

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF PARKLANDS INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Staff Consultation meeting held via zoom on the 9 December 2020@ 4.30pm

1. Attendance

The meeting was attended by 65 staff from both Parklands infant and junior schools.

7 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 expressed his appreciation and thanks on behalf of the local authority to all the staff for not just making out time to attend the meeting, but also specifically on the work they are doing to support Havering children and families under the challenging circumstances of the pandemic since March.

He acknowledged that any change is unsettling but he hoped that the meeting will be an opportunity to present the rationale, benefits of the proposed amalgamation from the local authority's perspective and also gather direct views from staff as part of the consultation process. He also highlighted that in addition, all stakeholders should provide feedback using the online survey questionnaire.

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 to the zoom chart bar during the presentation and then there will also 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 benefits of the proposal if implemented on stakeholders, the impact of the amalgamation on staff and the statutory timeline for implementation if the proposal is approved. (*The presentation is attached as an appendix to this notes*)

4. Questions, Comments and responses

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

Questions/Comments	Local Authority response
<i>Will the parents meeting be recorded to an available to see</i>	Yes, we are planning to record parents meeting and made available to the Parents' community.
<i>With regards to staff-what is the staff turnover in the junior school for the last 5 years please?</i>	<p>(The LA invited response from the Head of Parklands Junior School)- Response from the HT: 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, pretty low.</p>
<i>Both schools are consistently 'good' in OFSTED reports</i>	Yes, absolutely, both schools have been consistently good and are in strong positions
<i>Will all staff not have to sign new contracts as a primary school?</i>	This was covered in the presentation. The answer is no, we have been clear on that.
<i>So there will be no staff changes? Yet you talk about the restructuring of the leadership team? Will infant leaders have to re-apply for these roles?</i>	There is no implied staff changes in respect of this amalgamation proposal. In terms of infant leaders reapplying for roles; this is not part of this amalgamation proposal. If there is any leadership restructuring, it will be for the new governing body to determine and if such a determination is to be made, they will have to follow due procedural consultation. If for any reason a restructure is needed, both schools can do that now and can also do that in future irrespective of whether

	<p>they are amalgamated or not. However, there is no linked restructure in terms of this current amalgamation proposal, so nothing changes.</p> <p>The Head teachers of Parklands junior contributed to this by saying; that it is worth pointing out that the size of the school, number of pupils and classes will remain the same and at the moment there is very clear understanding of the number of teachers, support staff, admin staff that are required for the two schools to operate separately. There isn't going to be a smaller school if the two school amalgamate. The school is going to remain the same size, so my feeling is that the staffing requirements wouldn't be different; whether there is a restructure that takes place at any point and like the LA officer said it can happen at any time in either school but staff are needed at present and staff will be needed if the two schools amalgamate.</p>
<p><i>This is all being rushed through. Should we not be working with our families and our staff in supporting mental health needs in relation to the current pandemic?</i></p>	<p>This has not been rushed. The LA has been in consultation with the two governing over some months now. The LA has also extended the consultation period to take into account of the Christmas break so it ends on the 18 January. The next step in terms of statutory notice publication will now be in February for four weeks which then gives us a term to put in place the mechanisms for establishing the new school.</p> <p>So, no it has not been rushed through but where relevant, we have extended timeline taking into consideration the current circumstances.</p>
<p><i>Why is there no mention of federation? This was meant to be considered but does not appear to have been?</i></p>	<p>Within the consultation document, it did look at federation as an option, however, it wasn't an option that was taken forward for the reasons as set out in the document. For clarification; a federation is led by the governing bodies and an amalgamation is led by the local authority for maintained schools.</p>

