

# Decision Record –Stockingford Infant and Junior Schools,Nuneaton

Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking decision: *name and portfolio*

Councillor Heather Timms, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools

Date of Decision: (NOT BEFORE 25 November 2011)

28.11.11

## Decision taken

I, Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools, the Strategic Director for the People Group be authorised to consult on linked proposals to close Stockingford Junior School and extend the age range of Stockingford Infants School to achieve a single all-through Primary school, for children age 4 – 11 years.

## Reasons for Decisions

Warwickshire Schools Organisation Framework document supports the creation of all through primary schools in preference to separate infant and junior schools on strong educational grounds. All through primary schools generally add value to school achievement because of the continuity and progression they provide for pupils, and the greater economies of scale and access to more specialised teaching than can otherwise be achieved.

The County Council policy gives priority to school amalgamations where the schools share the same or adjacent sites and where the capital cost is either minimal or is deemed a spending priority. Following formative discussions with the two schools, it has been agreed that in this case the two schools could be amalgamated without the need for building work yet gain all the major benefits of being one school in terms of governance, leadership, and most importantly continuity and progression in pupils' learning. There will therefore be no capital implications for this proposal.

The national agenda is more heavily focused on raising standards for **all** groups of pupils in **all** schools. The approach to ensuring that this emphasis results in real progress on the ground involves the identification of schools where it is believed that pupil attainment and progress are an issue requiring structural solutions to be found. Stockingford Junior School is currently vulnerable under these new criteria since data over a 5 year period suggests that standards are not rising quickly enough to bring results above the new, more robust national floor standard.

Supporting the raising of standards must be the key criterion for the proposal. It is argued that generally 'all through' primary schools have a number of advantages of separate infant and junior schools, including continuity (of education, curriculum, assessment and school ethos), greater flexibility in the use of staff skills and economies and benefits of scale.

## **Background Information/ factors considered in arriving at these decisions**

### **Background**

- 1.1 Stockingford Infants School is a community infant school serving pupils 4-7 years of age. The school is located in an area of traditional housing to the west of Nuneaton and most of its pupils come from the immediate locality. Stockingford Infant has an admission number of 120 and physical capacity of 360 pupils. In Sept 2011 there were 269 pupils on roll at the school.
- 1.2 Stockingford Junior School is a community junior school serving pupils from 7–11 years of age. The school is located on a campus site adjacent to Stockingford Infant (and close by Stockingford Early Years Centre and Nursery School). Stockingford Junior has an admission number of 120 and physical capacity for 480 pupils. In Sept 2011 there were 272 pupils on roll at the school.
- 1.3 A private nursery and the Stockingford Early Years Centre and Library are located on the same campus as the existing Infant and Junior schools. These facilities will not be affected by the proposal to amalgamate the Infant and Junior Schools.
- 1.4 Recent pupil numbers indicate a slightly increased number of pupils entering the infants school but a decreasing proportion of Year 2 pupils transferring to the junior school.

### **Financial and Legal Implications**

- 1.5 The amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools can be achieved in law by one of two processes. For community schools the LA can either publish proposals to close both schools and open a new school, either through a competition or after receiving exception from the Secretary of State, or the LA can publish proposals to close one school and make proposals to change the age range of the other.
- 1.6 Provisions of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 mean that all new schools including those resulting from the amalgamation of existing schools may be subject to competition for their provision. This means that in effect any new school could be open to bids from educational providers other than the Local Authority. Furthermore a robust case would need to be developed for the Secretary of State to agree to any new school being opened as anything other than an academy.
- 1.7 Prior to Statutory consultation there has been initial formative consultation with both the Stockingford schools' governing bodies and their school leaders. All parties have indicated their strong preference that at this stage the Local Authority continues to maintain the all through primary school which would result from amalgamation. For this reason the linked proposal is to close Stockingford Junior School and to extend the age range of Stockingford Infant

School, thereby 'growing' the infant into a primary school without the need for an entirely new school to be created.

- 1.8 As part of the statutory process it will be necessary to consult key stakeholders including staff, existing parents and the parents of prospective pupils, governors of the two schools, pupils of the schools, Diocesan Authorities, local schools, other local admission authorities, neighbouring Local Authorities, County and Borough Councillors and the local MP.
- 1.9 Detailed consideration of equality issues will be given during the design phase of the new school with particular attention being paid to accessibility issues and facilities.
10. The key milestones, subject to responses at each stage, are as follows:
- Consultation on proposals 5 Dec 2011 – 28 Jan 2012
  - Nuneaton and Bedworth Area Committee 1 Feb 2012
  - Report to Lead Portfolio Holder 24 Feb 2012
  - Publication of statutory notices 8 March 2012
  - End of objection period 5 April 2012
  - Cabinet 19 April 2012
  - Primary school formed Sept. 2012

### **Background Papers**

School Organisation Framework 2005 – 2010.

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Strategic Director:	Wendy Fabbro
Portfolio Holder	Cllr Heather Timms

### **Checklist**

**Urgent matter: yes/no\***

No

**Confidential or Exempt (state category of exempt information)**

No

**Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework**

No

**List of Reports considered** [please attach or forward a copy]

As published

**List of Background Papers** [please include directorate contact names and numbers for access to background papers]

- School Organisation Framework Document 2005/10

**Any members and officers consulted or informed and any comments given.**

Cllr Heather Timms – Decision Maker  
Local member: Cllr Barry Longden, Cllr Sonja Wilson  
Legal: Naomi Bentley Lawson, Victoria Gould, Fay Ford  
Property: Steve Smith  
Finance: Chris Norton

**For information:** Cllrs Tandy, Ross, Balaam, Rickhards., Cllr Robbins