

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	28 May 2013
Subject:	Future Organisation of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) and Cannon Lane Junior School
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Catherine Doran, Corporate Director of Children and Families Services
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Zarina Kalid, Portfolio Holder for Children, Schools and Families
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Appendix A – Decision Makers Guidance Appendix B – Cannon Lane First School representation Appendix C – Cannon Lane Junior School representation Appendix D – representation from a parent

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Statutory Proposals were published in March 2013 that would effect the amalgamation of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) and Cannon Lane Junior School. Cabinet approval is sought to enable the two schools to combine in September 2013.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to determine the statutory proposals in relation to Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) and Cannon Lane Junior School to enable the amalgamation of the two schools in September 2013, namely to:

- Extend the age range of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) to

establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) from 1 September 2013;

- Expand the capacity of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) from 1 September 2013;
- Discontinue Cannon Lane Junior School on 31 August 2013.

Reason: (For recommendation)

In line with the Council's amalgamation policy, combining the two schools would give the opportunity to further improve educational standards by enabling planning as a coherent whole across the primary phase of the national curriculum and providing greater flexibility across and between key stages. Access to the whole primary curriculum supports and informs whole school planning, assessment, pastoral systems, etc, and provides opportunities for wider staff development and experience across the full primary phase.

Section 2 – Report

Introductory paragraph

1. Harrow's vision is to provide high achieving schools at the centre of community services, and to continue improvement in schools to make education in Harrow even better. In order to further this vision, in October 2007 Cabinet agreed its strategic approach to school organisation, which included an amended amalgamation policy that was further clarified by Cabinet in 2008.

Options considered

2. Cabinet have the following options when considering these proposals:
 - a. Reject the proposals;
 - b. Approve the proposals;
 - c. Approve the proposals with modification e.g. in relation to the implementation date;
 - d. Approve the proposals subject to meeting a separate condition.
3. There are separate proposals for the two schools, however these are linked and the proposals should be considered together.

Background

2. The Headteacher of Cannon Lane Junior School will retire at the end of this academic year in August 2013. During the Autumn Term 2012, the governing bodies of the two schools commenced the process to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the Council's amalgamation policy. The amalgamation policy requires separate infant/first and junior schools to

amalgamate when one or more of the triggering circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to. A headteacher vacancy in either or both schools is one of the triggering circumstances.

3. There are two key stages to the processes leading to a decision to amalgamate two schools:
 - Statutory consultation. The amalgamation policy requests the governing bodies of the schools make written recommendations following the consultation period.
 - Publication of statutory proposals, which is followed by a 6 week representation period.

Statutory Consultation

4. The statutory consultation was held from Monday 14 January 2013 until Friday 8 February 2013. This consultation met the requirements of the Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance on closing, expanding and making changes to schools. Two thirds of the written responses received from adults support combining the two schools (73% of parental responses were in support). The outcomes of the statutory consultation are reported under 'Other issues' in Appendix A.
4. The recommendations of the Governing Bodies following the statutory consultation were:
 - Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) Governing Body considers it is in the best interests of the children that both schools should amalgamate.
 - Cannon Lane Junior School Governing Body recommends that the schools stay separate and believes there are compelling and over-riding educational reasons for the schools to remain separate.
5. The Joint Steering Group established by the two governing bodies to plan the consultation of the school communities agreed a timeline for the statutory processes to achieve final decision by May 2013. In order to achieve this timescale, a Portfolio Holder decision was made on 28 February 2013 to publish statutory proposals. In making this decision, the Portfolio Holder considered the outcome of the statutory consultation and the recommendations of the two governing bodies.
6. The statutory proposals that were published were to extend the age range and capacity of the first school and to discontinue the junior school. In accordance with usual practice in implementing the policy, the junior school is proposed to be legally discontinued because there will be no substantive headteacher in post at that school.

Statutory proposals

7. Linked statutory proposals were published on 7 March 2013 with a statutory representation period of 6 weeks that, if approved, would effect the amalgamation of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) and Cannon Lane Junior School to provide an all through primary school:
 - a. A prescribed alteration to extend the age range of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) from 1 September 2013;
 - b. A prescribed alteration to expand the capacity of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) from 1 September 2013;

- c. A notice to discontinue Cannon Lane Junior School on 31 August 2013.

Representations made to the published statutory proposals

8. The local authority received three representations during the representation period from:
- an individual who feels that the two schools should not be combined;
 - the Governing Body of Cannon Lane Junior School who consider that combining the schools is not in the best interest of the children at Cannon Lane Junior School.
 - The Governing Body of Cannon Lane First School who confirm their view that the two schools should combine.
- These representations are appended in full to this report. The reasons set out for these views are summarised in Appendix A under 'Other issues' together with officer comment.

Determination of statutory proposals

9. In its role as the Decision Maker, Cabinet must have regard to the statutory and non-statutory guidance, provided by the Department for Education, when determining statutory proposals. The guidance on expanding a maintained school by enlargement, making changes to a maintained mainstream school, closing a maintained mainstream school and giving children and young people a say have been provided to all Cabinet Members, and are available as background papers. Appendix A provides Cabinet with commentary on the salient points contained in the Decision Makers' Guidance.

Recommendation

10. The Corporate Director of Children and Families Services recommends that Cabinet approve the proposals to effect the amalgamation of the two schools with effect from 1 September 2013. The reasons for this recommendation include the following.
11. Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) Governing Body considers it is in the best interests of the children that both schools should amalgamate. Amalgamation would produce an enhanced learning environment for all children in both schools for reasons that include: children would experience the same ethos and programs of study throughout KS1 and 2; sharing of 'best practice' from both schools, and; a strong school with excellent strategic leadership is in the best interests of the community it serves.
12. The recommendation of the Cannon Lane Junior School Governing Body that the schools should remain separate is noted. Full reasons were provided in the governing body's response and are summarised under 'Other issues' in Appendix A together with officer comment. However, it is considered that the reasons given do not constitute compelling and overriding reasons not to combine the two schools, and they could be fully considered and addressed through detailed implementation planning should Cabinet decide the schools will combine.
13. The representation from an individual who feels that the two schools should not be combined is noted. However it is considered the reasons stated include positive points about current provision at the school that can be retained and built upon in a combined school and the reasons do not represent compelling and overriding reasons not to combine the two schools.

14. In line with the Council's amalgamation policy, combining the two schools would give the opportunity to further improve educational standards by enabling planning as a coherent whole across the primary phase of the national curriculum and providing greater flexibility across and between key stages. Access to the whole primary curriculum supports and informs whole school planning, assessment, pastoral systems, etc, and provides opportunities for wider staff development and experience across the full primary phase.

Legal Implications

15. The Local Authority has a statutory entitlement under Sections 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, to issue statutory proposals in respect of school reorganisation. The statutory proposals were published on 7 March 2013 following the decision made by the Portfolio Holder on 28 February 2013. Cabinet must determine the proposals within two months of the representation period, which ended on 18 April 2013, or the matter is referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for determination. Cabinet must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance when reaching its decision, and should consider the representations received during the course of the publication period when making their decision.
16. The Decision Makers Guidance states that whilst each case should be considered on its merits, there is a presumption in favour of approval for infant/junior school amalgamations.

Financial Implications

17. The governing body and leadership team of a combined school would have to plan strategically in a cost effective manner in the best interests of the children in order to achieve positive outcomes for the children in the long term.
18. The Government has introduced significant changes to school funding and is moving towards a national funding formula. Under the Government's new funding formula the combining of two schools would result in the loss of one element of 'lump sum' funding allocated to schools. In 2013/14 the lump sum amount is £142,230. This money would be retained in that financial year if the schools combine, though currently regulations specify that one lump sum would be lost in 2014/15 and for each year going forward if lump sum funding is retained by the Government. There has been a Department for Education (DfE) consultation with regards to the lump sum and school amalgamations and the government is currently reviewing this with regards to any changes in the 2014/15 school funding. The outcome from this consultation will be known later in the year. Current arrangements are that, if the schools were to remain as separate schools, each school would retain its 'lump sum' funding. Though this is a significant issue it may be considered that it would only put the combined school in the same position as existing all-through primary schools. There will be reductions in expenditure through having one headteacher post and the governing body of the combined school could make decisions that would achieve efficiencies. No other elements of the school budgets would change.

