. As far as I can recall, the</p>

<p>will handle it sensitively but I am concerned about how it is handled in press releases etc. Is there any chance the press release can talk about the amalgamation of 'a' school rather than talking about 'a school closure or discontinuation'? The consultation document refers to closure of the Junior School. I am concerned that confidence and identity of the children, especially the junior school children, could be destroyed by the nature in which it is reported. Don't want the children to feel that their school has been a failure.</p>	<p>press statement we put out did not refer to discontinuation or closure. The key part of the consultation is bringing together the two schools which we feel is the most appropriate option and hope that this will be the view of the wider community.</p>
<p>Parent & governor of Junior School If it goes down the academy route what happens about the teachers and headteacher and also what will KCC's involvement be in improving the school? Do we not get a chance to hear if it was run by an academy how they will help the school improve? We have not been told what the worst case scenario will be</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Do not consider there is a worst case scenario because the education for the children will continue regardless. If the amalgamation proposal does not go ahead then the LA will continue to support this school until it becomes an academy. We work with the Academies Division to help them decide who the best academy chain would be. The LA will work with all the staff in this school up to the point that it becomes an academy. The academy is not an LA school; they are maintained by the academy chain and accountable to the DfE directly. Some of the academy chains do buy in our services. I am very interested in the education for all primary school children in Kent and we would work as closely as possible with the academy chain for the education of the children in the Junior school. If the Junior school becomes an academy, Mrs Guthrie would return to the Infant school and continue as the headteacher and the academy chain would appoint a headteacher into this school.</p>
<p>Parent If Ofsted were to come in and audit the Infant School and find an issue because the criteria has changed so much and they de-graded it would that affect this process?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I cannot guarantee that the Infant School would remain outstanding because there are variables around an Ofsted inspection and what their outcome will be. We have worked with Mrs Guthrie and have carried out our own risk assessments to ensure that the structure in that school is secure for the days that Mrs Guthrie is in the Junior School. We are confident and hopeful that if it were inspected that it would be judged at least good but I do not know when they may choose to visit. There is no reason why the Infant School would not reflect how good it currently is. This would not affect the current process because we are into the consultation.</p>
<p>Parent If it did become an academy or merge and then went into special measures in a couple of years' time what would happen?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If amalgamated, unlikely it would go into category because my team would continue to support up until the next inspection. Support and external review prior to a formal inspection would almost guarantee that the Primary school would be judged as good when inspected. If after 4 years we would still carry on supporting</p>

<p>At the meeting you spoke about what would happen if we had a new Headteacher and it went into special measures and you not being allowed to go into the school to support unless you had evidence against them</p>	<p>the school and review with Headteacher and staff with all expectation of going from good to good or outstanding and cannot see the school going backwards</p> <p>If Mrs Guthrie chose to leave and work elsewhere we would appoint a new Headteacher. As this school is important to me, as are others, I would offer services to governors to be appointing officer with them for the headteacher. I would ask very clear questions about how they would wish to work with the LA. If the school was in decline I would not allow future Headteachers to turn us away, that I can guarantee. We have changed our protocols</p>
<p>Parent How have your protocols changed because obviously the previous Head was allowed to turn you away, how would that change in the future?</p> <p>Does that mean all schools will not go into Special Measures?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser We use the law. Any school in Kent who chooses not to engage with the LA will be issued with a pre-warning notice. Agreement with Cabinet Member and the Corporate Director have empowered officers to ensure that we have access to all LA schools and if we have a school that is of concern we will raise them through the usual route. If that is blocked we will issue them with a pre-warning notice that will allow them 30 days to respond to our concerns. If they ignore that we could remove the Governing Body. Hopefully that will not happen. What we are very clear with schools that we will work with Governors to ensure that high standards are delivered. Do not think the LA is a soft option. If we need to move swiftly into a school because we are concerned about the leadership and management or quality of education we will now do so.</p> <p>No, I cannot guarantee that a school will not go into special measures. The biggest factor in an Ofsted inspection is the quality of teaching and I cannot guarantee that on the day of the inspection the teachers will all deliver good or outstanding lessons. I can assure you the procedure is there and we are ready to use wherever on behalf of the LA.</p> <p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member KCC will do everything in KCC's power to do its own role but as you say it is up to the headteacher and teachers on the day</p>
<p>Parent Feel that it is essential that we get the management structure right. When it was one Headteacher all the staff knew all the children and I think under the new structure that will sadly be lost. How will the new Governing body be appointed if the schools merge? As parents we were unaware that some of the governing body appear not to have been working in the best</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Mr Webb has already responded to the first of your concerns. In terms of governing body, I refer to the reference to Instrument of Government in the presentation slides, but will provide some further clarification on that. This is the legal document though which the constitution of the governing body is held and is recorded against the name of the school. The Governance Team within KCC</p>

