

## HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Decision Report

<b>Decision Maker:</b>	Executive Member for Education
<b>Date:</b>	30 July 2014
<b>Title:</b>	Amalgamation of Siskin Infant and Siskin Junior schools to become a primary school
<b>Reference:</b>	6012
<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 approval to withdraw the proposed amalgamation of Siskin Infant and Siskin Junior schools to form a single primary school.

#### 2. Contextual information

2.1. Siskin Infant and Junior Schools are federated under a single governing body. Following an examination of all options on the future of the Siskin Schools by the governing body, the local authority received a letter asking that a statutory consultation be undertaken on the proposal for the two schools to become a single primary school. 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".

2.2. 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 inspectors 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.

2.3. 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”.

- 2.4. 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”.
- 2.5. 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.
- 2.6. 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 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 that would be achieved was by continuing to work in partnership with school improvement and other officers of the local authority.
- 2.7. Notwithstanding Siskin Infant and Siskin Junior schools work closely together under a federated governing body the schools were conscious of the potential negative impact which transition at age 7 from the infant to the junior school could have on children’s attainment. As such the governing body requested that consultation be undertaken on a proposal for the two schools to form a single primary school.
- 2.8. The Executive Member for Education authorised consultation to take place on the proposal to close the infant school and change the age range of the junior school to cater for all age primary age pupils. Consultation commenced on 23 January 2014 and ran until 13 March 2014.
- 2.9. The consultation took the form of letters to all statutory consultees (Appendix 1), with the consultation document being placed on the County Council website together with a drop-in session at Siskin Junior School on 11 February 2014 allowing consultees to engage with County Council Officers and make comments on the proposal. There was also the opportunity for consultees to make their views known either through the website or direct to a named officer. No objections to the proposal and two comments in support of the proposal were received from parents of pupils in the infant school.
- 2.10. As a result of the outcome of consultations it was decided to proceed with the proposal and, in keeping with due process, two Public Notices were published on 2 May 2014, one setting out the proposed closure of the infant school, the other setting out the proposed change of age range for the junior school. The notices ran for six weeks during which time representations were invited. No representations were received.
- 2.11. Siskin Infant School was inspected by Ofsted in April 2014, inspectors concluded that that the school had improved and was no longer “providing an inadequate education”. The school was judged as “requires improvement”

and needs to build upon this to ensure a good judgement is secured at the next inspection.

- 2.12. On 10 June 2014 the local authority received a letter from the Siskin schools federated governing body which had reflected on its request to consult on the two schools becoming a single primary school and concluded that “the financial advantage of keeping both schools’ budgets outweighs the advantages of clearer lines of accountability within one organisation rather than two”. As such the governing body has requested that the proposal for the two Siskin schools to form a single primary school not be implemented.

### **3. Finance**

#### **Capital**

- 3.1. Siskin Infant and Junior Schools have recently had a £2.5m 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 through school funding and from the Culture Communities and Business Services landlords budget to redecorate the classrooms in the junior building and those areas of the infant building that the main building contract did not address.

#### **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). The budget for the primary school would largely be based on the number of pupils at the school, as would be the case for separate infant and junior schools and as such would be of similar magnitude.
- 3.3. As part of a school’s overall budget allocation each receives a lump sum which, for 2014/15, was £175,000. As such, were the proposal to go ahead, there would be a loss in revenue funding to support the education of Siskin’s pupils of some £175,000 per annum from 2016/17, assuming this lump remains in the formula For 2015/16, in accordance with the 2014/15 school funding formula, the new school would receive 85% of the total lump sums for each school i.e. £297,500 ( $£175,000 * 2 * 85%$ ) based on current rates.

### **4. Performance**

- 4.1. The initial first cut of data provided to the Local Authority indicates that Siskin Junior School has just secured over 85% of students attaining Level 4+ in reading, writing and maths combined in the Standard Assessment Tests (SATs). This represents an outstanding outcome and better than many

schools in Hampshire. This underpins the fact that, as a federated pair of schools, the junior school can still deliver very good SATs results.

## **5. Future direction**

- 5.1. It is the case that when establishing new schools for primary age pupils Hampshire County Council does so through primary schools and not separate infant and junior schools. This is in recognition of the economies of scale which a single school brings, but also in the knowledge that the transition from an infant to a junior school can have a negative impact on children's attainment. As such the proposal to form a single primary school from Siskin Infant and Junior schools has merit. However this needs to be set against the detrimental effect which such a proposal would have with regard to revenue funding. The schools are, in many respects, set up to operate as a single entity with physical facilities to do so (see 3.1 above) and under the leadership of a single headteacher and governing body. As such, and on balance, to ensure a firm funding foundation would seem to outweigh the advantages of a single primary school.

## **6. Recommendation(s)**

- 6.1. **That the proposal to form a single primary school through the closure of Siskin Infant School and the change in age range of Siskin Junior School be withdrawn.**
- 6.2. **That a notice be published on the County Council website outlining the reason for withdrawal of the proposal in keeping with statutory guidance.**

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

<b>Hampshire safer and more secure for all:</b>	no
<b>Maximising well-being:</b>	yes
<b>Enhancing our quality of place:</b>	no

**Other Significant Links**

<b>Links to previous Member decisions:</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Reference</u>	<u>Date</u>
<b>Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives</b>		
<u>Title</u>	<u>Date</u>	

**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.)

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
None	

## **IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:**

### **1. Equality Duty**

1.1. The County Council has a duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 ('the Act') to have due regard in the exercise of its functions to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation) and those who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

#### **Equalities Impact Assessment:**

1.2.1 There will be no impact on the pupils as they will still receive the same primary education across two schools rather than one.

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

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

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

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

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

b) 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.