

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

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| Decision Maker: | Executive Member for Education |
| Date of Decision: | 11 November 2016 |
| Decision Title: | Amalgamation of The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School |
| Decision Reference: | 7540 |
| Report From: | Director of Children's Services |

Contact name: Brian Pope – Assistant Director, Children's Services

Tel: 02392 441471

Email: brian.pope@hants.gov.uk

1. Executive Summary

1.1. This paper reports on the outcome of the public consultation on the future of The Connaught School because a step change in attainment and performance is required. The preferred option of the County Council would be to merge The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School to form an all-through school. This would be achieved through the closure of The Connaught School and Newport Junior School and as an enlargement of Belle Vue Infant School and change of age range from 4 – 7 to 4 – 16. The consultation offered three other options: to make no change; to find a sponsor to enable sponsored academy status; and to merge with The Wavell Secondary School. During the consultation the County Council also welcomed any additional viable proposals.

2. Contextual information

2.1. The Connaught School has a track record of relatively weak educational performance over a number of years and there are insufficient indications that rapid and sustainable improvement is likely. The Connaught's performance and legacy of weak outcomes relative to neighbouring schools continues to be a contributory factor to pupil numbers. Admissions for Y7 2016 show that only 30% of in-catchment parents opted for The Connaught as their first preference school. This is the highest proportion for several years; however The Connaught is clearly not the school of choice for a significant proportion of parents within the immediate community. The issues facing the school are complex and inter-related. The number on roll has been low for several years in comparison to capacity and this is having a significant negative impact on the budget. The school serves a community with a high number of students deemed to be disadvantaged, primarily those eligible for free school meals.

The school competes with neighbouring Surrey schools for local pupils. A change of approach and structure is now considered necessary, in order to raise standards of educational provision and outcomes for secondary age students locally and to secure the school's long term viability.

- 2.2. There are four mainstream secondary schools within the Borough of Rushmoor; The Connaught, The Wavell, Cove and Fernhill. Cove and Fernhill serve students primarily from Farnborough. The Wavell is in the heart of Rushmoor and serves students from both Aldershot and Farnborough. The Connaught is sited on the edge of Aldershot town and tends to serve students from Aldershot.
- 2.3. The Connaught is in very close proximity to the Hampshire/Surrey border. There are several more popular and generally higher performing Surrey secondary schools nearby: Ash Manor is within half a mile (Ofsted – good in 2012); All Hallows RC is within one and a half miles (Ofsted – outstanding in 2014), Farnham Heath End Academy is within two miles (Ofsted – requires improvement in March 2016) and Weydon Academy is within 4 miles (Ofsted – outstanding 2009).
- 2.4. The Connaught was judged satisfactory in 2011, then requiring improvement in 2013 and again in March 2015. The current Ofsted framework requires that any school receiving two consecutive requiring improvement judgements must, on a third inspection, either be deemed good or be placed in special measures. The Connaught must therefore be judged good at the next inspection (due in April 2017) or it will be placed in special measures. Both the County Council and governors of The Connaught recognise the vulnerability of the school as it approaches the next Ofsted inspection.
- 2.5. The Department for Education (DfE) has historically used the attainment measure of 5 GCSEs including English and mathematics at grades A* to C (5ACEM) as a preferred measure for secondary school performance. Table 1 sets out the performance of The Connaught School for this attainment measure compared to the national average. Please note that The Connaught's figure for 2016 is self-reported and that both 2016 figures shown remain provisional. Due to changes to the Government's preferred measures there will be no national comparative figure for 2016.

Table 1

| 5 A* to C inc En & Ma | The Connaught | National |
|-----------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|
| 2016 | 43% | Not Available (Hampshire 62%) |
| 2015 | 29% | 57% |
| 2014 | 48% | 59% |

| | | |
|------|-----|-----|
| 2013 | 36% | 61% |
|------|-----|-----|

Attainment both in relation to the headline performance measures and to attainment more broadly has been stubbornly low and considerably below the national average for too long. Improvements secured previously have not been enough to close the gap between the school and national averages sufficiently, nor have they been sustained and built on.

2.6. In the five years that pupils are at The Connaught accelerated progress would be expected in order to narrow the attainment gap; however the rate of progress has generally been below that which has been secured nationally, the exception to this being in 2014. Tables 2 and 3 below show the proportion of pupils making expected progress at The Connaught compared to nationally in English (Table 2) and mathematics (Table 3).

Table 2

| % Expected Progress in English | The Connaught | National |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 2015 | 53 | 71 |
| 2014 | 76 | 72 |
| 2013 | 36 | 70 |
| 2012 | 54 | 68 |
| 2011 | 56 | 72 |

Table 3

| % Expected Progress in Maths | The Connaught | National |
|------------------------------|---------------|----------|
| 2015 | 54 | 67 |
| 2014 | 66 | 66 |
| 2013 | 64 | 71 |
| 2012 | 67 | 69 |
| 2011 | 60 | 65 |

3. Consultation

- 3.1. Dedicated webpages, containing information on the consultation process, outlining the four possible options for change including the Council's preferred option, giving dates of the public drop-in meetings and linking to a response survey, were live from 4th July to 30th September - <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/connaught-consultation>. Letters containing information and the link to these webpages were sent to parents of the schools concerned and all other schools within 2 miles, together with a range of other local and relevant stakeholders. Copies of the letter, webpage and response survey are attached at Appendices 1, 2 and 3 respectively. A list of consultees is attached at Appendix 4.
- 3.2. Three public drop-in meetings were held, one at The Connaught, one at Newport Junior School and one at the West End Centre in Aldershot. Separate meetings for staff were held at The Connaught School and Newport Junior School, the latter including staff from Belle Vue Infant School. Hampshire County Council officers also attended Governing Body meetings at The Connaught School and the Federation of Belle Vue Infant & Newport Junior Schools. Additionally officers also met with Rushmoor Borough Council Members and the Chief Executive.
- 3.3. The public consultation meetings were attended by a mixed audience including pupils, governors, interested parties and parents (predominantly the latter). As well as having questions directly answered at these meetings, attendees were encouraged to complete the online or hard copy response forms. The minutes for the meetings at The Connaught and Newport/Belle Vue Schools were uploaded to the consultation webpages to provide additional feedback to consultees and are also included at Appendix 5. The FAQ section was also updated as appropriate.
- 3.4. A total of 577 online and written responses have been received. An analysis of responses and summary of comments made are outlined below.
- 3.5. Responses to Question 1 'In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?'

| | |
|--|-----|
| Parent of a pupil at The Connaught School | 61 |
| Parent of a pupil at Newport Junior School | 33 |
| Parent of a pupil at Belle Vue Infant School | 34 |
| Parent of a pupil at another school | 282 |
| Governor at The Connaught School | 3 |
| Governor at Newport Junior School/Belle Vue Infant | 9 |
| District/County Councillor | 3 |
| Pupil at The Connaught School | 6 |
| Pupil at Newport Junior School | 1 |
| Pupil at Belle Vue Infant School | - |
| Pupil at another school | 14 |
| Member of staff at The Connaught School | 1 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Member of staff at Newport Junior School | 27 |
| Member of staff at Belle Vue Infant | 20 |
| Member of the public | 45 |
| Other | - |

- 3.6. Responses to Question 2 'Which of the following options do you support? (you may tick more than one box) – please refer back to the consultation page for the detail on these options:

| | |
|---|-----|
| Maintain the current position | 243 |
| Academy Sponsor | 149 |
| Merge The Connaught with The Wavell | 30 |
| Merge The Connaught School with the Federation of Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School | 272 |

- 3.7. Summary of comments in response to question 3 on the survey 'Should you wish to comment further or to suggest alternative viable options please use the box below:'

| | |
|---|-----|
| Supportive of Connaught / Make no changes | 52 |
| Not supportive of Connaught / Change required | 15 |
| Increase financial support for Connaught | 21 |
| Merger would have negative affect on Wavell finance | 3 |
| Connaught's Ethnic Diversity an issue | 31 |
| Aldershot needs 2 secondary schools – not supportive of merger with Wavell | 13 |
| Negative impact on Connaught | 38 |
| Merger of two secondary schools would have negative impact on Wavell | 190 |
| Merger with Belle Vue and Newport would have negative impact on Infant & Junior Schools | 16 |
| Merger of two secondary schools would not work due to split Campus | 146 |
| Supportive of merger with Belle Vue and Newport | 44 |
| Supportive of merger with the Wavell | 6 |
| Supportive of bringing in an Academy sponsor | 7 |

- 3.8. The open meeting at The Connaught School was attended by in excess of 150 parents of pupils currently at the school. They were overwhelmingly supportive of there being no change for the following reasons:

- A belief that there would no longer be secondary age provision on the current site; that the school (and site) would close with no subsequent merger and that there would be no alternative secondary provision in the immediate area;

- That the proposal was founded on the Council's desire to sell the land occupied by The Connaught School currently;
- Significant support for the headteacher of The Connaught, the inclusive ethos she has created within the school and the positive relationships she has established within the community;
- Support for the staff of The Connaught and recognition of their efforts to meet the needs of the pupils.

Minutes from the Connaught and Belle Vue/Newport Open Meetings can be found at Appendix 5.

- 3.9. The governing body of Belle Vue Infant and Newport Junior federation has, as part of the consultation, submitted minutes of a meeting, which show agreement to support the preferred option. This is included as Appendix 6
- 3.10. The Connaught governing body has also submitted a response to the consultation to Executive Member for Education, Cllr Edgar. This concludes that it will be supporting the preferred option whilst raising some issues about the process of consultation and a degree of disappointment that it could not explore other alternatives within the timeframe. This briefing is included as Appendix 7.
- 3.11. Hampshire County Council officers met with Rushmoor Borough Council Members on 19th September to outline all the options as part of the consultation process. Rushmoor Borough Council subsequently through its Chief Executive wrote to the County Council stating its support of the preferred all through school option. This is included as Appendix 8.

4. Financial Impact

- 4.1. The revenue implications affecting all three schools are summarised in the following paragraphs.
- 4.2. The following information is based on minimal changes to the current funding arrangements. However, it is anticipated that there will be national reforms to school funding from 2018/19 with further consultations due to be announced by the DfE later in the autumn of 2016. In addition, there are pressures to budgets locally and, as a result, the local authority will be consulting with all schools over the autumn 2016 about changes to school budgets from 2017/18.
- 4.3. All schools will receive a pro-rata budget share for the period 1 April 2017 to 2 April 2017 (the date of closure). Following the closure of both Connaught and Newport Junior, from 3 April 2017 Belle Vue will be issued with a revised budget share that incorporates all the pupils and lump sums from all three schools.
- 4.4. A significant financial impact will be the loss of two lump sums, which is currently £175,000 per school. However, as a protection for amalgamating schools and to acknowledge the loss of the lump sums, Belle Vue will

receive additional funding for one year in 2018/19 that is equivalent to 85% of the three combined lump sums. There is also further option for the LA to apply to the Secretary of State for a 75% protection of 3 lumps sums the following year (in 2019/20).

- 4.5. From 3 April 2017, as Belle Vue will be operating from more than one site, it will be eligible for split site funding, which is currently £50,000 per annum as detailed in the funding policy approved by Schools Forum. This additional funding recognises the increased costs faced by schools that operate on more than one site such as additional transport requirements and duplication of facilities. This policy is currently under review, with the possibility of increased funding for a school that is split over three sites.
- 4.6. Connaught and Newport Junior are both currently in receipt of minimum funding guarantee (MFG), which is a per pupil protection that had arisen due to historical formula changes. On the assumption of minimal formula changes, this level of funding would reduce significantly year on year, as the protection works its way out of the system. Belle Vue is currently not in receipt of this form of funding. The MFG for Newport Junior is minimal and would have likely to have ceased completely in 2017/18 (assuming no major funding formula changes). However, the Connaught MFG currently exceeds £130,000 and would have therefore taken a few years to work its way out of the system.
- 4.7. Upon closure of the Connaught and Newport Junior, the MFG funding protection will cease, and will not transfer to Belle Vue with the pupils. Belle Vue will be funded according to the number and characteristics of the pupils currently at Connaught. This is on the basis of a per pupil level of funding, plus supplements for deprivation, children looked after, English as an additional language, low attainment and pupil mobility.
- 4.8. As at 31 March 2016, Connaught had a deficit balance of £45,000 and Newport Junior had a surplus balance of £155,000. The expectation is that all schools will take appropriate actions to ensure a balanced budget by the closure date, although any surplus balances can be transferred to Belle Vue upon closure.
- 4.9. Belle Vue, as at 31 March 2016, had a surplus balance of £56,000.
- 4.10. Newport Junior currently receives additional funding as a growing school as it moves to a 3 form entry. However 2016/17 will be the final year of growth and therefore this area has no impact on the merger.
- 4.11. Additional items incurred by the re-organisation (eg. new school signage) will be funded via the re-organisation fund from within the growth fund, as detailed within the Hampshire School Funding Policy Pack.

5. Admission Arrangements

- 5.1. The proposed new 4 - 16 school will have two main entry points for admission – Year R and Year 7. A Published Admission Number (PAN) of 90 will apply at the primary phase of the school and a PAN of 80 (for new pupils) at the secondary phase. Year 6 pupils attending the primary phase

are expected to transfer to the secondary phase without the need to apply. Should they wish to attend a different school, parents can make an application through the recognised process. The number of places available in Year 7 of the secondary phase could increase above 80 if fewer children transfer from the lower school, so that a total of 170 places are allocated.

- 5.2. The 2017/18 admission arrangements for Belle Vue Infant, Newport Junior and The Connaught School are already determined. The County Council will seek any required approvals to vary the existing admission arrangements for Belle Vue Infant School to reflect the new arrangements for the all-through school as described above.
- 5.3. The closing date for Year 7 applications for September 2017 is 31 October 2016. By the decision date in November, parents will have already made their applications for The Connaught School. Places for Year 7 in September at the new school would therefore be allocated in accordance with The Connaught School's 2017/18 determined admission arrangements on the national notification date of 1 March 2017.
- 5.4. The admission round for parents applying for a Year R or Year 3 place in September 2017 opens on 1 November 2016 and closes on 15 January 2017. The determined 2017/18 admission arrangements for Belle Vue Infant School would be used to allocate places in Year R at the new school on the national notification date of 18 April 2017.
- 5.5. The closure of Newport Junior School as a result of amalgamation would mean that there would no longer be a Year 3 intake for parents to apply for. Children on the roll of Year 2 at Belle Vue Infant School would be automatically entitled to progress to Year 3 of the new school in September 2017. The Admissions Team will communicate with local families in regards to the closure of Newport Junior and the resulting change in the application process. Parents of children in Year 2 at Belle Vue Infant would still have the option of applying to other junior schools in the main admission round if they wished. Parents of children in Year 2 at other infant /primary schools seeking a Year 3 place at the new school in September would be able to make an in-year application in June 2017, in line with Hampshire's published procedures for applications to Year 3 at a primary (or all-through) school.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The County Council's preferred option to merge Belle Vue Infant School, Newport Junior School and The Connaught School is wholly supported by the governing body of Belle Vue Infant and Newport Junior Federation and reservedly supported by the governing body of The Connaught. It is also supported by Rushmoor Borough Council Members.
- 6.2. The view of parents on the County Council's preferred option presents a mixed picture. Some of the early responses to the consultation, including representation at the meeting held at The Connaught School, suggest a preference of no change, most notably by those whose children currently attend the school. Whilst recognising that a substantial proportion of the support for no change has been predicated on misconceptions relating to the

continuation of secondary provision on the site, a substantial proportion is driven by the popularity of the existing headteacher of The Connaught School and a confidence in the staff team. Parents of children beyond those who have children already at The Connaught School have in the main responded more favourably to the preferred option.

- 6.3. Staff at The Connaught, based solely on views expressed at the meeting with them, would prefer to see no change, with a view that the school is improving despite significant challenges and that it has secured a better reputation in the community over recent years. Staff at Belle Vue Infant School and Newport Junior School were broadly supportive of the preferred option.
- 6.4. There is minimal support for the option to merge The Connaught School with The Wavell School; indeed there is considerable strength of support from parents against the option and insufficient support from other stakeholders to retain this as a viable option for further consideration.
- 6.5. There is some support for sponsored academy status, favoured by just over half that of the preferred option, as indicated by individual responses. This route is not, however, favoured by the governing body of The Connaught School, nor by the County Council, for the reasons outlined in the original consultation report. Rushmoor Borough Council Members wish to retain this option as a possibility longer term but, do not consider it the favoured option at the current time and therefore within this consultation process.
- 6.6. No other viable options have been put forward as part of the consultation process.
- 6.7. Individual responses to the consultation show that across all stakeholders the County Council's preferred option is favoured above the option to make no change. When combining this with the support of both governing bodies involved with the proposed merger and that of the local Borough Council, the preferred option of Hampshire County Council would, on balance, appear to be the favoured way forward.

7. Recommendations

It is recommended that:

- 7.1. A Public Notices be published in accordance with Sections 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to:
 - a) Discontinue The Connaught Secondary School and Newport Junior School with effect from 9 April 2017.
 - b) Establish a community all-through 4 – 16 school by enlarging Belle Vue Infant School through the utilisation of Newport Junior School and The Connaught Secondary School sites and buildings and, extension of Belle Vue Infant School age range from 4 – 7 to 4 – 16, with effect from 10 April 2017.

CORPORATE OR LEGAL INFORMATION:

Links to the Corporate Strategy

| | |
|--|-----|
| Hampshire safer and more secure for all: | No |
| Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate): | |
| Maximising well-being: | Yes |
| Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate): | |
| Enhancing our quality of place: | No |
| Corporate Business plan link number (if appropriate): | |
| OR | |
| This proposal does not link to the Corporate Strategy but, nevertheless, requires a decision because: | |

Other Significant Links

| | | |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Links to previous Member decisions: | | |
| <u>Title</u> | <u>Reference</u> | <u>Date</u> |
| The Connaught School Aldershot | 7540 | 1/7/2016 |
| Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives | | |
| <u>Title</u> | | <u>Date</u> |
| Education and Inspections Act 2006 | | 8/11/2006 |

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> |
|---|----------------------------------|
| School Organisation-Maintained Schools Guidance for proposers and decision makers | Department for Education website |

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

Equalities have been considered and no adverse impacts have been identified as a result of this proposal

- **Impact on Crime and Disorder:**

The recommendations will have no impact on crime and disorder

- **Climate Change:**

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

No impact has been identified

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

Appendix 1 – Copy of Consultation Email

County Council set to consult on future of Aldershot's Connaught School

Hampshire County Council is proposing to seek views on [options for the future of The Connaught School](#) in Aldershot, in a move aimed at raising the academic attainment of students.

The decision on whether to go ahead with a consultation will be made on 1 July 2016 by Councillor Peter Edgar, the County Council's Executive Member for Education.

Commenting ahead of his Decision Day, Councillor Edgar said: "I will give careful consideration to the proposal to go out to consultation on options for the action that could be taken to improve student outcomes for the better. However, we cannot ignore a situation where attainment is so far below the national average. We have a duty to ensure that those who are most important in this, the students, have the opportunity to access even better education at Key Stages 3 and 4."

