

PUBLIC MEETING

**Proposal to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant School and
Fleetdown Junior School**

Chair of Panel:	Mrs Valerie Dagger, Chair of Schools Organisation Advisory Board
Officers:	Mr Simon Webb, Area Children Services Officer Mr David Hart, Operations Support Officer
Notetaker:	Mrs Ann Drury, Office Services
Headteachers:	Mrs Margaret Moyle, Fleetdown Infant School Mrs Susan Clement, Fleetdown Junior School
Governors:	Mr Michael Kiely, Chair of Governors Fleetdown Junior School Ms Claire Jones, Chair of Governors Fleetdown Infant School

- Approximately 60 people attended the public meeting, including headteachers, staff, governors and parents.
- A minute's silence was held in memory of the teacher from the Junior School who had died tragically in a motor accident.
- Mrs Dagger formally opened the meeting by explaining her role and introduced Mr Simon Webb, who proceeded to lead the presentation.
- Public Consultation meetings are taped so that an accurate record can be kept. The meeting was asked to address any questions or comments to the panel through the microphone.
- The Area Children's Services Manager assured the meeting that all comments received would be carefully considered and used to develop the proposals further.

Mr Simon Webb:

- Both headteachers of the school have informed their governing bodies of their intention to retire in December 2009.
- The Local Authority is supportive of amalgamating schools, as part of KCC's policy of "Children First – A Primary Strategy for Kent". It also states that all-through primary schools are generally preferred, as they help to eliminate barriers to children's learning by providing continuity of experiences, which in turn leads to an overall higher quality of educational achievement.
- The amalgamation of separate schools should be considered when it becomes known that one headteacher is about to leave.
- The proposal is to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant School and Fleetdown Junior School and open a new all-through 2 FE Community Primary School with approximately 60 pupils in each year group.
- The new school will have two forms of entry (i.e. an intake of 60 pupils in the reception year) giving it a capacity of 420 pupils.
- All pupils who currently attend the school will be guaranteed a place. The admission rules regarding siblings will also continue.
- The amalgamation process will be completed by December 2009 and the new Community Primary School will open on the same site on 1 January 2010.

- The new school would be on the same site, housed in the existing buildings. A feasibility study will be undertaken to see whether it is possible to physically link the two buildings together.
- Advantages to amalgamation include:
 - Recruitment of new headteacher may be easier
 - Reduction in fixed costs
 - The Local Authority offer a two year subsidy
 - More opportunities for non-curriculum activities
 - Transition from one school to another
 - Single management team
 - More consistency in teaching and learning
 - Long term relationships can be built
 - More flexibility in organising classes and deploying staff
 - Less duplication
 - One Ofsted Inspection
- Disadvantages to amalgamation include:
 - Possible uncertainty over jobs for staff.
 - Accommodation issues
 - Disruption
- Changes to government legislation mean that the local authority invites any interested party, group or organisation, who believes they can run the school, to submit a tender. If a tender is received the local authority must set up a competition to decide upon the best tender.
- The law offers an exemption to this rule and the local authority is entitled to apply for it. Kent County Council is seeking an exemption as it believes this process is not important as this amalgamation is straightforward. The exemption could delay the process.
- The consultation is therefore asking whether the local authority is right in seeking an exemption. It is therefore important to indicate whether the local authority should apply to the Secretary of State for an exemption to competition. Public opinion is very important.
- The Public Consultation period closes on 2 March 2009.
- Following this consultation, the outcomes will be reported to the School Organisation Advisory Board on 23 April 2009.
- At that stage a decision will be made on whether to proceed with amalgamation.
- If so, a Public Notice will be published in early May for a further 6 weeks. Further representations can then be made to the proposal.
- A determination will be reached on whether the proposal progresses.
- June 2009 will mark the end of the statutory consultation period.

Governors Statements

<p>Mr Michael Kiely, Chair of Governors of Fleetdown Junior School:</p>	<p>“The proposal to amalgamate both schools has come about purely as both headteachers have decided to retire at the same time. Kent County Council encourages schools to amalgamate whenever such a situation arises, as it is considered beneficial to staff, parents and pupils. Both governing bodies have worked closely with Simon Webb to meet and discuss proposals.</p>
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	The governing body have also met with other headteachers where schools have amalgamated to try and understand what is involved. The conclusion is the same, everyone believing it is the best decision they have ever made.”
Claire Jones, Chair of Governors at Fleetdown Infant School:	“It has been a privilege to serve on the governing body for eight years, representing staff, parents, pupils and the wider community. The governing body had visited three other schools to seek their views and opinions on amalgamation and was reassured by the positive remarks received. Therefore, the governing body have voted unanimously to agree to the proposal to amalgamate Fleetdown Infant and Junior Schools, adding two fantastic schools can be turned into an amazing one.”

Questions and Answers

Mrs Hargreaves, parent asked: 1. Whether the name ‘Fleetdown’ will be retained in the new school name. 2. Whether there would be any change to school uniform. 3. Whether nursery currently on site would still be accommodated	 The answers to Q 1 and 2 will be down to the School Governors. The nursery provision is not expected to change
Mr Mangat, parent sought more information from the Governing bodies Representatives who visited three local schools to find out the ‘pros’ and ‘cons’ of amalgamation.	Although each school had described it as a challenging experience, the overall perception was that it had been worthwhile with definite advantages to the school
Mr Miller, parent asked about the impact that amalgamation will have on the school budget?	Simon Webb explained the budget including the two year additional funding.
Mrs Hargreaves, parent Returned to her original question, adding there were two nurseries on the Fleetdown site and would they both still remain there?	There are no plans to change the nursery provision on site.
Mrs Bernard, parent. Will the school starting and finishing times would be the same.	The decision will be down to the School Governors.
	Ms Jones, chair of governors of Fleetdown Infant School asked parents to make a note

	of such questions so they could be taken into consideration before the opening of the new school in January 2010.
Ms Patterson, parent asked whether class sizes and catchment area were likely to remain the same.	Class sizes were decided by national legislation rather than individual school decision. Catchment areas were not in use by KCC but the admission arrangements remained unchanged

Meeting concluded at 8pm.