

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF PARKLANDS INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Parents Consultation meeting held via zoom on the 9 December 2020@ 6.30pm

1. Attendance

41 Parents from both Parklands infant and junior schools attended the meeting.

6 Local Authority Officers were also in attendance.

2. Opening of the Meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair for the evening, Mr. Trevor Cook (*Assistant Director of Education services*) who welcomed all. He thanked everyone for making out time to attend the meeting and urged that in addition to the views that will be received today, all should respond formally to the consultation by completing the online survey questionnaire as it is very important that all stakeholders give their feedback on the proposals.

The Chair then explained the format/protocol for the evening and advised that there would be a presentation from Local Authority Officers. He said that questions can be added onto the zoom chat bar during the presentation and there will be an opportunity for verbal questions during the question and answer session of the meeting.

3. Local Authority Presentation

The presentation consisted of details of the amalgamation proposal & statutory process, the intended stakeholder benefits of the proposal if implemented and the statutory timeline for implementation if the proposal is approved. (*The presentation is attached as an appendix to this notes*)

4. Questions, responses and comments

The following represents the questions & comments received from parents and the responses given by the local authority during the meeting.

Questions	Local authority's response
<i>As a parent are we allowed access to the governing bodies' reasons of both schools for the decisions they made regarding federation and amalgamation? Where can we find this information if we are allowed access to it</i>	Parents or anyone can request to view the minutes of the governing body so far it has been approved by the governors. Both schools can provide this.
<i>What are the differences in the ethos and values? What would the new ones be?</i>	All schools do have different values, statements and vision and both schools will have theirs. The amalgamation is an opportunity for the whole staff to work together collaboratively

	to create a joint ethos and for the staff to take the best out of both schools and work on a strong vision that would enable a greater consistency for all pupils
<i>And who would be involved in collaborating a collective ethos?</i>	The Senior Leadership team in conjunction with their staff and parents creates these vision and values.
<i>What is the financial impact of the amalgamation as opposed to a federated school? From my understanding under an amalgamation we will have reduced funding per pupil.</i>	There will be no reduction in per pupil funding. The funding rate per child will not be impacted by the proposed amalgamation. However, the lump sum funding each school receives will be impacted because we are moving from two separate schools to a single school. This is calculated via a national formula. From the LA's experience, reduction in this lump sum is more than covered from efficiencies in other areas within the school either by combined buying power etc. There is no other impact otherwise.
<i>Has the projected increase in population which will result in the need for more school places being factored in to this proposal?</i>	Yes, there is a projected increase in the school population but there is no plan to expand this school. Need for school places in the Romford area will be met by a new free school. Under this proposal the PAN and the capacity of the school remains as is. The infant school has a capacity of 360 with a 45FTE place nursery bringing their total capacity to 405 and the infant has a capacity of 480 this brings the total capacity to 885 and this will be the same number in the primary school.
<i>As the head takes on a hands on approach how will she manage this with two school and keep the juniors up to the standards where it's at</i>	There is no definitive number of what constitutes an effective leadership team firstly, it depends on the constitution of the Leadership team for example some leadership structure includes the business manager, some include their SENCO whilst some choose to include their literacy or language lead. So Leadership structure tends to have a range of importance strands of work, balance of skills or a model with some deputy heads, assistants heads, phase leaders etc. So a leadership structure comes in all shapes & constitution but in the end it is down to the model of leadership the school chooses and what they prioritise in order to get a good balance of skill & coverage in the team.

