

Meeting:	Education Consultative Forum
Date:	11 September 2008
Subject:	Amalgamation Policy
Responsible Officer:	Director of Schools & Child Development Heather Clements
Portfolio Holder:	Portfolio Holder for Schools & Child Development Councillor Anjana Patel
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe A – Draft Amalgamation Policy

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report presents a draft revised amalgamation policy and supporting documents to Education Consultative Committee for their consideration and comments as part of the consultation process.

Recommendations:

1. The Forum consider the draft and provide comments

Reason: (For recommendation)

To engage stakeholder representatives in the consultation process of the revised amalgamation policy and supporting guidance documents.

Section 2 – Report

2.1 Background

At their meeting in February 2005 Cabinet agreed an Amalgamation Policy.

A revised Amalgamation Policy was considered and agreed by Cabinet in November 2007. The revised policy was up-dated in the light of experience of implementing the policy and changes to the Education and Inspections Act 2006 regarding making changes to schools.

The 2007 Policy documentation is being reviewed and revised to take into account comments from the Department of Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) School Organisation Unit about clarification of the decision making process, and further experience of implementing the policy.

Six schools, have amalgamated in Harrow; St Johns in September 2006, Cedars Manor and Pinner Wood in September 2007. Six schools are in the process of amalgamation; West Lodge First and Middle Schools, Belmont First and Middle Schools and Roxeth Manor First and Middle Schools.

The local authority is undertaking a consultation on the revised policy and supporting documentation with headteachers and chairs of governors. A final draft will be presented to Cabinet in October 2008.

2.2 Main Option

A draft policy document with supporting guidance is provided in Annexe A.

The circumstances when schools are required to amalgamate unless there are overriding and compelling reasons not to do so, is not part of this policy review process. The documentation has been revised with the intention of providing greater clarity about the process and guidance to support the policy's implementation.

The policy comprises the following sections:

The Amalgamation Policy and Flow Chart Timeline for Amalgamation Processes

Guidance Notes:

- Guidance Note 1: Statutory Processes to Amalgamate Schools
- Guidance Note 2: Guidance on Headship Appointment
- Guidance Note 3: Guidance on Establishing a Governing Body

Exemplar and Template Documents

- Exemplar and Template Document A: Steering Group Terms of Reference
- Exemplar and Template Document B: Development Plan
- Exemplar and Template Document C: Consultation Document
- Exemplar and Template Document D: Amalgamation Implementation Plan

2.3 Staffing/Workforce

The Policy includes specific guidance on processes to confirm the leadership of the combined school.

A combined school will require the appropriate staffing structure for the size and number of pupils. The process proposed is that the headteacher and governors develop a shadow staffing structure and appointments are made over time.

No staff have been made redundant as a result of the amalgamation policy in Harrow.

2.4 Equality Impact considerations

There are no equality impact implications arising from this policy.

2.5 Resources, costs and risks

The resources to support the implementation of the amalgamation policy are provided within existing budgets. The officer support provided to schools during the process will be determined through discussion with the schools and local authority. It is expected that there will be different support during the phases of preparation, consultation, statutory notice publication and implementation if that is the agreed outcome. The guidance indicates the support provided by officers at various stages.

2.6 Legal Implications

In accordance with the provisions in the Education and Inspections Act 2006, local authorities have authority to bring forward proposal to make changes to community schools. In doing so, proposers must have regard to the Secretary of State's guidance. Only Cabinet can make decisions on proposals to make changes to schools.

2.7 Financial Implications

Amalgamating schools has had a positive albeit small revenue effect, and in previous cases this has resulted in improved efficiencies of approximately £40k. The principal efficiencies result from having one headteacher instead of two. Schools will also benefit from having fewer Service Level Agreement (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.

2.8 Performance Issues

The Council considers that amalgamated schools will contribute to raising standards in Harrow Schools. The educational rationale for amalgamation is included in the policy. This policy contributes to the Council's Corporate Priority to Extend use of schools while making schools even better.

Risk Management Implications

1. Risk included on Directorate risk register? No
2. Separate risk register in place? No

There is a range of risks in the implementation of this policy and these will be managed within the process for individual school amalgamations.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name: John Stansfield Date: 1.9.08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Chief Financial Officer
Name: Helen White Date: 1.9.08	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the* Monitoring Officer

Section 4 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Johanna Morgan, Service Manager – Partnerships and Well-Being
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Background Papers: None

If appropriate, does the report include the following considerations?

1.	Consultation	Yes
2.	Corporate Priorities	Yes