

TRAFFORD METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to: Executive Member for Children's Services
Date: Thursday 15 July 2021
Report for: Decision
Report of: Director of Children's Services

Report Title

Approval to publish a statutory notice in relation to the amalgamation of Wellfield Infant and Junior Schools (through the proposal to close Wellfield Junior School and simultaneously expand the age range of Wellfield Infant School)

Summary

The proposal to amalgamate the two schools would be achieved by closing Wellfield Junior School and simultaneously expanding Wellfield Infant School. The reason this method of amalgamation is being proposed is because from September 2021 there is a vacancy in the headship of Wellfield Junior School.

A period of consultation on the proposal began on 12 May 2021 and closed on 7 July 2021. This report provides analysis of the responses received during the consultation period and proposes that the Local Authority progress to formal consultation (representation stage) of the statutory process through the publication of a Statutory Notice.

For this proposal, the Local Authority is the proposer and the decision-maker.

Recommendation(s)

That the Executive Member:

- notes the consultation approach, comments and responses
- approves the publication of a Statutory Notice to commence a period of formal consultation on the amalgamation proposal

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 will reduce 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 There are two methods by which two schools can be amalgamated. The first method is to close both schools and open a new community primary school. The second, the method proposed here, is to close one school and enlarge the other school by extending the age range.
- 1.3 This method of amalgamation is being proposed in line with the Trafford Presumption to Amalgamate Policy as there is a vacancy in the headship of Wellfield Junior School from September 2021.
- 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. The Local Authority must have regard for the statutory processes and consider all the views and comments submitted during the consultation and representation period.

2.0 Consultation

- 2.1 A period of consultation was announced on 12 May 2021 on the proposal to amalgamate Wellfield Infant and Junior Schools by closing Wellfield Junior School and simultaneously expanding the age range at Wellfield Infant School from the current 3 to 7 years, to 3 to 11 years.
- 2.2 Information was published on Trafford Council's website which laid out the proposal and invited all interested parties to participate in shaping the proposal, by submitting their comments and ideas for consideration. Information was sent to all parents and staff members. The proposal was announced on the council's digital channels including their website and social media. Online meetings for staff and union representatives were held on 11 and 12 November 2020. Meetings were held with the school governing bodies on 18 November and 4 December 2020. The Public Consultation Document is attached (Appendix A).
- 2.3 The Council received 30 responses to its consultation:
- 3 consultees did not support the proposal.
 - 7 consultees were in favour of amalgamation in principle but expressed concerns about elements of the proposal presented and/or asked questions.
 - 16 consultees fully supported the proposal to amalgamate the two schools.
 - 4 consultees were neutral but submitted questions or comments.
- 2.4 The Local Authority responded directly to every consultee. Each comment and individual response is published on the Council website. The full document is attached at (Appendix B).

3.0 Financial Implications

- 3.1 The proposed amalgamation will reduce the overall cost to the Dedicated Schools Grant which will result in an adjustment through the funding formula meaning there is no impact on the Council's revenue budgets.
- 3.2 The impact on school revenue and capital budgets is described in the Public Consultation Document (Appendix A).

4.0 Accommodation

- 4.1 This current proposal does not include any expansion project, refurbishment or new school building.

5.0 Other Options

- 5.1 A decision not to proceed with the amalgamation.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendation

- 6.1 The local authority has a long standing strategic aim to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools as laid out in the Presumption to Amalgamate policy.
- 6.2 There is a vacancy in the headship of Wellfield Junior School.
- 6.3 The two schools provide a good education for their pupils and are well supported by parents and governors.
- 6.4 Amalgamation would allow development of a single vision for the future with a shared ethos. It will provide continuity of leadership and consolidate more effectively the high quality education that exists, delivering advantages to staff, children and families.
- 6.5 The amalgamation would enable better continuity and progression of children's learning, particularly between key stage 1 and key stage 2. It would remove the requirement for children to transfer between schools at the end of Year 2, creating opportunity for improved educational standards and achievement.
- 6.6 The publication of the Statutory Notice will be accompanied by the publication of the full detail of the proposal and will begin the 4 week representation stage of the statutory process. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to the Local Authority to be taken into account by the decision-maker.

Key Decision No

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

Finance Officer Clearance GB

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.