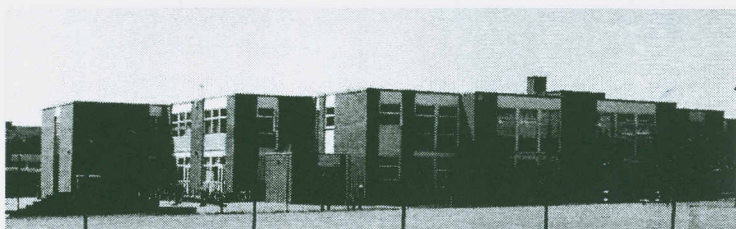


Public Consultation Document

Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School



Kent County Council would like to hear your views on a proposal to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School and establish a new primary school on the same site.

Date of Public Meeting: Monday 2 February 2009 at 7pm

Venue for Public Meeting: Fleetdown Infant School

This consultation document is available on:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-learning/about-education-service/consultations>

INTRODUCTION

Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School are community schools serving the Brent Ward in Dartford East. Both schools are part of the Dartford West Local Children's Services Partnership.

The two schools are on the same site but have separate staffing structures and governing bodies. The schools have well-established, on-site provision for teaching children with impaired hearing. Both schools are inclusive and believe in including the whole family using whichever mode of communication is suitable for that child.

Recently, the headteachers of both schools have notified their respective governing bodies of their intention to retire in December 2009. In 2006, Kent County Council published the 'Kent Primary Strategy'. One of the recommendations for linked junior and infant schools is that when a change of headteacher is notified then the local authority should consider amalgamation of the linked schools.

The governing bodies of both schools have requested that the local authority consult the local community on a proposal to amalgamate the two schools and establish one all through primary school.

This consultation seeks to:

- explain the process for amalgamating the two schools;
- explain the process for opening a new school, including the statutory duty of the local authority under Section 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to invite proposals for the school;
- determine whether local people believe that the amalgamation is in the best interest of the community and in particular, the pupils;
- determine whether local people believe that the local authority proposal to seek exemption from Section 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 is in the best interests of the school and the community.

WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

(Subject to receiving an exemption under Section 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006)

- (1) To discontinue Fleetdown Junior School and Fleetdown Infant School on 31 December 2009.
- (2) To amalgamate the two schools to form a new 2 FE (420 place) community primary school, from 1 January 2010, retaining in full the existing provision for children with impaired hearing.



AN EXPLANATION OF THE PROCESS FOR AMALGAMATING FLEETDOWN INFANT AND FLEETDOWN JUNIOR SCHOOL

Prior to the introduction of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, amalgamating an infant and junior school was a relatively straightforward process. It involved closing the two schools on one day and opening a new school on the next.

However, under Section 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, opening a new school requires the local authority to invite promoters to come forward and set up the new school. The process is generally referred to as a "competition". This can add months to the process.

There is an alternative, which is to apply to the Secretary of State for consent to publish proposals for a new school without running a competition. This process is generally referred to as an "exemption". The Schools' Adjudicator at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) is the statutory body that decides this on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Kent County Council proposes to seek an exemption to running a competition because this amalgamation is between existing infant and junior Schools, with no changes to the education provision.

The first thing Kent County Council has to do is find out whether people feel that amalgamation is in the best interests of the children, parents/carers, staff, and all other stakeholders. The process used by Kent County Council to find this opinion is our Public Consultation process.

Members of the public, the local community and any other stakeholders are invited to offer us their thoughts, suggestions and concerns. In the past, the DCSF has generally agreed that straightforward infant/junior amalgamations may be exempt from a competition, but each case is assessed separately. One of the more important considerations is that the Adjudicator wants to know YOUR opinions on whether a competition is necessary or desirable for the new Fleetdown School. We would therefore like to ask you whether you feel that Kent County Council is right to seek an exemption.

Once the public consultation has closed (5pm, 2 March 2009), Kent County Council will apply to the Schools' Adjudicator at the Department for Children, Schools and Families for an exemption.

The Schools' Adjudicator will then decide whether Kent County Council can be exempted from running a competition. If an exemption is refused then Kent County Council will invite proposals for the new school. Any interested party will be able to submit a proposal to manage the school.

If an exemption is granted, all your views and the opinion of the Schools' Adjudicator are presented to the Kent County Council's School Organisation Advisory Board (SOAB). The SOAB considers all the evidence and then advises the Kent Cabinet Member for Education. The Cabinet Member then decides whether or not to issue a public notice.

During this time there will be few, if any, changes at the schools. The governing bodies of both schools have a responsibility to maintain effective governance of the schools and, although they will be keeping a close watch on the ongoing consultation process, they will ensure that both schools continue to provide a high quality education for the children.