	So as such there is no ideal model but the numbers, structure and constitution is down to the governing body to make those strategic choices looking at their budget & priorities
<i>What do you envisage the restructured Leadership Team will look like?</i>	As responded to above
<i>While the council's priority may be financial efficiencies and resource management, I think it is well known that in real terms, schools across the UK have suffered real-term cuts in funding over the past few years. How is this amalgamation going to affect the funding allocated to the school? Will the funding be cut in real terms, therefore adversely impacting the pupil's learning?</i>	There will be no reduction in per pupil funding. The funding rate per child will not be impacted by the proposed amalgamation. However, the lump sum funding each school receives will be impacted because we are moving from two separate schools to a single school. This is calculated via a national funding formula. From the LA's experience reduction in this lump sum is more than covered from efficiencies in other areas within the school either by combined buying power etc. There is no other impact otherwise. Efficiency achieved will be diverted to spending in those areas that will positively impact on children learning.
<i>I am assuming as the job role/description changes of the head of the newly formed primary school, that this would mean that the position will be advertised to secure the right/best person for the job in a fair and transparent way</i>	This will be the decision of the primary school Governing body
<i>Don't see that not filling a form in is benefit</i>	As alluded in the presentation, it more than just filling the form but also about the whole key stage transition which is challenging for some parents as there is no automatic transfer from infant to junior especially in some cases where some parents submit their application form late which leaves them without a place in the junior school of their choice. So for a single primary school that takes the whole process away so yes it is a benefit.
<i>How will you be able to ensure that Infant school has input into the senior leadership team? Will it be a balanced team?</i>	If the proposal is implemented, the primary governing body will take responsibility of both key stages. So in terms of the structure of the leadership team, like earlier said, it will be the governing body to determine what this will be.
<i>Will the Assistant Headteachers who will be put in post in the Infant School in January remain in post following the amalgamation?</i>	Again, this will down to the new structure and a decision of the governing body.
<i>What are the disadvantages of amalgamation?</i>	There are disadvantages to every reorganisational proposals but for an amalgamation, the LA sees that the benefits far outweigh any disadvantages. One of the disadvantages picked up was staff

	anxiety but the LA hopes that the meeting earlier with staff has relieved that, secondly for the loss of the lump sum we have highlighted some mitigation plans to avoid any impact
<i>Yes - who will appoint the new headteacher?</i>	This will be the decision of the primary school Governing body
<i>Will the juniors have access to infants forest school</i>	The benefit of having a single school is that pupils will have access to a wide range of resources except if there are specific reasons such as safety, suitability or not age appropriate that makes it not accessible.
<i>Will the governing bodies be a mix from infants and Junior school parents?</i>	The primary governing body will have the opportunity to consider increasing its membership to include further representation from the infant school if the proposal goes ahead.
<i>Currently both schools have very different SEND provision. What will this look like in September? How can I make an informed decision about whether this school is able to meet my son's needs in September with so much uncertainty?</i>	Everything moves across to the new primary school as opposed to two separate schools. We expect that there will be a stronger, more consistent and seamless transition as pupils move through the school and this is one of the main benefits for pupils with SEND as there will be an early oversight by either one or two SENCOs in a single school.
<i>How will 1 to 1 support for the children carry on for the children with EHCP will this carry on? Will there be support groups for parents to access Will SEN still have their inclusive education</i>	Yes of course the 1:1 support will continue as it is the right of the child to have it. The SEND support and services which currently exist in the two schools will continue in the primary school.
<i>My son's education was hugely disrupted when the junior head teacher took over the current position. What reassurances will I get as a parent that the existing staff who know my child will not be impacted upon?</i>	The support and continuity will be much smoother in a single school. We expect that there will be a stronger, more consistent and seamless transition as pupils move through the school and this is one of the main benefits for pupils with SEND as there will be an early oversight by either one or two SENCOs in a single school. Staff terms, condition of employment remains the same so they will continue in their roles in the new school.
<i>What are you gonna put in place to bring together the school staff so they are working together</i>	This will be down to the leadership team and the governing body

