


Decision Record – Consultation on the Amalgamation of Round Oak School with Ridgeway School

Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking the decision	Councillor Colin Hayfield Education & Learning
Date of Decision 20 January 2020	

Decision Taken

That the Portfolio Holder for Education and Learning agrees to the undertaking of a public consultation on the amalgamation of Round Oak School and Ridgeway School.

Reasons for Decisions

Consultation exercises require the permission of the Portfolio Holder.

Background Information

The Annual Education Sufficiency Update published in June 2019 shows that in the Warwick/Leamington (Central) area of Warwickshire, an additional 78 special school places will be required by academic year 2022/23. Some of these places will be provided by expanding the number of Specialist Resourced Provision places (in mainstream schools) but the vast majority will need to come via an expansion of the two existing special schools in the area.

Ridgeway School is a special school for primary aged pupils. The site of the school is small and there is no scope for further building. Round Oak School is a special school for secondary aged pupils. It has a much larger site and there are significant opportunities for development. All the additional demand could therefore be met through an expansion of Round Oak School. However, this would allocate new classrooms to secondary aged pupils only, when there is also a demand for primary places. The amalgamated school would occupy both sites and hence additional demand can be balanced across the two phases.

Amalgamation of the two schools also has other benefits. A single all-through will lead to economies of scale, enabling school leaders to make more efficient use of resources to ensure that children progress well. All other areas of the county have all-through special schools.

The SEND and Inclusion strategy pledges that children and young people with SEND will make good progress and transition smoothly into the next stage of their education. By combining the two schools, the transition from primary to secondary will be far smoother because pupils will be moving within the same school.

Should the amalgamation not take place, the need for additional special school places in the primary phase will need to be met in some other way. Places could be purchased in independent special schools. This would involve considerable extra cost. Alternatively, a primary special school in another area could be expanded but that would mean that some pupils would have to travel further and there would be additional transport costs.

When amalgamating two schools then one school must close and the other expand. In August, the Governing Body of Round Oak was replaced by an Interim Executive Board. It is therefore recommended that Round Oak should close, and the age range at Ridgeway School should be altered from 3-11 to 3-19.

Any closure or change to the age-range of a community special school must be carried out in accordance with the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for Education 'Opening and closing maintained schools.' The guidance requires the local authority to undertake a statutory consultation for a period of at least 4 weeks, with the proposals published both online and in a local newspaper, as well as to the governing body, the parents of registered pupils at the school, and anyone else considered appropriate. The local authority should then make its decision within 2 months of the end of the consultation period.

In order to meet the time scales for this change to be implemented for September 2020, consultation needs to take place during January to February 2020.

The results of the consultation will be included in a future Cabinet report for approval, followed by implementation (if agreed) from September 2020.

Financial Implications

In December 2017, Council approved the allocation of £250,000 capital funds to reconfigure existing classrooms in both schools to create around 28 more places (numbers dependent on the individual needs of the pupils). This work is yet to be undertaken.

Should the amalgamation be approved, feasibility work will be undertaken into the enlargement of the site and identified funding presented to cabinet at a later date.

Report Author	Steve Pendleton
Assistant Director	Ian Budd
Strategic Director	Mark Ryder
Portfolio Holder	Councillor Colin Hayfield

Checklist

Urgent matter?	N
Confidential or Exempt? (State the category of exempt information)	N
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	N

List of Reports considered

Link to published proposed decision report:

<https://warwickshireintranet.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=203&MId=2840&Ver=4>

List of Background Papers

None

Members and officers consulted or informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Colin Hayfield

Corporate Board

Legal – Jane Pollard

Finance – Virginia Rennie

Equality – Keira Rounsley

Democratic Services – Paul Williams

Councillors Morgan, Roodhouse, Chilvers, Dahmash, C.Williams, C.Davies and Chattaway