

Meeting:	Cabinet
Date:	12 November 2009
Subject:	Future Organisation of Welldon Park First School and Welldon Park Middle School
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director of Schools and Children's Development
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Anjana Patel Portfolio Holder for Schools and Children's Development
Exempt:	No
Enclosures:	Annexe 1 - Letter from Welldon Park First School governing body Annexe 2 - Email from Welldon Park Middle School governing body

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

This report sets out the outcome of the statutory consultation about the future organisation of Welldon Park First School and Welldon Park Middle School, and the recommendations of the governing bodies that the two schools do not amalgamate at this time.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

1. Consider the outcome of the statutory consultation and the recommendations from the governing bodies.
2. Agree that there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to amalgamate these two schools at this time.

Reason: (For recommendation)

Amalgamating these two schools at this time would not bring significant benefits to the education and welfare of the pupils because it is not possible to relocate the schools onto the same site at present, and there is no significant stakeholder support for amalgamation.

Section 2 – Report

Introduction

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.

Options considered

2. The Headteacher of Welldon Park Middle School will retire at the end of the Spring Term 2010. During the Autumn Term 2009, the governing bodies commenced the process to amalgamate the two schools in accordance with the Council's October 2007 amalgamation policy. The October 2007 amalgamation policy requires separate first and middle schools to amalgamate when one or more of the triggering circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to, and a headteacher vacancy in either or both schools is one of the triggering circumstances. This report sets out the outcome of the statutory consultation.

Consultation

3. In September 2009, the governing bodies of the two schools established a working group with representatives from both schools to prepare a consultation document, and plan and lead the consultation processes with the school communities.
4. The statutory consultation was held from 25 September 2009 until 23 October 2009. The working group prepared a consultation paper and a proposal evaluation document. The consultation paper was sent to all parents, members of staff and governors on 25 September 2009. Two formal parents consultation meetings for parents of both schools were held on 8 October 2009 to enable discussion. Discussions were held with the staff of both schools, and discussion was held at the school council of the middle school. The proposal evaluation document was made available from the school offices and Harrow Council website, and was distributed at the parents meetings.
5. On 25 September 2009, Harrow Council sent the consultation paper to interested parties in accordance with the Department for Children, Schools and Families School Organisation Unit guidance, including neighbouring local authorities, diocesan authorities, local MPs and elected members, voluntary and community organisations, and Harrow Youth Council. Information about the amalgamation policy and the consultation paper were also made available on the Harrow Council website.
6. The two schools received 192 written responses to the consultation from parents, staff and governors. The responses are as follows (percentages rounded to nearest % point):
 - 73% of responses from parents and staff received by the Middle School are not in support of amalgamation. 22.5% support amalgamation, and 4.5% are not sure.
 - 62% of responses from parents and staff received by the First School are not in support of amalgamation. 23% support amalgamation, and 15% are not sure.

The pupils of the Middle School Council discussed the issues and reported back to their classes. The pupils were aware of the consultation paper and what it was about, and they all decided it would be a bad idea to amalgamate the two schools. The comments from parents and staff included in the consultation responses have been collated and are available to the governing bodies so that the comments and issues can be considered in subsequent future planning.

7. The two governing bodies met on 2 November 2009 to decide their recommendations. Welldon Park First School Governing Body voted unanimously in favour of retaining the schools' separate identities. Two principal reasons were cited for reaching this decision. First, the geography of the schools' separate sites is disadvantageous. Second, most of the advantages normally associated with the amalgamation of first and middle schools do not apply in this case. The letter from the Chair of Welldon Park Middle School Governing Body is attached to this report at Annexe 2. Welldon Park Middle School Governing Body recommend it is not appropriate for the Welldon Park First and Middle Schools to amalgamate since the advantages that might accrue were the schools on the same site would not be achieved in this case. The email from the Chair of Welldon Park Middle School Governing Body is attached to this report at Annexe 2.
8. No other responses to the consultation were received by Harrow Council.

Recommendation

9. The Director of Schools & Children's Development recommends that these two schools do not amalgamate at this time for the following compelling and overriding reasons:
 - the two schools are on separate sites with a road between them, and there is not the capital funding available to locate the schools on a combined site;
 - if the two schools combine it would not be possible to realise the usual economies that can arise from rationalising administrative and management functions. It would be necessary to maintain separate reception, welfare and security arrangements for the safety and well being of the children;
 - the outcome of the consultation shows support across the school community for the schools to remain separate;
 - the governing bodies recommend that the schools remain separate at this time and have stated their reasons for their recommendations;
 - though the schools would remain among the smallest schools in the borough, the governing bodies consider the schools would continue to be viable and to provide a distinctive and quality education experience for the pupils;
 - the schools would contribute to the diversity of education provision in the borough and would continue to be supported by the local authority. For example, a bulge reception class has been created in Welldon Park First School in September 2009, which will have financial benefits for the school as the change in the ages of transfer is being implemented;
 - the governing bodies have well-established cooperative working arrangements, and will continue to consider ways of closer collaboration in the interests of the education of the pupils.

