



Leicester
City Council

WARDS AFFECTED
Castle Ward

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND MEETINGS:

Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee
Cabinet

21 JULY 2005
25 JULY 2005

Proposals for the Change of Status of Avenue Infant and Junior Schools

Report of the Service Director (Policy and Resources), Education and Lifelong Learning

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the outcome of the consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the infant and junior schools into an all-through primary school and to seek Members' views as to whether they wish to take the proposal forward. If this is agreed statutory proposals will be published followed by a six-week period during which the public has an opportunity to make representations in writing about the proposals. If there are any representations in the form of objections the proposals must be put to the School Organisation Committee for decision.

2. Summary

- 2.1 The City Council's policy is to consider the amalgamation of separate Infant and Junior Schools when Headship vacancies allow or on a case-by-case basis when governing bodies make a formal request. (Cabinet 22 April 2003)
- 2.2 Arising from the retirement of the Head Teacher of Avenue Infant School at the end of the Summer Term 2004, an opportunity has arisen to consider an amalgamation to form an all-through primary school at the commencement of the Autumn Term 2006.
- 2.3 The LEA considers that there are major educational advantages to be secured from a single primary school instead of separate infant and junior schools sharing the same site and buildings. However, it is necessary to give full consideration to the issues arising at each school. As such, an amalgamation may not always be the best way forward. The perceived advantages and disadvantages are set out in the Consultation document (Annex A). These follow extensive discussions with the governors and unions to ensure these are appropriate.
- 2.4 Consultation by the Council on their proposals before publication is a statutory requirement. The consultation document at Annex A was issued at the beginning of the consultation period which started on the 3 June 2005 and due to end on the 18 July 2005. This was followed by a number of meetings with the LEA including Parents and Carers at the Infant School on the 13 June and the Junior School on the 14 June, and

staff and governors of both schools on the 7 June. A further meeting was organised by the Governors and attended by an LEA representative on the 27 June. The consultation document at Annex A was issued at the beginning of the consultation period. This was followed by LEA Consultation meetings with parents, governors, and staff at each school. A summary of the issues raised and the Department's response is at Annex B. After each meeting a questionnaire was issued to enable feedback. Annex C contains a statistical analysis of the returns and Annex D contains a summary of comments made both in support of the proposal and against and the Department's response. The Governors also held a subsequent meeting to listen to the views of parents.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Education and Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the proposal and advise Cabinet of the views of the Committee.
- 3.2 Cabinet is asked to consider whether it wishes to publish statutory proposals to change the status of Avenue Infant and Avenue Junior Schools to an all-through primary school.

4. Headline Financial and legal Implications

- 4.1 The financial advantages and disadvantages are set out at Annex A. Any cost savings will remain within the Schools Block budget, and any costs arising, including start-up costs, will have to be met from the Schools Block budget. (David Wilkin, Head of Education Finance - ext: 7750)
- 4.2 The re-organisation of schools follows a statutory process set out in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, associated regulations and guidance. The report outlines the appropriate steps to be taken. (Guy Goodman, Assistant Head of Legal Services - ext 7054).

5. Report Author/Officer to contact:

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 Service Director (Policy and Resources)
 Education and Lifelong Learning

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DECISION STATUS

Key Decision	Yes
Reason	Significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more ward
Appeared in Forward Plan	Yes
Executive or Council Decision	Executive (Cabinet)

Governors/Staff

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON THE POSSIBLE AMALGAMATION OF LEICESTER AVENUE INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Background

The City Council policy is to consider the amalgamation of separate Infant and Junior Schools when Headship vacancies allow or on a case by case basis when governing bodies make a formal request. (Cabinet 22 April 2003)

The LEA wishes to engage consultees in formal consultations about a possible amalgamation. The consultations will be conducted in accordance with DfES guidance. Members of the City Council will consider the various views expressed in meetings held with governors, heads, staff and parents and representations made by other consultees before making a final decision as to whether to publish statutory notices for an amalgamation.