<p>interest of our children.</p> <p>So the LA will be appointing the new governing body?</p> <p>How will the new governing body be formed because if the proposal goes ahead you want that in place for the new term</p> <p>Will that be chosen by the LA?</p>	<p>will be advising and assisting the school in doing that. A skills audit will be done to ensure that the governing body for the new Primary will have the necessary skill set to be an effective governing body.</p> <p>They will support that process.</p> <p>The LA will support and yes, it will need to be in place for the new term. It may draw from both the governing bodies or select new members.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If the Junior School closes the governing body dissolves however, we would not want to lose highly skilled people from the Juniors and as Mr Nehra said, we will carry out a full skills audit of both governing bodies and work with both to secure the new governing body. The LA will only appoint LA governors. The governing body itself will appoint community governors and the parental body. Parents are normally in the majority so please put your names forward.</p>
<p>Parent Ofsted inspection identified poor teaching. Rather than slotting those teachers into new post would it not be better to get rid of those teachers as that would improve standards and bring new teachers in. Is it going to work just re-training the same people?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Reiterated the results of the review adding that the pressure that Headteacher is under as Executive Headteacher is the same as any other headteacher in the LA. If you have a teacher or teachers that require improvement we want to be told if those teachers are not making progress, because if they can't or won't because there is an exit strategy that will be used if necessary. However, the outcome of review today is that that is not necessary here today, at the moment.</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer Proposal does not include any changes to staffing. Anticipated all teaching and support staff will transfer to the new Primary School and remain in the LA's employment</p>
<p>Vicar of Bearsted When will junior parents get the opportunity to elect representatives to the Governing Body? When will there be an election of Parent Governors which the parents of the junior section will be able to participate? I was intrigued to hear that if the Headteacher denies access to the LA you sack the governing body. St Michaels Infant & Junior schools who were in a similar situation to this Federated with the Infant Headteacher becoming Headteacher of both schools. On each inspection the Junior went up a category. There hasn't been an inspection of Infant school since the Federation so I don't know</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If the two schools amalgamate the new school comes into being as of 1st September 2014, elections can take place from the 1st September 2014</p> <p>In answer to comment re sacking the governing body - in extreme circumstances where we need to go into the school and the headteacher is resistant it normally mean that the governing body, who are the employers of school and staff, are resistant as well. We issue them with a pre-warning notice stating the identified issues and we that we would like you to come back to us in 30 days with a detailed plan or how you plan to rectify the situation. If nothing comes back then the</p>

<p>if it has had a negative on the Infant but in terms of the Junior it has been entirely successful</p> <p>There will be elections for parents in the Autumn term?</p>	<p>Governing Body, who is accountable, choose not to respond then the LA are in the position to remove them in 30.</p> <p>Yes.</p>
<p>Parent Exit strategy for teachers; has it loosened up to allow the Headteacher to have more power to remove teachers?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Employment law states teachers will go into capability procedures and as the school is in Special Measures, instead of taking six weeks the shortest time is one month. I would look to give the teaching staff the opportunity to improve. However, if they don't want to or can't I would have no issue with using the exit strategy rather than the teacher being in the school going through the capability procedure. We would use a compromise agreement as the exit strategy to remove the teacher swiftly. It is the quality of teaching in class rooms that ensures good education for children. Can't leave failing teachers in class room too long.</p>
<p>Parent At our last meeting you said only the previous Headteacher, and Chair of Governors knew there was a problem because they had both received a letter and that information had not been shared with the other governors. In future will the new protocol mean that each governor will be informed of any problems?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser We are now informing the Clerk of the Governing Body who will inform each governor. The letter would request for the AEO, I or one of my colleague to insist an immediate meeting with the Governing Body to talk the issues through.</p>
<p>Parent & Infant Governor (i) Do not feel happy that at the 1st September 2014 we will be a school without a governorship because we will not know who the Chair of Governors is or who are the parent governors. There is a lot of responsibility being placed on us.</p> <p>(ii) 50% teachers have the standard of still requiring improvement that means that there are 50% staff who are not teaching good high quality lessons. I think that is quite a high figure. How long you are happy for staff not reaching a least satisfactory?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The Junior Governing Body would be dissolved, but the Infant Governing Body would still be in place. Between May to July if the Cabinet Member agrees the proposal and is referred to the adjudicator we will get on with the process of putting in place a 'shadow governing body' that will work with both schools until the amalgamated school comes through. Can give names of schools where this practice has worked. By second week of September the new governing body will be formed and the structure in place. Need parent governors for the governing body. If more come forward than needed then an election will be held.</p> <p>At point of inspection 25% of teaching was judged inadequate. We now have 50% good, 50% technically RI +. By March/beginning April expect that figure to be 75% good or outstanding and by May/June expect 100% to be nearing good</p>
<p>Parent Schools Adjudicator, in your experience do they just rubber stamp the decision by the Cabinet or do they refuse it and on what basis would they refuse it?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Decision by Cabinet Member is only referred to the Schools Adjudicator if there is a statutory objection. Statutory objection can only come from the churches or the Education Funding Agency. This</p>

<p>Just to clarify because everyone would have gone away thinking that they will not know until it has gone to the school adjudicator but we are now being told that there is a 98% chance it won't go to the adjudicator. The slide states that the proposal is referred to the schools adjudicator for a decision; if that is not the case we should have been told.</p>	<p>is not a church school so the churches are unlikely to put an objection forward and I have never known the Education Funding Agency to object. It is unlikely that there would be a referral to schools adjudicator although it is possible. Chances are 2%. I have only known two cases being referred and these were on complete school closures</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer I appreciate that you would like further clarity on this point and I will ensure that the information is included in the letter to be sent out to parents.</p> <p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member Apologised for any misunderstanding and that this point will be clarified in the information that is to be sent out to parents.</p>
<p>Parent If the amalgamation happens and it becomes a Primary School the support from the LA would this have to be funded with the approval of the Governing Body.</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The LA will fund the on-going support. Money that the school governors receive is broadly determined by the number of pupils in the school and that pays for everything i.e. the running of the school, teachers, curriculum monies and everything else.</p>

Mr Nehra read out the timescales for the consultation process as detailed on the presentation and reiterated that the closing date of the process is 28th February 2014 and asked everyone to send in their views in the various routes as detailed in the consultation paper. Any comments made this evening or at the second public consultation evening to be held in the Infant School, will also be recorded and bought back to the Education Cabinet Committee (ECC), so please have responses back to us by the closing date of Friday 28th February. Following that the report will go to the ECC on the 14th March 2014. No decisions will be taken until the conclusion of that consultation process.

