

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	23 October 2008
Subject:	Amalgamation Policy document and Implementation Guidance
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements Director of Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Anjana Patel Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe A: Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the outcome of the consultation on the Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is asked to:

1. Note the consultation responses and outcomes.
2. Agree the clarified Amalgamation Policy and the Implementation Guidance.

Reason: (For recommendation)

For Cabinet to consider the outcome of the consultation undertaken on the Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance to support the on-going implementation of this policy.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

In October 2007, Cabinet approved an amended Amalgamation Policy to support the Council's strategic approach to school organisation. The amended policy requires the Governing Bodies of all separate First and Middle Schools to amalgamate the two schools when one or more of the specified circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to. A headteacher vacancy in either or both schools is one of the specified circumstances.

The policy remains unchanged in terms of the specified circumstances for amalgamation. The documentation has been reviewed and a revised Amalgamation Policy with Implementation Guidance has been prepared.

Background

Six Schools in Harrow have amalgamated to establish three combined schools, St John's Church of England School September 2005, Pinner Wood September 2006 and Cedars Manor September 2007. In addition, a further six schools are in processes that may result in amalgamation.

Considerable experience has been gained through the implementation of the Amalgamation Policy, and a range of documents has been developed to support the process.

The School Organisation Unit (SOU) at the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has provided guidance on the Harrow Amalgamation Policy.

The investigations of a complaint around the amalgamation process of two schools have included recommendations about the amalgamation policy. These have also been addressed in the drafting.

Options Considered

In this context, a review of the Amalgamation Policy documentation has been undertaken. A revised Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance have been drafted which builds on experience, SOU advice and brings together resources to support the policy implementation.

The Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance contain the following contents:

The Amalgamation Policy

Amalgamation Process Flow Chart
Timeline for Amalgamation Processes

Guidance Notes:

Guidance Note 1: Statutory processes to amalgamate schools
Guidance Note 2: Guidance on leadership of an amalgamated school
Guidance Note 3: Guidance on establishing the governing body

Exemplar and Template Documents

Document A Steering Group Terms of Reference exemplar
Document B Proposal Evaluation exemplar

Document C	Consultation Document exemplar
Document D	Amalgamation Implementation Plan template

It is intended that the advice and guidance will be up-dated to support the Amalgamation Policy and its implementation in the light of further experience of implementing the Policy, changes to the Harrow context and relevant changes to legislation.

Consultation

The draft Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance was sent to headteachers and chairs of governors of first, middle and combined first and middle schools, those schools in Harrow that amalgamated and those schools in the process of amalgamation for their comments.

The Education Consultative Forum (EdCF) considered the draft document at their meeting on 11 September 2008. EdCF suggested that the words "joining together of two schools" are used in the exemplar materials to provide greater clarity of the proposals.

The Headteachers and Directors' Meeting on 18 September 2008 considered the draft document. At the meeting, the Headteachers and Directors expressed general support for the improved clarity and exemplar documents to support the process. They considered that additional emphasis on the consultation with staff was required and this has been included. In addition further clarity is provided about the process.

Five other responses have been received. One is from a school governing body, and four are from individuals. These responses contain comments about the draft documents and a number of amendments have been incorporated. In particular, greater explanation is given of the local authority's responsibility, and of the role of the governing bodies. It is the local authority that has the power to bring proposals to make changes to schools. In Harrow, the local authority consults interested parties, and works with the governing bodies to conduct the consultation of the school communities. This is because the governing bodies are best placed to ensure that all in their school communities are informed properly about the proposals, are able to make their views known, and can give due consideration to the views expressed to inform their recommendation to Cabinet.

In considering the comments made, officers have been mindful that the policy is strategic and needs to be applied to any separate first and middle schools in Harrow. Therefore the policy documentation has some flexibility in its implementation to individual school circumstances. For example, whilst the local authority may express a preferred option or an expectation, this may not be the solution or option most appropriate for the schools concerned. In addition, the policy is bound by education and employment legislation. It is within this context that the comments have been considered and where appropriate have been incorporated.

Legal comments

The local authority has powers under the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to bring forward proposals and publish statutory notices to make changes to community schools. The Act makes provision for Cabinet to determine statutory notices.

In accordance with the Amalgamation Policy, the local authority and the schools plan and undertake the consultation when the specified circumstances in the policy are met. The governors report the outcome of the consultation with the school communities to the Director of Schools and Children's Development. This is then reported to Cabinet and

Cabinet decides whether to publish statutory notices to effect any changes to school organisation.

Financial Implications

Amalgamating schools have had a positive albeit small revenue effect. 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.

If the proposals to change school organisation are agreed and implemented, there will be a significant change to the schools' funding formula. At this time it is not possible to assess the impact on amalgamated schools. However, it is expected that as a combined school there will be less impact than two separate schools. The greatest financial impact of school reorganisation is likely to be in the separate first schools where there will be one less year group of pupils.

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 Reorganisation 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, in particular the following from the new National Indicator Set. NI 72 – 109 'Enjoy and Achieve' indicators covering Key Stage achievement and progression, narrowing the gap for lower performing and vulnerable groups, attendance, behaviour and special educational needs.

Whilst Harrow's performance is currently above national and statistical neighbours averages at all Key Stages, Harrow's targets, which are set annually for the DCSF, are highly challenging. The table below presents Harrow's performance against its targets and the national averages.

Harrow's 2006-07 Results

KS1	Actual	Target	National
Reading L2+	84.7%	Not set	84%
Writing L2+	81.0%	Not set	80%
Maths L2+	90.5%	Not set	90%
Science L2+	88.2%	Not set	89%
KS2	Actual	Target	National
English L4+	82%	85%	80%
Maths L4+	79%	85%	77%
Science L4+	88%	Not set	88%
KS3	Actual	Target	National
English L5+	79%	82%	74%
Maths L5+	79%	80%	76%
Science L5+	75%	78%	73%
GCSE	Actual	Target	National
% 5+ A*-C	68.0%	67.5%	62.0%
% 5+ A*-C incl E&M	56.1%	Not set	46.8%

Risk Management Implications

Risk included on Directorate risk register? No

Separate risk register in place? No

The Amalgamation Policy and Implementation Guidance cover all areas of the policy and its implementation. Reference to the guidance will contribute to the management of key risks including for example, consultation, governance and leadership of the combined schools, implementation plans.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	John Stansfield	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	10 October 2008		
Name:	Helen White	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	15 October 2008		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date:	13 October 2008		

Section 5 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Johanna Morgan, Service Manager, Partnerships and Well-Being,
020 8736 6841 johanna.morgan@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:
Consultation responses.