

Hollinswood Junior School

School Reorganisation Consultation

Staff Meeting	4.00pm
Governors Meeting	5.00pm
Parents Meeting	6.00pm

Tuesday 3rd July 2012

Glenn Atkinson introduced the LA representatives.

In attendance representing Telford & Wrekin Council were:

- Jim Collins, Assistant Director Education, Skills and Culture (5.20pm onwards)
- Kathy Swallow, School Organisation Admissions & Planning
- Maria Haywood, HR Consultant
- Jules Millington, School Organisation Admissions & Planning

Kathy began the meeting by explaining the process we have been through so far and the timetable for the remainder of the process, and what are considered to be the advantages of an all through primary school. Maria followed on from Kathy and explained the human resources aspect of the merger and the process that would follow should the merger be approved by cabinet on 26th July. At both the governors and parents meeting Jim Collins reaffirmed the benefits of merging an infant and junior school.

The following questions and comments were raised during the **Staff** meeting:

Q: Would staff be informed of the outcome of the Cabinet meeting on 26th July?

A: Kathy explained that this would be a public meeting that would be attended by the press. It is likely that the outcome would be reported in the press the following day, but every effort would be made to inform the school of the outcome at the earliest point.

Q Is it an automatic decision to 'close' the Infant school?

A: This would be a decision made by the Council. It is recommended that a Governors Working Party would be formed if approval is given by cabinet to proceed with the merger. The working party would be a combination of governors from both schools, would include both Chairs and would guide work on the merged school. It is immaterial which school is 'closed' the end result would be the same. It was stressed that this was an amalgamation – not a take-over.

Q: If the merger went ahead would there be any possibility of closing one school building and extending the other?

A: There are no funds at present to consider this as an option, however if the town centre expanded this may create the need to revisit this question in years to come. Reorganisation in the class structure may assist integration of the year groups.

It was suggested we could consider a covered walk way. The distance between the two buildings was thought to be too great to contemplate this option. We would consult the Property and Design team to see if they could suggest any enhancements to the landscaping which may assist integration and harmonisation.

The general feeling at the meeting was that the merger was a positive move for the schools, but thought would be needed to minimise disruption and movement between buildings. It

was suggested that this was a matter of organisation and that the year groups could be mixed within the buildings to assist integration. The fact that the buildings were physically separate would be the challenge.

Q Is it likely that the staffing would remain at its current level?

A: It was not possible to say until the restructure had been decided. However at the two mergers that took place in 2011 no compulsory redundancies occurred. There was some adjustment to hours to accommodate all staff.

The following questions and comments were raised during the **Governors** meeting:

A personal opinion was expressed by one of the Governors, she felt that it would be good if the schools merged to be one school. She felt that the children would benefit if there was no change over between infant school to junior school.

Q: Was the merger likely to be detrimental to the children?

A: National figures show that generally merged primary schools perform better than separate Junior and Infant schools. There are also management and assessment benefits of merging the schools.

A governor asked for clarification of the policy to merge infant and primary schools. Kathy explained the history behind policy and confirmed that Telford and Wrekin would consider the merger of schools where one of the following situations arise: There are fundamental problems with the school's building, there are considerable concerns over the school's attainment or one of the head-teachers resigns

A governor recalled that the last time a merger between the two schools was considered, the schools were going to be rebuilt as one and was there any opportunity to join the buildings. It was confirmed that there was no budget to consider this at this point in time, but it would not be ruled out in future should the need for additional capacity in the area become apparent.

Q: Notwithstanding the extra cost benefit, which was considered best - a new head teacher for the infant school or merger?

A: Research has demonstrated the benefit of primaries over separate infant and junior schools. It was confirmed that there was a new funding structure and it was not clear how this would impact on all Telford and Wrekin schools, however, funding was based on numbers on roll and pupil numbers would not be affected by the merger.

The Head-teacher commented that merging in January would give the school some settling time, before starting a new academic year, which could work to the benefit of the school.

The governors considered drafting a letter expressing their opinions which would be forwarded to the schools organisation in-box.

The following questions and comments were raised during the **parent's** meeting:

In response to a press release in April it was clarified that neither school would be physically closed. It is proposed that one school will have its age range extended to cover the whole primary range and the other school would no longer have its own DfE number so the two schools would operate under a single DfE number.

Q: What will happen to the infant school during the interim period?

A: The governors have appointed an acting head teacher until a decision is made on the merger.

Q: What are the financial implications of merging a school?

A: It was explained that there is a new funding structure that would be effective from April 2013. This would be driven by the number on roll, pupil numbers would not be affected by the merger. Remaining balances from the 'closed' school would be transferred to the remaining school. Although the lump sum that is currently given to all schools would only be given to the primary school this would be offset by only having to fund one head-teacher.

Q: How much disruption to you anticipate for the children?

A: This would depend on how the governing body decided to organise the school. If merged all the pupils would be familiar with the head teacher and there would be no transfer between infant to junior school. It would all be driven by the needs of the children.

Q: Would all staff have to reapply for their jobs?

A: It would depend on the governing body, they would decide how the new school would be structured. In previous mergers governors have not made all the staff reapply for their jobs. It was confirmed that we had already addressed this matter with the staff earlier that evening.

Q: How can the transition between the key stages be improved giving that there would be no structural change to the building?

A: Various methods could be employed for example: mixing of year groups within the two buildings, events such as sports day, assemblies, a single assessment policy and curriculum planning across the key stages all aid integration.

Everyone was encouraged to express their opinion whether it be positive or negative.

The feeling from the junior school parents was that it was a positive proposal.

The Head-teacher had canvassed some of the children who had responded positively. It was suggested that they could involve the school council to encourage the children to discuss the merger and give the children the opportunity have their say.