	A federation can only be taken forward if there is an agreement by the two governing bodies that it is the proposed option. But this wasn't the outcome during the period of discussions/negotiations with the two governing bodies which is why it was included in the document that it was considered but was not taken forward as the proposal.
<i>And what about staff that are isolating or shielding? Surely that need more time added to the consultation periods?</i>	We have extended the consultation process until the 18 January to take account of this period and hopefully should allow all stakeholders a chance to participate and contribute to the process.
<i>What is the current funding of the two schools? For example, what is the budget of the different schools and is either of them in deficit?</i>	Neither school is in a deficit position. Both schools have a healthy surplus built over years through sound planning & financial management. So there is no financial drive in terms of this amalgamation.
<i>Will parents be given a vote as stakeholders? Will staff get a vote and how important are staff views to you</i>	The consultation includes all stakeholders as the questionnaire asks consultees to indicate who they are so response from all groups can be disaggregated. So parents, staff, residents, governing body etc all have a say. You can either support or be against the proposal and we also encourage you to include any issues or reasons for being for or against the proposal as all these will be considered in order to determine next steps. Staff views are incredibly important which is why we are asking for all to respond to the survey.
<i>As there is no meeting specifically for GB how do you get their vote as stakeholders?</i>	The consultation response is the same for all stakeholders. So governors can respond individually and so not a block vote by the governing body. Governors have the same opportunity to respond to the consultation survey like other stakeholders.
<i>So a governing body that does not know the infants staff?</i>	There is currently a limited crossover between the two governing bodies but the governing body will have the opportunity to consider increasing its membership to include further representation from the infant school if the proposal

<p><i>Will there be further meetings for staff and parents following this meeting</i></p>	<p>goes ahead and the governing body changes from a Junior school governing body to a Primary school governing body. No, we are not considering further meetings. There is a good turnout at this meeting and we hope that through this one, you have a better understanding of the proposal and this consultation will last till the 18th and so gives ample time for all to respond.</p>
<p><i>So to be clear will a re-structure be imminent, especially with regards to support staff?</i></p>	<p>No, this is not what was said. The Headteacher mentioned a restructure of support staff in the context of when she joined as the Junior headteacher in response to an earlier question. There is no linked restructure in respect of this amalgamation proposal.</p>
<p><i>Will office staff have to re-apply for their jobs?</i></p>	<p>Like stated in the presentation, there are no changes to staff terms and conditions. Staff will be migrated into the new structure of the primary school as opposed to the two separate schools, so no changes.</p>
<p><i>It says the federation was discussed by both governing bodies? Can we have the records of this meeting please?</i></p>	<p>Any governing body minute can be requested from the school so far it is not private & confidential and provided it has been agreed by the governing body. So if it is still in draft form it will not be available but once any set of minutes is approved any person can ask to view them.</p>
<p><i>What about funding for SEN</i></p>	<p>Regarding this amalgamation proposal there is no change in the revenue funding in terms of High Needs funding or SEN budget. So no implications of this proposal on SEN budgets.</p>
<p><i>There are many things that the infants school are proud of e.g forest school, SEN provision school trips, ICT support and of course our established breakfast and after school provision how are these going to be impacted?</i></p>	<p>There is no impact on these services. These are great services as mentioned and if they are working and are well received by the parents and community, then there is an expectation that it would not be impacted by this proposal.</p>
<p><i>I think it is the possible 'restructuring' of staff which is most concerning for infant school staff. Can our TAs and office staff be assured that their jobs are not at risk?</i></p>	<p>Like mentioned in the presentation, this is no greater risk through this amalgamation of a restructure than a school standing alone. We cannot give promises into the future, as you are aware we are in the middle of a pandemic and there are</p>

