



Ref: PHD 072/04

Subject:	St John's First and St John's Middle Schools amalgamation proposal
Responsible Officer:	Geoff Wingrove, Director of Strategy
Contact Officer:	Johanna Morgan, Group Manager, People First
Portfolio Holder:	Education and Lifelong Learning
Key Decision:	No
Urgent/Non Urgent:	Non-Urgent
Power to be exercised:	Portfolio Holder Responsibilities (Allocation of Responsibilities) - Para 2 (iii) of Delegated Powers of Portfolio Holders, Appendix to the Executive Procedure Rules, Part 4D of the Constitution – as the report is non-urgent.
Status:	Public (Part 1)

Section 1: Summary

This report provides 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.

Decision Required

To:

- 1) support the following proposals as outlined in the Statutory Notices:
 - a) discontinue St John's First School
 - b) discontinue St John's Middle School; and
 - c) establish the new combined St John's First and Middle School.

Reason for report

The School Organisation Committee is required to determine Statutory Proposals received in relation to school openings and closures. At its meeting on Jan 18 2005 the SOC will consider the three linked proposals required to amalgamate St John's First and Middle School.

Statutory Notices to establish the new combined School and discontinue the separate First and Middle Schools were published on 25 November 2004, and allow six weeks for comment (Annexe A). The closing date for comments is 6 January 2005. The SOC will consider these responses when it makes its final determination on the proposals.

This report will enable the Portfolio Holder to indicate the Council's support or otherwise for the proposals, as part of this Statutory Notices procedure. This will be reported to SOC as a response received during the Statutory Notice period.

Benefits

- This amalgamation is in accordance with the Council's Amalgamation Policy agreed by Cabinet in May 2004. The Governors of both Schools have considered amalgamating the two separate schools when one of the Headteachers resigned at the end of the Summer term 2004. This is one of the Council Policy circumstances where Governors are requested to consider amalgamation.
- Together the proposals to amalgamate the First and Middle Schools are intended to deliver greater continuity and consistency throughout the primary years, within a family setting.
- It is expected that the combined school will promote a smoother transition into Year 4 and Key Stage 2 by enabling greater continuity and a 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 a First School and a 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 working towards the 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

- 1.1 At its meeting in May 2004 the Cabinet 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 and then, to undertake initial planning for a combined school once the Statutory Notices were 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. The Statutory Notice period will conclude on January 6, 2005.

Options considered

- 2.1 The two options considered throughout the consultation process were to:
 - a) Amalgamate; or
 - b) Remain as separate First and Middle Schools.

Consultation

- 2.2 There has been a consultation process involving the school, parents/carers, school staff, other neighbouring schools and LEA's. This consultation occurred both before and after publication of the statutory notices, in line with the statutory requirements.
- 2.3 The Ward Councillors have been consulted about the amalgamation of the schools.

2.5 Financial Implications

This proposal involves no additional costs above those of funding the existing two schools. After a transition period, there will be a £17,000 saving from funding a single amalgamated school. This saving will be shared amongst all schools in the Borough

Signature Date

Name (print)

2.6 Legal Implications

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

Signature Date

Name (print)

2.7 Equalities Impact

There are no anticipated equalities impact implications

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

List other background papers that are available on request:

Statutory Notices and Prescribed Information

Signature:

Position *Geoff Wingrove, Strategy Director People First*

Name (print)
.....

Date:

FOR PORTFOLIO HOLDER

* I do agree to the decision proposed

* I do not agree to the decision proposed

* Please delete as appropriate

Notification of personal interests (if any):

(Note: if you have a prejudicial interest you should not take this decision)

Additional comments made by and/or options considered by the Portfolio Holder

Signature:

Portfolio Holder

Date: