



PROPOSAL TO MERGE REDWOOD INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS TO FORM A PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM SEPTEMBER 2011

SUMMARY

- 1.1 At its meeting of 2 June 2009, Cabinet approved the policy of promoting infant and junior school mergers whenever possible and appropriate, once consideration has been given to a range of factors. The report confirmed the Council's preferred model for the delivery of primary education as an all-through (4-11) primary school, as opposed to separate infant and junior schools.
- 1.2 At the formal Cabinet Member meeting on 1 July 2010, the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approved the commencement of consultation on the merger of Redwood Infant and Junior Schools to form an all-through primary school. Consultation on the proposal took place over a 6 week period from 29 September to 10 November 2010, with consultation papers circulated to all key stakeholders and interested parties. A summary of responses received is set out in Appendix 2 of this report and a copy of the consultation document is attached as Appendix 3.
- 1.3 Due to the majority of support shown in the consultation responses, and given the Council's policy of promoting mergers wherever appropriate, this report recommends that Cabinet gives approval to move to the next stage of the 'merger' process, which involves the publication of statutory notices and a further six week representation period.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 To approve the publication of a statutory notice to 'merge' Redwood Infant and Junior Schools through the closure of the Junior School and the simultaneous expansion in age range and size of the Infant School to form a primary school from September 2011.
- 2.2 To delegate authority to determine the proposal to the Strategic Director of Children & Young People if no objections are received and, if objections are received, to bring a further report to Council Cabinet for a decision.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 There are clear benefits to be gained in merging the schools to create all-through primary as outlined in paragraph 4.2 of this report. Council Cabinet has previously approved a policy of promoting Infant and Junior School mergers wherever

appropriate.

- 3.2 From the consultation responses, there has been a majority of support for the proposal. Of a total of 68 respondents, 50 (74%) expressed support for the proposed merger. A detailed breakdown of consultation responses is set out in Appendix 2 of this report.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 4.1 School mergers do not feature within the relevant regulations. Instead, mergers can be achieved through statutory procedures to close one school and simultaneously expand the age range of the linked school. The choice of which school should close and which should expand is usually based on which school has a headteacher vacancy, with that school usually the one proposed for closure. As Redwood Infant and Junior Schools both have temporary headteachers in place, a decision was taken with the schools that the proposal would be to close the Junior School and expand the Infant School. Once a “new” school is formed, it is necessary to form a single governing body to serve the new primary school.
- 4.2 There is a well established national preference for primary schools with full foundation stage provision, rather than separate schools serving individual key stages (nursery, infant and junior schools). This is based on evidence suggesting there are significant advantages of continuity, flexibility and efficiency. The main advantages are:
- A single primary school makes the transition of pupils between years 2 and 3, from infants to juniors, smoother and better for pupils and their families with less chance of ‘lost learning’ at the beginning of year 3.
 - The possibility to create a single and continuous approach to the curriculum, such as single policies for handwriting, reading, maths and behaviour.
 - School budgets are based mainly on the number of children in a school. If these go up and down year to year, it causes instability and can lead to a shortage of funding. The effects of this are often more pronounced for smaller schools as larger schools are more able to deal with fluctuations, for example leading to redundancies or lack of funds to purchase books, refurbish ICT equipment etc.
 - A larger school has more capacity to introduce remodelled posts, such as a site manager or school business manager. This releases the head and senior managers to concentrate more on the business of raising achievement for all children.
 - More development opportunities for the staff, such as shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum and gain experience and understanding of all key stages.
- 4.3 At its meeting of 2 June 2009, Cabinet approved the policy of promoting school mergers whenever possible and appropriate, once consideration has been given to a range of factors. The report also confirmed the Council’s preferred model for the delivery of primary education as an all-through (4-11) primary school, as opposed to separate infant and junior schools.

- 4.4 At the Formal Cabinet Member Meeting on 1 July 2010 the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People approved the commencement of consultation on the proposal to merger Redwood Infant and Junior schools to form a primary. The consultation period commenced on 29 September 2010, for a six-week period.

4.5 **Analysis of the case for merger at Redwood Infant and Junior Schools**

The opportunity to consider the establishment of a primary school arises following the resignation of both head teachers at the end of the 2009/10 academic year. At its meeting on 2 June 2009, Council Cabinet approved a set of criteria to be considered when analysing the respective advantages and disadvantages of a merger. An analysis of the situation at the two schools is detailed below, in line with this criteria:

Any significant teaching or learning issues at either school, including recent Ofsted judgments.

The Infant School was judged as a good school by OFSTED in 2008 while the Junior School was judged satisfactory in 2009. There are no significant standards issues at either school that would be significant in terms of a merger.

The stability of pupil numbers in the schools, including projected numbers and the potential size of the primary school.

The table below sets out pupil number information for Redwood Infant and Junior Schools based on the 2010 School Census.

School	Number on Roll	Net capacity	Surplus Places	% Surplus
Infant	172	243	71	29%
Junior	239	300	61	20%
Total	411	543	132	24%

Pupil projections are suggesting that there may be a marginal increase in pupil numbers across this cluster of schools over the next five years. This is in line with citywide primary pupil projections which are now starting to show an increasing trend. Therefore, there is no proposal to reduce admission numbers or pupil places as part of the merger proposal.

Any current or predicted financial issues in either school which would affect the quality of provision.

The outturn for financial year 2009/10 is £44,082 under-spend at the Infant School and £61,869 under-spend at the Junior School. Budgets for 2010/11 are;
Infants £696,284
Junior £827,721

The three year budget plan for the Junior school does show a deficit by 2011/12 as the recent fall in pupil numbers at the infants feeds through to the juniors. The combination of budgets would offer economy of scale and greater stability.

The availability of surplus places at both schools and others in the area.

There are 132 (24%) surplus places across both schools, which is relatively high. No major housing developments are planned in the school's catchment area. However, a major housing development within South Derbyshire, on the edge of Sinfen, has received approval through the South Derbyshire Planning Inquiry. The current proposal is for 500 properties which would generate around 140 primary school pupils. Although the development does not fall within the Redwood catchment area, it could result in a displacement of pupils into Redwood Infant and Junior School. The timescales for the development are not yet clear.

Issues around staff recruitment, especially at senior leadership level.

There are no significant issues.

Any relevant issues relating to the school buildings and/or site.

The schools share the same site, and the buildings are adjoining.

- 4.6 Appendix 2 sets out a detailed analysis of consultation responses. Of a total of 68 respondents, 50 (74%) expressed support for the proposed merger. Having regard to the above factors and consultation responses, the recommendation is that the proposal should proceed to the next stage of the 'merger' process. This involves following statutory procedures to close the Junior School, whilst simultaneously expanding the age range of the existing Infant School.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 5.1 There is an option to retain existing Infant and Junior Schools. This would result in a missed opportunity to improve standards and continuity for pupils in those schools where clear benefits are envisaged.

This report has been approved by the following officers:

Legal officer Financial officer Human Resources officer Service Director(s) Other(s)	Stuart Leslie, Director of Legal and Democratic Services Alison Parkin, Acting Head of Finance, Children and Young People's Dept. Rachel Squirrel, Team Leader - Schools and Resources Rita Silvester, Service Director – Performance and Commissioning, CYP
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For more information contact:	Rita Silvester, Service Director – Strategy and Commissioning, tel. 01332 716840, email rita.silvester@derby.gov.uk
Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implication Appendix 2 – Summary of consultation responses Appendix 3 – Consultation Document

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 The financial implications of one school closing and the other extending its age range are in some respects different from the closure of two schools and their replacement by a single new school. For most of the funding streams, the allocation for the “merged” school will be based on that of the school extending its age range, only with greater pupil numbers.
- 1.2 As far as the Council's funding formula is concerned, there will be a reduction of approximately £40,000 across the two schools because of the removal of flat rate factors allocated to each school. This will be more than offset by the reduced costs of only having one headteacher. Beyond that, the schools may be able to make further savings in the longer term.
- 1.3 The School Development Grant, along with other schools' grant funding streams will be mainstreamed and allocated through the formula funding mechanism from April 2011 as announced in the October 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review. It is not possible, at this stage, to say what the allocations of the amalgamated school would be but we would seek to protect the “merged” school from within the flexibility we have in this grant wherever possible. The devolved formula capital grant is also calculated by a nationally determined formula although we do not know at this stage what that will be for 2011/12. Under the current formula there would be a reduction in overall capital funding for each pair of schools of £18,500 because this is the element that is paid as a lump sum to each school.

Legal

- 2.1 School ‘mergers’ do not feature within the relevant regulations. Instead, statutory procedures for closing one school and simultaneously expanding the age range of the linked school should be followed. Full consultation has now been carried out with staff, governors and parents of all schools concerned. Subject to Cabinet approval, a statutory notice will be published, containing details of the proposal, and there will be a six week period for the receipt of any objections. The matter will then return to Cabinet – if there have been any objections – or be decided upon by the Strategic Director if there are none, provided recommendation 2.2 has been approved.

Personnel

- 3.1 The Council expects the budget for the merged schools will be sufficient to maintain sustainable levels of staffing set within the budgets of the separate schools. It will be the responsibility of the temporary governing bodies, in consultation with the authority, trade unions and professional associations, to determine a staffing structure for the new schools and the allocation of staff to posts within those structures.

- 3.2 Within the constraints of the powers of individual governing bodies, the Children and Young People's Department will do everything possible to ensure employment at other schools or elsewhere within the Council if this became necessary.

Equalities Impact

- 4.1 None for consideration.

Health and Safety

- 5.1 None for consideration.

Carbon commitment

- 6.1 None for consideration.

Value for money

- 7.1 Over the longer term, a larger school will have more capacity to introduce remodelled posts, such as a site manager or school business manager. This releases the head and senior managers to concentrate more on the business of raising achievement for all children.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 8.1 The proposal supports the Corporate Priority of building ambition, aspiration and achievement in the city's young people.

Proposal to merge Redwood Infant and Junior Schools to form a Primary School Summary of consultation responses

The table below sets out a summary of consultation responses:

Type of Respondent*	Number of Responses	'Yes I agree with the proposal' (number and % of respondents)	'No I don't agree with the proposal' (number and % of respondents)
Parent of Infant school child	25	19 (76%)	6 (24%)
Parent of Junior school child	25	21 (84%)	4 (16%)
Governor – Infant	4	3 (75%)	1 (25%)
Governor – Junior	2	2 (100%)	0 (0%)
Member of Staff – Infant	10	3 (30%)	7 (70%)
Member of Staff – Junior	1	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Local Resident	1	1 (100%)	0 (0%)
Total	68	50 (74%)	18 (26%)

*Please note that some respondents fell into multiple categories. If a respondent indicated that they represented more than one category, for example, if they were a parent and governor, this would count as two responses in the above table as their result would appear in both the parent and governor category.

Overall **74%** of respondents were in favour of the proposal.

The key comments made in relation to the merger can be summarised as follows:

The following issues of concern were raised:

- Children would attend a larger school and younger children would mix with older children.
- The view that this is 'cost cutting' exercise.
- The merger could have a detrimental impact on the Infant and Nursery School and the focus may shift to Year 6 achievements.
- Due to the separate buildings, segregation could still happen and the head will need to travel between the two. The halls and staffrooms should be enhanced for staff cohesion.
- Whether teachers and teaching assistants have sufficient subject knowledge to teach across KS1 / KS2.
- A very strong headteacher would be needed.

The following points were raised in support of the proposal:

- The merger would have benefits in terms of the transition of pupils from the Infant to Junior School and a consistent structure would exist across the primary phase.
- There would be benefits for consistency of subject methods and the continuation of schemes of work.
- Support was expressed based on previous positive experiences of a nursery, infant and junior school merging.
- The merger would result in improved access to facilities for children, for example, a school playing field would be available for the Infant School.
- A primary school would offer a better framework for future site development plans.
- A primary school could offer a higher salary for a Headteacher attracting the very best candidates.

Consultation Document



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

29 September 2010

To:

Parents, Staff, Governors, Trade Unions, Derby City Councillors (Ward Members),
Derby City Diocesan Authorities, local MPs, community organisations

Dear Consultee

PROPOSAL TO MERGE REDWOOD INFANT & NURSERY AND REDWOOD JUNIOR SCHOOLS TO FORM A SINGLE PRIMARY SCHOOL**Background**

It is generally accepted that all-through primary schools offer certain advantages when compared with separate infant and junior schools. The benefits include continuity for pupils, flexibility and efficiency in terms of staffing resources and improvements in terms of admissions. Where separate infant and junior schools exist, some pupils attending the infant school may not be able to access a place at the linked junior school, due to the availability of places. This can cause significant disruption for pupils and frustration for parents.

The opportunity to consider merging Redwood Infant & Nursery and Redwood Junior Schools arises due to both Headteachers leaving the schools at the end of the 2009/10 academic year, with temporary Headteachers currently in post.

Derby City Council is consulting on a proposal to merge the schools to form a single primary school, within the existing school buildings, from September 2011.

What is the proposal?

A 'merger' is the joining of two or more schools into one, with a single governing body and headteacher. This would be achieved through the "closure" of the Junior School and the simultaneous expansion of the age range of the Infant & Nursery School to form a single 3 to 11 primary school. Benefits of the 'merger' proposal are set out in the next section of this paper.

The choice of which school is to close and which school to expand is no more than a technical choice and carries no implication that one school is in any way better placed for expansion than the other. Usually, if one of the schools has a headteacher vacancy this is the one proposed for closure. However, in this case, both schools have temporary

Headteachers in place and a decision has been taken to consult on the closure of the Junior School and expansion of the Infant & Nursery School to form a primary.

The schools' currently each have an admission number of 75 and there are no proposals to change this.

If the two schools do merge, they will continue to operate within their existing buildings.

What are the benefits?

