



29 September 2014

Agenda Item: 5

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR, EDUCATION STANDARDS AND
INCLUSION**

**RADCLIFFE-ON-TRENT COMMUNITY INFANT & NURSERY AND
RADCLIFFE-ON-TRENT COMMUNITY JUNIOR SCHOOLS: POSSIBLE
AMALGAMATION - CONSULTATION OUTCOME**

Purpose of the Report

1. This report provides Committee with the outcome of formal consultation about possible amalgamation of the above named schools and recommends that Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant School and Radcliffe-on-Trent Junior School should not amalgamate to form a primary school at this time.

Information and Advice

2. It is current County Council policy that consultations take place to actively consider the advantages of amalgamating schools to form new primary schools and that reports be brought to Members on the outcome of the consultations with recommendations for action.
3. Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant and Junior Schools are located on separate school sites and are approximately 500 metres apart by the nearest available walking route. Following the departure of the infant school headteacher in August 2013, a temporary collaboration agreement between the two schools appointed the junior school's existing permanent headteacher as the acting headteacher of the infant school since September 2013.
4. The opportunity to consider a possible amalgamation of the two schools from September 2015 at the earliest therefore arose as a result of the headteacher vacancy at Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant and Nursery School.
5. The proposed amalgamation is not a reflection on the quality of education currently provided by either Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant School or Radcliffe-on-Trent Junior School.
6. The predicted combined pupil roll for 2015/16 is 499, with a combined net capacity of 515. Early years provision of 39 full-time equivalent places are also provided at the infant school. By the 2016/17 and 2017/18 academic years, the combined pupil roll is forecast to fall to 481 and 469 respectively.

Consultation

7. Prior to initiating a formal statutory process, informal discussions were held between representatives of Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant, Radcliffe-on-Trent Junior and the County Council about the possibility of amalgamating the schools. Joint formal consultation meetings were then held with the schools' staff, parents/carers and governors. A consultation document was circulated prior to the meetings.
8. The consultation meetings were held on 6 and 7 May 2014 and provided parents/carers, staff, governors and the wider public the opportunity to discuss with County Council officers the implications of amalgamating the two schools.
9. Approximately 1,000 consultation documents were distributed to:-
 - all the staff, governors and parents/carers of pupils at the Radcliffe-on-Trent schools
 - the wider community including residents adjoining the Radcliffe-on-Trent schools' sites where appropriate
 - other schools in the locality
 - the Member of Parliament
 - the local County Councillor
 - Diocesan Authorities
 - the local district and parish councils
 - other interested parties.
10. 81 responses were returned during the consultation period that expired on 13 June 2014. Of these responses:
 - 22 agreed with the proposal to amalgamate
 - 53 disagreed and
 - 6 consultees 'Didn't Know'.
11. The wide range of opposition to the proposed amalgamation led the governors of both schools to request that the process should progress no further.
12. A summary of written responses received either by the reply form provided, via the County Council's website, or by electronic mail is included in the attached **Appendix**.

Post-Consultation Update

13. Since consultation closed on 13 June 2014, the junior school headteacher tendered his resignation with effect from 31 December 2014. There are now therefore headteacher vacancies at both schools. The collaboration agreement will conclude on 31 December 2014 and the governing bodies of both schools are in the process of recruiting new headteachers.

Statutory Notice

14. If amalgamation were to be approved, the proposal requires that both schools shall formally close and that a new community primary school should be established. This will

involve the publication of a statutory notice under the provisions of Sections 11 and 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. This notice would stand for four weeks and the decision on the outcome of its publication would be determined by an independent Schools Adjudicator.

Other Options Considered

15. One other possible option for the future of these two schools was considered which was for both schools to remain as separate infant and junior schools.

Reasons for Recommendation

16. There is significant opposition from staff, governors and parents/carers of both infant and junior schools to the proposed amalgamation.

Statutory and Policy Implications

17. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (Public Health only), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Implications for Service Users

18. If the recommendation of this report is accepted, pupils will remain on roll at their existing schools and will transfer to their next designated school at the appropriate age.

Financial Implications

19. If the recommendation of this report is accepted, there will be no changes in the current financial arrangements which support these schools.

Public Sector Equality Duty Implications

20. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is available as a background paper. Decision makers must give due regard to the implications for people with protected characteristics when considering this report.

Human Rights Implications

21. Parental preference will continue to be facilitated.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That:-

- 1) Committee notes and considers the outcome of formal consultation with staff, governors, parents/carers, local community and other interested parties about the proposals referred to in paragraph 1 of this report.
- 2) Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant and Junior Schools should not amalgamate to form a primary school at this time.