Arising from the retirement of the Head Teacher of Avenue Infant School at the end of the Summer Term 2004 an opportunity has arisen for the Local Education Authority to consider an amalgamation to form an all through primary school at the commencement of the Autumn Term 2006. The LEA considers that there are major educational advantages to be secured from a single primary school instead of separate infant and junior schools sharing the same site and buildings.

This consultation involves the issuing of the consultation document followed meetings with parents, governors, and staff of both schools. After each meeting a questionnaire will be issued to enable feedback. The outcome of the consultations and feedback will then be reported to the Cabinet of the City Council to assist in deciding whether or not to agree to proceed with the publication of statutory notices i.e. progress the matter further.

If the statutory notices are published there would be a further six week period for anyone to make representations in writing about the proposals. All written representations received will be reported by the Local Education Authority, together with its comments to the School Organisation Committee. This is not a public meeting. The Local Education Authority has one month after the representation period to submit all written representations and their comments the School Organisation Committee.

The School Organisation Committee is an independent body which is charged with the responsibility for taking decisions about amalgamations if written representations are received. The Committee has to reach a unanimous decision across its voting groups. If it cannot make a unanimous decision the matter is referred to a Government appointed Adjudicator for a final decision. In the event that no written representations are received then the Local Education Authority can exercise its powers to determine the proposals

The proposal

Both infant and junior schools currently share the same site and buildings. The proposal is to close both the infant and the junior schools to form a 525 place primary school with an intake

of 75 for each year group for statutory age children. This would be the Planned Admission Number based upon the size of school at Autumn 2006. All school PANS across the City are reviewed on an annual basis with a view to consulting on changes as considered necessary and appropriate. There would also be a 30 place full time equivalent foundation one stage. This figure represents the maximum number of places to be provided to serve both schools' school priority areas and would remove surplus places. The existing accommodation at both schools would require adaptations to form the primary school. This would comprise the removal of temporary accommodation, and appropriate classroom alterations, and also addressing the Department's minimum requirement model

- a common staff room
- a common resources area
- common administrative accommodation
- a single common entrance to the school, controlled by reception
- a head teacher's office suitably located.

Funding for this has been reserved provisionally in the Council's Capital programme if the proposals go ahead. The removal of the temporary classrooms will enable more playground space on a very restricted site.

The LEA is in favour of all through primary schools. The perceived advantages and disadvantages are set out below.

Advantages of an all through primary school

- A common approach to teaching and learning which enables continuity and progression for pupils.
- A smooth transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 which avoids the likelihood of an 'academic dip' on the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2
- Consistency and continuity in policies and practices.
- There is evidence to suggest that children at the age of 11 achieve more if they experience more coherence and consistency in approaches to teaching and learning between the ages of 5 and 11
- More flexibility to target resources to priorities across key stages as necessary
- Greater learning opportunities for both staff and pupils. It is easier for teachers and classroom staff to develop an understanding of pupils outside the age-range that they would normally teach
- Older pupils can develop a sense of responsibility by spending time with and helping younger children, aiding the social development of both
- Parents only need to relate to one school and one head teacher which makes it easier to build longer-term relationships with the school
- Economies of scale should be achievable across a larger school

Disadvantages

- Larger schools can be seen to be more impersonal with some pupils feeling overwhelmed by the number of other children

- Some separate infant and junior schools achieve very good results so there may not be a clear academic advantage in an amalgamation
- The budget of a new primary school will be less than the combined budgets of the infant and junior schools as only one head teacher post will be funded.
- Creating one primary school from separate infant and junior schools may cause anxiety and an impact on staff morale due to changes in staffing and organisation, and could lead to recruitment and retention problems.
- An extended period of uncertainty may have an adverse impact on staff morale and lead to recruitment and retention problems
- The new school would only receive one allocation under the ' School Specific Factor' and ' School Support Grant' resulting in reduced funding in the order of £27,000.

What Would an Amalgamation Mean for Staff?

A temporary governing body would be appointed. It would then determine the organisational structure of the new school. The Education and Lifelong Learning Department's Human Resources team would offer guidance to the Governors on staffing matters through the Authority's Change of Status procedure which was agreed at the Teachers Negotiating Committee on 29.4.04.

