

## TRAFFORD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

**Report to:** Executive Member for Children's Services  
**Date:** 18 November 2021  
**Report for:** Decision  
**Report of:** Director of Children's Services

### Report Title

**Withdrawal of proposal to amalgamate Wellfield Infant and Junior Schools (through the proposal to close Wellfield Junior School and simultaneously expand the age range of Wellfield Infant School).**

### Summary

It is recommended that the proposal to amalgamate is withdrawn at this time. This means the schools will continue as separate Infant and Junior Schools.

Amalgamation of the two schools was proposed to be achieved by closing Wellfield Junior School and simultaneously expanding Wellfield Infant School. The reason this method of amalgamation was proposed is because from September 2021 there was a vacancy in the headship of Wellfield Junior School. The Local Authority is the proposer and the decision-maker.

A period of consultation on the proposal began on 12 May 2021 and closed on 7 July 2021. After considering the responses received, a decision was taken to publish a statutory notice which commenced a four-week period of formal representation between 2 and 29 September 2021.

During the period of representation, new financial information was considered which suggests that an amalgamated school may not be financially viable at this time, as the pandemic has significantly compounded financial challenges for both schools. Withdrawal of the proposal at this time will allow for more detailed financial modelling to take place to further understand the position. The proposal will be reconsidered after Easter 2022.

### Recommendation(s)

That the Executive Member:

- notes the report
- withdraws the proposal to amalgamate at this time

Contact person for access to background papers and further information:

**Name:** Karen Samples, Director of Education  
Sarah Butters, Head of Early Years, School Places and Access

**Extension:** 3233      **Background Papers:** None

## Implications:

Relationship to Corporate Priorities	Ensuring a fair start for all children and young people
Financial	The proposed amalgamation would have reduced the overall cost to the Dedicated Schools Grant, resulting in an adjustment through the funding formula meaning there is no impact on the Council's revenue budgets.
Legal Implications:	A school closure is determined by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 and Opening and Closing Maintained schools statutory guidance. Expanding the age range of a school is determined by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013 and Making Significant Changes to Maintained Schools statutory guidance
Equality/Diversity Implications	Schools are required to meet current appropriate Equality and Diversity Legislation however there are no direct implications from this proposal.
Sustainability Implications	There are no sustainability implications from this proposal.
Carbon Reduction	None
Resource Implications e.g. Staffing / ICT / Assets	There are no e government or asset management implications from this proposal. The staffing structure for the proposed school is a matter for the Governing Body of the school.
Risk Management Implications	There are no specific strategic or operational risks to this proposal.
Health and Wellbeing Implications	None
Health and Safety Implications	Schools are Subject to current Health and Safety Legislation but there are no direct impacts from this proposal

## 1.0 Background

- 1.1 The Local Authority's long standing strategic aim is to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where there are no contrary indicators e.g. size, respective locations.
- 1.2 The method of amalgamation for this proposal was in line with the Trafford Presumption to Amalgamate Policy as there was a vacancy in the headship of Wellfield Junior School from September 2021.
- 1.3 The Governing Body of Wellfield Junior School appointed the Headteacher of Wellfield Infant School to act as Executive Headteacher for the Junior School under interim arrangements whilst the amalgamation proposal was considered.
- 1.4 The process of closing a school is determined by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013. Expanding

the age range of a school is determined by the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) Regulations 2013.

- 1.5 For this proposal, the Local Authority is the proposer and the decision maker. A proposal can be withdrawn by the proposer at any point before a decision is taken. A notice must be placed on the website where the original proposals were published.

## 2.0 Representation

- 2.1 On 2 September 2021, the Council published statutory notices of its intention to discontinue (close) Wellfield Junior School and to extend the age range of Wellfield Infant School to offer provision for pupils aged 3 years to 11 years. The Council announced a four-week statutory representation period that lasted until 29 September 2021.
- 2.2 The Council received two responses to its consultation, both consultees objected to the proposal. It appears that one consultee may have misunderstood the proposal and one consultee did not express any reasons for objecting. We responded directly to both consultees, comments and individual responses are attached in Appendix A.
- 2.3 During the period of representation, new financial information was considered which suggests that an amalgamated school may not be financially viable at this time, as the pandemic has significantly compounded financial challenges for both schools.

## 3.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1 It is recommended that the proposal to amalgamate is withdrawn at this time. This means the schools will continue as separate Infant and Junior Schools
- 3.2 The pandemic has compounded financial challenges for both schools and so withdrawal of the proposal will allow for more detailed financial modelling to take place to understand if an amalgamated school will still be financially viable.
- 3.3 The interim leadership arrangements for Wellfield Junior School will continue and are a matter for the Governing Body.

**Key Decision** No

**If Key Decision, has 28-day notice been given?** n/a

Finance Officer Clearance MH

Legal Officer Clearance PD

**[CORPORATE] DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE**



Jill McGregor, Director of Children's Services

To confirm that the Financial and Legal Implications have been considered and the Corporate Director has cleared the report prior to issuing to the Executive Member for decision.