

Cabinet Meeting

29 November 2017

Report title	Merger of Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School	
Decision designation	AMBER	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Claire Darke Education	
Corporate Plan priority	People - Stronger Communities	
Key decision	Yes	
In forward plan	Yes	
Wards affected	Graiseley; Merry Hill; Penn;	
Accountable Director	Meredith Teasdale, Education	
Originating service	Education	
Accountable employee	Bill Hague Tel. Email	Head of School Planning and Resources 01902 555100 bill.hague@wolverhampton.gov.uk
Report to be/has been considered by	Education Leadership Team People Leadership Team Strategic Executive Board Children, Young People & Families Scrutiny Panel	9 October 2017 9 October 2017 17 October 2017 1 November 2017

Recommendations for action or decision:

The Cabinet is recommended to:

1. Formally consider, in accordance with statutory guidance, the outcomes of Informal Consultation and Formal Consultation (Representation) on the proposed merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School.
2. Approve the discontinuance of Springdale Infant School with effect from 31 December 2017 in accordance with Section 15(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to facilitate the merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School with effect from 1 January 2018; and

This report is PUBLIC
[NOT PROTECTIVELY MARKED]

3. Approve both the lowering of the age range from 7 to 11 years to 3 to 11 years and the enlargement of the school premises of Springdale Junior School (to include the physical capacity of Springdale Infant School's buildings) in accordance with Section 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to facilitate the merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School with effect from 1 January 2018.

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. That the recommendations detailed in 2 and 3 above are related proposals which are interdependent and cannot be considered in isolation of one another.

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1 This report details the outcomes of Informal Consultation and Formal Consultation (Representation) on the proposed merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School. The paper seeks approval to merge the two schools to create a primary school to cater for pupils aged between 3 and 11 years with effect from 1 January 2018.
- 1.2 Please note that this report was subject to pre-decision scrutiny at Children, Young People and Families Scrutiny Panel on 1 November 2017. Panel Members were supportive and endorsed the recommendations.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 Strategic policy regarding the organisation of primary school provision in the City is outlined within the Council's Primary School Organisation Strategy 2016-2018 (PSOS). This Strategy was approved by Cabinet in July 2016 following consultation with key stakeholders.
- 2.2 The PSOS explains that, "The 'merger' of infant and junior schools is the process of joining the schools together by discontinuing one establishment and expanding and altering the age range of the other" (PSOS 2016).
- 2.3 The PSOS outlines a number of advantages of bringing infant and junior schools together, including:
 - "Reducing the number of major transitions that pupils face
 - Reducing the likelihood of lost learning at the beginning of Key Stage 2
 - Increasing the opportunity for specialist teachers to work with a wider range of pupils
 - Providing the opportunity for a consistent approach to the curriculum to be adopted
 - Ensuring the continuity of teaching, learning and achievement
 - Cost savings through economies of scale" (PSOS 2016).
- 2.4 The PSOS recommends that, "...The Council will consider proposing the adoption of structural solutions (including both federations and sponsored academy status) in order to improve standards in underperforming schools." (PSOS 2016).
- 2.5 Springdale Infant School was inspected by Ofsted in January and February 2017 and was judged to be a school which 'Requires Improvement'. The current school inspection dashboard lists weaknesses in progress and attainment for all children including disadvantaged groups in Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.
- 2.6 The School was categorised as B1 in September 2016 and moved from B1 to B2 at the end of the Autumn Term 2016. A pre-warning letter and re-categorisation to a C was issued following a Local Authority review of the school in early February 2017.

