

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL**CABINET MEMBER FOR ALL AGE LEARNING****DATE: 10 MARCH 2020****LEAD OFFICER: DAVE HILL, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND LEARNING.****SUBJECT: PROPOSAL TO CREATE A NEW SCHOOL AMALGAMATING CHRIST CHURCH C OF E INFANT SCHOOL AND ENGLEFIELD GREEN INFANT SCHOOL AND NURSERIES****SUMMARY OF ISSUE:**

Surrey County Council, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and the Governing Bodies of Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries, have consulted on a proposal to open a new school by amalgamating the two schools into a single institution from September 2020. It is proposed that the new school would be a voluntary aided school and would be situated on the existing site of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries.

In order to amalgamate Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries:

1. Surrey County Council and the governing body of Christ Church C of E Infant School are proposing the closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School
2. Surrey County Council and the governing body of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries are proposing the closure of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries
3. The Diocese of Guildford is proposing the opening of a new voluntary aided school and nursery with Church of England character under section 11 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 on the site of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries

The Lead Cabinet Member for All Age Learning is asked to review summary of the evidence in the report and the consultation analysis and determine whether to proceed with the publication of statutory notices.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that:

1. The Lead Cabinet Member for All Age Learning approves the publication of statutory notices
2. If approved Surrey County Council 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.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

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.

DETAILS:

Background

1. The schools are currently two distinct institutions:
 - Christ Church C of E Infant School admits up to 30 places into reception year, also known as one form of entry (1FE) and this gives an overall capacity of 90 places.

The school is a voluntary aided school which means it operates fully within the maintained education sector and has a Church of England foundation. Revenue funding comes from the local authority (LA), Surrey County Council in line with legislation. Capital funding is administered by Guildford Diocese. The school must comply fully with the DfE's School Admissions Code and is its own admission authority.
 - Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries admits up to 60 places into reception year, also known as two forms of entry (2FE) and this gives an overall capacity of 180 places.

The school is a community school and maintained by Surrey County Council. The LA decides the admissions criteria and offers places to pupils. Revenue funding comes from the local authority (LA), Surrey County Council in line with legislation.

The school also has a nursery provision onsite offering up to 80 places.

2. The leaders from the two schools have worked closely for a number of years along with leaders from the local junior school St Jude's C of E Junior School and share similar values and educational expectations. Each school is rated 'Good' by Ofsted.

Proposal

3. Surrey County Council, in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and the Governing Bodies of Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries, is proposing to amalgamate the two schools into a single institution from September 2020. It is proposed that the new school would be a voluntary aided school and would be situated on the existing site of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries.
4. In order to amalgamate Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries:
 - i. Surrey County Council and the governing body of Christ Church C of E Infant School are proposing the closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School
 - ii. Surrey County Council and the governing body of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries are proposing the closure of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries
 - iii. The Diocese of Guildford is proposing the opening of a new voluntary aided school with Church of England character under section 11 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006 on the site of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries
5. It is proposed that the nursery provision currently offered by Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries remains unchanged and will be managed in the same way by the new school. There will be no reduction in current provision

Reasons for the proposal

6. 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 that the school budget has reduced as school budgets are based on the number of pupils in the schools. The schools have introduced mixed age classes to help sustain teaching with a lower number of pupils.
7. The current pupil numbers are shown in Table 1. This illustrates that surplus places at the schools are high in relation to the capacities at the schools.

Table 1	Capacity	Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Totals
Christ Church Infant School	90	19	23	11	53
Englefield Green Infant School	180	43	37	41	121

8. Projections of future demand for school places show that the surplus of places in both schools is projected to continue.

9. Admission first preferences to the schools are shown in the Table 2. The number of pupils expressing first preferences is low. Across the three years shown in Table 2 there is a general decline in the number of first preferences.

