

**SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**

**LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

**DATE: 22 AUGUST 2016**

**LEAD OFFICER: LIZ MILLS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR FOR SCHOOLS & LEARNING**

**SUBJECT: AMALGAMATION OF SEND COFE (FOUNDATION) FIRST SCHOOL WITH ST BEDE'S COFE (AIDED) JUNIOR SCHOOL, THROUGH THE CLOSURE OF SEND COFE FIRST SCHOOL (FOUNDATION) AND A PRESCRIBED ALTERATION TO LOWER THE AGE LIMIT OF ST BEDE'S COFE JUNIOR (AIDED) SCHOOL**



**SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

The Governing Body of the Federation of Send Church of England (CofE) Schools, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and Surrey County Council, is proposing that Send (CofE) First School and St Bede's (CofE) Junior School amalgamate to become one primary school in September 2016 admitting pupils from 3 to 11 years of age. This will include the nursery provision at Send First.

It is proposed to implement the amalgamation through the closure of Send CofE First School (Foundation) and a prescribed alteration to lower the age limit of St Bede's CofE Junior (Aided) School. The school would be renamed Send CofE Primary School from September 2016 admitting pupils from age 3 to 11.

In September 2017 it is proposed that the reception Published Admission Number (PAN) will increase from 58 to 60. The PAN for year 3 will be removed. All children on roll at either school as of 1 September 2016 will automatically continue to have a place at Send CofE Primary School.

The two schools are already federated with one Head Teacher and one Governing Body with staff employed by the Federation.

Following a public consultation, on 26 February 2016 the Governing Body of the Federation voted unanimously to proceed with the proposal. A statutory representation period was held from 15 July 2016 to 12 August 2016.

As the amalgamation involves both a prescribed alteration and a school closure, the final decision on whether to proceed with the alteration of the age range at St Bede's and the closure of Send First rests with the Local Authority. Therefore, the Leader 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 proposals.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council

- i. determines the closure of Send CofE First School; and
- ii. approves the prescribed alteration to lower the age limit of St Bede's CofE Junior School to 3 -11 years.

### **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 Borough of Guildford. The school currently provides 60 places per year from Year 3 through to Year 6 pupils.
2. Send CofE First School also serves the community of Send, providing 58 places per year from Year R to Year 2 and nursery provision.
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 Surrey County Council (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 alter its lower age limit and be renamed as Send CofE Primary School.
5. Due to the closure of Send First, a further statutory representation period was held from 15 July 2016 to 12 August 2016.
6. 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 to be relocated and

rebuilt on the Send First site. The proposal to amalgamate the two schools is not reliant on this scheme.

7. 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, having a place at Send CofE Primary School.
8. 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.
9. 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**

10. 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.
11. As one school there is more opportunity for increased working across year groups, whole school play and sporting events with older children being role models for the younger children.
12. 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 and curriculum development.
13. In addition, with the rebuild of St Bede's progressing, the closer proximity of the junior and infant buildings will enable greater sharing of facilities with infant pupils benefiting from new facilities in the junior building including IT, food technology, design technology, kitchen and dining and whole school events in the new hall.
14. 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. Both schools were judged by Ofsted as 'good' schools in June 2016.

### **CONSULTATION:**

15. The Governing Body 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.
16. A further Statutory Representation period was held from 15 July 2016 to 12 August 2016. Statutory Notices were issued by the Governing Body.

17. Notice was given in accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that the Governing Body of the Federation of Send Church of England Schools intends to discontinue Send CofE First School with effect from 31 August 2016.
18. With regard to the linked proposal, notice was also given in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that the Governing Body of the Federation of Send Church of England Schools intends to make a prescribed alteration to St Bede's CofE Junior (Aided) School with effect from 1 September 2016. The prescribed alteration proposed is to alter the lower age limit from 7-11 to 3-11 to create an all through primary school including a nursery.

### **Consultation responses**

19. 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.
20. 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.
21. Two respondents disagreed with the proposal to amalgamate. One 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 available for drop-off and collection of pupils if they are all going through one entrance.
22. A further two respondents had no view on the proposal to amalgamate. Comments were given on parking, traffic and road safety.
23. In addition, a public meeting was held on the proposed building plans for the junior school which 10 people attended. Nine attendees supported the plans with comments including that it would be more practical, safer and easier for parents collecting children from both schools providing a more united school community. Comments were raised from most attendees, whether or not supporting the proposals, around traffic and parking, and that a crossing outside the school should be provided.
24. The Statutory Representation period concluded on Friday 12 August. No responses were received during the Statutory Representation Period reflecting that the proposal is acceptable to local stakeholders and does not raise any significant concerns.

<b><u>RISK MANAGEMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:</u></b>
---

25. There are minimal risks associated with this proposal. In the event that the proposed closure and prescribed alteration does not take place the schools will continue to operate in their current arrangement.

### **Section 151 Officer Commentary**

26. There are no financial implications arising from the amalgamation of the two schools.

### **Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer**

27. Section 13 of the Education Act 1996 places a general duty on the Council to ensure 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 ensure that there are 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 progression of primary phase education.
28. As Send CofE First School is being closed, the statutory procedure described in The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 has been followed.
29. As the age limit of St Bede's CofE Junior School will be lowered, this requires a consultation and publication of notices through prescribed alterations which have been correctly done in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
30. In considering this report, the Leader 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 their decision.
31. In coming to a decision on this issue the Leader needs to take account of all relevant matters. The weight to be given to each of the relevant matters is for the Leader 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**

32. 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 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 (SEN) register and/or who would benefit from a statement of educational need, this proposal will support Surrey's most vulnerable children.

### **Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications**

33. 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 have the opportunity of attending this school. Looked After Children are the highest priority criterion within the school's admission arrangements.

#### **Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications**

34. 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:**

35. Subject to approval of this proposal by the Leader of the Council, the next steps are:

- Send CofE First School would close on 31 August 2016.
- St Bede's CofE Junior School would alter its lower age limit to 3-11 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 the roll of Send CofE 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 the roll of Send CofE Primary School.
- A reconstitution of the Governing Body will be required from 1 September 2016.

---

#### **Contact Officer:**

Melanie Harding  
School Commissioning Officer (South West)  
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 schools within 3 mile radius  
Keith Taylor, Local County Councillor  
Borough Councillors  
Anne Milton, MP  
Linda Kemeny, Cabinet Member for Schools, Skills and Educational Achievement  
Julie Fisher, Deputy Chief Executive and Strategic Director for Children, Schools and Families  
Julie Stockdale, Head of Schools Commissioning and Admissions

**Sources/background papers:**

- The Education Act 1996; the Education Act 2002; the Education Act 2005; the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
  - The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.
  - Consultation document regarding the proposal to merge St Bede's CofE Junior with Send CofE First School to become a primary school through the closure of Send First and the alteration of St Bede's lower age limit.
  - Statutory Proposal for the closure of Send CofE First School.
-

This page is intentionally left blank