

Report to: **Lead Member for Learning and School Effectiveness**

Date: **8 December 2014**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title: **Primary school reorganisation in Crowborough**

Purpose: **To seek Lead Member approval to commence statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough.**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Lead Member is recommended to authorise the commencement of statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to amalgamate Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough with effect from 1 September 2015.

1. Background

1.1 The Council's Policy for School Organisation sets out our ambition to address the relative underperformance at Key Stage 2 of junior schools compared with all-through primary schools by supporting infant and junior schools to form a federation or to amalgamate.

1.2 Whitehill Infant School federated with Herne Junior School on 1 September 2009; the schools share the same governing body. In 2012 we consulted on a proposal to amalgamate the schools in time for the 2013/14 academic year, but the proposal did not proceed due to the governing body's concerns about the loss of one of the lump sums from their budget. However, with the extended protections now in place, the Council and the governing body wish to explore amalgamation again.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 It is recognised that there may be some practical difficulties in bringing together schools which do not share the same site. However, the benefits of a single all-through primary school arrangement outweigh the benefits of having separate infant and junior schools. The benefits include:

- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development under a single headteacher and teaching staff
- Greater continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning
- The school could provide a greater range of professional development opportunities for teachers. This could include the appointment of curriculum co-ordinators with the time to oversee the effective development and teaching of individual subjects across the whole 4–11 age range
- Greater flexibility that a 4–11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively
- Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children's primary education
- Practical advantages for parents e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to home links, uniform, codes of conduct
- Transfer to a different school environment after three years or less of schooling might be seen as an unnecessary disruption to pupils' sense of security and well-being. A positive feature of 4–11 schools is the social interaction between younger and older pupils
- Separate admissions applications at age seven will not be necessary and any uncertainty about transfer between the schools would be removed

Procedure for Change

2.2 Proposed changes to the organisation of schools have to follow a prescribed process established by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006), the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

2.3 To establish one all-through primary school, the Council proposes to close Herne Junior School on 31 August 2015 and alter the age range at Whitehill Infant School from 4-7 years to 4-11 years on 1 September 2015. The all-through primary school would continue to operate across the existing Whitehill Infant and Herne Junior school sites.

2.4 **Appendix 1** to this report sets out the proposed consultation programme key decision dates. Should the 2015 general election be announced earlier than expected, the programme might be subject to change to avoid the preceding period of Purdah.

2.5 Currently both schools receive a lump sum in their budget formula of £147,000 per annum. Should the schools amalgamate on 1 September 2015, the new all-through primary school would receive only one lump sum. However, the following lump sum protections would apply.

- For the remainder of the 2015/16 financial year the school would continue to receive the two separate lump sums combined
- For the 2016/17 financial year the school would receive 85% of the two lump sums, £249,900 ($£147,000 \times 2 \times 0.85$)
- For the 2017/18 financial year the school would receive 75% of the 2016/17 lump sum, £187,425 ($£249,900 \times 0.75$)
- From the 2018/19 financial year the school would receive one lump sum, £147,000

(The £147,000 lump sum is based on the current primary lump sum and can change in future years. Also, the second year of protection (2017/18) is subject to DfE approval, where the Local Authority has to apply for an exemption. This is required to be done by 31 December 2014).

2.6 The loss of one of the lump sums would be partially offset by the school receiving a split site allowance of £39,774 (estimate, based on the 2014/15 allowance). This is because the school would remain on two sites following amalgamation.

2.7 Capital investment would not be required to implement the proposals, other than for items such as new signage.

2.8 As with any process of change, the interests of staff must be considered carefully, and all staff and their unions will be consulted in accordance with the Council's Managing Change policies.

3. Conclusion and reason for recommendation:

3.1 In conclusion, the local authority and the governing body believe that a change to the current organisation of Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School will build on the progress made since federation in September 2009 and lead to a sustained improvement in educational standards at Key Stage 2. For this reason, the Lead Member is recommended to authorise the commencement of statutory consultation procedures in respect of a proposal to reorganise Whitehill Infant School and Herne Junior School in Crowborough with effect from 1 September 2015.

STUART GALLIMORE **Director of Children's Services**

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LOCAL MEMBERS:
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PROPOSED CONSULTATION PROGRAMME KEY DECISION DATES

Lead Member approval to consult	8 December 2014
Begin consultation	w/c 15 December 2014
End consultation	w/c 9 February 2015
Lead Member approval to publish notices	9 March 2015
Publication of notices and start of representation period	w/c 16 March 2015
End of representation period	w/c 13 April 2015
Lead Member final decision	8 June 2015
Implementation	1 September 2015