WHY CONSIDER AMALGAMATION?

Possible benefits include:

- Eases transition from one school to another.
- Children and parents can build long-term relationships with staff
- The head and governors have more flexibility in how they organise classes and deploy staff.
- Less duplication therefore a reduced administrative burden.
- More consistency in teaching and learning.
- Saving money through economies of scale.
- Headteacher recruitment is becoming an increasing problem.
- Reduction in fixed costs.
- More opportunities for non-curriculum activities.
- Better career opportunities for staff through broader experience.
- KCC offer a two year subsidy.
- Single management team.
- Better co-ordination.
- One Ofsted inspection.

Possible drawbacks include:

- Accommodation issues during any building work.
- IT integration issues.
- Security and telephone systems conflicts.
- Possible uncertainty over jobs for staff. Some posts may be changed and there might not be a suitable post for every member of staff now working at the infant and junior schools.

If there are no objections to the public notice, the amalgamation is agreed and the schools begin their preparation to amalgamate. This process is robustly supported by Kent County Council.

Firstly, an interim (or temporary) governing body is formed, primarily using volunteers from the two existing governing bodies. This is to ensure that both schools are equally represented. The existing governing bodies have already informed the local authority that they are fully committed to amalgamation.

A new headteacher recruitment process will take place. Once a new head is appointed, they will work with the interim governing body to produce a vision statement, an ethos, a staffing structure and begin the work to produce a new school budget.

Finally on 31 December 2009, when all the work is done, the two schools will formally close and the new school will reopen on 1 January 2010.

The local authority will work with the school on whether or not any building work is required to perhaps provide a physical link with the two existing buildings. This will be the decision of the school governors



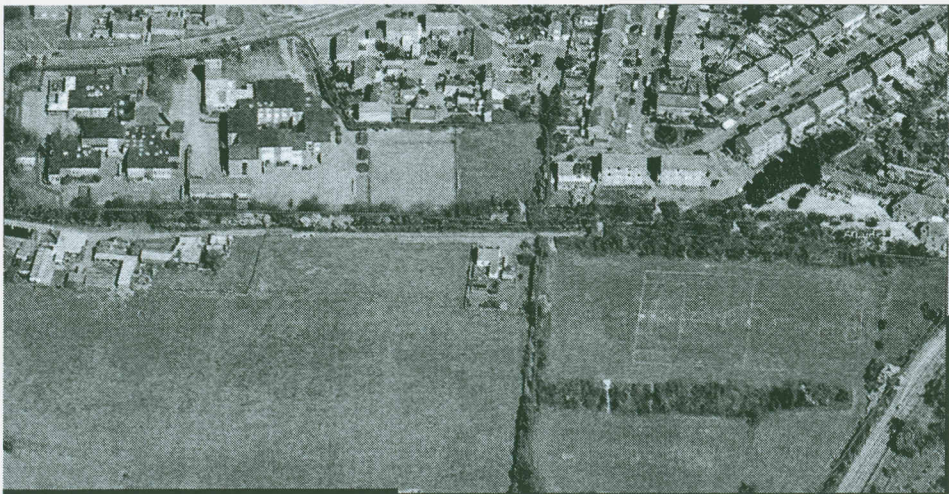
SCHOOL PLACES

The town of Dartford and its environs is undergoing an era of fundamental change, massive growth and re-development as part of the Thames Gateway.

There are currently 33 primary schools in Dartford. Capacity in schools has been affected by lower birth rates in Dartford over the last ten years. But recently we have seen noticeable increases in primary pupil numbers, due to a forecasted increase in birth rate, the new housing developments and a modest increase in economic migration.

The Fleetdown schools play a vital role in providing a quality education for the community, and wider for children across Dartford. Accordingly, neither the governors of both schools, nor the local authority are seeking a reduction in pupil numbers in the new school and all existing children will be guaranteed a place in the new school.

Aerial Photo of the School



HOW TO GIVE YOUR VIEWS

We would like to know your views on the proposal to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School. Additionally, we would like to hear your views on whether you support the local authority seeking an exemption to Section 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 .