While four options have been identified by school improvement officers at the County Council, in their view the most appropriate solution would be found in amalgamating The Connaught School with Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School through the closure of The Connaught and Newport Junior Schools, and expanding the age-range of Belle Vue Infant School.

Effectively, this would create an all through school (4 – 16 years of age) in terms of management and leadership but with the day to day operation of the schools in their current locations remaining unchanged. Hampshire already has an all through school in Winchester - the Westgate School - that is working well.

However, the County Council is also keen to hear people's thoughts on the alternative options it has also considered, which are:

- Make no change
- Find an academy sponsor
- Amalgamate The Connaught School with The Wavell secondary school

Other issues that have contributed to the school's difficulties in securing the necessary sustained improvement include recruitment and retention of staff, low number of pupils on roll which, in turn, has an impact on the school's budget; and the school's location on the county border meaning that it is competing with schools both in its own county of Hampshire, and in Surrey.

Should Councillor Edgar agree with the proposal to go out to consultation, consultation dates will be finalised and announced at the earliest opportunity. If the consultation goes ahead, people would be able to contribute their views via www.consultations.hants.gov.uk. A range of meetings would also be organised during the consultation period to give people the opportunity to ask questions and share views.

Appendix 2 – Copy of Consultation Webpage

Consultation on the future of The Connaught School in Aldershot

On this page go straight to:

- [Introduction](#)
- [Educational standards](#)
- [Pupil numbers](#)
- [The 4 options being considered](#)
- [About admissions to Connaught in September 2017 and beyond](#)
- [What will happen to staff if a school closes?](#)
- [If schools are amalgamated, will staff undertake teaching on two or three sites?](#)
- [Drop-in meetings in July](#) (minutes of meetings added on 18 August 2016)
- [How to take part in the consultation](#)
- [Consultation start and end dates](#)
- [Next steps](#)

Introduction

Hampshire County Council is proposing a structural solution to the under-performance and future viability of The Connaught School, Aldershot. The County Council is consulting on 4 different options aimed at raising educational attainment and outcomes for the children of Aldershot. Whilst the consultation identifies a preferred option we are interested to hear your views and any other viable options you consider would help achieve these aims.

This consultation will run from 4 July until 30 September 2016. Officers will then take into account all the consultation responses before making a recommendation to the Executive Member for Education, Councillor Peter Edgar, on which option should be progressed and which statutory processes are therefore required.

Educational standards

The Connaught School has performed relatively weakly on attainment measures for the past three years despite significant attempts to improve its performance. In 2015 29% of students attained 5 good GCSEs including English and mathematics compared to a national average of 57%. This places the school well below the minimum Government Floor Standard of 40%. Over the past two years the School's leadership has been diligent in its pursuit of improved performance in an attempt to drive up standards. However, improvements have not materialised and the Council recognises that another approach is now needed in order to ensure that present and future pupils have a high quality educational offer.

The Connaught was judged 'satisfactory' by Ofsted in 2011, then 'requiring improvement' in 2013 and again in March 2015. The current Ofsted framework requires that any school receiving two consecutive 'requiring improvement' judgments must, on a third inspection, either be deemed good or be placed in special measures. The Connaught must therefore be judged good at the next inspection (due in April 2017) or it will be placed in special measures.

The overall effectiveness and performance of Connaught's feeder primary schools has improved significantly since 2011. Of the ten primary schools in Aldershot three, including Belle Vue Infant, are currently judged by Ofsted to be outstanding and the remaining seven are judged to be good; no primary schools are requiring improvement or in an Ofsted category. These schools work in strong collaboration. The performance of Rushmoor primary schools is an educational strength with 86% of pupils attaining the national standard in reading, writing and mathematics in 2015 compared to 80% nationally.

Pupil numbers

Hampshire County Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient school places across the county and to promote high educational standards. The need for school places changes in response to population movements and birth rate variations. In Hampshire the primary school population has been rising for the past 8 years and is forecast to continue to do so. At the same time secondary numbers have been declining but are now forecast to rise in keeping with the growth in primary age children.

There are four mainstream secondary schools within the Borough of Rushmoor; The Connaught, The Wavell, Cove and Fernhill. Cove and Fernhill serve students primarily from Farnborough. The Wavell is in the heart of Rushmoor and serves students from both Aldershot and Farnborough. The Connaught is sited on the edge of Aldershot town and tends to serve students from Aldershot.

The Connaught is in very close proximity to the Hampshire/Surrey border. There are several more popular and generally higher performing Surrey secondary schools nearby: Ash Manor is within half a mile (Ofsted – good in 2012); All Hallows RC is within one and a half miles (Ofsted – outstanding in 2014), Farnham Heath End Academy is within two miles (Ofsted – requires improvement in March 2016) and Weydon Academy is within 4 miles (Ofsted – outstanding 2009).

The Connaught School has a published admission number of 170 with the capacity for 850 pupils. In spring 2016 there were 542 pupils on roll. Given a school's budget is largely determined by the number of pupils Connaught's budget share is relatively small and this has a negative impact on the breadth of the curriculum which the school can afford to offer, limits the school's ability to use allowances to attract and retain staff, and limits the extra curricular activities that can be offered to pupils.

The 4 options being considered

1: Maintain the current position; make no change

The Council believes this is no longer a viable option because the community could and should be better served by its local secondary school. There is insufficient evidence or confidence that the school has the capacity to secure the rapid and sustained performance required, nor to turn around its long-standing relatively weak reputation which is having a negative impact on student numbers, the budget and consequently the quality and breadth of educational provision.

2: Find a strong academy sponsor to improve outcomes at the school

A viable option would be to find a strong academy sponsor to take over the running of the school. Academy sponsorship has been successful in some parts of the country with schools securing higher attainment because of the drive and expertise good sponsors can offer. In Hampshire, we currently have 6 sponsored academies. Their combined attainment fell in 2015 to 40% which is the Government's minimum National Floor Standard. They have not delivered a step change in performance in Hampshire to date.

This option would offer a 're-branding' of the school which may be beneficial and lead to the school becoming the first choice for some catchment students who would otherwise go to either Surrey schools or other Hampshire schools. It could also potentially offer the school greater flexibility to recruit and retain staff of high calibre; however this would be dependent on decisions of the sponsor regarding budget, pay and conditions.

3: Merge The Connaught with The Wavell

This would be achieved by closing The Connaught and retaining The Wavell as an expanded secondary school but retaining The Connaught site, thus offering split site provision.

The Wavell has a strong reputation in the community and has higher standards than the national average. The Wavell benefits from strong leadership and good quality provision. The higher standards of The Wavell would influence positively those of students who traditionally would have attended The Connaught. It would increase internal capacity through a larger staff, a wider and more experienced leadership team and the potential for staff to work within a 'critical mass' of good practitioners. It may also reap the benefits of a wider curriculum offer. There would also be

the potential for economies of scale and would assist the integration of the AUE community across Aldershot, through the split site arrangement.

This option does mean that there would only be one secondary school serving Aldershot thus limiting parental choice.

4: Merge The Connaught School with the Federation of Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School, to create a single all-through (age 4 to 16) school

This would be achieved by closing The Connaught School and Newport Junior School whilst retaining Belle Vue Infant School and expanding its age range to 4-16. The new 4-16 School would operate across the three existing sites.

This is the Council's preferred option.

This proposal maximises the potential for continuity of culture and educational experience across the key stages, bringing with it a number of inherent advantages linked to high expectations and aspirations, already well-established within the two primary schools, which are already in a federation. Belle Vue Infant School and Newport Junior School have both secured significant improvement since the federation was formed and the appointment of the current headteacher in 2006.

Both have been judged by Ofsted as good or better for over five years. The overall effectiveness of Belle Vue Infant School was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding in March 2016. Outcomes show an overall trend of performance which has been significantly above the national average over a sustained period of time. Consequently they are popular schools with a strong reputation in the locality.

There is strong capacity across the current federation and there would be the potential for economies of scale. It would retain the possibility of wider collaboration within the family of all Aldershot schools moving forward. Leaders and governors of Belle Vue Infant School and Newport Junior School recognise the benefits of structural change, having experienced these through the federation, and acknowledge the need to strengthen secondary provision in Aldershot, in order to build on good outcomes in the primary phase.

This increases the likelihood of the Belle Vue Infant and Newport Junior communities being open to consideration of a merger, recognising the potential benefits it would offer local children.

What will happen regarding applications for admissions to Connaught in September 2017 and beyond?

Option 1

This requires no change to the admissions arrangements.

Option 2

For September 2017 children in primary to secondary transfer make applications in the usual way and offers will be sent, based on parents' preferences that can be met, at the beginning of March. If the Connaught School is academised and part of a Multi-Academy Trust (MAT) in September 2017 then the new school will admit all those children offered a school place through the admissions round process.

Going forward the MAT may change the admission arrangements for the new academy, any changes would first apply in September 2018.

Option 3

For September 2017 children in primary to secondary transfer make applications in the usual way and offers will be sent, based on parents' preferences, at the beginning of March. Children with an offer for either of The Wavell School or The Connaught School will be admitted to the newly merged school with an expectation that they attend the site that they applied for.

Going forward the new school, operating from two sites, would serve the newly enlarged catchment area (made by adding together the current catchment areas). The HCC policy would

apply (so priority to catchment children) and measurements, if applying the tiebreaker to decide the ordered list of applicants, will be by straight line to the reception on the nearest school site.

Parents can only apply for their school place and not the site that they would like their child to attend. The authority would help the school collect information from parents regarding their preferred site and the school would need to decide which site children attend.

