

CABINET MEMBER DECISION

Decision:

PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW SCHOOL AMALGAMATING CHRIST CHURCH C OF E INFANT SCHOOL AND ENGLEFIELD GREEN INFANT SCHOOL AND NURSERIES

(i) Details of decision

1. The Lead Cabinet Member for All Age Learning approved the publication of statutory notices
2. Following approval, Surrey County Council will publish statutory notices to close Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries at the same time as the Diocese of Guildford publish related statutory notice to open a new voluntary aided infant school on the site at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries.

(ii) Reasons for decision

Both Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries have experienced a decline in admissions in recent years. This has meant there has been a surplus of places and the school budget has reduced as school budgets are based on the number of pupils on roll, in the schools.

Forecasts are showing that whilst pupil numbers are expected to increase in more urban parts of Runnymede they are not expected to increase in Virginia Water and Englefield Green.

The new infant school would work closely with the local junior school, St Jude's C of E Junior School, with potential for a more formal partnership in the future.

The leaders from all three schools have worked closely for a number of years and share similar values and educational expectations. Each school is rated 'Good' by Ofsted. By amalgamating the two infant schools, opportunities for further joint working are offered in a more cost effective and strategic manner than at present with two separate infant schools. This will, in turn, make the school more sustainable in the long-term.

This proposal is supported by the governors of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries, Christ Church C of E Infant School and St Jude's C of E Junior School. The result of the amalgamation and continued collaboration with St Jude's will be that there will be provision for 60 places for children in newly amalgamated infant school in Englefield Green from reception to year two matching the PAN of 60 places at St Jude's Junior School from year 3 to year 6.

(iii) Details of any alternative options considered and rejected

Cllr Robert Evans attended the meeting to raise concerns related to the decision. These included:

- That the decision would have a detrimental impact on the local area.
- That that the Council should not make the only infant school in the local area a Church of England School (C of E).

- That a C of E school may follow to a biased admissions process by only admitting children who have the same religious background.
- That a faith school may discriminate when recruiting new staff.
- That Religious and Sexual Education within the school may be unbalanced.

The Cabinet Member noted the Members concerns and provided the following points in response:

- That the recommendation was approved due to the reasons outlined in the report.
- Confirmed the next steps following the close of the meeting.
- Noted that consultation responses had shown that a majority of parents of school children were in favour of the decision.
- That the school's admission policy would not change within the first year and any changes following this period would be subject to consultation.
- That the Diocese of Guildford had confirmed that it would be a school for the community for all different backgrounds and beliefs.

(iv) Details of any consultation and representations received not included in the published report

None.

Conflicts of Interest and any Dispensations Granted

(Any conflict of interest declared by any other Cabinet Member consulted in relation to the decision to be recorded and any dispensations granted by the Audit and Governance Committee)

None.

Decision taken by:

- (i) **Name:** Julie Iles
- (ii) **Portfolio:** Cabinet Member for All-Age Learning

Date of Decision: 10 March 2020

Date of Publication of Record of Decision: 10 March 2020

Date decision effective (i.e. 5 working days after date of publication of record of decision unless subject to call-in by the Children, Families, Lifelong Learning and Culture Select Committee): 18 March 2020