

REPORT FOR: **CABINET**

Date of Meeting:	15 December 2010
Subject:	Future Organisation of Elmgrove Infant School and Elmgrove Junior School
Key Decision:	Yes
Responsible Officer:	Heather Clements, Director Schools, Quality Assurance and Commissioning
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Brian Gate, Portfolio Holder for Schools and Colleges
Exempt:	No
Decision subject to Call-in:	Yes
Enclosures:	Annexe A – Decision Makers Guidance

Section 1 – Summary and Recommendations

Statutory Proposals were published in October 2010 that could effect the amalgamation of Elmgrove Infant School and Elmgrove Junior School. No objections have been received during the representation period. Cabinet approval is sought to enable the two schools to combine in September 2011.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to determine the statutory proposals in relation to Elmgrove Junior School and Elmgrove Infant School to enable the amalgamation of the two schools in September 2011, namely to:

- Extend the age range of Elmgrove Infant School and Nursery to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) with attached nursery class from 1 September 2011;
- Expand the capacity of Elmgrove Infant School and Nursery from 1 September 2011;
- Close Elmgrove Junior School on 31 August 2011.

Reason: (For recommendation)

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.

Cabinet agreed the publication of statutory proposals and is under a statutory duty to determine the proposals within two months from the end of the representation period, which ended on 15 November 2010, or the matter is referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for determination.

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.

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

4. The headteachers of both schools have resigned and left their posts. During the Spring Term 2010, 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.
5. In March 2010, the governing bodies created a steering group to plan the consultation process with the school communities and prepare consultation

papers to send to all stakeholders. The statutory consultation was held from Monday 7 June 2010 until Monday 12 July 2010. This consultation met the requirements of the Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance on closing, expanding and making changes to schools.

6. At its meeting on 14 September 2010, Cabinet considered the outcome of the consultation and the recommendation of the governing bodies that the two schools amalgamate from September 2011. Cabinet agreed to publish statutory proposals that could effect the amalgamation of the two separate schools. The statutory proposals that were published were to extend the age range and capacity of the infant school and to discontinue the junior school. In consultation with the local authority the governors recommended that the junior school is the school that is legally closed because there is no substantive senior leader in the junior school following the resignations of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

Statutory proposals

7. Linked statutory proposals were published on 4 October 2010 with a statutory representation period of 6 weeks that if approved would effect the amalgamation of Elmgrove Infant School and Elmgrove Junior School to provide an all through primary school:
 - a. A prescribed alteration to extend the age range of Elmgrove Infant School and Nursery to establish a primary school with an age range of 4 years (Reception) to 11 years (Year 6) with attached nursery class from 1 September 2011;
 - b. A prescribed alteration to expand the capacity of Elmgrove Infant School and Nursery from 1 September 2011;
 - c. A notice to discontinue Elmgrove Junior School on 31 August 2011.
8. The local authority received no representations or comments during the representation period.

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. Annexe A provides Cabinet with commentary on the salient points contained in the Decision Makers' Guidance.

Recommendation

10. The Director of Schools, Quality Assurance and Commissioning recommends that Cabinet agree the statutory proposals to effect the amalgamation of the two schools with effect from 1 September 2011. 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 comments

11. The Local Authority has a statutory entitlement under ss.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 4 October 2010 following the decision made by Cabinet on 14 September 2010. Cabinet must determine the proposals within two months of the representation period, which ended on 15 November 2010, 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.

12. 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

13. 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 infant and junior schools are charged separately for the Schools Finance SLA. This changes to only one charge after amalgamation.

14. Currently it is not anticipated that any capital works would be required as a necessity to enable the amalgamation to proceed. However there may be changes to the premises that would enhance the workings of the school as a combined school. Funding for such works would be considered as part of agreeing the future capital programme.

Performance Issues

15. 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.

Primary National Indicators 2008-09	Harrow	National
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	34.4%	22.3%
Ni 104- The Special Educational Needs (SEN)/non-SEN gap achieving Key Stage 2 English and Maths	45.1%	N/a
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – White British	77.2%	73.2%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – White Irish	87.5%	79.6%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – White Other	74.2%	69.5%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Mixed White Black Caribbean	75.0%	69.5%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Mixed White & Asian	91.9%	79.1%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Mixed Other	72.5%	74.7%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Indian	89.2%	80.6%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Pakistani	65.5%	64.5%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Asian Other	79.2%	75.3%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Black Caribbean	54.1%	63.0%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Black African & White and Black African	59.7%	66.1%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Black Other	57.1%	62.7%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – Any Other Ethnic Group	66.2%	66.8%
Ni 107- % pupils achieving level 4 or above in both English and maths at KS2 for Black and minority ethnic groups – All pupils	76.6%	73.0%

16. 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 Department for Education, are highly challenging. The table below presents Harrow's performance against its targets and the national averages.

Harrow's 2008 – 09 Results

EYFSP	Actual	Target	National
NI 72 - % children achieving 78 points or more AND at least 6 points in Social & Emotional & Communication, Language and Literacy areas of learning	50%	49.1%	52%
NI 92 - Narrowing the gap between the lowest achieving 20% in the EYFSP and the rest of the Local Authority Area	38.1%	33.96%	33.9%
KS1	Actual	Target	National
Reading L2+	86%	Not set	84%
Writing L2+	83%	Not set	81%
Maths L2+	91%	Not set	89%
Science L2+	88%	Not set	89%
KS2	Actual	Target	National
English L4+	82%	Not set	80%
Maths L4+	81%	Not set	79%
Science L4+	88%	Not set	88%
English & Maths	75%	79%	72%
GCSE	Actual	Target	National
% 5+ A*-C	74.8%	Not set	70.0%
% 5+ A*-C inc English & Maths	60.8%	64%	49.8%

Environmental Impact

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

Risk Management Implications

18. A summary of high level risks is provided in the table below.

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.

Equalities implications

19. 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.

Corporate Priorities

20. The proposed amalgamation of the two Elmgrove schools will support corporate priorities by providing opportunities to enhance educational standards and to help ensure the most effective and coordinated extended services support to families and children, and the use of school facilities.

Section 3 - Statutory Officer Clearance

Name:	Emma Stabler	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Chief Financial Officer
Date:	24 November 2010		
Name:	Sarah Wilson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Monitoring Officer
Date:	15 November 2010		

Section 4 – Performance Officer Clearance

Name:	David Harrington	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director Partnership, Development and Performance
Date:	17 November 2010		

Section 5 – Environmental Impact Officer Clearance

Name:	Andrew Baker	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	on behalf of the Divisional Director (Environmental Services)
Date:	15 November 2010		

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:

Papers of Cabinet 14 September 2010 - Future Organisation of Elmgrove Infant School and Elmgrove Junior School

Department for Education School Organisation and Competitions Unit guidance for decision makers www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg

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

NOT APPLICABLE