Performance Issues

19. Harrow is a high performing Local Authority and the large majority of local services are judged to be good or better by Ofsted. Schools in Harrow perform well in comparison to national and statistically similar local authorities. The vast

majority of primary schools and secondary schools are judged good or outstanding. Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) achieved an “outstanding” judgement at its Ofsted inspection in September 2008. Cannon Lane Junior School achieved a “good” judgement at its Ofsted inspection in July 2009.

20. The Schools White Paper and Education Act 2011 maintain a focus on driving up standards in schools, and place more of the responsibility with the schools directly for their improvement. The role of the Local Authority in measuring performance and driving improvement has changed significantly and is reduced from its previous level. However, the Local Authority maintains a strategic oversight and enabling role in local education, and is likely to retain some role in monitoring educational achievement and key measures such as exclusions and absence. The Local Authority is also statutorily responsible for supporting and improving underperforming schools.
21. The Local Authority continues to monitor key education indicators. The indicators are used locally to monitor, improve and support education at both school and local authority level; they are also used within information provided to the DfE.

The indicators fall within the following areas:

Attendance and exclusions - remain a statutory duty for the Local Authority to monitor and improve;

Narrowing the Gap - is a fundamental part of Ofsted’s school inspection process, and accordingly the Local Authority monitors the attainment of identified groups of pupils in its schools, for example SEN children;

Underperforming schools – schools are assessed at Key Stage 2 & Key Stage 4 against defined floor standards.

Environmental Impact

22. There is no significant environmental impact arising from these proposals.

Risk Management Implications

23. A summary of high level risks is provided below.

High Level Risks	Consequences	Mitigating/Control Actions
Challenge to decision making.	Delay.	The decision maker must have due regard to the Secretary of State’s guidance for decision makers in reaching its decisions on school reorganisation proposals.
Clarification of the Council’s Amalgamation Policy.	Confusion for stakeholders.	In response to issues raised by the DCSF in regard to the amalgamation policy, and a corporate complaint investigation relating to a school involved in a school reorganisation process, Cabinet agreed a clarified policy at its October 2008 meeting. This clarification does not change the policy requirements.

Equalities implications

24. The equality impact assessment indicates that the equalities impact of Cabinet's decision will be effectively neutral. No children would be displaced if the schools amalgamate or if they stay separate. Harrow's community schools are inclusive schools and this would continue in a combined school. The proposal is intended to build on the many positives already in place at the schools. In an all through school, there may be benefits for pupils with special educational needs in that amalgamation might help to alleviate issues of transition as it could provide continuous support for pupils and a common set of school rules and processes.

Corporate Priorities

25. The proposed amalgamation of the two Cannon Lane schools will support the Council's Corporate Priorities:

- United and involved communities: A Council that listens and leads;
- Supporting and protecting people who are most in need;

by providing opportunities to enhance educational standards and to further promote positive community outcomes by ensuring the most effective and coordinated extended services support to families and children, and the use of school facilities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: Patricia Harvey	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date: 10 April 2013		
Name: Matthew Adams	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date: 15 April 2013		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name: David Harrington	<input checked="checked" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Strategic Commissioning
Date: 12 April 2013		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name: Andrew Baker



on behalf of the
Divisional Director
(Environmental Services)

Date: 10 April 2013

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Chris Melly, Senior Professional, Education Strategy and School Organisation 020 8420 9270 chris.melly@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Portfolio Holder decision report 28 February 2013 - Future Organisation of Cannon Lane First School (4-7 Years) and Cannon Lane Junior School.
Portfolio Holder Report

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/documents/s104784/PHD%20report%20Cannon%20Lane%20schools.pdf>

Portfolio Holder Decision

<http://www.harrow.gov.uk/www2/documents/s104787/Decision%20Notice%20-%20Cannon%20Lane%20First%20and%20Junior%20Schools.pdf>

Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit
guidance for decision makers

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolorganisation>

Equality Impact Assessment

**Call-In Waived by the
Chairman of Overview
and Scrutiny
Committee**

NOT APPLICABLE

[Call-in applies]