

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR SCHOOLS, SKILLS AND
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT****DATE: 11 APRIL 2016****LEAD OFFICER: JULIE FISHER, DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE****SUBJECT: PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF SEND COFE (FOUNDATION)
FIRST SCHOOL WITH ST BEDE'S COFE (VOLUNTARY AIDED)
JUNIOR SCHOOL****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The governing body of the Federation of Send Church of England Schools, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and Surrey County Council (SCC), is proposing that the two schools amalgamate to become one primary school. Send First would close and St Bede's Junior would extend its age range. The school would be renamed Send CofE Primary School from September 2016 admitting pupils from age 4 to 11. In September 2017 it is proposed that the reception Published Admissions Number (PAN) will increase from 58 to 60. The PAN for year 3 will be removed.

Following a public consultation, on 26 February 2016 the governing body of the Federation voted unanimously to proceed with the proposal.

As this is a prescribed alteration to the two schools, the final decision on whether to proceed with the extension of the age range at St Bede's and the closure of Send First rests with the Local Authority. Therefore, the Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement is asked to review the education rationale for the project and the summary of the consultation responses provided within this report, to determine whether to proceed with implementing the proposal.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement approves:

- i. St Bede's CofE Junior (Voluntary Aided) School becoming a primary school, extending its age range to 4 to 11 years in September 2016, with a reception Published Admissions Number of 60 from September 2017.
- ii. Send First CofE Infant (Foundation School) closing from September 2016.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

The amalgamation would provide continued, secure progression of primary phase education in the Send locality.

DETAILS:

Background

1. St Bede's CofE Junior School serves the community of Send in the Guildford Borough. The school currently provides 60 places per year for Year 3 to Year 6 pupils.
2. Send CofE First School also serves the community of Send, providing 58 places per year for Year R to Year 2.
3. The two schools, on adjoining sites, are federated as the Federation of Send Church of England Schools, with one head teacher, one governing body and one budget. All staff are employed by the Federation.

The proposal

4. On 8 December 2015, the governing body of the Federation of Send Church of England Schools, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and SCC, published the following proposal:
 - To merge the two schools to become a single, full primary school with effect from 1 September 2016, named Send CofE Primary School. The new school would retain the Voluntary Aided status (VA) maintaining close links with the Diocese of Guildford.
 - From September 2017 the reception PAN would be increased from 58 to 60, the year 3 PAN would be removed.
 - For administrative purposes Send First School would close and St Bede's Junior School would expand its age range and be renamed as Send CofE Primary School.
5. The proposal does not require any additional accommodation or capital works to facilitate the amalgamation. The two schools are currently situated on adjacent sites. However, parallel to this proposal, under the Department for Education's Priority Schools Building Programme (PSBP), St Bede's is due to be relocated and rebuilt on the Send First site, subject to planning permission. The proposal to amalgamate the two schools is not reliant on this scheme.
6. If the proposal goes ahead, all children on roll at either school on 1 September 2016 will automatically continue to have a place at Send CofE Primary School. The existing process of applying for a place at the two schools will remain unchanged for September 2016, with all children who are offered and accept a place at either school will have a place at Send CofE Primary School.
7. For applications for September 2017 onwards there will be one admission process for the reception year intake to Send CofE Primary School. Children will automatically transfer from year 2 to year 3 and therefore parents will not need to submit an application for admission to year 3.
8. If the proposal is agreed, the governing body will apply to the Schools Adjudicator for the changes to be made 'in year'.

Reasons for the proposal

9. Principally, the amalgamation would provide continued, secure progression of primary phase education in the Send locality. Seamless transition from Key Stage 1 (infants) to Key Stage 2 (juniors) will benefit children in the school, whilst providing security of all through primary provision to parents with no need to reapply for year 3.
10. As one school, there will be more opportunity for increased working across year groups, whole school play and sporting events, with older children being role models for the younger children.
11. Operating as one school will enable greater economies of scale and efficiencies, with resources being used more effectively to the benefit of all children. There would be greater opportunities for staff development and curriculum development.
12. In addition, if the proposed rebuild of the St Bede's goes ahead, the closer proximity of the junior and infant buildings will enable greater sharing of facilities, with infants pupils benefiting from new facilities in the junior building including IT, food technology, design technology, kitchen and dining as well as whole school events in the new hall.
13. Educationally, the amalgamation will help to secure the two schools on their journey of improvement. Since January 2015 with a new executive head teacher and chair of governors in place, the schools are now making good progress and are well supported by parents and the local community.

<u>CONSULTATION:</u>

14. The governing body in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and SCC undertook a consultation on the proposal between 8 December 2015 and 29 January 2016. A consultation document was produced and circulated to all parents, carers, local residents, local borough and County Councillors, other stakeholders and interested parties. In addition, a public meeting was held at the school on 7 January 2016. Statutory Notices were issued in line with the consultation.