Table 2 – first preferences	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Christ Church Infant School	12	8	7
Englefield Green Infant School	40	38	34

(On-time first preferences)

10. 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 60 places at the local junior school, St Jude’s Junior School.
11. The new school will provide:
- One stable school
 - Greater certainty around the employment of teaching and other support staff
 - A better curriculum offer for age appropriate classes or groups
 - A sufficient budget to manage the school and provide the necessary resources for teaching and learning, and support the infrastructure of the school
 - Long term viability of the school
12. 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 schools. This will, in turn, make the school more sustainable in the long-term.
13. Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries has been chosen as the site to locate the new school. Englefield Green School is a larger, more modern building which is easily accessible and needs no further development in order to accommodate the additional pupils.
14. Due to low preferences pupils in areas of Runnymede where there have been deficits of places have been offered places at Christ Church C of E Infant School. Less than 10 pupils attending Christ Church C of E Infant School have a post code in the local area of Virginia Water.

Reasons for the new school to be a voluntary aided Church of England School

15. A partnership of Surrey County Council, the Diocese of Guildford and the governing bodies of Christ Church C of E Infant School, Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries and St Jude’s C of E Infant School considered different options for amalgamating the two infant schools.
16. It was agreed that a new C of E voluntary aided school would bring the strengths of both infant schools to a new school to support the development of

outstanding educational provision and make way for a strong and effective partnership with St Jude's C of E Junior School in the future. The new school will be a Church school which serves the local community including children and families from two neighbouring parishes. The new school will build on the legacy and traditions of the two former schools in a way which will honour the vision, values and character of both schools.

17. An Equalities and Impact Assessment is being undertaken throughout the consultation and statutory notices. Positive impacts have been identified for families with Christian beliefs who had chosen Christ Church C of E Infant school because it is a church school. Considerations have been taken of negative impacts for families who chose Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries as a community school because they have other religious beliefs or no religious beliefs. However the school is already affiliated with the diocese and almost all pupils move on to the local Church of England junior school so the decision is to provide the same offer in year R to 2 as in year 3 – 6.
18. The new school will be a church school for the community and therefore will be inclusive of families of all faiths or with no religious beliefs. The current Englefield Green Infant School admissions policy will not change in the first year of the new school. If changes are made to the admissions criteria in the future this would be subject to a separate consultation and is not part of the current proposal.

CONSULTATION:

19. A Consultation Analysis is submitted as an appendix to the report and should be read alongside this section.
20. The informal consultation was published by Surrey County Council in partnership with the Diocese of Guildford and the Governing Bodies of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries, Christ Church C of E Infant School and St Jude's C of E Junior School.
21. The consultation was open from 22 January to 26 February 2020. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via a formal consultation response form, included at the end of the consultation document, as well as an online form

Public Meetings

22. Two public meetings were held, one at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries on 30 January at 6pm and one at Christ Church C of E Infant School on 11 February at 2pm.
23. 72 people attended (44 were parent/carers or perspective parent/carers of pupils at both the current schools) on the 30 January and 36 (25 were parent/carers or perspective parent/carers of pupils at both the current schools) people attended on the 11 February.
24. A questions and answers paper was published after the meetings based on the questions asked during the two meetings

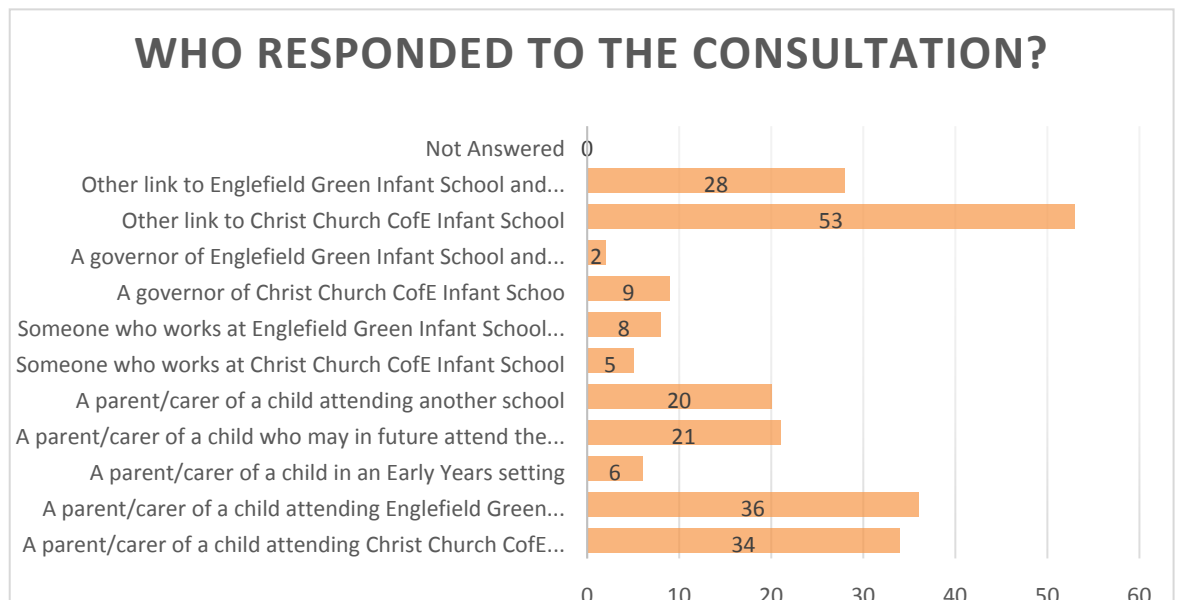
Key points from the consultation responses:

- The majority of respondents do not **agree** with the proposal (63%)
- Parents of pupils in both of the current schools made up 32% of all responses.
- The majority of parents of pupils at Christ Church C of E Infant School **disagree** with the proposal (68%)
- The majority of parents of pupils at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries **agree** with the proposal (58%)
- Some respondents were concerned about the new school being a church school with some 29 in support of the idea and 40 against.
- However of the 70 responses from parents of pupils at both the current schools only 21 made comments in relation to the religious designation of the new school, 16 commented they were for the school being a Church of England school and 5 were against.

Responses

25. There were 222 responses to the consultation. 26% of respondents agreed with the proposal, 63% of respondents disagreed with the proposal and 11% of respondents didn't know if they agreed or disagreed.

26. The chart below shows the distribution of who responded to the consultation. The highest percentage of respondents selected "other link to Christ Church C of E Infant School" (24%). The second largest group selected "a parent/carer of a pupil attending Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries" (17%), and third selected "a parent/carer of a pupil attending Christ Church C of E Infant School" (16%). The fourth largest group selected "other link to Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries" (13%)



Percentage who agreed/disagreed/didn't know by individual groups:

27. Out of 34 responses from parent/carers of a pupil attending Christ Church C of Infant School 18% agree, 68% disagree, 15% don't know

- 28. Out of 36 responses from parent/carers of a pupil attending Englefield Green Infant Schools and Nurseries 56% agree, 25% disagree, 19% don't know
- 29. Out of 53 responses from other links to Christ Church C of E Infant School 9% agree, 83% disagree, 8% don't know
- 30. Out of 28 responses from other links to Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries 25% agreed with the proposal, 72% disagreed with the proposal, 4% didn't know
- 31. 178 out of 222 respondents left comments in response to the consultation.

Petitions

- 32. A petition has been published on Change.org in opposition to the closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School. 388 people had signed the petition on 26 February 2020
- 33. The National Secular Society have published a petition calling on Surrey County Council to reject proposals to replace Englefield Green Infant School with a voluntary aided Church of England faith school. The petition was not submitted as part of the organisations response to the consultation and it is not known how many people have signed the petition.

Key themes from the consultation

There were 7 key themes that emerged from the consultation response

New school and Implementation

- 34. Respondents mentioned hopes and fears for the new school. Some respondents mentioned the current mixed age class teaching (3%) at the current schools and the majority who mentioned mixed age class teaching would prefer to move back to individual year groups. Some parents mentioned the larger size of the school (5%) and classes and were concerned about the impacts on pupils from Christ Church.
- 35. Some respondents were concerned about the new school being a church school with some respondents in support of the idea (13%) and some against (18%). It should be noted that there were also 13 (6%) responses tagged as "loss of links to the local church" that were not given the tag of "Church of England character – For" as they do not want the new school to be in Englefield Green.
- 36. Out of the 70 responses from parents of pupils at the current two schools 21 made comments in relation to the religious designation of the school, 16 commented they were for the school being a Church of England school and 5 commented that they were against.

