

Meeting: School Organisation Committee

Date: 18 January 2005

Subject: St John's First and St John's Middle Schools Amalgamation Proposal

Status: Public

Author: London Diocesan Board in partnership with the Governors of St John's First and St John's Middle Schools

Contact: Geoff Edwards, London Diocesan Board for Schools

36 Causton Street, London SW1P 4AU

020 7932 1155

geoff.edwards@london.anglican.org

Section 1: Summary

This report provides Members of the School Organisation Committee (SOC) with information about a proposal to amalgamate St John's First and St John's Middle Schools. The amalgamation will involve the closure of the separate First and Middle Schools and the establishment of a new Voluntary Aided St John's First and Middle School, to take effect from 1 September 2005.

The report details the outcome of the Statutory Notice procedure and recommends that Members consider the three proposals involved in the amalgamation. As a Voluntary Aided School the promoters for the proposal are the London Diocesan Board for Schools and the Governing Bodies of St John's First and Middle Schools.

Decisions Required

Members agree to:

- 1) note the outcome of the consultation and Statutory Notices procedure for the amalgamation of St John's First and St John's Middle Schools; and
- 2) determine the following proposals as outlined in the Statutory Notices:
 - a) discontinue St John's First School and discontinue St John's Middle School; and
 - b) establish the new combined St John's First and Middle School.

Reason for report

The SOC is required to determine Statutory Proposals received in relation to school openings and closures. This report provides Members with information about the proposals required to amalgamate St John's First and Middle Schools.

At the SOC meeting of 2 November 2004, Members were informed that the Governors were undertaking an informal consultation on the proposal to amalgamate St John's First and Middle Schools. Since then the consultation has been completed and the Governors of both schools, after considering the responses they received, have agreed to proceed with the proposal. On 18 November 2004, the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) endorsed the Governors' proposals.

Statutory Notices to discontinue the separate First and Middle Schools and establish the new combined School were published on 25 November 2004, allowing six weeks for comment.

This report will provide SOC with information to make a determination on the proposals, and includes comments received in response to the Statutory Notices.

Benefits

The Governors consider that the benefits are summarised as follows:

- Together the proposals to amalgamate the First and Middle Schools will deliver greater continuity and consistency throughout the primary years, within a family setting.
- The combined school will promote a smoother transition into Year 4 and Key Stage 2 for pupils and their families by enabling greater educational continuity and consistency of approach. It will also provide greater access to resources, accommodation and specialist facilities for students and staff.
- The amalgamation will ensure that parents and the local community are able to relate to one school, thereby providing a focal point for school leadership and community links.

Cost of Proposals

- The new school will be formed by the amalgamation of the First School and Middle School. There are no capital costs associated with the implementation of the proposal.
- The school will be funded in the accordance with Council's Schools Funding Formula.

- There will be transitional arrangements in place to support the first 2 years of the new school's operation.

Risks

- The amalgamation is considered a low risk proposal. Both schools have been operating successfully on the same site for many years and strong links already exist between the staff and students.
- The two schools and their Governors are committed to developing strategies to preserve the special qualities of education for younger and older children in the new combined environment. This will address the concerns expressed by some parents during the consultation process.

Implications if recommendations rejected

- The identified benefits of moving towards a combined school model of organisation will not be realised if the proposal is rejected.
- Both schools have been considering the possibility of amalgamation for some time. As part of the planning and consultation, they have undertaken reviews of existing policies, staffing arrangements and curriculum. If the proposal is rejected much of this strategic work will be made redundant, which may affect staff morale and impact on forward planning efforts.
- A new Head Teacher will need to be appointed at the First School, which currently has a temporary Head Teacher.

