

## *Frequently asked questions*

### **Proposal to Amalgamate Daylesford Infant and Chapel Fields Junior Schools**

#### **1. Questions about the benefits of an amalgamation and Standards**

##### ***What are the benefits of amalgamation?***

There are three key benefits to amalgamating the two schools, these cover curriculum and standards, finance and benefits for parents. All of these have a direct impact on the education of the children.

**Curriculum and Standards** – the key benefit of the amalgamation is the impact it can have on transition of pupils from year 2 to year 3. In one single school there would not be the regress of achievement from the end of Key Stage 1 teacher assessments and the beginning of Key Stage 2. Progress can be maintained and meaningful work completed to ease the transition into Year 3. Evidence shows that all through primary schools provide a richer and more varied curriculum experience for their children. This enables progress to be more sustained throughout the school ensuring that there is good achievement throughout the whole school. The curriculum can be planned to sequentially build upon knowledge and skills acquired in previous years. In a primary school, teachers can use and develop their skills to work across a wider age range thus raising expectations of what can be achieved. Children also benefit from having role models of older children throughout the school allowing them to aspire to leadership roles.

**Finance** – The main financial benefit for bringing the two schools together is the economies of scale that can be achieved through staffing changes and more efficient operations. Experience of previous amalgamations has shown that savings in the region of £139,000 can be achieved (after the loss of one school's lump sum funding). These savings are then available for the Governing Body to reinvest in their priorities to the benefit of the education of the pupils. The main areas for delivering these savings are through changes to leadership and management, restructure of admin support and the purchasing of services. In the longer term the management of one site instead of two school buildings will also create savings for the school.

**Benefits for Parents** – An amalgamated primary school will provide benefits for families such as consistent school uniform and school events such as parents' evenings and performances. If the school comes together on one site parents will benefit from pick up and drop off on one school site. In addition parents will no longer have to go through the admissions process to apply for a place in Year 3 but automatically feed through into the junior phase of the primary school.

***This proposal has been brought forward due to the Ofsted Inspection at Daylesford Infant School in June 2017?***

Officers have been meeting with representatives of the Governing Bodies of both schools for 12 months, to discuss bringing the two schools together. The Ofsted inspection was not a key driver in the amalgamation proposal and the Council would still have brought forward an amalgamation proposal, if the Ofsted outcome had been different, based on the key benefits outlined above. However now that the school has received such an Ofsted rating, there is a duty on the Council to take action to improve standards.

***Why does Daylesford Infant School have to close, it just needs more time?***

The Interim Headteacher at Daylesford Infant School is making a significant difference to the teaching and learning at the School and this has been recognised in the Ofsted report. However, the Council is satisfied that there are significant benefits to curriculum and standards for both schools through this amalgamation, which will benefit all pupils across the whole primary school.

***The amalgamated school will be very large and will not offer the small caring ethos offered by the two individual schools?***

The consultation process has demonstrated how well regarded both schools are within their community. With regards to the school ethos the size of a school is not necessarily the issue but actually how the school is organised. There are examples within Solihull of schools of this size which successfully operate different key stage departments within the larger school. Measures such as separate play areas, access doors and even school day times can help to make nursery and reception pupils feel part of a smaller environment whilst being part of a 3FE primary school. In the first instance the proposed amalgamated school would be located across two school sites which would feel like minimal change for the pupils. How the school is organised would be a management issue for the Headteacher and the Governing Body of the amalgamated school.

## **2. Questions about staffing**

***Who will the Headteacher be?***

Daylesford Infant School currently has an interim Headteacher following on from the retirement of the previous Headteacher and the Headteacher of Chapel Fields Junior School has announced her retirement from August 2018. Governors from both Daylesford Infant School and Chapel Fields Junior School are working together to recruit a Headteacher for the amalgamated school from September 2018. This work has started now, so that the resignation deadlines for Headteachers starting in September can be met.

