

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
CABINET MEMBER**

**AMALGAMATION CONSULTATION
PRIORY LANE INFANT SCHOOL AND PRIORY LANE JUNIOR SCHOOL**

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To seek approval to commence formal consultation regarding the possible amalgamation of Priory Lane Infant School and Priory Lane Junior School.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 Following discussions with the governing bodies of Priory Lane Infant and Priory Lane Junior Schools regarding school reorganisation, it has been resolved that the LA should seek permission to undertake a formal public consultation in relation amalgamation.
- 2.2 In recent years the local authority (LA) has completed a number infant and junior school amalgamations to create primary schools. The most recent example being Willoughby Road Primary School (formally Riddings Infant School and Riddings Junior School).
- 2.3 In order to amalgamate community schools, the LA must follow statutory regulations. The regulations require that public consultation is undertaken. The consultation allows an opportunity for the LA to seek stakeholders' views regarding the creation of a through-primary school. The consultation process normally involves:
- Consideration of pupils' views (normally via pupils' council)
 - The publication of a formal proposal incorporating a questionnaire to facilitate feedback
 - An online-questionnaire for comments and feedback
 - Formal public meeting and / or 'drop-ins'
 - Media releases where appropriate.
- 2.4 There are two ways in which the LA can consider amalgamating infant and junior schools, which are listed below:

- a) Expand the age range of one school which would result in the ‘technical closure’ of the other school. However, the building and land would continue to be used as normal.
- b) The ‘technical closure’ of both schools and the opening a ‘new’ primary school. However, as above, both school buildings and land would continue to be used as normal.

Whilst the terminology ‘school closure’ describes the process, in reality this simply means that the school’s DFE number will be deleted. No school building would actually be closed. Therefore, the physical aspects relating to the buildings and land would continue to be occupied and used by the school as required.

- 2.5 The consultation would seek stakeholders’ views regarding their preferred method of amalgamation.
- 2.6 All feedback from the consultation exercise will be collated and presented in a formal report. The report will provide detailed information identifying the summarised views from each specific stakeholder group (eg parents, governors, staff) and will be used by the LA to determine how or if the amalgamation proposal should proceed.
- 2.7 Currently both schools have separate leadership and governance teams. However, the headship at Priory Lane Junior School is current being covered by an acting-head teacher. The schools operate on separate sites.
- 2.8 Amalgamation would create a single leadership team and governance arrangement.
- 2.9 It is the LA’s practice to work closely with governors, schools’ staff, parents and children to ensure they are kept informed and involved in the process wherever possible.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

- 3.1 There are two options for consideration
- 3.2 **Option 1** To undertake a public consultation regarding the proposed amalgamation of Priory Lane Infant School and Priory Lane Junior School.
- 3.3 **Option 2** To maintain the current arrangements.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

Option 1

- 4.1 A public consultation is part of the statutory regulations for implementing changes to school organisation.

- 4.2 The consultation would be an opportunity to seek stakeholders' views on the key benefits which can be achieved through amalgamation. In summary these include:
- Consistency relating to the tracking of pupil progress, attainment and behaviour across both key stages.
 - Closer integration of curriculum, policy, procedures and teaching practice, thus helping maximising opportunities for better outcomes and improved attainment.
 - The creation of a sustainable integration between two schools.
 - Potential for wider career development opportunities and continued professional development for all staff, which will help raise standards.
 - Greater flexibility regarding the deployment of teaching and non teaching staff and the specialist equipment or other resources.
 - Increased purchasing power when negotiating supplies and services
 - Parents would no longer be asked to apply for a place at the end of KS1. Creating a formal togetherness between the schools.
- 4.3 The consultation will also provide an opportunity for stakeholders to raise any other issues that may require consideration.
- 4.4 Based on the consultation feedback, the amalgamation may either:
- a) Proceed to the next stage. This will then require the LA to publish a public notice confirming the exact details of the amalgamation. This may incorporate any suggestions which have been raised through the consultation process.
 - b) Withdraw the proposal, having concluded that it is not appropriate to proceed with the amalgamation.

Option 2

- 4.5 If the public consultation was not approved, the amalgamation could not proceed. Furthermore, it will not be possible to gauge stakeholders' views regarding the potential benefits of amalgamation.
- 4.6 This option does not support the LA's ambition to create school environments that will help raise learning and achievement.
- 4.7 In order to improve outcomes for children and young people, and develop a sustainable school infrastructure, the LA needs to, at least, consider the benefits of structural solutions like amalgamation.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

- 5.1 **Finance** - The cost of the consultation will be met from existing budgets for school organisation issues.
- 5.2 **Staffing** - Any staffing issues will be identified through the consultation process.
- 5.3 **Property** - Both schools would continue to utilise their buildings and land in the short term. A separate feasibility may be undertaken in line with the Council's strategic financial planning strategy and capital bidding processes.

6. OTHER IMPLICATIONS (STATUTORY, ENVIRONMENTAL, DIVERSITY, SECTION 17 - CRIME AND DISORDER, RISK AND OTHER)

- 6.1 **Statutory** - The process for undertaking school mergers is governed by statutory processes and regulations. The procedures are established by The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended by The School Organisation and Governance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2007 which came into force on 21 January 2008 and The School Organisation and Governance (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2009 which came into force on 1 September 2009).

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The LA has met with Priory Lane Infant School and Priory Lane Junior Schools Governors to discuss the possibility of school amalgamation. Both governing bodies agreed that they wish to undertake a consultation process to seek stakeholders' views about amalgamation.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves option 1, to undertake public consultation regarding the proposed amalgamation of Priory Lane Infant School and Priory Lane Junior School.

DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICE

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Background Papers used in the preparation of this report: None