Section 2: Report

Brief History

- 1.1 At its meeting in May 2004 the Cabinet of Harrow Council agreed an approach to *Shaping Schools for the Future*, which included an Amalgamation Policy for First and Middle Schools.
- 1.2 The policy requires that Governors consider formally the future of their schools as a combined first and middle school when a Headteacher vacancy arises in one of the schools. The policy seeks to secure a range of Council objectives. One is to promote combined schools as the preferred model of organisation for schools in Harrow.
- 1.3 In accordance with Council policy, the Governing Bodies of both schools agreed to consider amalgamation when the First School's Headteacher position became available. A Steering Group of Governors was

established initially to undertake the consultation, consider the responses and report to both Governing Bodies. The Steering Group also undertook initial planning for a combined school once the Statutory Notices had been published.

- 1.4 The consultation process involved parents, teachers, staff and other interested parties (see below). After careful consideration of the responses from this process the Governors agreed to proceed with the proposal. The London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) endorsed the Governors' decision.
- 1.5 The proposal to establish the new School is put forward by the LDBS. The proposal to close the separate First and Middle Schools is the subject of two separate proposals put forward by the Governing Bodies of each school.
- 1.6 The LDBS and the Governing Bodies completed the consultation process, during October 2004 and subsequently published the Statutory Notices and prescribed information (see Appendices A, B and C).
- 1.7 A decision by the Portfolio Holder for Education and Lifelong Learning was published on 23 December supporting the proposals of the Governing Bodies and Diocesan Board. A copy of the report and decision notice is attached at **Appendix F** and **Appendix G** respectively.
- 1.8 During the Statutory Notice period objections were received from Mr A Gadsby and Mr R Sainsbury and are attached for you to consider at **Appendix D (i) and D (ii)**. These detailed objections were received towards the end of the Statutory Notice period and appropriate responses could not be prepared in time for the dispatch of the agenda and supporting papers to members of the SOC. The responses of the LDBS and Governors will be sent to SOC members as soon as possible and prior to the meeting on 18 January.
- 1.9 The Governing Bodies and the LDBS now require the SOC to make a determination on the proposals.

Consultation

- 2.2 The consultation process involved the circulation of a consultation document to Parents/Carers, Staff, Councillors, Professional Associations and Unions, as well as the Chairs of Governors and Headteachers of all Schools in Harrow and neighbouring LEAs. The Governing Bodies also held meetings for Parents/Carers and Staff of both St John's Schools during October.
- 2.3 The opportunity to provide written feedback to the Governing Bodies was offered to all interested parties. In addition, the Governors arranged a

series of drop-in surgeries to allow Staff, Teachers and Parents/Carers an opportunity to discuss any aspects of the proposals.

- 2.4 The process involved consultations both before and after publication of the statutory notices, in line with the statutory requirements. All comments received during the consultation period were considered by the Governing Bodies of both schools during the decision making process.

Financial Implications

- 3.1 This proposal involves no additional costs above those of funding the existing two schools. In accordance with the Council's Policy, after a transition period, there will be a £17,000 saving from funding a single amalgamated school. Harrow Council will share this saving amongst all schools in Harrow.

Legal Implications

- 4.1 The Statutory Notices and Prescribed Information have been checked and are legally valid. The consultation process adhered to the necessary statutory principles.

Equalities Impact

- 5.1 There are no anticipated equalities impact implications.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendices

Appendix A Prescribed Information and Statutory Notices for the Closure of the St John's First School

Appendix B Prescribed Information and Statutory Notices for the Closure of the St John's Middle School

Appendix C Prescribed Information and Statutory Notices for the establishment of the St John's First and Middle School

Please note that Appendices A, B and C have been distributed separately from the main agenda to Members and Reserves of the Committee only. Copies are available on request from Nick Wale, nick.wale@harrow.gov.uk, 020 8424 1323.

Appendix D (i) Representation/Objection from Mr A Gadsby

Appendix D (ii) Representation/Objection from Mr R Sainsbury

Please note that the objection from Mr A Gadsby was accompanied by a number of background documents. These have been distributed

separately from the main agenda to Members and Reserves of the Committee only. Copies are available on request from Nick Wale, nick.wale@harrow.gov.uk or 020 8424 1323.

Appendix E LDBS and Governors response to the objections (To Follow – please see paragraph 1.8 above)

Appendix F Portfolio Holder Decision Report

Appendix G Portfolio Holder Decision Notice