- 2.7 Springdale Junior School was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in June 2014 and is an LA Category A school.
- 2.8 Representatives of the City of Wolverhampton Council brokered arrangements for the Headteacher of Springdale Junior School to support Springdale Infant School as the Interim Headteacher.
- 2.9 In order to support an improvement in standards at Springdale Infant School, the Council approached the Governing Boards of both Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School to consider federation. A federation is where one governing board governs two or more schools. Following consultation in summer term 2017 on this proposed structural solution, the Governing Boards of Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School formally federated in July 2017.
- 2.10 When proposing to merge schools, Local Authorities must follow statutory processes and timescales as outlined in The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013.
- 2.11 On 26 April 2017, Cabinet approved commencement of a period of Informal Consultation on the proposed merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School to create a primary school for children aged 3 to 11 years with effect from 1 January 2018. To enable the proposed merger;
- Springdale Infant School would be discontinued on 31 December 2017
 - The age range of Springdale Junior would be altered from 7 to 11 years to 3 to 11 years with effect from 1 January 2018
 - The recorded capacity of Springdale Junior School would be expanded to include the physical capacity of Springdale Infant School's buildings with effect from 1 January 2018.
- 2.12 Informal Consultation commenced on 8 May 2017 and concluded on 25 June 2017. The outcome of consultation is detailed in Section 4 below.
- 2.13 On 26 April 2017, Cabinet delegated authority to the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Assistant Director School Standards to consider the outcome of Informal Consultation and determine whether to proceed to Formal Consultation.
- 2.14 In July 2017, the Cabinet Member for Education, in consultation with the Assistant Director School Standards, reviewed the outcomes of Informal Consultation and approved progression to Formal Consultation (Representation). Formal Consultation commenced on 11 September 2017 and concluded on 8 October 2017. The outcome of Formal Consultation is detailed in Section 5 below.

3.0 Statutory Consultation and Decision Making Processes

3.1 As indicated above, when proposing to merge schools, authorities must follow statutory processes and timescales. The following process has been undertaken in relation to this proposal:

8 May 2017 – 25 June 2017 (Stage 1 – Informal Consultation)

Consultation with stakeholders including pupils, parents, staff and Governors regarding the proposal.

July 2017 – Individual Executive Decision Notice

The Cabinet Member for Education in consultation with the Assistant Director School Standards, considered the outcome of Informal Consultation and gave approval to proceed to the next stage of the process.

11 September 2017 (Stage 2 – Publication)

Complete Proposal and Statutory Notice published.

11 September 2017 – 8 October 2017 (Stage 3 – Representation)

Formal Consultation period (Representation) – Offered stakeholders a formal opportunity to submit comments on the proposal.

29 November 2017 (Stage 4 Decision)

Cabinet consider the outcome of consultation and make a final decision on the proposal in line with the published statutory guidance for decision-makers (Department for Education (DfE) April 2016).

1 January 2018 (Stage 5 – Implementation)

If approved, the proposal would be implemented.

3.2 As detailed within the Department for Education's (DfE) statutory guidance the Council is the decision-making body regarding proposals to discontinue and to make prescribed alterations to mainstream community schools.

3.3 Decisions must be made within two months of the end of the Representation Period or they must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator.

3.4 There are a number of factors that Cabinet are required to have regard to when making decisions on the proposals. DfE statutory guidance for decision-makers can be found at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/514570/16-04-06_FINAL_SO_Guidance_DM.pdf

3.5 Decision-makers must consider all the views submitted, including support for, objections to and comments on the proposal. All responses to consultation are included within the body of this report or report appendices.

3.6 When issuing a decision, the Cabinet can;

- Reject the proposal;
- Approve the proposal without modification;
- Approve the proposal with modification;
- Approve the proposal (with or without modification) subject to certain conditions being met.

3.7 The following bodies may appeal the decision:

- The local Church of England Diocese
- The local Roman Catholic Diocese.

Should an appeal be lodged responses and decision rationale will need to be sent to the Schools Adjudicator for review.

4.0 Outcome of Informal Consultation

4.1 At the start of the Informal Consultation period over 770 individual letters and consultation documents were distributed to stakeholders. Stakeholders included the Governing Bodies, staff and parents/carers of pupils attending Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School. A complete list of those stakeholders who were consulted can be found at Appendix A.

4.2 During the Informal Consultation period, 33 written consultation responses were received by the City of Wolverhampton Council regarding the proposed merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School. These were completed by a range of stakeholders including Governors, staff and parents/carers of pupils.

