

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

To: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform

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

Past Pathway of Paper: Education Cabinet Committee – 14 March 2014

Electoral Division: Maidstone Rural North, Paul Carter

Summary: : Following the recommendations from Education Cabinet Committee on 14 March 2014, the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is requested to agree to the recommendations below:

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to take 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.
- 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.

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 Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform is asked to take 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.

11. Background Documents

11.1 Bold Steps for Kent and Policy Framework

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

11.2 Kent Commissioning Plan for Education Provision 2013-2018

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

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

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

11.4 Education Cabinet Committee report – 14 March 2014 - 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.

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=746&MId=5471&Ver=4>

12. Contact details

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