<i>Will the parents have a say in the new head?</i>	Not directly, The governing body has the responsibility for this. So any parent governor will be able to contribute to this.
<i>Can we ask why juniors didn't agree to federation</i>	Please refer to the governing body minutes as this will contain their rationale for this.
<i>Have you evidence of a drop in attainment between infants and juniors? This has not been my experience</i>	<p>This was a point raised in the presentation but the example that was highlighted was not for the parklands schools because they are currently rated as good schools so the quality of education they provide is good rather the point was being made regarding a well-documented research & evidence which has also being acknowledged by Ofsted and has made their inspectors aware that the pupils in junior suffer a dip in their attainment and the transition between key stages is less smooth in junior schools as opposed to primary school along with moving through different assessment systems also impacts on pupils progress specifically for those who have additional needs.</p> <p>The Fischer family trust; one of the most respected purveyors of educational data in the country also note that progress 8 attainment data shows that on the whole pupils who attended infant and junior school on average attain half a grade less than those who went to a primary school. Obviously, this statistics across the nation, based on a huge number of pupils and large cohorts. These findings have been consistent over a number of years, across different schools, areas, types & social settings. So a very robust data.</p> <p>Yes, in the two schools they attain well but we are ambitious and we want our children to be better and with the two schools coming together as one, they will deliver an outstanding education.</p>
<i>Also, is this something that is being imposed on the schools by the council, or is it something that both school leadership teams are broadly supportive of and see potential benefits of for the school and pupils?</i>	The LA propose an amalgamation and the governing body proposes a federation. However, there was no agreement between the two governing bodies on a federation status, hence the LA has proposed this amalgamation and is consulting on the process to get feedback from stakeholders to ensure an informed decision is made.
<i>How does the budget work if schools merge?</i>	This has been covered in an earlier response. There is no reduction in pupil funding.

<i>As there are a huge amount of SEN children coming through the school how will the funding affect this when you say moneys covered by other things throughout school do you mean pupils 1 to 1 funding</i>	
<i>We currently have 5 forms in year 5??</i>	Yes, there is currently a one-off bulge moving through the school.
<i>Is there any LA data around SEN retention through an amalgamated and/or primary school?</i>	Not sure about what is meant by SEN retention, Can you expand on your question?
<i>Thank you for the point about budgets - could you please confirm for clarity that whilst per pupil funding will not reduce, the AVERAGE per pupil funding will reduce as a result of the reducing 'lump sum'. Have you modelled the %/£ per pupil reduction amalgamation will result in?</i>	There is no reduction in per pupil funding in terms of this amalgamation but for the lump sum; this is calculated based on a national funding formula on a yearly basis for all schools.
<i>It is fairly clear why the junior school would favour an amalgamated approach and the pro's, but why did the junior school not agree to a federated approach? There are no public papers to view at this stage so I can understand the balanced view.</i>	You can request this from the school and the governing body minutes will provide reasons for this once the minutes have been approved and signed off.
<i>I feel my child has been well supported by the juniors senior leadership team. Will this joining of the two schools mean the infants children will be able to access the school farm</i>	This is similar to the response we provided regarding the forest school. So far this is age appropriate, safe and suitable, there will be no reason for this not to be accessible to children of the school.
<i>Does the LA have any evidence from Havering or other Local Authorities looking at how often a new Head Teacher is appointed to the 'continuing' school</i>	It depends on the context of the amalgamation and it varies from school to school but we do not have any empirical evidence. As already explained, in this case, there is one headteacher leaving and the other remaining, so it is the remaining headteacher whose school we will be expanding will be the headteacher.
<i>Are the LA saying that the current Junior head has sufficient experience within infants and early years education?</i>	All teachers who qualify to teach KS1 and KS2 and ultimately qualifies to lead would automatically be qualified to teach or lead an infant, junior or primary school. I think the perspective here is that the Junior head will not have sufficient experience to make good judgements about KS1 or early years education. However, just like the government is not just the prime minister, so a good balance of the leadership team with the skills, abilities and insights will provide the necessary experience. Currently there is capacity within the leadership of the infant school to draw on and provide the necessary balance where needed

<p><i>Why are we effectively only being given two options - amalgamation or status quo? The fact that beyond parent's questions, no-one is mentioning the other option of federation is worrying. Having a proper choice, with proper reasoning might be advantageous</i></p>	<p>We are consulting on one option and that is the amalgamation of the school because legally that is what we are allowed to do. A federation status is a proposal agreement from the two governing bodies and there was no agreement from them. This is why the consultation document is very clear on the proposal for amalgamation.</p>
<p><i>SEN provision is very strong in juniors would this be the same in a whole primary</i></p>	<p>This will continue in the primary school</p>
<p><i>Will this have any impact on the Teacher Training program currently offered by the Infants?</i></p>	<p>There is no reason this will cease so there will be no impact on the program.</p>
<p><i>The staff turn around in the juniors seemed particularly high when my daughter moved over, it was quite unsettling. There was a real familiar feel with the teachers in the infants, I am concerned this will be lost</i></p>	<p>We had a similar question from the staff meeting held earlier on and fortunately the junior headteacher was in attendance. This was her response to this: <i>When I initially took over as the headteacher, we had a restructure that involved a number of support staff and there was various reasons for that, the main one being; the budget deficit and this resulted in support staff redundancies other than that it is difficult to quantify because staff leave for various reasons. So we have teachers that have relocated out of the area, we have had support staff have relocated out of the area. But since the past 3years we have had few staff that have left. In terms of the exact figure it will be impossible to give that without referring to personnel records. Staff leave as anyone is aware for different reasons; relocation, promotion, we have had a few that have left to have babies etc. But in the last three years, leavers have been pretty low.</i></p> <p>So in terms of this an amalgamation is a benefit as it will help staff retention.</p>
<p><i>I'd be grateful for the actual data please about the attainment gap You'll forgive me for not letting you tell me that something is the case without data but I think it would be useful if the data was provided as part of the consultation.</i></p>	<p>The LA will follow up on this.</p>
<p><i>This isn't a consultation. It's a persuasion attempt</i></p>	<p>An amalgamation is the LA's preferred option and this consultation and the meeting is an opportunity to seek views of all stakeholders regarding the future of these schools so but be assured that the</p>

	consultation is meaningful and the decision as we progress will be taken based on the evidence that is presented at the end of the process, so please provide your responses.
<i>So, where there was disagreement between the two schools governing bodies, might it not have been better to have allowed the two options to have been presented by the two schools so that parents could have had a solid impression of the advantages and disadvantages prior to a seemingly biased consultation?</i>	Unfortunately, this is not possible within the legislation. The LA cannot give two options. The LA leads on amalgamation consultation while governing bodies lead on federation so there is no option to present the two side by side in this case.
<i>Yes it is a bulge but you have not included that in your numbers and they will still be in the school in Sept 2021.</i>	In the consultation, we do not refer to number on roll but the capacity the school is registered on and we have not changed the capacity. The bulge is a temporary arrangement and does not change the capacity of the school permanently.
<i>Will all staff have the same training so they are all on the same page</i>	This is one of the benefits of an amalgamation because a single school, there will be a shared CPD across the school for all staff.
<i>Could you please read out the questions verbatim? Some people may not have read all the questions, and so therefore your answers out of context are less helpful? Or will you type up questions and responses?</i>	Apologies, the notes of the meeting will be made available.
<i>Sorry, tech issues - I was thinking of whether more children stay on their journey through a primary school as opposed to leaving for a separate junior school after going through an infants school etc</i>	The vast majority of infant pupils go on to the Junior school but this is not guaranteed especially in cases where parents fail to make an application on time and another pupil outrank an existing pupil who made an application early but this does not happen very often.
<i>You can actually train at 3-7 only in teacher training. So not technically correct. I assume the EYS lead would still provide that expertise regardless though.</i>	Yes, but a teacher does not qualify as a specific phase teacher however, we expect that staff will continue in their roles as there are no changes to their terms of employment.
<i>What reassurance can you give me that the SEN in juniors won't be affected by the merge as my son had a rough year and it took time to find the right balance</i>	There are no staff changes in respect of this amalgamation, so the transition already in place with regards to your son will not be affected.
<i>If the role of the head expands will they see an increased salary?</i>	This is the duty of the governing body to determine with advice from HR as there are set parameters with regards to the size of a school.
<i>With so much anxiety, uncertainty and challenges currently faced by schools during this pandemic, is this really the right time to be making such huge</i>	The lead timeline in establishing the single primary school is a lengthy one and we have started the work to ensure the process will be completed if it is approved. We gave staff reassurances