The final decision on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools will not be taken until 6 March 2018. In the event that that the proposal is not approved then this recruitment process will stop and further consideration will be given by each of the Governing Bodies about the implications for their school.

***What will happen about staffing at the Schools?***

The Governing Body of the amalgamated school will be responsible for drawing up the new staffing structure required for the expanded school. Once a Headteacher is appointed it is hoped that staffing decisions can be made quickly to minimise the uncertainty for staff.

As pupil numbers are growing it is likely that more teaching staff will be required because the junior phase of the school will need an additional class every year for the next four years as the larger numbers of pupils currently attending Daylesford Infant School feed through to the junior department.

**3. Questions about the site and buildings**

***Where will the amalgamated primary school be located?***

This proposal will establish the primary school across the two existing school sites, so in the short term there will be no change to the location of the school buildings.

It is the intention of the Council, in partnership with the Governing Body, to bring the school onto one school site in the future. High level feasibility has been carried out exploring the options. Early indications are that the school would be based on the Chapel Fields Junior School site.

Any change to the existing location of the schools will be subject to separate consultation.

***Will there be sufficient outdoor play space?***

Yes, the Council has to ensure that we comply with building and space guidance published by the Government that lay out the requirements with regards to accommodation and outdoor space. Initially the primary school will be located across the two existing school sites so there will be no change to the facilities for outdoor play. Any proposal to bring the school on to one site will have regard to the requirement and space guidance.

***Are residents going to be consulted?***

Yes, any change to the existing location of the schools will be subject to separate consultation and will include the consultation of those residents affected by the change.

***Traffic and Parking at both schools is a real issue, this proposal will increase the number of pupils and make it worse***

Parking around school sites is always an issue, especially for residents. Initially the proposal will establish the amalgamated school across the two existing school sites so the traffic and parking will be split across the two sites as at present.

It is the intention of the Council to locate the primary school on one site. The Council will work with the Governing Body of the amalgamated school and the local community to evaluate the impact of this change and take measures to ensure the safety of children around the school entrance, through schemes such as designated parking areas and walking buses. The view of the highways department is an integral part of any planning application that would be required to make changes to existing buildings. The impact of having more children on one site would be a consideration and highways requirements would have to be met before a planning application could be approved.

#### **4. General Questions**

***Is this proposal a Council cost cutting exercise?***

Any savings made by the amalgamated Governing Body through economies of scale are available for them to reinvest in the education of the children in their school. The amalgamation of these two schools will not create a saving for the Council.

***Will the amalgamated school have to become an academy and part of a multi academy trust?***

The academisation of the amalgamated school is not part of this Council proposal. The decision to become an academy school normally rests with the Governing Body of the school and would be subject to consultation by them, if that was something they wanted to consider. The Secretary of State for Education can force a school to become a sponsored academy where the school has been deemed to require special measures or inadequate by Ofsted.

***Will the Primary School have a new name?***

No decisions have been made regarding the details for the implementation of the proposal including whether the school will have a new name. These decisions will not be made until after there has been a final decision on the proposal.

Implementation decisions such as this will be a matter for the Governing Body of the amalgamated school in partnership with staff and parent community.

## **5. Questions about the Process**

### ***How do I make my views known?***

The Council has now published a statutory proposal for the proposed amalgamation of Daylesford Infant and Chapel Fields Junior Schools. There is now a further four week period when anyone can comment on or object to the proposal. This consultation period will run until 19 February 2018.

You can reply to the consultation period by emailing:

[researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk) or by writing to The School Place Planning Team, Council House, Manor Square, Solihull, B91 3QB.

### ***What happens next?***

All comments or objections received by the Council by 19 February 2018 will be considered by the Cabinet Member for Children, Education and Skills on 6 March 2018 when a final decision will be taken on the proposal.

**If you need this information produced in a different language please contact the School Place Planning Team on 0121 704 6702 or email [researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:researchandpolicy@solihull.gov.uk)**