Traffic and Transport

- 37. 18% of respondents commented regarding traffic and transport barriers. Some were concerned about the additional traffic in Englefield Green. Some respondents were concerned about additional journey time to the new school, particularly for pupils at Christ Church who already travel from Chertsey to Virginia Water.

38. 2% of respondents transport and traffic enablers mentioning better traffic on the road that the Christ Church Infant School is on and closer proximity to local junior school St Jude's. Some respondents mentioned benefits for traffic on the road that Christ Church Infant School is currently on.

Admissions and place planning

39. 12% of respondents commented on admissions and place planning. Some respondents mentioned the need for more school places in Chertsey. Some respondents advised they would have liked to be informed of the consultation before the closing date for admissions for Sept 2020. Some respondents felt more should be done to publicise surplus places at Christ Church. Some respondents felt that more should be done to provide affordable housing in Virginia Water to bring families into the area
40. 10% mentioned new housing developments particularly in Longcross and Chertsey and felt that families moving into the area would benefit from the places currently at Christ Church.

Loss in closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School

41. 12% of respondents mentioned loss to Christ Church pupils and families, valuing the small site and smaller class sizes. Some respondents value the current teaching and support at Christ Church and worry this will be lost in the new school.
42. 19% of respondents mentioned loss to the community in Virginia Water, the heritage of the site and the value in a school that has been open for 175 years. 7% commented on the loss of links to the local church, Christ Church Virginia Water. 2% of respondents asked what will happen to the site that Christ Church C of E Infant School is currently on.

Positive Impacts

43. 3% of respondents mentioned positive impacts of the partnership seeing gain in the collaboration between the two schools. 5% mentioned positive impacts for children. 13% commented on positive financial impacts mentioning the new school would be a better sustainable offer. 4% of respondents were positive about the new school being situated on the Englefield Green site.

Negative Impacts

44. 6% of respondents felt distrust in the consultation and the decision making before the consultation was published.
45. 6% of respondents were concerned about negative impacts for staff and wanted to make sure staff were not adversely impacted. 9% respondents felt there were negative impacts for children and young people in amalgamating the two schools particularly for pupils currently at Christ Church who may need support in transitioning to a larger site and who have experienced change in staff in the past and need stability. 4% mentioned negative impacts for children with special educational needs and disabilities. 1% also mentioned negative impacts on low income families such as additional travel and costs of new uniforms.

Ideas and Innovation

46. 3% of respondents had ideas for what the current site in Virginia Water could be used for. 7% had ideas for the new school and 6% had ideas to support transition.

Risk Management and Implications

47. The informal consultation has been completed in compliance with the relevant legislation governing such decisions. Therefore there is no outstanding risk associated with this.
48. There are associated risks whether the decision is taken to proceed with the proposal or halt. Work is being undertaken to mitigate against the risks associated.

Financial and Value for Money Implications

49. This proposal means that the current site of Christ Church C of E Infant School will no longer be required by the new school. There are no current proposals for the future use of the site. The ownership of the building and land is split between owners including the County Council and diocesan site trustees. Any changes to the use of the site would need to be agreed by the Secretary of State for Education.
50. It is proposed that Surrey County Council transfer the building and land of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries to be held in trust by Guildford Diocese
51. There are no identified building requirements on the site at Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries which will become the site of the new school.
52. By amalgamating the two schools and reducing the combined PAN of 90 to 60 it is expected that the new school will run with fewer surplus places and will offer a financially sustainable future based on the running costs of one school on one site for 60 pupils.
53. The revenue budget to fund the additional travel and uniform costs for some children will need to be identified within Council resources as these are not able to be funded with Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) funding.

Section 151 Officer Commentary

54. Although significant progress has been made over the last twelve months to improve the Council's financial position, the medium term financial outlook is uncertain as it is heavily dependent on decisions made by Central Government. With no clarity on these beyond 2020/21, our working assumption is that financial resources will continue to be constrained, as they have been for the majority of the past decade. This places an onus on the Council to continue to consider issues of financial sustainability as a priority in order to ensure stable provision of services in the medium term. As such, the Section 151 Officer supports the proposals within this paper and notes the potential non DSG costs which will need to be delivered within existing revenue budgets factored into the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Legal Implications – Monitoring Officer

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.