Other considerations

10. 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 stay separate or if they amalgamate.
11. If Cabinet agrees that there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to amalgamate these two schools at this time, Welldon Park Middle School Governing Body will act to recruit a headteacher at the earliest opportunity to ensure effective leadership of the school.
12. In the event Cabinet does not follow the officer recommendation, it may decide to publish statutory proposals. In the event these are published, they may be published at the earliest opportunity, for determination in February 2010 following a representation period. In accordance with practice under the October 2007 amalgamation policy, the statutory route to establish a combined school would be to discontinue the school where the headteacher vacancy has arisen, and to extend the age range and expand the capacity of the other school. Cabinet would need to determine the proposals within two months from the end of the representation period.
13. If Cabinet decides to publish statutory proposals to combine the two schools, officers would propose that the age range of Welldon Park First School would be extended and the capacity expanded, and that Welldon Park Middle School would be discontinued. This is based on the fact that, from April 2010, Welldon Park Middle School would not have a substantive headteacher. This proposed approach was stated in the consultation paper.

Legal comments

14. The recommendation is to preserve the status quo and therefore there are no legal comments in respect of the recommendation.
15. However in the event Cabinet is minded to publish statutory proposals, the decision must be made with regard to the representations and feedback provided by stakeholders. Cabinet must have regard for the Secretary of State's guidance in their decision-making.
16. If Cabinet decides to publish statutory proposals, there would be a 6 week statutory period during which representations could be made. Cabinet would need to determine the proposals within two months from the end of the representation period, giving due regard to the representations received during the representation period. Cabinet's decision is subject to appeal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator and / or judicial review. In the event Cabinet does not make a decision within two months of this period, the decision must be referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, whose decision is also subject to judicial review.

Financial Implications

17. To combine the two separate schools on a single site would require a substantial capital investment. Funding for this would have to be found from existing capital resources, such as Schools Devolved Formula Capital and other Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) specific capital grants.
18. Previous experience suggests that amalgamating schools usually leads to a small reduction in revenue spend of approximately £40k for the combined

school. This is a result of having one headteacher instead of two and rationalising administrative functions. Schools 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 changes to only one charge after amalgamation. However some of these savings, such as fully rationalising the administrative functions, would only be achieved if the schools were amalgamating onto one site.

19. In September 2010 the school reorganisation changes to the ages of transfer will be implemented, and Year 3 will move from first to middle schools, and Year 7 will move from middle schools to high schools. There will be a significant change to school budgets as funding follows the pupil. 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. It is expected that there will be less impact on combined schools than on two separate schools because of the scope to manage changes in one larger school. Welldon Park First School is running a 'bulge class' from September 2009 which will limit some of the impact of the change in the age of transfer.

Performance Issues

20. Delivering School Reorganisation so that Harrow's 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 – 107 'Enjoy and Achieve' indicators covering Key Stage achievement and progression, narrowing the gap for lower performing and vulnerable groups, attendance, behaviour, special educational needs. These are all areas of priority for Harrow as is reflected in Harrow's results, which are broadly inline with the national picture.

National Indicator 2007- 08	Harrow	National
Ni 72- % children achieving 78 points or more & at least 6 points in Social & Emotional & Communication, Language and Literacy areas of learning	44	49
Ni 92- narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the EYFSP and the rest of the Local Authority Area	38.9	35.6
Ni 93- % making two levels of progress English KS1-KS2	86.2	82.2
Ni 94- % making two levels of progress Maths KS1-KS2	81.9	79
Ni 102- achievement gap between pupils eligible for free school meals and their peers achieving level 4 and above in both English and maths at KS2	27.9	22.4
Ni 104- The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap achieving Key Stage 2 English and Maths	44.9	51.0
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups - White	74.9	73.7
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Mixed	75.1	73.6
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Asian	77.0	71.5
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Black	65.6	64.1
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Chinese	86.4	84.5
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – All pupils	73.1	73.0

21. 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 2007 - 08 Results

KS1	Actual	Target	National
Reading L2+	87%	Not Set	84%
Writing L2+	83%	Not Set	80%
Maths L2+	91%	Not Set	90%
Science L2+	91%	Not Set	90%
KS2	Actual	Target	National
English L4+	85%	85%	81%
Maths L4+	80%	85%	79%
Science L4+	89%	Not Set	88%
KS3 (Provisional)	Actual	Target	National
English L5+	77.6%	82.0%	73%
Maths L5+	79.5%	82.0%	77%
Science L5+	74.2%	78.0%	71%
GCSE	Actual	Target	National
% 5+A*-C	69.5%	68.2%	65.3%
% 5+A*-C inc E & M	57.7%	58.0%	47.6%

Impact on Corporate Area Assessment:

22. There is no anticipated negative Corporate Area Assessment impact on efficiency (Use of Resources Assessment) and achievement and inclusion outcomes (Performance Management & Area Assessment) in these schools.

Environmental Impact

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

Risk Management Implications

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

25. A summary of high level risks is provided.

High Level Risks	Consequences	Mitigating/Control Actions
Challenge to Cabinet decision making.	Delay.	Cabinet must have due regard to the Secretary of State's guidance for decision makers in reaching its decisions on school reorganisation proposals.
School reorganisation changes.	Confusion for stakeholders.	The consultation paper included information about the school reorganisation changes in September 2010.
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.
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Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	19 October 2009		
Name:	Linda Cohen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	3 November 2009		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Strategy and Improvement)
Date:	19 October 2009		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	19 October 2009		

Section 6 - Contact Details and Background Papers

Contact: Chris Melly, Senior Professional, Transforming Learning Team
020 8420 9270 chris.melly@harrow.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Consultation paper on the Future Organisation of Welldon Park First School and Welldon Park Middle School.

Consultation responses.

Equality Impact Assessment.

DCSF School Organisation Unit guidance for decision makers
www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg