

Meeting:	Education Consultative Forum
Date:	29 January 2008
Subject:	Amalgamation Policy
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director of Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Christine Bednell Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Amalgamation Policy

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the context for the Amalgamation Policy, and invites the Education Consultative Forum to consider the impact for schools in the context of a change in the age of transfer.

Recommendations:

The Education Consultative Forum is requested to consider the impact for schools of the Amalgamation Policy in the context of a change in the age of transfer, and to make comments that can be considered in the forthcoming consultation about the Primary Capital Programme and Primary Strategy for Change.

Reason: (For recommendation)

Cabinet agreed a revised Amalgamation Policy in October 2007 to contribute to raising standards of achievement in Harrow and to contribute to establishing the foundation for the implementation of a change in the age of transfer.

Section 2 – Report

Background

At its meeting on 13 September 2007, the Education Consultative Forum considered a report on the Strategic Approach to School Organisation. The report outlined the reasons for considering school re-organisation at this time and provided the Education Consultative Forum with the opportunity to consider and comment on initial proposals. Following discussion, the Forum resolved that proposed approach to school re-organisation in Harrow be supported and approved.

On 11 October 2007, Cabinet considered a report on the Strategic Approach to School Organisation. The report outlined the reasons for considering a strategic approach to school organisation at this time and proposes a framework for seeking stakeholder support for a way forward. Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) commitment be affirmed to implementing a change in the age of transfer from 12 to 11 years;
- (2) a stakeholder reference group be established;
- (3) the submission of a revised Building Schools for the Future (BSF) bid in accordance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance be agreed;
- (4) an amended amalgamation policy be agreed.

In October 2007, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) announced allocations for the Primary Capital Programme, and on 6 December 2007 published guidance for local authorities on developing, agreeing and implementing a strategic approach to capital investment for primary schools. This guidance requires every local authority to consult and agree a local Primary Strategy for Change, which is to be submitted to the DCSF no later than 16 June 2008.

Current situation

Officers are putting in place the detailed work programme to carry forward these initiatives.

A detailed procedure is being developed to support school governors and staff, together with officers, to implement the Amalgamation Policy whenever the trigger circumstances arise at a school. This procedure will set out the processes that need to be followed, and will provide guidance about the issues and considerations that need to be taken into account.

A consultation programme is being implemented to take forward the work to develop and agree Harrow's Primary Strategy for Change. It had been intended to co-ordinate this consultation with the expected DCSF consultation on management of the later waves of the Building Schools for the Future programme, but the DCSF has not yet published their consultation proposals. Nevertheless, it is important that Harrow's consultation programme takes account of Harrow's strategic approach to school organisation and Cabinet's commitment to change the age of transfer.

Initial consultations are occurring with schools and diocesan bodies prior to a wider consultation with stakeholders. A stakeholder reference group will be

established later this month to help steer the work. The consultation on the Primary Strategy for Change will include a vision for education in Harrow, which includes reference to school organisation aligned with the National Curriculum. Following the consultation, the proposed Primary Strategy for Change will be presented to Cabinet on 15 May 2008 for endorsement.

Amalgamation Policy

The Amalgamation Policy is an important element for achieving the change to a new structure of schools in Harrow. When the change in the age of transfer is implemented, Harrow will move to a school structure of secondary schools (age 11-18 years), and primary schools (age 4-10 years) organised into infant and junior schools. Schools in Harrow will then be aligned with the National Curriculum Key Stages. Any remaining separate first and middle schools will become infant and junior schools respectively and the age ranges changed accordingly. The age range of the first schools will be lowered to establish infant schools with Reception to Year 2 pupils. The Year 3 pupils will transfer to the new junior schools. The age range of the middle schools will be changed to establish junior schools with Year 3 to Year 6 pupils. The Year 7 pupils will transfer to the high schools.

It is considered that for the majority of infant and junior schools, the optimum structure is as a combined infant and junior school. This organisation reduces the impact of the change in the age of transfer and provides other benefits for the schools in respect of planning and organisation. It also addresses the reality of the long term financial viability of small infant schools especially those without a nursery. In view of these factors arising from the change in the age of transfer, the Amalgamation Policy was amended to help prepare for this as opportunities arise.

The Amalgamation Policy now requires first and middle schools to amalgamate when one or more of the trigger circumstances arise unless compelling and over-riding reasons not to are demonstrated.

The Education Consultative Forum is requested to consider the impact for schools of the Amalgamation Policy in the context of a change in the age of transfer, and to make comments that can be considered in the forthcoming consultation about the Primary Capital Programme and Primary Strategy for Change.

Financial Implications

Amalgamating schools have had a positive albeit small revenue effect, in previous cases this has resulted in net savings of approximately £40k. The principal saving results from having one head teacher instead of two. Schools will also benefit from having fewer SLA charges for some services, for instance, at present first and middle schools are charged separately for the Schools Finance SLA. This will change to only one charge after amalgamation.

Capital expenditure, where necessary, will be financed through existing capital resources including for example Schools Devolved Formula, and other DCSF resources as they come on stream for example, the Primary Capital Programme from April 2009.

Performance Issues

Delivering School Re-organisation so that Harrow Schools are in line with the national agenda is Council Improvement Plan project IP7D and contributes to a range of performance indicators including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on achievement at all key stages, Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets including those for reducing NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training), and Average Points Score at 16 (GCSE Results) and the Every Child Matters Score Card. Whilst Harrow's performance is currently above national and statistical neighbours at all Key Stages, Harrow's targets, which are set annually by the DCSF, are highly challenging. Harrow has not made as much improvement in these KPIs over recent years as statistical neighbours. This is an indication of the pressures on these targets due to a changing demography. Harrow needs to act to maintain performance, meet the challenging targets it has been set and achieve the most positive outcomes for every Harrow child.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Bharat Jashapara	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	15 January 2008		
Name:	Rosemarie Martin	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	16 January 2008		

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Chris Melly, Senior Professional, Service Development Team, Adults and Housing Department, 020 8420 9270

Background Papers: Cabinet Report on the Strategic Approach to School Organisation dated 11 October 2007.

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	YES
2.	Corporate Priorities	YES