Number of responses received	Respondents in favour of the proposal	Respondents against the proposal	Respondents who 'Don't know'	Not Stated
33	27 (82%)	1 (3%)	4 (12%)	1 (3%)

Copies of all consultation responses are available at Appendix B and must be given due consideration.

4.3 A number of supportive comments regarding the proposal were received during Informal Consultation including:

- "A primary school will have the best possible outcomes for all pupils." (Response 1 – Member of the Governing Body at Springdale Junior School).
- "Both schools working together under one Headteacher - so if we have a child in each school their school plays etc won't be at the same time and other school stuff." (Response 2 – Parent/Carer of a pupil at Springdale Infant School).

- “The school needs consistency and strong leadership. There have been too many new initiatives and the merger with the juniors seems to be the best solution.” (Response 6 – Member of staff at Springdale Infant School).
- “Positive move for the school - Positive impact so far since recent inspection.” (Response 8 – Member of staff at Springdale Infant School).
- “As the proposed admission numbers will be remaining the same there are no concerns that this would impact on schools in Staffordshire therefore we have no objections to the proposed merger.” (Response 9 – Staffordshire County Council).
- “The proposed merger will certainly enhance the learning of the children currently in both schools. The levels of continuity, consistency and progression will be maximised by the schools becoming a unified primary school. The clear leadership shown by the Headteacher of the Junior school will not only benefit the outcomes of the pupils, but will also guarantee a high level of professional development and clear guidance for all staff. The financial benefits for the school will also be enhanced by the economies of scale. Transition for pupils will quickly become less of an issue and stalling in learning will be reduced.” (Response 11 - Member of staff at Springdale Junior School).
- “I agree to the proposed merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School because there would be consistency of learning between the two schools thus there would be less 'back tracking and filling the gaps' and more building on pupil's existing knowledge in Key Stage 2. There would be better communication between the two schools especially identifying earlier, pupils with specific learning difficulties.” (Response 21 – Member of staff at Springdale Junior School).
- “Have felt for many years that a merger of the two schools would benefit pupils. A merger would ensure consistency across both schools, consistency in curriculum, expectations and standards. The physical building will mean very few changes will have to take place, so very little disruption to pupils....” (Response 32 – Member of staff at Springdale Junior School)

4.4 A number of concerns and considerations regarding the proposal were also identified during Informal Consultation including:

- “... I believe the school doesn't have to merge to improve. There's obviously a lack of communication between the two schools when there shouldn't be there are in same building. I think the education board should look at more productive ways to improve staff teachers knowledge giving teachers knowledge giving teachers the real skills needed. There's a skill gap between "no longer there experienced staff" and today's modern staff. Fill the skill gap to improve leadership, organisation and performance. More regular reviews of performance is needed...” (response 7 – Parent/Carer of a pupil at Springdale Infant School).
- “On the premise that the best interest of both schools are catered for e.g. proper levels of staffing are upheld for the Infant School and leadership that is representative of both schools are put into place. This process requires transparency for parents so that they are fully informed of all changes and allowed a voice. This should not mean that Infant School activities such as break times, clubs, plays, etc are ceased. Both schools when merged need a shared ethos and commitment to all.” (Response 15 – Parent of a pupil at Springdale Junior School).

- “The Governing Body and the City of Wolverhampton Council need to make a clear statement of intent that this proposal will not only keep the SL Resource bases but will use the merger to successfully enhance this facility for the children by guaranteeing specialist teaching and the appropriate resources are available across the primary school age range. This opportunity should look at how the merger can ensure stability and continuity for children from age 4-11.” (Response 16 – Parent/Carer of a pupil at Springdale Junior School).
- “I feel the merger makes sense in terms of supporting 2 smaller schools that are so closely connected to both do well and for a well managed transition from infant to junior. However, I also feel this has to be done in the interest of both schools and not primarily as a reaction to the recent infant OFSTED. The merger needs to consider the needs of both schools and maintain the needs of infants’ pupils.” (response 30 – Parent/Carer of a pupil at Springdale Infant School).