Consultation responses

15. The public meeting was attended by 10 parents, residents and other interested parties. A total of eight formal written responses were received during the consultation via the Surrey Says website, post and email.
16. 13 respondents agreed with the proposal to amalgamate. Comments were supportive of the proposals including that the local area needs a full primary school, removing the current uncertainty for parents regarding year 3 entry and transition. Respondents did raise some concerns around traffic, road safety and crossings.
17. 2 respondents disagreed with the proposal to amalgamate. 1 did not give any comment on the proposal. Another chose the schools because they do operate separately and sharing lunch and assemblies could be daunting for very young children. They also felt that the current name of St Bede's should stay along with

the blue uniform, and expressed concerns around the space for drop-off and collection if all pupils are going through one entrance.

18. A further two respondents had no view on the proposal to amalgamate. Comments were given on parking, traffic and road safety.
19. In addition, a public meeting was held on the proposed building plans for the junior school which 10 people attended. 9 attendees supported the plans with comments including that it would be more practical, safe and easier for parents collecting children from both schools, providing a more united school community. Comments were raised from most attendees, whether or not they supporting the plans, around traffic and parking and that a crossing outside the school should be provided.

RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

20. There are minimal risks associated with this proposal. In the event that the proposed amalgamation does not take place, the schools will continue to operate in their current arrangement.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

21. There is no capital cost involved with this proposal as no building works are required in relation to the amalgamation.
22. In terms of the ongoing revenue costs, the schools already operate under a single budget. Primary provision offers a number of cost saving benefits and is considered to be more financially sustainable in the longer term. The Federation has considered carefully the financial impact of the amalgamation with support from Babcock 4S.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

23. The amalgamation of the two schools does not require additional capital and/or revenue funding from the County Council. The amalgamation will give rise to economies of scale and will be more financially sustainable.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

24. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to secure that efficient primary and secondary education is available to meet the needs of the population in its area. In doing so, the Council is required to contribute to the spiritual, moral, mental and physical development of the community. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on the Council to secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary education are available in its area. There is a legal duty on the Council therefore to secure the availability of efficient education in its area and sufficient schools to enable this. The amalgamation will support this by securing continued secure progression of primary phase education.
25. As the school's capacity and PAN will be increased, this required a consultation and publication of notices which have been correctly done in accordance with the School Organisation Regulations 2013

26. In considering this Report, Cabinet must give due regard to the results of the consultation as set out in the report attached and the response of the Service to the consultation comments and conscientiously take these matters into account when making its final decision.
27. In coming to a decision on this issue the Cabinet needs to take account of all relevant matters. The weight to be given to each of the relevant matters is for the Cabinet to decide. Relevant matters in this context will include the statutory requirements, the policy considerations, the impacts of the options on service provision, the medium term financial plan, the Council's fiduciary duty, any relevant risks and the results of the consultation.

Equalities and Diversity

28. The proposal would enhance educational provision and be open to all children in the community served by the school. No group with any protected characteristics under Equalities legislation will be affected by this proposal as primary provision for all children is proposed to be made. As a result no Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been produced. However, with the security in all through primary provision being open to all applicants with the highest priority given to Looked After Children and pupils on the Special Educational Needs (SEND) register and/or who would benefit from a statement of educational need, this proposal will support our most vulnerable children.

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications

29. This proposal would provide all through primary provision in the local area which would be of benefit to the community served by the school. Therefore, this would also be of benefit to any Looked After Children who the opportunity of attending this school. Look After Children are the highest priority criterion within the school's admission arrangements.

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

30. Safeguarding vulnerable children is a high priority in Surrey schools. Schools have considerable expertise in safeguarding vulnerable children and adhere to robust procedures. The school would continue to apply good practice in the area of safeguarding. Safeguarding is monitored when Ofsted carries out inspections of schools.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

31. Subject to Cabinet Member approval of this proposal, the next steps would be:
- Send CofE First School would close on 31 August 2016.
 - St Bede's CofE Junior School would expand its age-range on 1 September 2016 and be renamed Send CofE (Voluntary Aided) Primary School operating on the adjoining two sites of the existing infant and junior schools.
 - All the children on the rolls of the existing schools would automatically be placed on roll at the new amalgamated primary school.
 - Any children offered places for September 2016 in reception at Send First or in Year 3 at St Bede's will be placed on roll at the new amalgamated primary school.

- A reconstitution of the governing body will be required from 1 September 2016.
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Contact Officer:

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020 8541 7376

Consulted:

Federation of Send CofE Schools Governing Body
Parents of pupils attending the schools
Local residents
Diocese of Guildford
Diocese of Arundel & Brighton
Local Head Teachers
Keith Taylor, Local County Councillor
Borough Councillors
Anne Milton, MP

Sources/background papers:

- The Education Act 1996; the Education Act 2002; the Education Act 2005; the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
 - Consultation document regarding the proposal to merge St Bede's Cof E Junior with Send CofE First School to become a primary school.
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