<p><i>changes which will undoubtedly have a huge impact on an already stressed out and concerned workforce?</i></p>	<p>that we would allow time for them to respond which is why we have extended the consultation period till the 18th January and there will be a further opportunity to give feedback during the 4 week representation period in February and so this provides some certainty for staff.</p>
<p><i>Thanks, I wasn't asking for the amounts, just if salary was increased through this process</i></p>	<p>We cannot provide any further comment on this.</p>
<p><i>With the two schools planning to join in real world terms what does that mean for the Year 6 children getting into Grammar and top performing senior schools? Also why is there a lack of outstanding schools in the Borough? How will Amalgamation help the schools to perform better?</i></p>	<p>We do not have any grammar school in the borough. Admission into a grammar school is by a different process; through a series of tests and is not the job of our schools to tutor the pupils to sit for the tests. We have some secondary schools who outperform other schools nationally.</p> <p>In terms of our primary schools, we are extremely well placed. In every single measure we are either in the first or second quartile and also often in the top ten percent of schools nationally. So it is unfair to say that there are lack of good schools in Havering. In relation to the amalgamation, this is about two good schools pulling their resources with a view to becoming even better with a further option to be outstanding.</p> <p>For year 6 pupils, any change of this nature is unlikely to have a massive impact either positively or negatively.</p> <p>An amalgamation is an organic process which takes a little bit of time in a way that engages all the staff to work collaboratively, pulling their resources, knowledge & expertise together, to be better over time and in due course as it will not be achieved overnight.</p>
<p><i>Why have the infants employed a new deputy head if this amalgamation is on the cards</i></p>	<p>We are consulting on the amalgamation and a decision is a long way off. The infant has some challenging capacity in their leadership team for various reasons so they took the view that this left them vulnerable and so decided to fill the position to get them through this period, pending when a decision is made regarding the amalgamation.</p>
<p><i>Given this is the first meeting of a consultation, would it not have been appropriate for the Lead Member for Education to have been available for questions?</i></p>	<p>It is not usual for the Lead member to be leading consultation meetings. This is an Officer led process but it will be the Lead Member to take the decisions as we go through the process.</p>

	However, all ward councillors are being consulted and hopefully they will give their views regarding the proposal.
<i>Can we have a day meeting for all the parents that couldn't come on tonight due to putting children to bed</i>	This is understandable, the record of the meeting will be made available for the school to share with parents who were unable to attend.
Comments received from parents	
<i>My son has been supported amazing in the junior school by the teachers and the senior leadership I would hate to see this change they are amazing</i>	
<i>My child receives support for SEN and the juniors have been fantastic. To have the same support throughout my child's primary days would be the best thing for the children.</i>	
<i>i have found the head teacher of the juniors very approachable</i>	
<i>My child has also received fantastic support in Juniors. Their SEN and pastoral support for my child has made an amazing impact on his academic, social and emotional progress</i>	
<i>my child in juniors has thrived and is achieving really well, I hope if the schools become a primary, I think all the children will benefit</i>	
<i>My child has made fantastic progress in the Junior school and thanks to the support he is receiving he is achieving so much more than was expected. I would like to see this emotional support start at a much earlier age.</i>	
<i>I think making the schools a primary is a good idea, to me it will benefit the children making the process from going from infants KS1 to juniors KS2 much less scary</i>	
<i>I wish my son received the support emotionally and in every other way earlier in the infants not just in the juniors he may have had a completely different experience if he had</i>	
<i>I have only heard good things about the junior school and their leadership. As a parent of the Infants if anything is more reassuring than a new Infant head.</i>	
<i>Not having the stress of applying for a position in the juniors is a great benefit to parents</i>	
<i>The juniors have gone above and beyond for my child and I. We have always received the personal touch. Thank you Trevor for your time and for explaining this to us</i>	

5. Closure of the Meeting

The chair thanked everyone for their feedback and also for all the positive comments above received from both schools. He hoped that the meeting provided enough transparency in terms of the proposal and urged everyone to respond to the online survey.

The meeting was closed at 7.52 pm