

**PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF ST PAUL'S INFANTS' AND  
HASLEWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOLS, HODDES DON**

*Report of the Director of Children, Schools and Families*

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Executive Member: Robert Gordon

**1. Purpose**

To enable the Cabinet to determine whether or not to publish statutory notices to form a new 4-11 age-range Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School for up to 45 children per year, in the light of the responses received from a recent consultation exercise.

**2. Summary**

- 2.1 Consultations concluded on 8 March, 2002 on a proposal to amalgamate these two schools to form a new Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School in Hoddesdon, with a reduced standard number of 45 pupils in view of current and forecast demand for places in the area.
- 2.2 The proposal will be considered at the CSF Resources Panel on Wednesday 20 March, 2002 and the Panel's views will be reported to Cabinet. The report to the Panel (and its appendices) sets out the background to the proposal and forms an Appendix to this report.
- 2.3 Consultation responses are largely favourable. The governing bodies of the two schools have met to review the consultation responses and they are fully in support of the proposal going forwards. The Diocesan Board for Education, who would sponsor the formation of the new school, are also in support.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 The Cabinet is asked to consider whether or not to proceed with this amalgamation and standard number reduction proposal. If the Cabinet wish to proceed the next step would be to agree to the publication of statutory notices and to authorise the Director for Children, Schools and Families to approve the proposal if no formal objections are received, or if objections are received to refer the objection(s), with comments on behalf of the Council, to the Hertfordshire School Organisation Committee for determination.

### **4. Background**

- 4.1 The background to this amalgamation and standard number reduction proposal is set out in the report to the CSF Resources Panel ( attached as Appendix A)
- 4.2 Consultations concluded on 8 March, 2002 and a summary of the views received is set out in the next section. Details of the consultation meeting are included in the Panel report itself.
- 4.3 Section 6 of the report refers to the particular statutory requirements that relate to the status of the current schools and proposed future school.

### **5. Consultation responses**

- 5.1 In addition to the support from both governing bodies and the Diocese 38 response forms have been returned. Copies have been placed in the Members' Room and can be seen by contacting Sarah Nicholls on 01992 556722.

In terms of the amalgamation proposal itself:

In favour	33
Against	6
Uncommitted	2

In terms of the formation of a new Voluntary Controlled Church of England Primary School:

In favour	33
Against	5
Uncommitted	2

Regarding reducing the Standard Number to 45:

In favour	33
Against	5
Uncommitted	2

The respondents were:

Parent	27
Governing bodies	2
Individual governor	2
Parent and governor	2
Diocese	1
Member of staff	6
Other	1

The respondents' connection with the school(s) is stated as:

St Paul's Infants	12
Haslewood Junior	18
Both Schools	10
Other	1

The detailed points made by individual respondents are summarised in Appendix B.

## **6. Technical issue**

- 6.1 In the case of this amalgamation the proposal technically involves the closure of a Voluntary Controlled School and a Community School and the establishment of a new Voluntary Controlled School.
- 6.2 The above would be achieved by a statutory notice published by the County Council seeking the two closures published in parallel with a second notice promoting the new Controlled School published by the Diocesan Board for Education.

**Main Comments raised by the St Paul's Infants' and Haslewood Junior School Consultation Response form**

**Against the Proposal to Amalgamate**

1. It was asked what would St Paul's Infants' gain by joining a school in Special Measures. There is a risk of St Paul's standards dropping if the amalgamation takes place.
2. It was commented that the proposal to amalgamate is purely to save money and not to benefit the pupils.
3. If the amalgamation goes ahead, this reduces the choice as to where their child attends Junior School. St Paul's received a pleasing Ofsted report, in contrast to Haslewood Junior School. Prospective parents may reconsider sending their child to St Paul's if their child then has to progress onto Haslewood.
4. It is asked how one person can run two schools which are separate. It is felt that the amalgamation will not improve the standard of teaching as St Paul's is doing well and Haslewood is not.

**For the Proposal to Amalgamate**

1. It would benefit the children of both schools if there was one Headteacher in charge of a combined school.
2. In the long-term felt that amalgamation would be a positive step forward for the two schools. However it was commented that disruption to the children must be kept to a minimum, especially for the children taking their SATs at approximately the same time as the amalgamation would be taking place.
3. Agrees with the proposal to amalgamate the two schools, but is concerned about the reduced budget and the length of time Haslewood is left without a permanent Head Teacher.
4. Would like to see a link between the schools in terms of buildings, but is concerned that the 'Special Measures' status at Haslewood would cease and the Ofsted inspection would be deferred for two years.

5. Agrees with the decision to amalgamate the two schools, but is concerned that Haslewood will no longer be classified as in 'Special Measures', as felt that the changes to Haslewood should go ahead as planned.
6. It was commented that the amalgamation will lead to better integrated facilities and would result in a more comprehensive education for the children at both schools.
7. If the amalgamation goes ahead, would it be possible for St Paul's Private Nursery to be adopted.
8. As the sites are next to each other, a merger could be carried out with minimum disruption to the children. The benefits of having a JMI school are considerable, especially the advantages to Haslewood. The benefits to children in having continuity from Key Stage One to Key Stage Two is equally as important as continuity from Nursery to Reception. The best way to achieve this would be for the nursery facilities that exist at St Paul's to become part of the state provision. However it is important to listen to the concerns of the staff, as they do not feel that their opinions have been listened to.
9. Agree to the amalgamation, but would like to see separate year classes and not mixed classes.
10. Agrees with the consultation, but is concerned that any of the staff at St Paul's will lose their jobs if they have to re-apply for their positions.
11. Agrees with the consultation, but is concerned about the reduction in the standard number because apart from year 6, all age groups in Haslewood are at the 45 capacity. If the new school attracts more pupils, what options does the school have to take advantage of, if they are at full capacity.
12. Agree with the amalgamation, but felt that a strong character would be needed to manage the older and younger children in the new school.
13. The need to share skills and to meet the demands of the new initiatives and curriculum pressures, it was felt would be more effectively achieved through an amalgamation of the two schools. The amalgamation would offer an excellent opportunity to create a seamless education for children from the foundation stage through to year 6.
14. Haslewood School needs to be improved after a poor year. Also money is needed to raise the standard of the Haslewood School building which needs to happen either before or shortly after amalgamation of the two schools.
15. It was commented that the County Council must ensure that the schools are well supported throughout the amalgamation to ensure the least amount of disruption occurs to the teachers and the children.

16. The pupil numbers have been falling as a result of the published SATs results. The proposal to amalgamate is seen as a positive step, which will encourage more parents to send their children to the new school. However, it was commented that they disagreed with reducing the standard number to 45 as this would prevent single year teaching, which they believe would prevent prospective parents from sending their children to the new school.

### **Uncommitted about the proposal**

1. Concerned about mixed year teaching if the amalgamation does not take place due to the low numbers at St Paul's. However it was felt that improvements should be made at Haslewood before the two schools amalgamate.
2. Concerned whether siblings will have difficulty in getting a place at St Paul's with a 25% reduction in intake. It was commented that less attention would be paid to children with special needs. It is asked whether St Paul's will suffer as measures are taken to raise standards at Haslewood. Concern was also expressed that children's education will suffer as the schools concentrate on amalgamation. Parents want to be kept informed as the decisions are being made regarding the two schools.