Mr Northey thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for the questions that had been asked and invited people to join the Public Consultation at the Infant School on the February 2014.

The meeting closed at approximately 21.00hrs

Approximately 55 people attended the meeting.

**Proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and
Madginford Park Junior School**

Notes of Public Consultation Meeting 5th February 2014

Panel	Michael Northey (Chair)	Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform
	Jared Nehra	Area Education Officer (West Kent)
	Simon Webb	Principal Primary Adviser
	Michelle Hamilton	Area Schools Organisation Officer (West Kent)
	Deborah Ledniczky	Public Meeting Recorder
	Stephanie Guthrie	Interim Executive Headteacher
	Toby Butler	Chair of Governors - Madginford Park Infant School

Introduction

Mr Northey welcomed parents, staff and members of the public to the meeting and introduced the supporting officers and principal speakers. Mr Northey explained that the meeting will be recorded and a transcript of the meeting will be presented to the Kent County Council Education Cabinet meeting and will be considered when the local authority is looking at whether to go ahead with this proposal.

Purpose of the Meeting

- To explain the proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School to become a 630 place all-through community primary school
- To give members of the public an opportunity to ask questions and comment
- To listen to views and opinions

Proposal

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

It is proposed to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School. The Infant School is rated outstanding by Ofsted and has strong leadership and governance. The Junior School was inspected by Ofsted in October 2013 and found to require Special Measures.

It is proposed that the most effective way to secure and sustain outstanding education provision for both infant and juniors at Madginford is to have a single primary school.

To achieve this proposal would involve the expansion of Madginford Park Infant School by increasing the upper age range from 7 to 11 and the discontinuation of Madginford Park Junior School. The Infant School would also be renamed Madginford Park Primary School.

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 school would have a total of 630 places.

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. The 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. The amalgamation would not result in changes to the admission arrangements at reception and year 2 children would automatically move into year 3 in the primary school.

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 the existing Junior School would close on the 31st August 2014 and the Infant School become a renamed primary school on the existing sites on 1st September 2014.

No final decision will be taken until the consultation process has finished. The deadline for the response forms is the 28th February 2014. The final decision will be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for the final decision to be made, subject to the proposal having been agreed by the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform.

Statement from the Interim Executive Headteacher, Mrs Guthrie

Parents will have now had information since the last meeting about my leaving Madginford School in the summer. I would like to take this opportunity to make it clear that this decision has been taken purely for the circumstances as explained in my letter and not about this process. I will be here until the end of July and feel strongly that there are a lot of positive actions already taking place in the joining of the two schools, tracking progress of each child carefully and being able to work between the two schools. For all the children and community I feel that it is positive in terms of having one cohesive team sharing the aim to give the children an all-round education collaboratively. Shared training is benefiting both the Junior and Infant School staff as well as working with other collaborations that are taking place in other local schools. Working closely together will enable us to use the facilities of the site much more effectively to benefit all the children and enable us to get the best value for the children and staff by using our budget and resources effectively

I would like to clarify that my reason for not having sent out the newsletter before today about the staffing situation at the Infant School was to avoid any confusion about the decisions I have taken. At the moment I am working across two schools and my need to draw on the leadership of each school has increased. Acting on advice given to me from other Headteachers I took the decision to appoint Mrs Julie Wellman as Head of School for the Junior School. My Deputy, Mrs Earls, will continue to teach her reception class and have sometime out to help with the operational and smooth running of the school. I felt it was important for the children that Mrs Earls remained in the classroom rather than their having a new teacher who they do not know. I have seconded someone this week from Hunton School to work on a part-time basis until the summer in an operational capacity. I have investigated her leadership skills and also how she works with our age children. The reason behind someone else coming in to the school

is to enable us to have the best capacity possible to support every child in both schools until the summer.

Statement from the Chair of Governors, Mr Toby Butler

Following Ofsted visit to junior school the Local Authority (LA) came and spoke to the Infant School Governing Body about the three possible options for the schools going forward. The LA put the options to us openly and fully and the Governing Body had the opportunity then to go through each of the options and consider what we felt was the best option to move forward with the Junior school i.e. amalgamation, federation or academy. The Governing Body was unanimous in its decision that in the interest of the children, families involved, the shared site and resources, building on the outstanding teaching that it would be right that we were part of a solution and we then wrote to the Local Authority to formally support the proposal to amalgamate the two schools. We think this is the right decision and although there may be hard decisions to be made we think that it is the right decision and the governors are here tonight to show their support in reaching that decision.

<p>Parent We have just been told by KCC and by the Governing Body that we have just one option; that is not strictly true. Can you outline all four options that are available please?</p> <p>Mr Webb has previously stated that: he would stop the Junior School becoming an academy, has deflected the head of academies, told governors on the 22 October that KCC did not want the school to become an academy and spoken to his legal people. It is unlikely that an academy order would be pushed through because, thanks to KCC, the school has made rapid progress and Ofsted stated in their report that the school has a year to improve. I am sure you are aware of the legal precedent</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer The consultation process is to hear people's views on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools. Both Governing Bodies and KCC feel that this is the most appropriate solution to secure and maintain outstanding education for the Madginford schools. The schools' Governing Bodies did consider the route of federation. We believe that this would be a short term solution and would result in the conversion of the Junior School to academy status. The alternative is for the two schools to remain as separate schools; in that instance the Junior School is expected to be issued with an Academy Order and therefore convert to an academy. The paperwork from the Department for Education (DfE) to start that process has already been received by the Chair of Governors of the Junior School.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I did not tell the Governing Body what they should decide. On the 22 October Madginford Junior School went into Special Measures and a letter regarding an academy order was sent to the Chair of Governors of the Junior School. I have stated that I do not wish to see any Kent school become an academy that is not to say that I do not agree with them. I believe fundamentally that Kent schools should be maintained and run by the LA. When I met with the Governing Bodies from each school I outlined the options very clearly. I believe that a through primary school is more effective for the education of the children. When Ofsted visited the Junior School the Governing Body was found to be inadequate. That leaves the</p>
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that was set on the 16.1.14 and that a number of schools have successfully challenged the SoS against an Academy Order. I do not believe that a court would impose such a change on a school that was changing so quickly. Why are KCC telling us it is such a bad thing, there is far more money in an academy budget for improved staffing and facilities for our children. You have not given us enough information for us to make an informed decision. There are four options and we are being presented with one which is the cheapest for KCC and best suits your budget.

