

Committee:	Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness
Date:	17 April 2012
Title of Report:	Primary school reorganisation in Newhaven
By:	Director of Children's Services
Purpose of Report:	To seek Lead Member approval to commence statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to reorganise Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School in Newhaven.

Recommendation:

The Lead Member is recommended to authorise the commencement of statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to reorganise Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School in Newhaven

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 Revenue: these proposals will not affect the schools formula, although they will affect the budget position of individual schools, to reflect the changing status and circumstances of the schools.

1.2 Capital: capital investment will be required to implement the proposals in full. The estimated cost will be informed by the design feasibility studies currently underway, and this will be reported in subsequent papers to Lead Member during the statutory consultation process.

2. Background information

2.1 The November 2010 Policy and Consultation Procedures for Primary Review sets out the County Council's ambition to create all-through primary schools where possible and the criteria on which proposals to bring infant and junior schools together should be based.

2.2 In this instance, Southdown Junior School was deemed to require special measures in December 2010. As a result, the Local Authority assisted the school in entering into a formally agreed partnership with Grays Infant School. Through this partnership arrangement, the headteacher of Grays Infant School currently leads both schools as executive headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body at Grays joined the Southdown Governing Body as the Vice-Chair.

2.3 In January 2012 Southdown Junior School came out of special measures. In their report, Ofsted remarked that:

- "Southdown is a satisfactory school which is on a clear and upward trend in improvement. Pupils, parents and carers have a positive view of the school...Standards are improving and, although below the national average, the gap between school and national outcomes is narrowing", and
- "The school has improved rapidly as a result of the excellent leadership of the headteacher. She has been inspirational in pulling together the staff team and establishing a clear vision for the way forward. This is based on a determination that every pupil will achieve the best they can. The new leadership structure has strengthened the roles of the senior leadership team, and middle managers are increasingly involved in monitoring and evaluation of the school's work and taking responsibility for the quality of education in their areas."

3. Benefits of change

3.1 The Local Authority is keen to build on the excellent progress made by the headteacher and her team, by bringing Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School together as one all-through primary school. The Primary Review Policy emphasises the benefits realised from all-through primary schools rather than separate infant and junior schools and recent data analysis continues to show that overall Key Stage 2 educational standards are higher in East Sussex for all-through primary schools than in junior schools where children transfer at the start of Year 3.

3.2 Bringing the two schools together as one all-through primary school would result in common policies and approaches to teaching and learning and for tracking of pupil progress. Under the leadership of the current executive headteacher, the two schools work well on creating a common

understanding of levels of attainment and transition processes for children transferring from the infant school to the junior school. However, there is no guarantee that this relationship would always be the case under two different Headteachers.

3.3 Having one headteacher with overall responsibility for the direction of the all-through primary school would ensure that there was continuity of practice and expectation for all pupils, improved consistency in the leadership and management of the curriculum across Key Stages 1 and 2, and more opportunities for staff to understand the progression of pupils' learning.

4 Procedure for change

4.1 In proposing changes to the organisation of schools the Local Authority must follow the process prescribed in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006), the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended).

4.2 To establish one all-through primary school, the Local Authority proposes to close Southdown Junior School on 31 December 2012 and alter the age range at Grays Infant School from 3-7 years to 3-11 years on 1 January 2013. The all-through primary school would initially operate across the existing Grays Infant and Southdown Junior sites but the Local Authority's ambition is to bring the school together on the Southdown site as soon as practicably possible. A feasibility study has been commissioned to consider options for how this could be achieved. The feasibility study will help to inform a CAPS bid in the autumn.

4.3 In the meantime, the Local Authority aims to relocate the Grays Nursery from its existing site in Railway Road, Newhaven to the Southdown site in time for the 2012/13 academic year. As the Southdown site is less than 2 miles (approx 0.67 miles as measured by the shortest available walking route using the Council's Geographical Information System and approx 0.48 miles 'as the crow flies') from the existing Grays Nursery site, the Local Authority is not legally obliged to consult on the proposal to relocate the Nursery.

4.4 **Appendix A** to this report sets out the timeframe, key dates and statutory consultation procedures (referred to in 4.1 above) the Local Authority is required to follow to make the proposed changes.

5 Other considerations

5.1 The Governing Bodies at Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School fully support a consultation to establish an all-through primary school. The proposal has also been discussed with Christine Terrey, the Executive Headteacher of Grays and Southdown, and it is the Governing Bodies' intention that she should remain as the headteacher of the all-through primary school.

5.2 Staff and trade unions will be kept informed of the statutory consultation process in accordance with the normal procedures outlined in the Managing Change policies which are available at: <https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk/schoolpersonnel/employmentpolicies/Pages/m.aspx>

6. Conclusion and reason for recommendation:

6.1 In conclusion, the Council believes that a change to the current organisation of Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School will build on the excellent progress made by the headteacher and her team in the last 12 months and lead to a sustained improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 2.

6.2 For this reason, Lead Member is recommended to authorise the commencement of statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to reorganise Grays Infant School and Southdown Junior School in Newhaven.

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Local Members: Councillor David Rogers

Background Documents: None

STATUTORY PROCESS FOR CONSULTATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

Newhaven Primary School Reorganisation Proposal to close Southdown and alter the age range at Grays		
Key Dates		
Lead Member approval to consult on a proposal to close Southdown and alter the upper age limit at Grays		17 Apr 2012
Public consultation commences		30 Apr 2012
Consultation period (7 weeks including May Break) to include public meeting and other consultation events		30 Apr to 17 Jun 2012
End of consultation period		17 Jun 2012
Lead Member approval to publish statutory notices		16 Jul 2012
Grays Nursery relocates to Southdown site		01 Sep 2012
Publication of statutory notices		07 Sep 2012
Representation period (6 weeks)		07 Sep to 19 Oct 2012
End of representation period		19 Oct 2012
Lead Member determination of notices (final decision)		20 Nov 2012
Implementation:	Southdown officially closes	31 Dec 2012
	Grays alters its age range to become an all-through primary school	01 Jan 2013