This guidance advises on the appointment of the head teacher/deputy head teacher and all other staff (teaching and support staff). It is normal practice for vacant head teacher and deputy head teacher posts to be advertised publicly. The temporary governing body of a new or merged school resulting from a reorganisation may, however, take the view that the posts are not in effect vacant. In such circumstances, therefore, they may decide that the posts are not subject to the normal advertising or selection requirements expected in cases where the posts naturally become vacant. In the event that a new school is formed from the immediately pre-existing schools then the head teacher post will be ring fenced to existing permanent head teachers in post. The post of deputy head teacher would be ring fenced to the permanent deputy head teachers in post. This would be the case even if there is only one person currently in post. To be accepted for these vacancies the candidate must have the qualifications, experience and ability to undertake the role in the new school. In such circumstances the temporary governing body may either recommend to the LEA to confirm the appointment of the head teacher or deputy head teacher, or set out an appropriate process by which to select the new post holders.

For all other staff, posts would be ring fenced to existing staff in the schools affected and slotting in and ring fenced interviews would take place.

Slotting-in / ring-fenced interviews.

Consideration for early retirement and / or redundancy would be determined by specific circumstances and depend entirely on the school's need to fill posts at the same grade and similar duties to the member of staff's existing job. Similarly pay protection for teachers would be in line with the current statutory pay and conditions. Pay protection for support staff would be subject to the prevailing City Council policy.

Good Practice

The LEA has worked with a number of schools to secure amalgamations. On the basis of this, good practice guidelines have been drawn up to ensure an effective amalgamation. These are appended.

Response from consultees

The consultation period is 3 June to 24 June 2005. This document is issued prior to the formal consultation meetings. The consultation meetings will be arranged to be held between 5 to 17 June 2005. A questionnaire will be issued at the end of each consultation meeting. The questionnaires should be returned to Anthony Nolan, Principal Development Officer, Education Lifelong Learning, 12th Floor, A Block, New Walk Centre, Leicester LE3 6ZG by 30 June 2005. A report on the responses will be submitted to the City Council's Cabinet on 25 July 2005 who will decide whether or not to proceed to with a statutory consultation on the proposals by publishing the statutory notice.

Note: Anyone who wishes further clarification about the proposals or about the consultations should please contact Anthony Nolan 0116 252 7765.

AGAN
May 2005

AMALGAMATIONS OF SCHOOLS (Infant and Junior) – GOOD PRACTICE FOR MANAGING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN AMALGAMATION

Good practice at school level

- Manage the expectations and aspirations of all staff through dialogue, formal and informal conversations, regular written and oral communication regarding the process and timings
- Develop a strategic plan for staffing over 2-3 years, describing how staffing will develop in order to meet the vision for teaching and learning.
- Deploy deputies strategically across different, but mutually supportive areas of work, e.g. curriculum development, teaching and learning
- Identify time for the head teacher to have dialogue with each member of staff individually, before and after the opening of the amalgamated school
- Consider establishing subject co-ordinators and 'buddies' drawn from both schools
- Provide opportunities for pupils to be involved in the process – e.g. by designing the logo for the new school
- Ensure team-building opportunities are arranged both before and after amalgamation. Consider off-site opportunities for training.
- Ensure key policies are agreed before the school opens – e.g. behaviour policy
- Ensure key operational matters are agreed before the school opens – e.g. homework, use of hall, assemblies, home school agreement
- Provide key resources from the start to avert dissension – e.g. laminators, access to photocopier
- Establish working groups to pursue issues that need clarification or fresh idea
- Create whole school displays before and after amalgamation which help to build unity and provide an arena for both professional development and parental communication and understanding.
- Accept and acknowledge that the head teacher is less accessible in a larger school – but recognising that the head teacher needs to be visible.
- Re-visit the aims of the school after a 12 month period
- Establish and involve a school council from the start
- Accept, and plan for, differential professional development needs
- Pair teachers, to spend time in each others' classrooms
- Devise theme weeks when members of staff are mixed across the age ranges, both as professional development and as a way of securing the longer term staffing plan
- Provide an 'amalgamation newsletter' for as long as it is deemed necessary