The best value duty is contained in s3 of the Local Government Act 1999 as a result of which the Council is under a duty to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The relevant guidance states that Councils should consider overall value, including economic, environmental and social value when reviewing service provision.

The Council owes a fiduciary duty to its Council tax payers, analogous to that owed by trustees responsible for looking after property belonging to other people. Accordingly in deciding to spend money a local authority must take account of the interests of Council taxpayers who have contributed to the Council's income and balance those interests against those who benefit from the expenditure. It will also need to act in a prudent way having regard to the short and long term consequences of the decision.

In considering this Report, Cabinet must give due regard to the results of the informal 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.

Equalities and Diversity

- 55. An Equalities Impact Assessment is being carried out during this period of informal consultation and will continue to be updated throughout the statutory representation if the decision is to progress.
- 56. Positive impacts have been identified for families with Christian beliefs who had chosen Christ Church C of E Infant school because it is a church school. Considerations have been taken of negative impacts for families who chose Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries as a community school because they have other religious beliefs or no religious beliefs. The school is already affiliated with the diocese and almost all pupils move on to the local Church of England junior school so the decision is to provide the same offer in year R to 2 as in year 3 – 6.
- 57. Positive and negative impacts have been identified in terms of travel to the new site for families from Christ Church Infant School. It should be considered how negative impacts can be reduced particularly for low income families.

Other Implications:

- 58. The potential implications for the following council priorities and policy areas have been considered. Where the impact is potentially significant a summary of the issues is set out in detail below.

Area assessed:	Direct Implications:
Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children	Set out below
Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults	Set out below

Environmental sustainability	Set out below
Public Health	Set out below

Corporate Parenting/Looked After Children implications

59. The needs of Looked After Children affected by the proposal would be prioritised through school admission arrangements whereby Looked After Children are the highest criterion

Safeguarding responsibilities for vulnerable children and adults implications

60. Safeguarding vulnerable children is a high priority in Surrey schools. Schools have considerable expertise in safeguarding vulnerable children and adhere to robust procedures. The current schools will continue to apply good practice in the area of safeguarding as will the new school if the proposal is approved. Safeguarding is monitored when Ofsted carries out inspections of schools.

Environmental sustainability implications

61. If the site at Christ Church Infant School were to close, there would be implications on families residing close to the school, or further away from the new site at Englefield Green, travelling further and in turn on carbon emissions. However some families will have shorter journeys based on their current addresses or having siblings at St Jude's C of E Junior School

Public Health implications

62. The well-being of children and their families could be affected the additional pressures of needing to change school, transition to a new setting and for some a new site, potential additional costs associated and the impact of additional travel for some

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT:

63. Subject to Cabinet Member approval to proceed with this proposal, the next steps are:

- Surrey County Council to publish statutory notices for the closure of Christ Church C of E Infant School
- Surrey County Council to publish statutory notices for the closure of Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries
- The Diocese of Guildford to publish statutory notices to open a new voluntary aided school and nursery on the site at Englefield Green
- The above statutory notices will be published together for a period of 4 weeks (term time) for further representation
- Following this period, on 12 May 2020 the Leader would consider the proposal and responses to the consultation and make a decision whether to determine the statutory notices

Contact Officer:

Jane Keenan, Commissioning Manager, 020 8541 7017

Consulted:

Christ Church C of E Infant School
Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries
Governing bodies of both schools
Diocese of Guildford
Christ Church Virginia Water
Parents/carers of pupils attending both schools
Parents/carers who selected either school as a preference for a school place Sept 2020
Local residents
St Jude's C of E Junior School (Headteacher, Governing Body, Parents and Carers)
Local schools in Runnymede
Local County Councillors
Borough Councillors
Parish Council
Borough Council
Julie Iles, Lead Cabinet Member for All Age Learning
Tim Edwards, Leader of the Council
Dave Hill, Executive Director Children Families and Learning
Liz Mills, Director for Education Skills and Lifelong Learning
Jane Winterbone, Assistant Director for Education

Annexes:

Consultation Analysis Report
Equalities Impact Assessment

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 open a new school by amalgamating Christ Church C of E Infant School and Englefield Green Infant School and Nurseries