

Portfolio Holder for Child Safeguarding, Early Intervention and Schools

Stockingford Infant and Stockingford Junior Schools, Nuneaton

Recommendation

That 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.

1. Key Issues

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 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.
- 1.3 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.
- 1.4 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.
- 1.5 Attached as **Appendix A** is a site plan of Stockingford Infant and Junior Schools.

- 1.6 It should be noted 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.
- 1.7 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. Further details are shown below.

Table 1 – Actual and forecast numbers on role

Admission Number	DCSF Number	Year Group	Actual Numbers					Forecast Numbers		
			Sept 2007	Sept 2008	Sept 2009	Sept 2010	Sep 2011	Sep 2012	Sep 2013	Sep 2014
Stockingford Infant School										
120	2121	0	85	91	87	81	110	111	101	97
		1	88	90	92	87	81	110	111	101
		2	106	88	90	92	87	81	110	111
		Total	279	269	269	260	278	302	322	309
Stockingford Junior School										
120	2120	3	97	80	73	63	80	81	78	90
		4	93	97	82	74	63	80	81	78
		5	80	93	94	80	74	63	80	81
		6	117	83	87	89	80	74	63	80
		Total	387	353	336	306	297	298	302	329
Overall Total			666	622	605	566	575	600	624	638

2. Proposal

- 2.1 The linked proposal is to close Stockingford Junior School whilst extending the age range of Stockingford Infant School to achieve an all-through primary school, using the site and buildings of both existing schools. It is proposed that the newly amalgamated Primary school would provide for 4 forms of entry with a capacity to admit 120 pupils per year group.
- 2.2 In considering school organisation proposals it is important to focus stakeholders on the key issues so that crucial strategic aims do not become lost in important but relatively minor details.
- 2.3 This proposal should be considered against the criteria of:
- Creating a school better placed to take on the challenges of raising standards for local children.
 - A school with increased capacity to respond to local community needs.
 - A school with secure and positive future making an efficient use of resources.

- 2.4 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.
- 2.5 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. It is worth stressing some of these potential advantages:
- Continuity of the child’s experience of education. Transition between schools is often a stressful time for children, when their attainment often suffers a dip and progress slows. Moving from Year 2 to Year 3 in an all year primary school removes this factor.
 - Continuity of the curriculum. The school can engage in long term curriculum planning across seven years, ensuring coherence and progression. Subject leaders in all through primary schools will usually have a wider understanding of the developmental stages in their subject, being better able to support colleagues in upper KS1 or lower KS2 in making provision for more able or low attaining pupils.
 - Continuity of assessment. When pupils move school at the end of a key stage, there is often discrepancy and sometimes dispute about assessment. In all through primaries teachers can engage in joint moderated assessment across the key stage boundary.
 - Coherence of assessment means more accurate assessment and better pupil tracking, leading to better planning of appropriate work for children.
 - Greater flexibility in the use of staff skills – teachers moving across the KS1/KS2 divide, helping develop their own professional skills with the school benefitting from their wider experience.
 - Continuity of school ethos, policy and practice. The leadership, management and governance of an all through primary can ensure that children experience consistency of ethos, values, social codes of behaviour, pastoral care, day to day routines and adult/pupil relationships.
 - Continuity in the school’s knowledge of the child/family context including any special circumstances and need, so strengthening a personalisation of educational provision.
 - Continuity in the experience of parents. Parents are better able to understand school policies and practices, and see the “bigger picture”.
 - Economies and benefits of scale – greater sharing of resources across the larger all through school.

3. Timescales associated with the decision/Next steps

- 3.1 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,

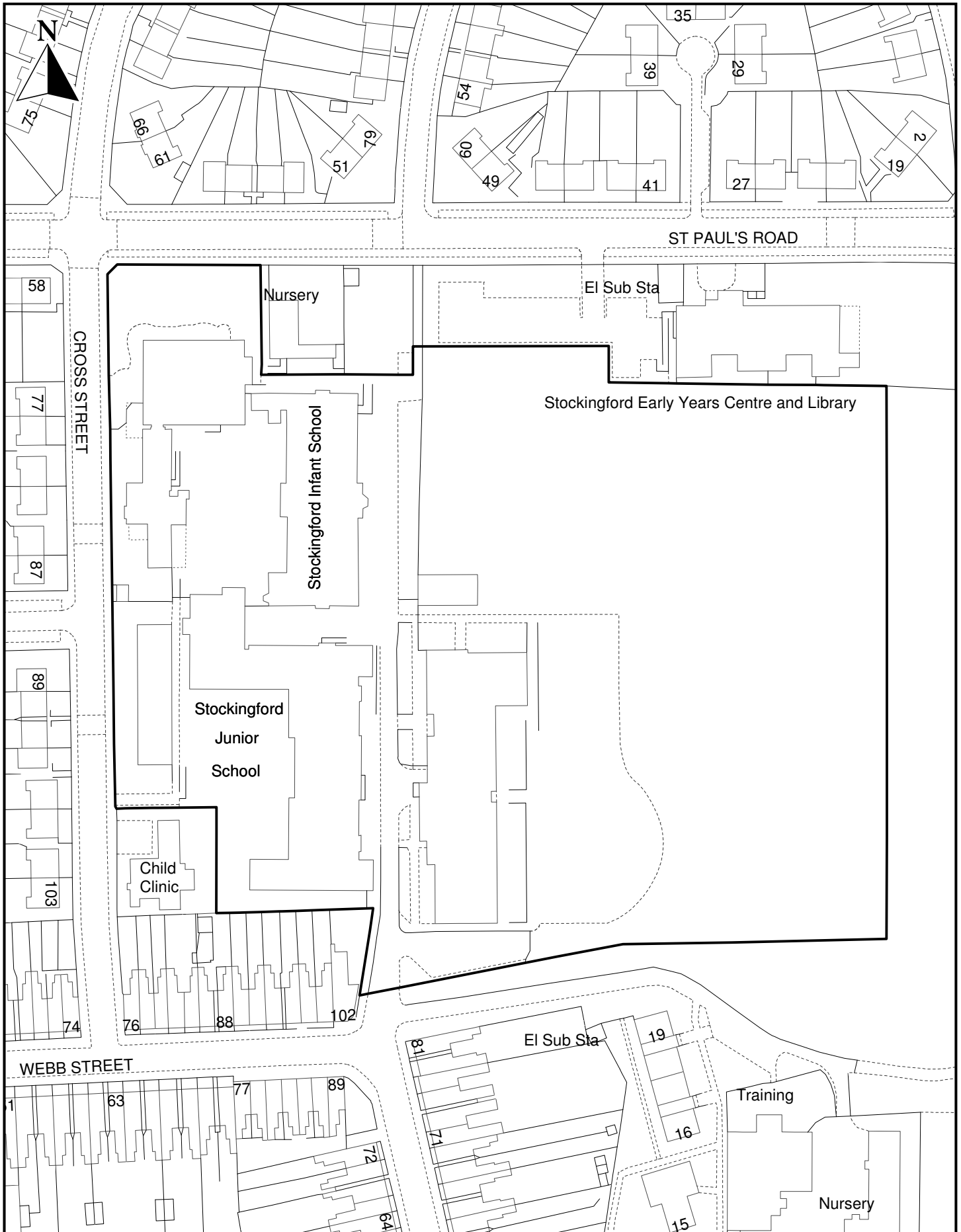
or the LA can publish proposals to close one school and make proposals to change the age range of the other.

- 3.2 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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

1. School Organisation Framework 2005 – 2010.

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Warwickshire County Council, 100019520, 2011

Title:
Nuneaton
Stockingford Infant & Junior
Schools

Scale:	1:1250
Grid Ref:	433670,291278
Operator:	GSEV
Date:	16/11/2011