Good practice at LEA level

- Manage the expectations and aspirations of school staff, governors, parents and community by regular and timely written and oral communications regarding the process, procedures and developments
- Ensure consistent messages from across the different divisions within the department – e.g. regarding budget, early retirements
- Ensure the timetable, once amalgamation is agreed, gives the earliest possible consideration to the establishment of the temporary governing body and the appointment of the head designate

- Give the highest priority to the building provision to ensure it is ready for the start of the new school opening
- Provide start up funding to ensure successful opening Appoint the head designate one term in advance of the school opening and clarify the requirements, levels of support and co-working with individuals and teams, that are envisaged
- Ensure that any amalgamation which utilises existing accommodation in one school provides, through building development, accommodation and facilities at least as good as those relinquished.
- Provide, in any buildings work, good accommodation for the head teacher, administrative and teaching staff as a statement of value and intent
- Agree a minimum of 2 additional closure days for establishing the aims and vision of the new school, staff development, team building, consistency of key policies, technical and administrative support
- Enable the school to utilise training days in whatever ways best meets the needs of the school
- Provide an audit of existing practice and provision in the two schools prior to opening through the use of inspectors/advisers and consultants. This to provide both the LEA and senior school staff and governors a current and accurate portrait of standards, ethos, quality of teaching and learning to inform the new school new improvement plan
- Provide time for consultants – e.g. literacy, numeracy, and ICT specialists, to work with the current separate co-ordinators
- Provide and fund, an ‘amalgamation mentor’ where possible, from another recently amalgamated school.
- Advocate and provide positive publicity

Annex B

Possible Amalgamation – Leicester Avenue Infant & Junior Schools.

Issues raised at the consultation meetings with joint Staff, joint Governors, Infant School Parents, Junior School Parents. The consultation document issued by the LEA formed the basis for discussions and the following issues were raised.

Issue

LEA Comment

Reasons for Amalgamation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the reason for amalgamation financial? 	<p>The amalgamation is not for financial reasons. The primary school would receive the combined budget of the current two schools. It would need to fund one less head teacher and potentially make other efficiency savings. This would be in excess of the loss of the Government grant. This proposal is being put forward because the LEA believes in all-through primary education and the educational benefits, particularly at the end of Key Stage 2. The DfES also advises the Authority to consider amalgamations to deal with falling rolls in separate Infant & Junior Schools. The LEA believes that planning the curriculum across a wider age range would benefit the pupils because it avoids interruption of education at the age of seven. The Authority will provide advisory and adequate financial resources to facilitate a successful amalgamation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the evidence & research to support amalgamations? 	<p>There is no specific study of this but it is the practice of most LEAs including the County and the City Council to carry out amalgamations when possible. The DfES TeacherNet website outlines the advantages of amalgamation.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What has been the experience 	<p>Feedback from our earliest</p>

<p>of other schools in the city that have been amalgamated?</p>	<p>amalgamation, namely at Caldecote, is that it has been a great success. One or two schools have found the transformation difficult, especially those which had major building work. The LEA reviews each amalgamation, listens to concerns and takes action to avoid problems that might occur in future amalgamations.</p>
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Importance of Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern about the loss of a small and safe Infant environment with strong Foundation education, which is the reason why many parents chose the Infant School. • Concern was expressed about the possible focus on KS2 in an all- through primary school, to the detriment of Foundation and KS1. • Comment was made about the need for strong leadership and management to make an all through primary school a success. • The span of control for an 	<p>During the discussions, reference was made to the need for a first class environment in Foundation 1. The LEA believes that this will be provided and also will give more space to children than the recommended DfES size of classroom for new schools. The LEA would ensure that children continue to be in a secure and safe environment.</p> <p>This will not be the case because the Governing Body of the new primary school would consist of governors from the current Infant school and the Junior school. The Governing Body would decide upon a new school's priorities and resources. The existing governors of both schools know the current priorities for each school.</p> <p>The new Governing Body would decide which appointments are needed and the staffing structure of the new primary school, in order to ensure a smooth transition towards an even more successful school. The ethos of the school will be determined by the Governing Body.</p> <p>This comment is true. But there is no</p>
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<p>Infant Head is less than that for a Primary head.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern was expressed about a possible dip in educational standards at the age of transfer from Infant to Junior school. 	<p>evidence that there is any detriment to the education of the children. The Head Teacher can strategically manage the needs of pupils over a wide age range as is the common practice of primary schools in all LEA's.</p> <p>An all through primary would help to minimise this danger.</p>
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Mixing Key Stages