This consultation is not correct because we have not been given all the information that we need. The Junior School Governing Body was not in agreement with this proposal. Mr Webb told them that if they did not agree with what he was doing he would replace them. In a letter written from Mr Webb in 2010 he wrote stating that academies could have overall 7% more in their budget which equates to £200,000.

LA with a choice (i) we can leave it in place or (ii) remove it and put in place an Interim Executive Board (IEB) to drive school standards forward. I spoke with both Governing Bodies and my director and it was my professional opinion that it would be better for Madginford Junior School to work with the Governing Body and, if the amalgamation were to go forward, then the best from each of the Governing Bodies to combine from September. The decision has nothing to do with the schools budget. The budget for an LA school is the same as an academy. The only difference is the DfE will give the Governing Body of the academy £25,000 for the legal costs to make the transfer.

Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer

We are aware of the case that you are referring to where a Judicial Review was successfully undertaken and it was found that there was a need to consult on options. That is not an alternative, to the proposal being made. A Judicial Review is a reaction to an Academy Order having been issued.

The options are:

- (i) Federation
 - (ii) Amalgamation
 - (iii) Remain as two separate schools and wait for an Academy Order to be issued.
- The difference in this case is that KCC and the Governing Bodies of both schools have made a recommendation which is now being tested that this is the best solution. The Secretary of State has indicated that he will appeal against the Judicial Review findings, so that is likely to be tested further in the courts.

Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser

That was the statement I made in 2010 when I was Area Education Officer for North West Kent. Between 2010 and 2014 the framework for the budget from the DfE to Local Authorities for schools has changed. There is longer any financial gain in becoming an academy.

I spoke very clearly to both sets of Governing Bodies about what I considered to be the best option for the future of the schools and made it very clear with the Junior School Governing Body that they were a failed Governing Body. I left the Junior Governing Body to determine their own future. The resolutions from the chairs of both Governing Bodies were then emailed to me a few days later. The Junior School is now making good progress from the low level it was at when inspected in October.

	<p>Although we were aware that the SAT levels had been declining over the past 2 years they were still above the national average. The infant school statics show that overall 20% of Year 2 are very highly attaining children. By time they move forward and out of Year 6, I would expect there to be at least 20% of children at level 6. The Junior school is making good progress. Since January 50% of teaching is now good or outstanding and I expect the other 50% to reach good in 6 months' time. We need to make sure that when HMI visit that teaching is judged as good. The inspectors will look for sustained level of progress over a period of 12-18 months. We have put in a teaching and learning consultant, Mrs Julie Wellman and I expect the progress that has been made to continue.</p>
<p>Parent When you meet with the Governing Body you asked the Chair of Governors to resign and explained the options. You did not leave the room; the decision was made whilst you were in the room and you told them what to say in the letter that was sent to KCC. You said that if the Governors did not propose the amalgamation you would remove them. When you left the room you said that if they did not do what you wanted them to do you would have them all resign and get in a new Governing Body that would do what you want them to do. Can you confirm whether you are telling me I am lying Mr Webb?</p> <p>I was a governor on the night and was in the room. You have not answered the point about if they did not do what you wanted them to do they would resign. Are you saying that I am lying to you?</p> <p>Did you in fact tell them that if they did not do what you want them to do you would get rid of them and bring in a body that would do what you want them to do.</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I was very clear with the Governing Body that the previous Chair had to resign because he and the Headteacher of the Junior School had not shared the information about: (i) the progress of the school (ii) about the meetings that I had asked them to attend at County Hall. I did visit the Junior School Governing Body and made it very clear about their options. I also made it very clear that I considered that the best way forward for the future of the school and the education of the children was to amalgamate both schools. I was not present in that room when the decision was made. I was asked directly what the best wording would be if the Governing Body was to take that decision and yes, I gave them my professional opinion. I was not part of the decision making and did not write the letter.</p> <p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member Please do not use the word 'lying' in a public forum. To accuse someone of lying in public is not what we wish to do. It may be that there is a misunderstanding or misinterpretation but please avoid use of the word 'lying'.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The Governing Body had already been found to be wanting; their leadership and management had failed. The LA can instantly remove and put in 5 or 6 experienced governors on an IEB who are LA appointed and could make that direction. For a failed Governing Body it was my opinion that amalgamation was the best way forward for the school. I then went to the Infant Governing Body and discussed the situation. If the Infant</p>

