

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

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| <b>Decision Maker:</b> | Executive Member for Education  |
| <b>Date:</b>           | 22 January 2014   |
| <b>Title:</b>          | Amalgamation of Siskin Infant School and Siskin Junior schools to become a primary school |
| <b>Reference:</b>      | 5446  |
| <b>Report From:</b>    | Director of Children's Services   |

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### 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to seek authority to carry out a statutory consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Siskin Infant and Siskin Junior schools. This would be achieved through the closure of the infant school and a change to the age range of the junior school from 7-11 to 4-11 creating a primary school, with an anticipated effective date of 1 January 2015.
- 1.2. This paper sets out the background to the proposal, and explains the necessary statutory consultation process to be followed.

### 2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Following an examination of all options on the future of the Siskin Schools (currently a federation) by the governing body the local authority has received a letter (see appendix 1) asking that a statutory consultation be carried out. In the letter the governing body stated "The Governing Body of the Federation of Siskin Infant & Nursery and Siskin Junior Schools has resolved that we consult with the community on closing the infant school and converting the junior school to become a Primary". What this would mean in practice is that a primary school (4-11) would be established in both school buildings. The Nursery, which is housed in the infant school buildings, would remain unaffected.
- 2.2. There are two processes which can be followed with the aim of establishing a primary school from separate infant and junior schools. One would be through the closure of both schools and the opening of an all-through primary school. The other would be through the closure of either the infant or junior school and a change to the age range of the school which remains open to cater for the full primary age range.

- 2.3. In October 2009 Siskin Junior School was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and, at that time, was categorised as requiring special measures to ensure an appropriate standard of education for pupils. Over the following year HMI carried out three monitoring visits the outcome of which indicated that the school was making satisfactory progress to come out of special measures. In March 2011 a full Ofsted inspection of Siskin Junior School judged the school to be providing a satisfactory standard of education for pupils and no longer requiring special measures.
- 2.4. A further inspection, in July 2013 concluded that Siskin Junior School was now a “good” school. The report emphasised that “pupils, including the high proportions who are disabled or have special educational needs, and the very high proportion who are eligible for extra support through pupil premium funding make at least good progress in all year groups”.
- 2.5. It also stated that “teaching is consistently at least good and has clearly been so for more than the last two years. Teachers make effective use of information from assessing how well pupils are doing to ensure work is well suited to their needs”.
- 2.6. In February 2013 Siskin Infant School was inspected by Ofsted and judged to have serious weaknesses. A first monitoring inspection took place in May 2013 which reported that the school’s action plan and the local authority’s statement of action, both designed to address the weaknesses identified by Ofsted, were considered to be fit for purpose.
- 2.7. As a school in serious weaknesses the Department for Education (DfE) would expect Siskin Infant School to consider becoming an academy, thereby engaging with an appropriate sponsor to address the areas of concern identified by Ofsted. The governing body have fully considered this option, recognising the need to improve the standard of education for children at the school as soon as possible, and concluded that the best way this will be achieved is by continuing to work in partnership with school improvement and other officers of the local authority.
- 2.8. Notwithstanding Siskin Infant and Siskin Junior schools work closely together under a federated governing body the schools are conscious of the negative impact which transition at age 7 from the infant to the junior school can have on children’s attainment. As such the governing body are keen to consult parents, staff, children and other interested parties on the proposal to create an all through primary school from the existing separate infant and junior schools.
- 2.9. There are four statutory stages for this type of statutory proposal, as set out below :
  - Consultation – 6 weeks
  - Publication of notice – 1 day (notice to run for 6 weeks)
  - Representation – during the notice period comments and/or objections to the proposal can be made
  - Decision – the local authority must decide the proposals within two months of the expiry of the public notice

### **3. Finance**

#### **Capital**

3.1. Siskin Infant and Junior Schools have recently had a £1.83m building project completed which has enhanced the educational facilities available for the pupils. The project included a covered canopy linking the infant and junior building together with a new reception area, office and multi-function space in the "junior" building. Within the "infant" building a new Headteacher's office has been provided together with a staffroom large enough to accommodate staff from both age phases at the school and a nurture space. Additional funding of approximately £100,000 has been identified to redecorate the classrooms in the junior building and those areas of the infant building that the main building contract did not address. No further capital expenditure is planned if the proposal to amalgamate the schools goes ahead.

#### **Revenue**

3.2. If the proposed amalgamation goes ahead with effect from 1 January 2015, the budget share for both schools will be pro-rated to 9/12 (April to December 2014) and a budget will be created for the newly established primary school for 3/12 of the year January to March 2014).

### **4. Performance**

4.1. Educational standards are improving rapidly at Siskin Junior School. As set out above the school was categorised as "good" by Ofsted in February 2013 and achieved very good Standard Attainment Test (SATs) results in 2013. Until 2013, outcomes for pupils were significantly below national averages for attainment overall and especially in maths. Standards have improved quickly so that they are now broadly in line with national averages with particular success in the number of pupils now reaching higher levels of attainment including maths. Strong progress in writing seen in 2012 has been sustained and strengthened further with two thirds of pupils making more than expected progress by the end of Year 6. Progress of children, including those eligible for free school meals, is now significantly above national expectations for other subjects too.

4.2. The Ofsted inspection at the infant school in February 2013 outlined a number of weaknesses :

- pupils' achievement in writing is inadequate in Years 1 and 2
- the achievement of children in the Nursery and Year R is inadequate with the children not being challenged enough
- teachers do not set work at the right level, questioning is not challenging enough and the pace of the lessons is not maintained
- when this occurs some pupils lose concentration which, occasionally, disrupts learning
- targets and marking are not used well enough to improve pupils' performance

**5. Recommendations:**

- 5.1. That approval be given to statutory consultations being undertaken on the Siskin Infant and Junior schools' federated Governing Body proposal to establish a primary school from the existing separate infant and junior schools through the closure of the infant school and change of age range to the junior school, with effect from 1 January 2015.**
- 5.2. That a report on the outcome of consultations be prepared for a future decision day.**

**CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:****Links to the Corporate Strategy**

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>  | no  |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):   |     |
| <b>Maximising well-being:</b>  | yes |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):   |     |
| <b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>   | no  |
| Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):   |     |
| <b>OR</b>  |     |
| <b>This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because: N/A</b> |     |

**Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents**

**The following documents discuss facts or matters on which this report, or an important part of it, is based and have been relied upon to a material extent in the preparation of this report. (NB: the list excludes published works and any documents which disclose exempt or confidential information as defined in the Act.)**

DocumentLocation

None

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equalities Impact Assessment:**

- 1.1. An impact equalities assessment will be undertaken in conjunction with any authorised consultation process.

### **2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

- 2.1. The proposals have no impact on crime and disorder.

### **3. Climate Change:**

How does what is being proposed impact on our carbon footprint / energy consumption?

The proposals have no impact on our carbon footprint/energy consumption.

How does what is being proposed consider the need to adapt to climate change, and be resilient to its longer term impacts?

No specific measures have been identified.