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern was expressed about different ages mixing and younger pupils feeling intimidated. 	<p>The organisation of the school is a matter for the Governing Body to decide. At KS1, the class size will be no more than 30. The Foundation Stage will have its own playground.</p>
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Library and ICT Suite

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern was expressed about having a library and ICT suite in an all-through primary school. 	<p>The LEA is advised by the DfES Guidelines to provide a single library and resource area. The LEA acknowledges that some schools prefer dedicated ICT suites but the future trend is towards providing laptops. There is spare capacity at the school but it is for the Governors to decide upon the use of space.</p>
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Building Proposals

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why have the building plans not been produced for the meetings? Why not build a separate 	<p>This issue was raised at the joint staff & joint governor meetings. The LEA responded by producing preliminary plans at subsequent meetings.</p> <p>The cost of this work exceeds the</p>
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<p>dining hall and kitchen?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be problems of noise in setting up dining equipment in the hall. • Is keeping the mobile dining room an option? • Will the building work be disruptive? • Concern was expressed about the size and location of the Foundation 1 classroom. • Concern was expressed about the size of the staff room. 	<p>budget allocated for this project. The LEA believes that there is adequate space inside the school to carry out dining room activities. The removal of the mobile dining hall will free up much needed playground space.</p> <p>Most primary schools have dining facilities in the school hall. It is acknowledged that there is noise setting out the dining room.</p> <p>Yes it is. This however will not be replaced as the LEA has insufficient funds. When the mobile becomes unfit for purpose the dining facilities would need to be transferred into the main school.</p> <p>It is acknowledged that building work can be disruptive but it is planned to carry out the work during the summer to minimise any impact. The work will be monitored closely in case any corrective action is needed.</p> <p>The proposed size of the Foundation 1 classroom will be larger than if it were being built in a brand new school. This is because the adaptation works will create more space. The position of the classroom would be adjacent to Foundation 2 classes thereby ensuring continuity in the planning of rooms.</p> <p>The proposed staff room would be much larger compared with the size of a new one in a brand new school. This is because the adaptation works will create more space.</p>
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Classrooms

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will there be enough space in the main school buildings after the temporary classrooms have been removed? 	<p>The LEA plan indicates teaching space for 525 pupils which is above that required for the highest forecast of 449. The extra space has been provided to allow for expansion and ease of school organisation.</p>
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Dining Centre

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that children would eat in one or both halls. • Concern about reduction in space available for indoor lunch time clubs, reduction in curriculum time for PE and need for space for serving hatches and dining table storage. • The food in the school is not as good as parents would wish. 	<p>This is normal practice in many primary schools.</p> <p>The school has two halls and one could be dedicated for lunch time activities. The school will also have more outdoor space to carry out lunch time activities.</p> <p>The Governing Body has the responsibility for deciding on the catering service.</p>
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Consultation Process

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern was expressed that the time allowed for consultation has been inadequate. • Do the parents have a right of veto? 	<p>The LEA has set out its proposals in the consultation document issued to parents, staff and governors and supplemented this with meetings. It has carried out its consultation with all consultees in accordance with the guidance issued by the DfES.</p> <p>No. They can make representations to the Leicester City Council in the form of the questionnaire issued by the LEA or by letter to be received by 30 June 2005. The Council will take into consideration those representations made before deciding whether to publish a statutory notice. If it is decided to publish a statutory</p>
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	<p>notice, it will be published in the Leicester Mercury, and be displayed at both schools, the local library and the Leicester City Council offices at the start of the autumn term, in order to avoid the summer holiday. Anyone can submit objections or comment within the specified 6 week period stated on the statutory notice. The proposals including objections or comment received during the period specified will be referred to the School Organisation Committee. If no objections or comments are received during the specified period the LEA will determine the proposals.</p>
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Annex C