	<p>Governing Body had chosen not to proceed to public consultation we would not be here now. I can legally tell the Junior Governing Body what is in best interest of children because the school was in Special Measures and that allows the LA greater leverage in using the law.</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer At this stage we are gathering everyone's opinions on the proposal. Of course we can discuss the past but what is important is to get people's views on the best way forward from where we are now.</p>
<p>Parent, Ex-Governor of Junior Governing Body, Vice Chair of Governors, and KCC employee Appalled that some people here tonight are fighting the case for the previous Governing Body of Madginford Park Junior School. That school went into category because of the leadership and Governing Body of that school. They hid information and did not do what was best by the children. School is now making progress and I would like to spend my evening focusing on the future. If standards had not been allowed to fall then my child, along with others, may not have failed the Kent test. We need to think about the proposal and what is best for the school and that there is enough Headteacher support for the schools.</p>	
<p>Parent (i) Concerned about consistency for children. (ii) Not enough information about amalgamation to make a decision about the best way forward specifically about the structure of the schools?</p>	<p>Mrs Guthrie – Interim Executive Headteacher (i) We are as far as possible using the current staff and leadership structure to offer the children stability. There will be a management re-structure if the two schools are to join. With me moving to a different school in the summer the infant Governing Body will need to re consider the structure regardless of this current process. In terms of information about leadership and management structure it is important that people do feel that we are being open and can see from the progress that the children are making, the right people are in place for those roles.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser (ii) Irrespective of the result of the amalgamation we need to get the advertisements published for the Headteacher/s posts utilising the best governors from each school. My recommendation to the new Governing Body will be not to touch the structure of</p>

	<p>the schools until the new Headteacher is in place. Mrs Guthrie has seconded an experienced Headteacher into KS1. If we get nearer to September and we have not been able to appoint then we will need to look at two Headteacher appointments. The LA will continue to deliver a high level of support to the Junior School irrespective of the outcome of the consultation process. If we do not recruit immediately we will bring in experienced Headteacher/s on an interim basis to maintain the progress that both schools are making.</p>
<p>Staff member Mr Webb, why did you not step in before the school went into Special Measures? This situation has to lie at the door of the LA. It has taken 8 years for the LA to become involved, why should we trust you now?</p>	<p>Mr Northey - Deputy Cabinet Member Acknowledged that the history of the situation was important but for people to think about what we are discussing now and what is the best way forward.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The accountability for the school lies with the Governing Body. The LA is responsible but not accountable. The School had been in decline but this was not a serious decline. The pupil performance statistics show that all the children were working above national averages. The LA did approach the Headteacher of the Junior School with our concerns but we were turned away. In April 2013 we undertook a leadership and management review and the outcome of that review found that there were failings across most of the Junior School. The Headteacher refused to accept findings and was invited to attend a meeting at County Hall with the Chair of Governors to explain why they were rejecting that view. They deflected that meeting three times. I then insisted that they meet with me, at which point the Headteacher resigned and I was invited to meet with the Governing Body. The LA can only intervene in any school if there is abject failure in finance and we can then take away the delegated powers and run the school ourselves. When it comes to standards we have to have substantive evidence to challenge a Governing Body. We issue the Governing Body a pre-warning notice which gives the Governing Body 30 days to answer our concerns. If the school were to be inspected now under new frame work it would not be in Special Measures because the criteria under which progress is measured has changed significantly.</p>
<p>Parent (i) Can you please clarify if the Schools Adjudicator does make the final decision</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer (i) I can confirm that the Schools Adjudicator will make the final decision. A letter has</p>

<p>and if so what implications does that have for time line? (ii) If that is the case and the decision isn't made until the summer can you clarify how many posts will be advertised</p>	<p>been sent to parents clarifying this point and I would like to apologise for any confusion that has been caused. Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser (ii) We will be talking to KCC's legal department to ensure that the adverts go out as soon as we are in a position to do so with the appropriate wording on them. It is the Governors that make the appointment of Headteacher not the LA. If the amalgamation did not take place then the LA would have the authority to intercede and make that appointment because the school is in Special Measures.</p>
<p>Parent Why was Mr Day's resignation not accepted in 2012 if the school was failing and KCC only tried to go into school once from that date?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I have no knowledge whether Mr Day resigned in 2012. Parent I am aware that when the school started to decline, Mr Day offered his resignation within a Governors meeting but they did not want him to do that which is why I am trying to encourage parents to do what is right for the children. That is why the Junior School Governors should not be in place.</p>
<p>Parent Is it possible to get a Headteacher in place in the schools and put this process back a year why they settle in? It feels that we are not being given enough time to make a decision properly. Why can we not have interim headships for a period of time? Do we have option to postpone the process? Why does it have to be done now?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser In order for the children of both schools to get the best possible education it is better to amalgamate the schools from September 2014 rather than leave it a year and for the children across both schools to have a permanent Headteacher in post rather than two temporary Headteachers. Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer If the amalgamation does not proceed we believe an Academy Order will be issued because the Chair of Governors of the Junior School has received the paperwork and the school will become an academy if we do not act now.</p>
<p>Parent The Governing Body of the Junior School has failed that school. Are you going to change those governors and if so, when because they have a very powerful role.</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If the amalgamation does not proceed the Infant School continues and an advert for a Headteacher goes out. We would put a temporary Headteacher in place in the Junior School because the Academy Order would enact in due course. The Academy Division of DfE would make the decision although what we are able to do is influence them on which academy chain would take the school over. The academy chain would appoint the Headteacher It is likely that I would meet with the Governors</p>