You can respond to the consultation by either:

Completing and returning the attached response form to:

**Mr Simon Webb
Area Children's Services Officer
17 Kings Hill Avenue
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent, ME19 4UL**

Deadline for response forms: by 5pm on 2 March 2009

and/or

Attending the Public Meeting at Fleetdown Infant School on Monday 2 February 2009:

An elected member of Kent County Council will chair this meeting, at which all interested parties will have an opportunity to put forward their views. Officers from the local authority will also be present to clarify points of detail.

and/or

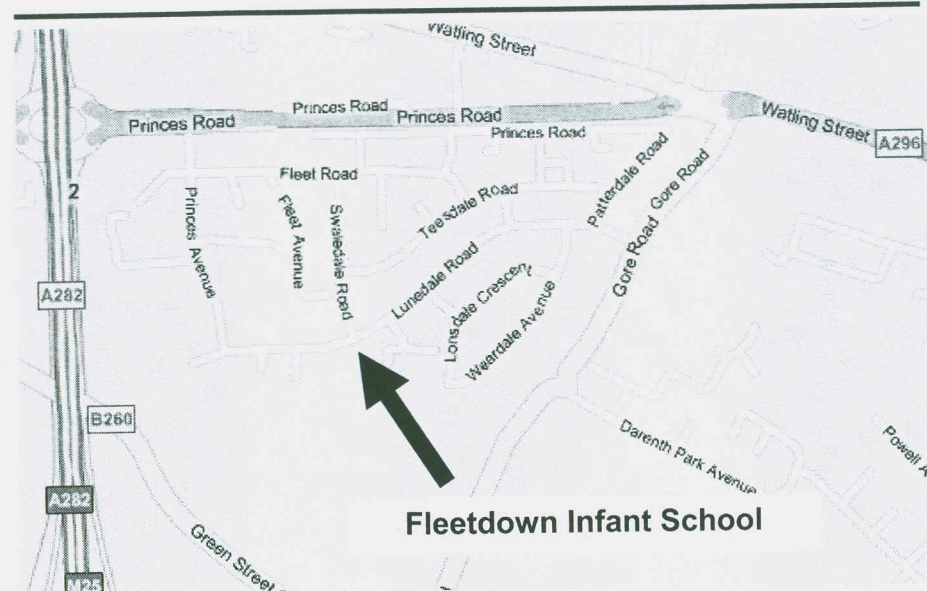
Sending an email to: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

**Dr Ian Craig
Interim Managing Director
Children Families and Education
Kent County Council
20 January 2009**

CONSULTATION TIMETABLE

8 Jan 09	School Organisation Advisory Board meets to discuss whether a Public Consultation should be held.
20 Jan 09	Start of Public Consultation.
2 Feb 09	Public Meeting.
2 Mar 09	Close of Public Consultation.
4 Mar 09	Annex D to Schools Adjudication, DCSF to seek exemption under Section 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
14 Apr 09	Deadline for the Schools' Adjudicator decision.
23 Apr 09	School Organisation Advisory Board meets to discuss the results of the Public Consultation and the Schools' Adjudicator decision and make a recommendation to the Cabinet Member.
early May 2009	Cabinet Member decision on whether or not to issue a Public Notice.
early May 2009	Public Notice issued, if agreed by Cabinet Member.
mid Jun 09	End of statutory representation period.
mid Jun 09	Establish interim governing body.
31 Dec 09	School governing bodies dissolved.
01 Jan 10	New school opens.

PUBLIC MEETING VENUE



Fleetdown Infant School

Monday 2 February, 7pm

**Fleetdown Infant School
Lunedale Road
Dartford
DA2 6JX**

This is your chance to put forward your opinions on the proposal to an elected member of the County Council who will listen to your views and report back to the School Organisation Advisory Board.

Public Consultation Response Form**CLOSING DATE FOR RESPONSES: 5pm on 2 March 2009**

To: Simon Webb
 Area Children's Services Officer
 17 Kings Hill Avenue
 Kings Hill
 West Malling
 Kent, ME19 4UL.

Fax: (01732) 525223

In order for us to fully understand your opinion, please answer the three questions below and overleaf.

1. Do you agree with the proposal to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School and establish a new all through Primary School?

YES

NO

If you wish you may use this box to explain your answer, offer suggestions or inform us of any issues that you have with this proposal.

Attach any additional sheets if necessary.

2. Do you agree with the proposal that the local authority and the governing bodies of both schools apply to the Secretary of State for an EXEMPTION to the requirement to invite proposals and run a competition for the new school?

YES

NO

If you wish you may use this box to explain your answer, offer suggestions or inform us of any issues that you have with this proposal.

Attach any additional sheets if necessary.

3. Please circle whether you are a:

Infant : Parent Infant school teacher Governor Pupil/Student

Junior : Parent Infant school teacher Governor Pupil/Student

Early Years provider local resident interested party other

If you are a parent or pupil/student, please circle the relevant school phase your child(ren)/you are in:

Name:

Address:

Kent County Council is a data controller under the Data Protection Act 1998 and will comply with the requirements of the Act at all times. We will ensure that your personal information is processed fairly and lawfully and in this instance used only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.