	more challenges to come. We can't give assurances that there will be no restructure in the future and no school can give that assurance either. But we can give the assurance now that there is no restructure linked to this proposal. There will be no job re-applications, staff will move over to the primary school.
<i>As far as we are aware there is only 1 governor on both governing bodies.</i>	Yes that is right. Like earlier highlighted, the governing body will have the opportunity to consider increasing its membership to include further representation from the infant school if the proposal goes ahead and the governing body changes from a Junior school governing body to a Primary school governing body.
How big will the SLT be with over 800 pupils?	No two schools are the same. It is difficult to say because schools organise in many different ways. With a single headteacher, there may be a mixture and/ or a variation in numbers to include; deputies, assistant heads or even phase leaders, SENCOs, Business manager as part of the SLT. The configuration depends on what the governing body considers as best fit for its school.
<i>You said nothing changes at moment so do we get notice if there are changes with jobs etc</i>	No change, no impact but the single primary school will be the new place of work.
<i>Will all salaries be protected if SLT is restructured?</i>	If the policy specifies that you get protection in a junior or infant school under a restructure condition, then you will get protection in the primary school but if we do not get protection now in both schools then you will not get it in the primary school. The terms remains the same.
<i>We think that the 2 schools are big enough at present but parents, families and children are treated and known by the Head Teachers at present. How do you think 1 head teacher will know and understand nearly 900 children and families, let alone 150 odd staff? Only the positives have been outlined in the paper.</i>	Yes it will be a large school. A good headteacher knows their school and relies on all the staff, good line management responsibilities and communication. In addition it depends on the culture of the school, the governing body and the school community. But there is no reason why a headteacher will not know their families well and to some extent the head and staff

<p><i>Are you saying that there are NO negatives - this is how it would read to parents</i></p>	<p>will know them better as children will be starting from a young age in the single primary school.</p> <p>As stated in the consultation document, the LA's preferred model is a single primary school because of the reasons and benefits highlighted which is a positive. There has been research which shows that pupils fair better in an all through primary school in terms of their wellbeing, attainment & progress. This benefit is recognised by Ofsted, Fisher family trust and also internationally. Of course there maybe negatives which also exists in an infant/junior school and as any other organisation. From discussions so far, one of the negatives that has been highlighted is staff insecurity because of the changes but there is an opportunity for all staff in both schools to come together, embrace the change and make it work for all concerned.</p>
<p><i>I want to say something about the consultation paper as well; I can see that there is a good piece of propaganda in it – the word 'benefits' jumps off in several pages of the document as if there are no problems and by that I mean it is one sided in favour of amalgamation for example; it says that the junior school takes over the infant school and when I queried it with the AD, I was told it was an administrative mechanism. But on reading the consultation documents it says "The Local authority would encourage Parklands Junior School Governing Body to consider all opportunities whereby Governors of the infant school could join the primary school Governing Body". The word 'consider' does not sound like a balanced approach of an amalgamation. I would suggest it has a damaging effect as it sounds like one school is better than the other. This is not true as both schools are rated Good by Ofsted. It makes staff of the infant school feel excluded and they are expecting that the new management will exclude them as well. The consultation document mentions Federation as the</i></p>	<p>Just to repeat; the reason why we are not consulting on a federation is because there was no federation agreement across the two governing bodies. Had there had been, the governing bodies will be the one to consult on this and take this forward as their chosen option. The LA cannot consult on a federation, only the governing bodies can do so if they are both in agreement, hence it is as mentioned in the document.</p> <p>The only option that we could take forward as an LA is for an amalgamation proposal consultation. So that is why the document is about amalgamation and cannot be about federation. Yes, the document highlights the benefit of amalgamation but it is expected because it is the LA's preferred model in line with our strategic objectives.</p> <p>There was a mention of a "take over from juniors" which is a wrong language in this respect because that is not what an</p>

preferred option of the infant school but there is no real exploration of this option. The infant school governors feel they were not properly consulted on federation. The consultation document mentions some disadvantages of federation but not the advantages. The benefits of the federation should be included in the consultation document. A lay person reading this would not know whether a federation is a better or worse option. The document also states "the Council believes that learning and progress will be improved if the two schools are amalgamated to become a single 'all through' primary school". Is there any evidence of this? Havering has examples of Federated schools, have they performed better or worse? It should be provided in the document.