	<p>and we would jointly come to a decision that might well be that the Governing Body dissolves and we bring in an IEB for a temporary period of time.</p>
<p>Parent Why is an academy such a bad thing? Why do you think that continuing under KCC is the right course when the Junior School has failed under the leadership of the KCC</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I have no issue whether a school wants to become an academy or not. I believe that a through primary for children aged 4-11 years is more effective in terms of continuity of education under one Headteacher. If the parents decide an amalgamation is not the way forward then effectively you will make decision for the Junior School to become an academy because we will not have time to go out for another option. The Commissioning Plan states very clearly that where we can we will amalgamate separate infant and Junior Schools. The leadership lies with Governing Bodies and Headteachers. The LA is responsible but not accountable. I believe the amalgamation of both school is the best solution. Yes we could have done more and should have tried. We are trying to get a better solution for both schools.</p>
<p>Parent Why do you feel that an academy is a bad thing? If there is an amalgamation of both schools then there will not be a proposal in the future to then turn the school into an academy after that process</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I have nothing against academies. I believe that for these two schools that are currently separate it would be better for them to become an all through primary. If the Governing Body of the new primary school in the future decides to turn the school into an academy then that is their decision to make. If the junior remains a separate school it will go into an academy chain and the infant school would remain a LA school. A through primary school under one Headteacher with a rejuvenated Governing Body of the primary school, would be the better option</p>
<p>Parent Mr Webb, you maintain that if parents don't opt to amalgamate then we will run out of time to consider other options. Why aren't those other options being considered as a range of proposal now?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser Where there is an opportunity to amalgamate an infant and Junior School the County Council feel that this is the better option and that is the proposal that will be presented for consultation. As parents you have the opportunity through this consultation to say if you do not want to see the schools amalgamate. Your views will be reported back through the County Council to the Education Cabinet Committee then onto the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform.</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer The consultation process that we are following is part of a statutory process. As a part of that process there is a requirement for either the LA or a Governing Body to make a proposal. In</p>

<p>I understand that it is a proposal and statutory process is being followed. Why are we moving to create a new school to remove the Special Measures by virtue of creating a new school and not putting the effort in to drive the standards of the Junior School back up to the standard it previously enjoyed?</p>	<p>this case the Governing Bodies of both the junior and infant schools and KCC are making a joint proposal. This is a proposal; it is not a set of options. Our belief is that that is the best option and we are testing that through this proposal.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser The amalgamation would not get rid of the problem. The support from the LA officers will continue to drive the standards up. Because the school is in Special Measures we cannot effectively challenge an academy order. The Governing Bodies have determined this option and offered it to the LA and we are supporting it. I believe that we can get the new Primary School to outstanding in two years because the new Ofsted framework is a much fairer and accurate framework. If the schools do not amalgamate the Junior School has to become an academy and that academy chain would drive the Junior School forward, as we would.</p>
<p>Parent I am concern about the ability to employ a high quality Headteacher who will want to take on a school that is half outstanding and half failing or improving. What consistency would the LA be able to offer to parents and children in terms of leadership?</p> <p>What would happen if a suitable candidate was not found? What would the LA do to ensure consistency of our children?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If the amalgamation does take place the LA and governors would ensure that the short listed candidates for the headship of the primary school are currently in a good or outstanding school. I am being advised by senior advisers that there are currently good or outstanding heads expressing an interested because it is Madginford. It will not take the Junior School a long time to get back on track. If the amalgamation does not take place we would need to make two Headteacher appointments. This would be slightly more difficult because they are smaller schools but I am confident that we will appoint good Headteachers. The larger size through primary will attract more interest because of the salary that it attracts.</p> <p>If we did not appoint we would put an acting headteacher in place. If it was two separate schools we would find good quality candidates to fill the post for a period of time. Worst case scenario would be September to December because we would have two people acting up until the appointment is made. Legally a person would need to resign in April to start in September but if an appointment is made at a slightly later date then the LA would talk to the Governing Body of that school to get an early release to be able to start their new role in September.</p>
<p>Parent</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</p>

<p>(i) How much funding is likely to be apportioned to the new school compared to the funding that the two schools currently receive i.e. less funding overall or the same?</p> <p>(ii) I am concerned that if we move too quickly the standards at the Infant School will drop whilst the standards at the Junior School rise. I feel it would be better to allow time for the standards to raise in the Junior and then look to amalgamate</p>	<p>(i) Schools received a delegated budget and that is totally separate from the LA budget. Under current Regulations (Schools and Early Years Finance England 2013) the majority of the budget is pupil led. Each school attracts a lump sum that is a small part of the overall budget. If two schools become one through amalgamation or closure then one of those lump sum budgets would cease. There is however a level of protection that can and will be applied for a maximum of 19 months. This equates to 7 months at 100% and then 12 months at 85% of the two lump sums with the maximum amount available applied. This is a national funding policy that allows the school to become one school and review their budget.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser</p> <p>(ii) As the appointment process for either one or two Headteachers gets underway the LA will already be looking at drafting in temporary Headteachers into both schools if we do not appoint. If there is not a substantive Headteacher in place I will classify that school as being vulnerable because that allows the LA to give that school more advice and support alongside the Acting Headteacher to ensure that the educational standards proceed as they were before. I believe that a through primary school is the best option for your children.</p>
<p>Parent</p> <p>Could we not have someone in from an academy to give us an overview of how they would run the school and put the consultation date back so that we can hear other options?</p>	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer</p> <p>The proposal is based upon the views of both Governing Bodies and KCC and that is what is being tested. The academy route or option is largely an externally imposed process. In the case of Madginford the LA stands by its view that this is the right proposal and that is being tested in the consultation. If your view through the consultation is that you feel that an amalgamation is not the best route then that view will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Education when he makes that decision to the Schools Adjudicator.</p> <p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser</p> <p>We will not know who that academy chain will be. We do talk to the Academies Division and meet with them every two months and can offer local solutions but the academies do not have to accept our view. If the Junior School was to go to an academy the choice of which academy chain runs the school will be made by the academies division. This process gives the choice about whether you like the idea of</p>