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Constitutional Comments (LM 03/09/14)

22. The Children and Young People's Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

Financial Comments (KLA 28/08/14)

23. The financial implications of the report are set out in paragraph 19 above.

Background Papers and Published Documents

- 1) The document for parents/carers, staff, governors and other interested parties explaining the possibility of amalgamating the two schools (circulated from 22 April 2014)
- 2) Minutes of questions and views expressed and discussed at the consultation meetings held on 6 and 7 May 2014 with parents/carers, staff, governors and local community
- 3) Letters from the governing bodies of Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant and Junior schools dated 5 and 11 June 2014, respectively
- 4) Equality Impact Assessment

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Electoral Division and Members Affected

Radcliffe-on-Trent: Councillor Mrs Kay Cutts MBE

C0484

Possible Amalgamation of Radcliffe-on-Trent Infant & Junior Schools

Consultation Responses Analysis:

Number of consultation documents distributed approximately 1,000

Status of Respondent	No. of responses received Agreed	No. of responses received Disagreed	No. of responses received Didn't Know
Parent/Carer	20	29	5
Governor	0	4	0
Staff	0	13	1
Pupil	0	0	0
Other	1	5	0
Unknown	1	2	0
TOTALS	22	53	6
Where reply forms indicated more than one type of respondent, only one has been included in the table above using a priority order of 'parent/carer', 'governor', 'staff' and then 'pupil/other'.			

Comments/Issues/Points raised at consultation meetings and within Written/ Electronic/ On-line responses:

The views of the Governing Bodies

- Initially supporting the proposed amalgamation, after consideration of wider financial issues and the response of staff and parents to the consultation, both governing bodies formally wrote to Nottinghamshire County Council rejecting the proposal (letters available as background papers).

The decision making process

- In disagreeing with a proposed amalgamation, opinions expressed that the amalgamation has no vision for the future education of the children
- In opposing a proposed amalgamation, feeling expressed that before being in a position to support the proposal, there needs to be a clear plan for how the schools can continue to provide the excellent education service provision on a reduced budget.

Staffing matters

- In support of the proposal, comment made that there will be the opportunity to increase staff knowledge and skills across a wider age range
- In supporting the proposal, opinion expressed that this would result in continuity of teaching from Key Stages 1 to 2, although it was also suggested that this would be difficult to manage across two school sites
- In expressing support for the proposal, comment made that it would benefit children by making the transition from Key Stage 1 to 2 more smooth, as pupils would be more familiar with staff
- In strongly disagreeing with a proposed amalgamation, opinions expressed and concerns raised that this would lead to potential reduced staffing hours or job losses due to similar roles existing in each school
- In completely disagreeing with the proposal, opinions expressed that a reduced budget will mean experienced staff will be too expensive at a time of great change. It was felt that school staff are the most precious resource.

Building and site-related issues

- In support of a proposed amalgamation, opinion expressed that NCC should build a new primary school on the current junior school site to achieve greater efficiencies and economies of scale. It was also felt that given the age of the existing infant school building, it was no longer fit for purpose
- In supporting the proposal, opinion expressed that it would provide an opportunity to make best use of available school resources
- Comment made that the proposed new primary will be too big
- Opinion expressed that many of the proposal's benefits mentioned in the consultation document are not achievable if the new primary is located on two school sites.

Financial issues

- In supporting the proposal, opinion expressed that this would reduce overhead costs if provision was concentrated on one school site. Although this would need a large financial investment, it was felt this would save costs in the long run
- In strongly disagreeing with the proposal, comment made that reduced funding emanating from an amalgamation of the two schools would have many detrimental consequences for the children's education.

Pupil, Curriculum and Community related issues

- In supporting the proposal, opinion expressed that a primary school can provide benefits for children, parents/carers, staff and the local authority that separate infant and junior schools cannot. In particular, a consistent education from start of primary school through to secondary education. For parents/carers, the same school policies would apply throughout the primary years
- Feeling expressed that the proposal would make it a lot easier for families having their children attending one primary school instead of two separate schools
- Opinions expressed that an amalgamation would simplify communication between parents/carers and schools. It was also felt this would enable a more 'joined-up' way of thinking, fostering a consistent educational approach and shared school vision
- In strongly opposing the proposal, concern and opinion expressed that two good schools, which work very well individually, would become a larger school with pressurised staff and shared/over-stretched resources. In this context, it was felt, the quality of schooling could only suffer
- In opposing the proposal, opinion expressed that as the National Curriculum is different for Key Stages 1 and 2, there is no cross over issue. It was also felt that Radcliffe-on-Trent infant and junior schools had successfully managed this transition for several years.