4.5 A number of consultation meetings also took place during the Informal Consultation period. Representatives from the Council’s Education Department outlined the proposal and stakeholders were offered the opportunity to raise queries or offer comments. A summary of these meetings is outlined below with full details of each meeting available at Appendix C. Decision-makers must consider all responses to consultation when determining whether or not to approve the proposals.

Stakeholder Group	Date of Meeting	Number of Attendees
Springdale Junior School Governing Body	8 May 2017	8
Springdale Infant School Governing Body	9 May 2017	8
Springdale Infant School Staff	15 May 2017	22
Springdale Junior School Staff	16 May 2017	28
Springdale Infant parents/carers	17 May 2017	18
Springdale Junior parents/carers	18 May 2017	7
Springdale Infant pupils (School Council)	19 May 2017	9
Springdale Junior pupils (School Council)	19 May 2017	8

5.0 Formal Consultation

5.1 Formal Consultation commenced on 11 September 2017 and concluded on 8 October 2017. At the start of the consultation period, a Statutory Notice (Appendix D) was published in the Express and Star Newspaper. In addition, consultation documentation including the Complete Proposal (Appendix E) and the Statutory Notice were published on the City of Wolverhampton Council’s consultation website and were also distributed to relevant stakeholders. A complete list of those stakeholders who were consulted can be found at Appendix F.

5.2 The Council received two responses to Formal Consultation. Staffordshire County Council stated “Our comments would remain the same as our letter of 16th May which I have attached for your information” (please see Appendix B – response 9). Birmingham

City Council stated “Thanks for sending us a copy of this. We have no concerns about the proposal and understand the principal behind the proposed amalgamation”.

6.0 Responses to Consultation

- 6.1 In response to the outcomes of consultation, representatives from the Education Department would like to make the following comments:
- 6.2 Leadership:
Should the proposal to merge the schools be approved, a Headteacher for the Primary School would need to be appointed in accordance with HR policy and processes.
- 6.3 Governance:
Consultation on the proposed federation of the Governing Boards of Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School was recently undertaken by the two schools’ Governing Boards with the support of representatives of the Education Department. Springdale Infant School’s Governing Board met on 20 June 2017 and Springdale Junior School’s Governing Board met on 19 June 2017; both Governing Boards reviewed the outcomes of consultation on the federation and voted to become a federated board.
- 6.4 Support:
The Education Department have brokered arrangements for the Headteacher of Springdale Junior School to support Springdale Infant School as the Interim Headteacher. In addition, representatives from the School Standards Team are supporting Springdale Infant School to improve standards of education and the outcomes for pupils. The focus of this work has been on improving leadership, particularly in the identification of the most important areas for development alongside helping teachers to provide lessons that offer more challenge to their pupils. In addition, advice is being provided to ensure that the School’s youngest pupils benefit from the development of the outdoor learning environment.
- 6.5 Financial Implications:
The proposed merger of the schools would provide opportunities for efficiency savings and maximise the use of school resources.
- 6.6 Staffing:
Should the proposal be approved, all staff at both Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School employed on 31 December 2017 would transfer to the Primary School on 1 January 2018. All staff would undertake roles and responsibilities commensurate with their current salary.
- 6.7 Admissions:
All pupils on roll as at the 31 December 2017 would automatically transfer to the Primary School.

6.8 Resource Base Provision:

Both Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School operate resource base provision for pupils with language and communication difficulties. This proposal would not affect the nature of provision currently available.

6.9 Subject to ultimate approval, the future organisation and management of the Primary School would be the responsibility of the School's Headteacher and Governing Board.

7.0 Evaluation of alternative options:

7.1 Alternative options have been considered, including;

- Amalgamation – The closure of both schools and the establishment of a new primary school. Whilst this option would ultimately result in the establishment of a primary school and offer the corresponding benefits, it would also result in a new school number being issued. As such, both establishments' existing Ofsted judgements would no longer be recognised.
- Maintaining two separate schools – Continuing with the current organisation of provision. This option would not offer the anticipated benefits detailed in paragraph 2.3. In addition, should the two schools remain separate, alternative leadership arrangements would need to be explored to ensure that there is robust leadership at Springdale Infant School due to vacancies within the Infant's Senior Leadership Team. The Infant School has benefited from stable, successful leaders from the Junior School who have taken on the challenge to raise standards. Should this support cease, the current rate of improvement could be jeopardised.