	<p>an amalgamation or not.</p> <p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer If amalgamation did not proceed and an academy order was issued the Junior School would be required to become an academy. The academies division would work with the LA but effectively make the decision about which academy chain or trust would take over the running of the school. The process involved would include a Commercial Transfer Agreement and the lease of the site and building under a 'Long Lease' for 125 years. Under the leasehold agreement any element of the school site or school that is in use by the school that is converting will be expected to go into that lease. The two schools are effectively on adjacent sites, although they appear to be one site. If one of the schools converts to academy status then that site would be leased to the academy chain/trust that takes over that school. The playing fields which I understand are part of the Junior School site would transfer under that lease. Although one would hope that the academy chain/trust would look to share those facilities there is no guarantee that they would enter into such an agreement.</p>
<p>Parent (i) Are there any disadvantages in the amalgamation of the two schools? (ii) What about the upheaval for the children in September who will be taking their 11+ if the amalgamation goes ahead?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser If the amalgamation takes place the staff will transfer. By the time we get to May, June, July the quality of teaching will be good. Hope that the Junior staff will remain in place. The staff at the Junior School are absolutely committed to the education of the children and I do not think that the children will be aware of any change. The disadvantage would be if we are unable to appoint a high quality Headteacher to the school but I do not believe that will be the case. Parents can leave the school which will affect the budget leaving the school a little more vulnerable or teaching staff were to leave.</p>
<p>Parent The teachers are going to be key and fundamental to the educational development of the children. As a parent who does not work in education field you are asking me to make an informed decision about proposal that tells me nothing about governance, the pros and cons. Can you please give me the information to be able to make that decision?</p>	<p>Mr Webb - Principal Primary Adviser I would suggest that if teachers want to talk to parents informally outside of the public meeting then clearly they can do so. I cannot say what the structure will be because it will be the new Headteacher who will advise the Governing Body on what structure they want. If we did not amalgamate come September we would put temporary Headteachers in place and the management structure would be held until the substantive Headteacher was in post. The LA will give their opinions if asked but is not the deciding body.</p>

	<p>Mr Nehra - Area Education Officer All members of staff will be consulted on the proposal and the changes to their employment. For teaching and support staff no changes are proposed. If the amalgamation goes ahead then the Junior School staff would transfer to the new primary school and the infant school staff would remain within the infant school. The public consultation meetings set out the key points and the purpose is to provide further information, to hear your views, hear your questions and give a response to allow you to feel more informed about the proposal in front of you.</p>
<p>Parent We have lost three teachers since school went into Special Measures. My concern is if we do amalgamate and some of the teachers are against it and they leave then this will have a detrimental effect especially on the Yr 5 children.</p>	<p>Mrs Guthrie – Interim Executive Headteacher Following the unfortunate Ofsted outcome some staff understandably felt insecure about their careers and the decision about whether to stay or move is a personal one. A movement of staff is not uncommon in these circumstances. I would like to commend all the Junior School staff for their commitment and huge amount of work including the staff coming into Years 5 & 3 since the situation happened in October and working alongside the Infant School staff to ensure consistency and stability for the children. Teachers are putting children first and working across all year groups. we have a three tier structure that is very well managed by the leaders in each year groups ensuring that there is consistency for new teachers in planning and marking. Please make an appointment to see myself or Mrs Wellman if you wish to discuss you own child or classroom.</p>

Mr Northey asked people to ensure that they do give their opinions either by completing the response form or by email and that to contact us if you have any further queries by the 28th February.

JN went back through the timescales for the consultation process.

The meeting closed at 21.00hrs

The meeting was attended by approximately 150 people.

**Proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School and
Madginford Park Junior School**

Formal minutes - 27.2.2014

Apologies: None - all present

Item 1: Meetings

- School Council meetings will now be held in the library every Thursday during assemblies.
- In future members of the council will have to bring their Councillor bags to all these meetings.

Item 2: Children's feelings about the amalgamation

- Miss Cook asked the children how they felt about the possible amalgamation of the Infant and Junior School. Overall most children were positive about the change and generally children felt that it would make it easier to settle into the Junior school.
- The school council were also excited about getting to spend more time with the infant children and to see their infant teachers again.
- They did not have any negative views.

Item 3 Children's feelings about the new changes:

- The councillors discussed how they feel about the new changes that have happened within recent times. These are a few ideas that we like:
 - Moving around classes on more occasions
 - The brand new timetables
 - The new process of Guided Reading and accelerated reader
 - A better quality of different working books
 - Football (just on the top playground)
 - Other pupils who don't like football get to have a play as now we have a 5 minute non-football time; whereas others prefer always football
 - The homework (e.g. Literacy homework)
 - Lots of people enjoy having learning logs over half term
 - New teachers doing more exciting assemblies

After that we discussed things that we did not like and to improve on. Here are the suggestions...

- Some believe the new timetable is confusing due to the tests being around
- A lot of people believe that the 5 minute is not working because they were used to it being normal.

The council also discussed how they don't like teachers leaving all at once.

**Proposal to amalgamate Madginford Park Infant School
And Madginford Park Junior School**

Summary of quotes following School Council meeting on 28.02.14

The school council met on 28.2.14 to discuss the recent and upcoming changes to the school. Being children, the children found it difficult to look at the overall picture, and constantly wanted to talk about areas that affected them individually. However, overall the children were very positive about the changes that have happened so far and also about amalgamating.

Quotes from the school Council meeting about the changes:

Amalgamating:

"I'd like to see the infants more!"

"I think it will be too big because there will be lots of children"

"...yes but other schools have got together so it will just be the same as those schools."