The document is very vague on the issue of staff morale it says "There is no reason for concern amongst staff generally as this should not immediately affect their day to day work and they need to be assured of this" What does not generally mean? If there is no immediate effect When will staff be affected and how?

I would like some figures on staff turnover, I know it's been mentioned already but I would like figures for five years as there is something to discuss here. The document also mentions single ethos as a benefit to children. Staff of the infant school are very proud of their record of SEN, it is an inclusive school. Will this be the ethos of the whole school? Is the LA aware of any differences in the way the two schools approach SEN. The document states "The two schools currently have different ethos. An amalgamation will enable a new collaborative ethos to be formed" How will create this when you are closing one school and allowing the other to take over. Amalgamation in this instance does not seem designed for collaboration for the infant when they are being taken over by the Junior school Federation seems designed for more equitable joining of the two schools. This needs to be a meaningful consultation and I would like you to commit to another meeting before

amalgamation is. Although it is recognised that individual members of staff can feel so, but the proposal is for the coming together of two good schools and building on the best parts which exists.

There are two ways to an amalgamation process; first is to close one school and extend the age range of the other school. Another way is to close both schools and establish a new primary school. In this case, this could not be done because schools have a Good Ofsted category and does not meet the criteria of a closure. Therefore the only option for an amalgamation in this instance, is to technically close the infant school because this is where the headship vacancy is and then extend the age range of the junior school to be a primary school.

In terms of the staff turnover figures, this is available from either school, there is nothing to hide and they can provide those figures. From our perspective, we do not see this as an issue.

Regarding SEN, Havering prides itself as an inclusive borough and that is the borough wide ethos and so it is expected that all schools support an inclusive culture within their school. So as it is a strong practice within the infant school, it is likewise in the junior school. And we expect to see the same in the primary school if the proposal is approved.

The consultation invite went out to both schools and governors were also sent the consultation document. The whole purpose of the consultation is to get the views of all stakeholders. So governors can make their views known to us by completing the online survey.

<p><i>the 18 January and also to allow the governing body of the infant attend the meeting with parents</i></p>	<p>We cannot promise that we will hold another staff meeting but we can consider whether it will be possible in the new year and if so we will inform the two schools.</p>
<p><i>But our parents chose to come to a separate infant and junior school so hopefully they knew the positives and negatives of that</i></p>	<p>This why we are keen to get parents view on the proposal and we hope that the schools are promoting the survey and urging parents to respond to the consultation. There is also parents' consultation meeting later this evening.</p>
<p><i>What will the 'new primary school' budget look like? Surely as one school our budget will be less?</i></p> <p><i>If amalgamation of schools is a policy why did the Ardleigh Green schools federate? Why did Squirrels Infants and Juniors stay as a standalone-all in the last 3 years</i></p> <p><i>Why did Crownfield Jr federate with Mawneys?</i></p> <p><i>The junior governing body refused to meet with our governing body</i></p>	<p>The impact on the school capital budget is about £120k loss spread over three years which relatively a small amount is considering that it is for both schools. There is no other impact otherwise</p> <p>Yes, the LA's policy is to encourage a closer working relationship amongst schools. Regarding federation, there needs to be that agreement between the two governing bodies to have that as a model in order for it to happen. In terms of the Ardleigh Green schools, the two governing bodies agreed to federate, for Squirrels Infants and Juniors, there has been no opportunity to warrant a re-organisation,</p> <p>Whilst this is a preferred model for Havering, is still an amalgamation but this has not been forced on any schools unlike what other LA's do by enforcing it regardless of whether there is an opportunity or not. We always look for an opportunity when it presents itself.</p> <p>With regards to Crownfield/Mawney, this was specifically for standards & improvement support.</p>
<p><i>The two governing bodies didn't agree but why then was amalgamation chosen (the Jr sch option) rather than Federation (the infant school)? other than LA preference is Amalgamation</i></p>	<p>There is an opportunity to consult on an amalgamation. There was no agreement to federate from the Parklands Schools.</p> <p>Yes the LA's preference is for an amalgamation and that is what we are consulting on and asking for feedback from staff and other stakeholders.</p>
<p><i>Why can there not be a period of time where the two schools work together and establish a working relationship and then amalgamation</i></p>	<p>This is in built as part of the process. We have started that process by engaging with the two governing bodies. However,</p>