8.0 Reasons for decision(s):

8.1 This proposal is in line with the Council's strategic policy as detailed within the Primary School Organisation Strategy 2016-2018 and would maximise the opportunity for the benefits detailed in paragraph 2.3 to be realised.

9.0 Financial implications

9.1 The proposed merger of the schools would provide opportunities for efficiency savings and maximise the use of school resources. The Local Authority schools funding formula includes a lump sum payment of £125,000 per school so the proposed merger would eventually release £125,000 of the Dedicated Schools Grant which would be available for allocation across the remaining schools in the city. In the year of conversion, the primary school would retain the full allocations originally made to the separate schools. A transitional year then follows, where the primary school would receive a proportion of lump sum that would equate to £87,500, in addition to its own £125,000 lump sum.

9.2 Subject to approval of the proposal, it is recognised that there would be a need to invest in ICT to consolidate the infrastructure and server/backup environment. This cost would need to be met by the primary school utilising a proportion of the aforementioned lump sum allocation.

- 9.3 Subject to approval of the proposal, investment would also be required to merge the SIMS databases from Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior Schools into one database. This cost would need to be met by the primary school utilising a proportion of the aforementioned lump sum allocation.
- 9.4 Based on the budget forecasts received, both schools are expected to hold surplus balances at the point of transfer, and these will be combined for use in the single school, subject to the discretion of the Local Authority. Should, either of the schools move into a deficit position, the combined deficit / surplus will transfer to the new school.
[DB/12102017/Q]

10.0 Legal implications

- 10.1 Any proposals to alter the structure of school provision in the area and specifically in the case of these two schools need to comply with the detailed provisions in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the regulations referred to at paragraph 2.10 of this report and general consultation principles.
- 10.2 This is to ensure sufficient consultation is undertaken and that relevant stakeholders are notified of the proposal/decisions in a timely manner and stakeholders are given ample time to consider and respond and comment on the proposals. All responses received from stakeholders must be taken into account throughout this process to determine whether or not to approve the proposals.

The relevant legislation and statutory guidance is set out in the body of the report.
[TC/11102017/A]

11.0 Equalities implications

- 11.1 This report has equal opportunity implications as the contents have direct reference to educational provision for children and young people in the city.
- 11.2 A full equality analysis has been completed with regard to the proposals. This analysis is available at Appendix G. In line with the prescribed decision-making process decision-makers are required to pay due regard to this analysis.
- 11.3 There are no outstanding equalities issues that would prevent Councillors from taking the decisions.

12.0 Environmental implications

- 12.1 There are no environmental implications to this report.

13.0 Human resources implications

13.1 The members of staff of the schools in scope are employed by the Local Authority, there would therefore be no transfer of employment and it is anticipated that terms and conditions of employment would remain unaffected. It may however, be required to review the leadership structures of the schools. The appropriate HR policy and process would be followed ensuring consultation with the affected staff, should the proposal be adopted.

14.0 Corporate landlord implications

14.1 Given the nature of the buildings we would not expect to undertake any physical changes to the buildings as part of this proposal. Springdale Infant School and Springdale Junior School are already physically linked and share a reception point, parking etc. Subject to ultimate approval, the asset register would be updated to reflect the establishment change.

15.0 Schedule of background papers

- IEDN (July 2017) Outcome of Informal Consultation on the Proposed Merger of Springdale Infant School with Springdale Junior School.
- Cabinet (26 April 2017) Re-organisation of Educational Provision
- Springdale Infant School Ofsted Inspection Report – 18 January 2017 & 7 February 2017 (www.ofsted.gov.uk)
- Department for Education statutory guidance 'Making 'prescribed alterations' to local authority maintained schools' April 2016 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>)
- Department for Education statutory guidance 'Opening and closing maintained schools' April 2016 (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-organisation-maintained-schools>)
- Springdale Junior Ofsted Inspection Report – 17 & 18 June 2014 (www.ofsted.gov.uk)