"Maybe we won't all fit in at once so how will we get together if we don't have anywhere, we will have to build an extension to make it bigger but that would cost lots of money so that is the downfall."

"When I first came up I was shy but I got into it really quickly and my friends did as well but I think it will be easier to get into it quickly if we are together."

"We already have buddies that encourage us to do stuff around the school and they might know their buddies better now so even if there are loads and you have to have more than 1 buddy you still get to see your buddy around the school."

Reading:

"I like the thing where you get AR (accelerated reader) and quizzes because we get to go on the computer and it is fun but not too hard. Also, people can't copy each other"

"I don't like it that we can't read books just for enjoyment because we have to read one at the right level and some of my favourite books that I have enjoyed the most are not at my level."

"It would be nice to read with the infants if we do get together. My friend has a thing in their school where they get together every... I think it is every term... yeah.... And they read books and sometimes they get to dress up or read the stories and things that they have written."

"I like having books that are at the right level because I used to choose a book and I didn't know if they were the right level and lots of the time they weren't the right level, so I didn't like the book."

Physical changes around school:

"I like the display boards around the school because it makes the school looks nice"

“We have a bigger classroom and now we have more room to move and we can concentrate better.”

Teaching staff

“When a lot of the teachers left at the same time, it took a lot of children by shock and I don’t think they should be allowed to leave at the same time”

“I want to talk about the teacher’s too. Me and my mum at home have been counting up all the teachers that 6D have had this year and we have had 11 different teachers this year.”

“Some of the teachers could swap schools like Miss Cook does now and I think it would be good to have teachers at the infants too because then you would know the teachers better.”

“It can be a bit confusing too because we often have different teachers in the same day. I don’t like that... yeah... it make it confusing.”

“I like having the same teacher every Friday”

Subject Coverage:

“We don’t get any art lessons at the moment and I am really good at Art, so I wish we could have some more.” Chorus of “yes” from other children.

“In year 6 we don’t really have another subjects except for maths and Literacy and Science”

“We don’t have much music either.”

“No, we haven’t had any music at all this year.”

Homework:

“I enjoy the new homework because it used to just be a learning log. I used to like learning logs but we still do them and they give you more time to learn about each subject, but now you can show your understanding in other subjects like Literacy but it doesn’t take as long.

“Yes, you have a lot more time to do your learning logs over half term.” Pupil in Year 4

Football:

Pupil from year 4 – “I like the changes to the timetable. Now we have maths after break and I have more time in my own class before I have to go to my maths group.

Pupil from year 6 – “I really like the new guided reading sessions because now we actually have time to read our books and we got a whole half an hour each day, whereas we didn’t used to get to finish a book.”

“I like having football on the top playground” Pupil in Year 6 “But it isn’t good that we have to stop 5 minutes before the bell goes.”

“It would be much better if football was just on the Olympic zone because it gets too crowded on the playground”

“Why don’t we use the field anymore because we can play football on the field?”

“Now that we have football on the top playground the bottom playground is really full and I feel cramped and lots of people get pushed over.

“I don’t like that we don’t get to play on the top playground anymore”

Books:

“I like having the same maths books in the whole school because if you lose them, you know what to look for.”

“Yes me too, I think we should have the same books for other subjects.

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 Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School, Maidstone by discontinuing the Junior School and enlarging and changing the age range of the Infant School to cater for the whole primary age range.

Decision:

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

(i) Issue a public notice to; discontinue Madginford Park Junior School; and enlarge and change the age range of Madginford Park Infant School, to become a through primary school.

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 Madginford Park Infant School and Madginford Park Junior School are two separate community schools serving the Bearsted Ward of Maidstone. Madginford Park Infant School is currently judged by Ofsted as Outstanding.
- 1.2 On 24 September the Headteacher of Madginford Park Junior School tendered his resignation. The Junior School was subsequently inspected by Ofsted on 11 October 2013 and was found to require Special Measures.
- 1.3 Madginford Park Junior School held an Extra-Ordinary Full Governing Body Meeting on 22 October 2013 and a new Chair of Governors was elected.
- 1.4 The Governing Bodies of the Infant and Junior Schools supported the decision to appoint the Headteacher of Madginford Park Infant School as Interim Executive Headteacher of Madginford Park Junior School which took effect from 4 November 2013.
- 1.5 The Governing Bodies of Madginford Park Infant and Madginford Park Junior independently recommended to the Local Authority that the most appropriate solution to securing and maintaining outstanding education provision for both infant and junior age ranges at Madginford is to have a single all-through primary school.
- 1.6 The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 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.”

- 1.7 Following receipt of letters of support from the Governing Bodies of both schools, the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform agreed to proceed to public consultation on these proposals.

Financial Implications:

Capital

The amalgamation can be implemented without the need for significant capital expenditure, as the expanded Madginford Park Infant School would 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 would 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 Madginford Park Infant School (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) will automatically continue their employment in the primary school.

Pupil forecasts indicate that the primary school will require as many class bases as there are currently in the Infant and Junior schools combined. It is proposed that all teachers and support staff employed at Madinford Park 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:

Paul Carter, the Local Member for Maidstone Rural North has commented as follows:

“When the opportunity to link an infant and junior school has arisen, I have always supported the direction of travel towards amalgamation. The Infant School has a very positive track record and its knowledge and expertise could support improvement at the Junior School. Amalgamation therefore looks like it could be a good solution.”

Any alternatives considered:

The Governing Bodies of Madginford Park Infant and Madginford Park Junior independently recommended to the Local Authority that the most appropriate solution to securing and maintaining outstanding education provision for both infant and junior age ranges at Madginford is to have a single all-through primary school.

The Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-18 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.”*

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