QUESTIONNAIRE

PROPOSED CHANGE OF STATUS OF AVENUE INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Do you support the Council's proposals to amalgamate the two schools to form one all through primary school?						
	Yes = 45			No = 66		
	Infants	Juniors	Both	Infants	Juniors	Both
Parent	4	11	3	30	4	16
Governor	1	6		4	2	
Staff	3	15	1	8	2	
Other		1				
Totals	8	33	4	42	8	16

Also, one Infant school parent is undecided, and the Junior School Council had an equal split of yes and no votes.

Petition

In addition to the above responses, a petition has been received opposing the amalgamation. This contains 81 names but the status of the petitioners is not clear. The main reasons cited for the opposition are:

- No evidence of benefits to pupils
- Loss of headteacher and character of schools
- Reduction in space and budget
- Disruption during building work
- Inadequate consultation

QUESTIONNAIRE

PROPOSED CHANGE OF STATUS OF AVENUE INFANT AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

SUMMARY OF COMMENTS

A selection of yes vote comments:-	LEA Response
✓ Support amalgamation on educational grounds	There is no particular study of this but it is the practice of most LEAs and supported by the DfES.
✓ It just makes sense! One building, one staff, one Headteacher, one vision.	The LEA believes in all-through primary education and the educational benefits.
✓ A great opportunity to improve the environment for the children.	Building work can be disruptive, but it is planned to carry out the work to minimise any impact.
✓ Better continuity, more flexibility, especially with staffing. I do not understand why this has not happened years ago.	An all through primary education allows for curriculum planning across a wider age range, which avoids interruption of education at the age of seven.
✓ I have never understood why they have been run separately, they are both within the same grounds and share playgrounds.	The adaption works will create more space.
✓ I think it will be better for the children.	Feedback from previous amalgamations shows that it has been a great success.
✓ Allow the opportunity to enhance good practice for all ages.	The Governing Body will determine the ethos of the school
✓ I feel very positive about the change of status.	Earlier amalgamations in the city have been a success.
✓ The positives of amalgamation far outweigh the disadvantages.	The DfES TeacherNet website outlines the advantages of amalgamation.

A selection of no vote comments:-	LEA Response
<p>✘ LEA has failed to evidence educational benefits</p>	<p>These are set out in the Consultation document (Appendix A). The DfES TeacherNet website also shows the advantages of amalgamation.</p>
<p>✘ I feel that it is unreasonable to force a change on our school.</p>	<p>Any proposal for change will be agreed after a full consultation process and following the statutory procedure.</p>
<p>✘ The size of the school will become too big.</p>	<p>Other City primary schools are larger. The majority of City schools are all-through primaries.</p>
<p>✘ I personally think both schools should be run as they are.</p>	<p>Noted.</p>
<p>✘ I feel that it would be detrimental to both schools</p>	<p>Feedback from past amalgamations has been positive.</p>
<p>✘ It seems that this “solution” will not tackle the educational problem, amalgamation is just to solve financial problems.</p>	<p>The primary school would receive the combined budget of the current two schools.</p>
<p>✘ The present system gives the younger children time to adapt to school life and most importantly mix up with their own peer groups rather than older children.</p>	<p>The LEA would ensure that children continue to be in a secure and safe environment. The foundation stage would have its own playground.</p>
<p>✘ Amalgamation of two schools is going to cause disruption.</p>	<p>There will inevitably be some disruption. However, the LEA reviews each amalgamation to address issues and improve practice.</p>
<p>✘ Insufficient consultation period for parents to discuss issues and concerns.</p>	<p>The LEA has carried out its consultation in accordance with the guidance issued by the DfES.</p>