Option 4

The timetable behind the consultation is such that, if you have a child in year 2 at Belle Vue Infants or in year 6 at Newport Juniors, you will need to apply for your preferred junior/secondary school place using the normal processes. If an amalgamation is approved then offers to Newport Junior School and Connaught School will be honoured at the newly amalgamated school in September 2017.

Going forward, if the all through 4-16 school is approved, pupils in the Belle Vue infant phase will move automatically to the Newport junior phase. When in year 6 children may automatically transfer into the 'Connaught' secondary phase. Both those transitions can be achieved without making an application as it is equivalent to moving between year groups as your child stays within the same school. If a family does not want their child to progress into the next phase in that school they may apply for another junior or secondary school place during the autumn of the year when their child starts in year 2 or year 6 respectively.

The authority will publish revised admission arrangements for the amalgamated school that, if the amalgamation happens and the proposed timetable is followed, will apply first for admissions in September 2018. The admission number for the admission of children from schools other than 'Newport Juniors' to the new school's secondary phase will reduce in line with the likely intake of children moving to secondary from year 6 of the amalgamated school. There is no intention to change the admission number for the Reception intake (currently 90). The catchment area for Belle Vue Infants/Newport Junior school will continue to apply to the primary phase of the amalgamated school and the existing Connaught School catchment will apply for the secondary phase.

What will happen to staff if a school closes?

The single senior leadership team and governing body of the new amalgamated school would determine the staffing structure designed to deliver the curriculum on two or three sites. It is anticipated that almost all staff would transfer to the amalgamated school.

Consultation will take place with all staff who may be affected by the proposal and with the professional associations and trade unions. The retention of high quality staff is a crucial element in the County Council's drive for improving educational standards and raising pupil achievement.



If schools are amalgamated, will staff undertake teaching on two or three sites?

In the first instance consistency is the key to minimal disruption. The large majority of staff will continue to teach on the school site where they are presently located. Some staff with specific responsibilities such as subject leaders or members of the senior leadership team may be required to work across different sites, for example to conduct quality assurance and development activities.

Drop-in meetings in July

There will be opportunities for parents, pupils and other interested members of the community to meet with Hampshire County Council officers where more information will be provided and you can ask questions and comment on the proposal. Comments made and issues raised will be fully considered before any decision is made.

Drop-in meetings for parents and other interested parties were/will be held at:

- The Connaught School on Wednesday 13 July 4.30pm to 6.30pm
([Download the minutes of this meeting](#)  243 kB)
- Newport Junior School on Thursday 14 July 4.30pm to 6.30pm
([Download the minutes of this meeting](#)  216 kB)

- West End Centre, Aldershot on Wednesday 7 September 4.30pm to 7.30pm

Additional meetings may be arranged for September 2016 if required.

How to take part in the consultation

Please give us your views at any of the drop-in meetings and/or by using our online consultation response form:

- [Give us your views using the online response form](#)

Consultation dates

The consultation starts on Monday 4 July and ends at midnight on 30 September 2016.

A report on the outcome of the consultation and recommendations on the action to be taken will go to the Executive Member for Education in November 2016, with a target date for implementation of any new structure between January and September 2017.

Next steps

The responses to the consultation will be carefully considered. If a proposal to amalgamate schools is taken forward, the Council will move onto a second, formal stage of consultation involving the publication of statutory notices. These will propose the closures / amalgamations and/or change of age ranges and provide another opportunity for you to make comments on the proposal which would be fully considered before a final decision.

We anticipate that these public notices will be published in November/December 2016 for a 4 week period during which representations can be made. Any representations will then be taken into consideration before the County Council decides whether or not to proceed with the proposals. If the proposal to seek an academy sponsor is agreed, then the formal academy process will be followed in line with DfE guidance.

Appendix 3 – Copy of Survey Response Form



<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/connaught-consultation>

Consultation on the future of The Connaught School, Aldershot

The closing date for responses is Friday 30th September 2016

1) In what capacity are you responding to this consultation?

| | I am a: |
|--|--------------------------|
| Parent of a pupil at The Connaught School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a pupil at Newport Junior School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a pupil at Belle Vue Infant School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Parent of a pupil at another school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Governor at The Connaught School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Governor at Newport Junior School/Belle Vue Infant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| District/County Councillor | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pupil at The Connaught School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pupil at Newport Junior School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pupil at Belle Vue Infant School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Pupil at another school | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Member of staff at The Connaught School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Member of staff at Newport Junior School | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Member of staff at Belle Vue Infant | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Member of the public | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other please specify

Please enter your **full postcode** (this information will not be used to identify your address)

2) Which of the following options do you support (you may tick more than one box) – please refer back to the consultation page for the detail on these options:

- Maintain the current position; make no change
- Find a strong academy sponsor to improve outcomes at the school
- Merge The Connaught with The Wavell; this would be achieved by closing The Connaught and retaining The Wavell as an expanded secondary school but retaining The Connaught site, thus offering split site provision.
- Merge The Connaught School with the Federation of Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School, to create a single all-through (age 4 to 16) school. This would be achieved by closing The Connaught School and Newport Junior School whilst retaining Belle Vue Infant School and expanding its age range to 4-16. The new 4-16 School would operate across the three existing sites.

