

Report to: **Lead Member for Education and Inclusion, Special Educational Needs and Disability**

Date: **21 March 2017**

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

Title of report: **St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant and Junior Schools amalgamation**

Purpose of report: **To seek Lead Member approval to amalgamate St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant School and St Thomas a Becket Catholic Junior School to create an all-through primary school.**

---

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**The Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of St Thomas a Becket Catholic Junior School on 31 August 2017 and to alter the upper age limit of St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant School from 4 - 7 to 4 - 11 with effect from 1 September 2017 in order to create an all-through primary school.**

---

## **1 Background**

1.1 The Governing Body of St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant and Junior Schools recently consulted on a proposal to amalgamate the two schools to create an all-through primary school with effect from 1 September 2017. Such a change would align the new school with Diocesan policy regarding all-through primary schools. The governing body believes that the longer-term future for Catholic education in the area can best be achieved through amalgamating the two schools into one all-through primary school, operating on the same site. All the children from ages 4-11 in the two existing schools would be part of one school.

1.2 The proposal is in line with the East Sussex County Council's School Organisation Policy which supports the amalgamation of infant and junior schools to form all-through primary schools.

## **2 Supporting information**

2.1 The governing body consulted with interested parties between 7 November and 16 December 2016. In all, 55 responses were received during the consultation, of which 48 (87%) were in support of the proposal and 7 (13%) were against it.

2.2 On 6 January 2017, the Governing Body agreed to publish statutory notices in relation to the proposal. The statutory notice was published on 27 January 2017 in the Eastbourne Herald and at the main entrances to the school. The notice and full proposal was also available on the school's website.

2.3 Publication of the notice was followed by a four-week period of representation, when comments or objections could be made to the Governing Body. By the end of the representation period, no comments or objections had been received.

2.4 The Governing Body met on 1 March 2017 to consider the outcome of the representation period and make a recommendation to the Lead Member. The Governing Body believes the proposal to amalgamate St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant and Junior schools is in accordance with the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton and East Sussex County Council's policies and has support locally. In light of these factors, the Governing Body recommends that the proposed amalgamation of the two schools is approved. A copy of the Governing Body report is attached at Appendix A. The report includes a copy of the consultation document, the outcome of the consultation and copies of the statutory notice and full proposal.

### **3. Factors to be considered by the decision maker and types of decision**

3.1 Proposed changes to the organisation of maintained schools have to follow a prescribed process established in Sections 15 and 19(1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 and the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

3.2 The process set out above complied with these requirements.

3.3 The regulations set out a number of factors to which the Lead Member should have regard before making a final decision on the proposal. These are set out in Appendix B.

### **4. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

4.1 In conclusion, the proposal to amalgamate St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant and Junior Schools would align the new school with Diocesan policy regarding all-through primary schools. The governing body believes that the longer-term future for Catholic education in the area can best be achieved through amalgamating the two schools into one all-through primary school, operating on the same site. The proposal is in line with East Sussex County Council's School Organisation Policy which supports the amalgamation of infant and junior schools.

4.2 For these reasons, the Lead Member is recommended to approve the closure of St Thomas a Becket Catholic Junior School on 31 August 2017 and to alter the upper age limit at St Thomas a Becket Catholic Infant School from 4-7 to 4-11 with effect from 1 September 2017 in order to establish an all-through primary school.

### **STUART GALLIMORE**

#### **Director of Children's Services**

Contact Officer: Gary Langford, Place Planning Manager

Tel. No. 01273 481758

Email: gary.langford@eastsussex.gov.uk

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Guidance for Decision Makers published by the DfE in April 2016

### **LOCAL MEMBER**

Councillor Pat Rodohan