The main benefits are:

- A single primary school would make the transition of pupils between years 2 and 3, from infants to juniors, smoother and better for pupils and their families with less chance of 'lost learning' at the beginning of year 3.
- The possibility to create a single and continuous approach to the curriculum, such as single policies for handwriting, reading, maths and behaviour.
- A single governing body bringing a single culture and ethos across the 3 to 11 age range.
- School budgets are based mainly on the number of children in a school. If these go up and down year to year, it causes instability and can lead to shortage of funding, job losses etc. This is often worse for smaller schools. Bigger schools, such as primaries, are better placed to cope with the fluctuations.
- One school uniform, the same policies and procedures, the same dates for staff training days and parents' evenings.
- A larger school has more capacity to introduce remodelled posts, such as a site manager or school business manager. This releases the head and senior managers to concentrate more on the business of raising achievement for all children.
- More development opportunities for the staff, such as shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum and gain experience and understanding of all key stages.
- Better access for pupils and the families to extended services and facilities.
- The opportunity for both schools to keep improving and moving forward.

What will it mean for the children?

All of the above should have a positive impact on the quality of education that children receive. There will, inevitably, be a period of adjustment while the new structure settles down. On a day-to-day basis there will be no change in routine or provision in either school. It is anticipated that the children will benefit from the potential of a wider range of resources and improved staff development.

What will it mean in terms of organisation?

- There should be no immediate change in the way in which the schools are organised as a direct result of merger.
- The new school will receive a single budget based on pupil numbers. Conversion to a primary school gives, in the longer term, the head teacher and governors greater flexibility in using staff and resources.

- The primary school would maintain the status of community school and there will be no change to admissions criteria. Children in year 2 would automatically have a right to transfer to year 3 without having to re-apply for a place.

What will it mean for the staff?

Again, very little on a day-to-day basis, but merger will create greater stability and security. Apart from a change of school name to a primary school, staff contracts and conditions of service will not be affected in any way.

What will it mean for parents/carers?

Merger will mean that the schools will continue to operate as usual and that parents/carers of both schools will continue to receive the same high level of quality provision. Parents/carers will not have to apply for a place in the junior part of the school once their child is on roll in the infant department of the school.

What will it mean for the Governing Body?

On an agreed date the two current Governing Bodies will end, and be replaced with one Governing Body made up of representatives from both schools. Different models are possible.

What happens now?

The circulation of this document marks the start of a six week consultation period on the proposal to merge. This starts on Wednesday, 29 September 2010 and ends on Wednesday, 10 November 2010. Following this, Council Cabinet will consider the consultation comments and will decide whether to progress to the next stage of the process.

There will then be a further six week consultation period. It is anticipated that a final decision will then be made by Cabinet early in 2011 on whether to merge the schools. If merger does proceed then the “new” school will be in place for September 2011.

How can I get more information or give you my views?

Representatives from Derby City Council will be available at the Infant School on Monday, 11 October 2010 from 3pm to 4pm to answer any queries you may have on the proposal.

Representatives from Derby City Council will also be available at Junior School parent evenings on the following dates to answer any queries:

Tuesday, 12 October 2010 from 3.30pm until 7pm

Wednesday, 13 October 2010 from 3.30pm until 7pm

Please note that these are drop-in sessions and you are welcome to call into the schools at any time during the above timeslots. Please come along and ask us any questions about the merger and what it means for the schools and pupils.

Let us have your views

Your views are very important. Please do let us know what you think and whether you agree or disagree with the proposal by **Wednesday, 10 November 2010**.

You can make your views known in the following ways:

- by completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to us at the address provided at the end of the questionnaire.
- by email to hayley.millward@derby.gov.uk
- by writing to: Hayley Millward, School Place Planning Officer, 27 St Mary's Gate, DERBY, DE1 3NN.

Proposed Merger of Redwood Infant & Nursery and Redwood Junior Schools

Your views are very important, please do let us know what you think.

Please tick the relevant box. I
am a:

Parent of Infant school child

☐

Parent of Junior school child

☐

Parent of Pre-School child

☐

Governor - Infant

☐

Governor - Junior

☐

Member of Staff - Infant

☐

Member of Staff - Junior

☐

Local Resident

☐

Local Councillor

☐

Other (please state)

☐

I support the merger of Redwood Infant & Nursery and Redwood Junior
Schools to form a primary school

☐

OR

I do not support the merger of Redwood Infant & Nursery and Redwood
Junior Schools

☐

Please add your comments below and attach additional sheets if necessary:

Please return your response form to:

Hayley Millward, School Place Planning Officer, 27 St. Mary's Gate, Derby, DE1 3NN

or email your comments to hayley.millward@derby.gov.uk

by **Wednesday, 10 November 2010**

OPTIONAL

Your name (BLOCK CAPITALS)

Date