<p><i>is developed rather than being rushed through in the space of 7 months?</i></p> <p><i>Surely then staff worries will be eased?</i></p>	<p>there is no guarantee that this proposal will be approved hence the point of a meaningful consultation but if it is then approved, there is an opportunity to develop those links, through as already highlighted like expanding the governing body to look at greater working relationships and yes that is when staff worries will be eased. That is why we need to get to the process if a decision is then taken to implement the proposal.</p>
<p><i>Do you not think due to Covid the process should be slowed down so that meeting can take place so everyone voice is heard</i></p> <p><i>Can we see evidence why they didn't agree so we can understand your reasons of no federation</i></p>	<p>We have had far greater contribution from staff by running this via a virtual model as so many questions has been raised through the chat option. This consultation runs till January, so feedback can still be given via the survey. However, there is another opportunity during the representation period for comments and objections to be made.</p>
<p><i>Has the consultation paper and the online consultation questionnaire been translated into the different language both of our schools cater for?</i></p>	<p>We have contacted both schools to ascertain if there is any parents who require the document in another language and we have been provided a list of about 20 languages. But we have not had any specific translation request from any parents. But we think if a request is received, and depending on how many, we could arrange translation service in a meeting format rather than translating the document in 20 different languages.</p>
<p><i>If you say that this is not being rushed through and discussions with both GBs have been ongoing for some months - so working together should have started to happen already but it has not</i></p> <p><i>Do parents know they can/have to request it?</i></p>	<p>Yes, we were working with both governing bodies over months on this without getting an agreement but as an LA we got to a position where we needed to move forward hence the amalgamation proposal.</p> <p>This has now been answered and we hope schools will make parents aware of this consultation.</p>
<p><i>If we have completed the online consultation input can we complete it again or edit our input after this meeting?</i></p>	<p>An earlier submission cannot be edited, however another questionnaire can be filled out and it will be received as a new response.</p>
<p><i>And how do the parents know that they can request it especially if they do not speak English</i></p>	<p>The feedback to both school leaders is that if you are already communicating with parents in those other languages, please</p>

	make sure you are using the same communication method to inform parents about the consultation and we can follow up with the LA support as highlighted earlier.
<i>Sorry you never answered my question about evidence and can we see it on why they didn't agree on federation</i>	This will be part of the governing body minutes and any person can request to view the copy of the minutes. If it was a noted decision then it will be evidenced in the minutes.
<i>Pooneeta said that a good school cannot be closed but the consultation paper states that the infant school will be closed this is an inconsistency</i>	In terms of amalgamation, we cannot close both schools if they are both good. For example, if the junior school had an Ofsted category of RI, in that case both schools would have been closed and a new primary school will be established. But this wasn't the case for this because the Junior school is good and the headteacher vacancy is in the infant so the infant can be closed and the Junior expanded.
<i>Thank you for your time it is good to see so many staff from both side invested in the schools future</i>	

5. Closure of the Meeting

All the questions and responses will be published on both schools website. All stakeholders were once again encouraged to respond to the online consultation survey with their reasons for or against the proposal.

The Chair thanked all again for making out time to attend and hoped that it will be seen as a meaningful consultation and the LA has provided further information on the process.

He acknowledged that any change can be unsettling but hopefully through this meeting those fears have been put at ease but still advised that they can still put in their feedback.

The meeting was closed at 6.00 pm