3) Should you wish to comment further or to suggest alternative viable options please use the box below.

Thank you for your comments regarding the future of The Connaught School

These will be considered along with other responses to the consultation

Please return to school office

Hampshire County Council adheres to the requirements of the UK Data Protection Act 1998. Hampshire County Council is registered on the public register of data controllers which is looked after by the Information Commissioner. Under the Data Protection Act the information which you have provided in this questionnaire will be used only for the purposes of this survey. All responses by individuals will be kept confidential, but views from organisations may be published in full. More information on Hampshire's data protection policies can be found at www.hants.gov.uk/dataprotection

Appendix 4 – List of Consultees

Headteachers at all Aldershot Primary & Secondary Schools
Chairs of Governors at all Aldershot Primary & Secondary Schools
Headteachers at other Rushmoor Secondary Schools
Chairs of Governors at other Rushmoor Secondary Schools
Parents of all children attending affected schools – sent via parentmail
Trade Union Representatives
Local Diocesan Directors of Education
Member of Parliament
Rushmoor Borough Council – Relevant Officers & Mayor
Hampshire County Councillors for Rushmoor
Rushmoor Borough Council District Councillors – sent via Committee Services
Surrey County Council – Strategic & School Place Planning
Neighbouring Secondary Schools in Surrey
Hampshire County Council – Relevant Officers & Councillors

Appendix 5 – Minutes of Public Meetings

**Minutes of the Consultation Drop-In session for Parents held at the
Connaught School
at 4.30pm on 13th July 2016.**

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| 1. | <p>Reason for the Meeting. The drop-in was held to give parents the opportunity to express views and ask questions face to face following the proposals for the merger of the Connaught school with Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School, to form an all through school for ages 4-16 years. A detailed paper dated the 1st July listing four options had been in the public domain prior to the session and the school had been asked to circulate details of the consultation, including the link to the website.</p> |
| 2. | <p>Lead Officers Present: Karen Nye – School Improvement Manager for Hart and Rushmoor, Hampshire Children’s Services Richard Vaughan – Deputy Head of Strategic Development, Hampshire Children’s Services. David Hardcastle – County School Improvement Manager, Hampshire Children’s Services.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Introduction. Richard Vaughan opened the parents drop-in meeting at 4.30pm.</p> <p>The purpose of the event was explained and the consultation process outlined. Richard highlighted the fact that this was a drop-in event and was not intended to be a formal presentation by officers. Karen Nye joined Richard at 4.45 pm and David Hardcastle joined the meeting once the staff meeting had concluded.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Question and Answer Session. There was a question and answer session for the parents, this is captured below.</p> |

| Number | Question / Comment | Answer / Response |
|--------|--|--|
| 1 | <p>How can you criticise this school? Newport’s entire year 6 are coming to this school? If you change things, people may not choose Connaught.</p> <p>If parents don’t choose this school, it’s irrelevant. Then it won’t work!</p> | <p>It depends on the curriculum offer being made, that has to be attractive. We hope that this will be the school of choice for more parents due to better standards.</p> <p>Parents should have that choice. Many parents currently do not select Connaught as their preference school.</p> |

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| 2 | Can't you just bring in better teachers now? | It's not about better teachers, we are not saying that the teachers are not good; we feel a different approach and structure should be explored to raise standards |
| 3 | The Council is short of money, so it seems like a good idea to sell? | No, it's not about money. Secondary provision will continue on this site, the site will not be disposed off.. |
| 4 | I chose this school for my son, there have been excellent transition arrangements and a fantastic family environment. | We acknowledge the strengths but feel attainment is presently not high enough. We feel the community should have a say about improving academic standards. |
| 5 | Why is it not an option to improve this school? Why not give the school more money? With all the people moving in to this area the school won't be able to take all the children in a few years. | The funding is not driven by the local authority but by the government based on a national formula which includes the number on roll. With its current number of pupils, the school's income is insufficient to support the school's existing structure moving forward. The local authority can only invest in new schools when all provision is full, currently there is plenty of capacity. Ten years down the line there may be case for expansion and that would then be considered. Setting up a through school would generate economies of scale offering opportunities to review spending and organisation. |
| 6 | There is a great deal of new housing in Aldershot, the spaces will be needed. | We accept that Aldershot is growing significantly but there is a significant drop off at transition from KS2; currently the school has capacity and this proposal does not remove any capacity. |
| 7 | My son is autistic and has made fantastic progress at Connaught. | The Connaught has many strengths and it is good that you feel your son has done well. |

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| 8 | <p>I don't understand why you didn't consult with the parents and staff before putting that article in the paper. That was disgraceful!</p> <p>Parents who wanted to come here will have been put off by that article.</p> | <p>We follow a statutory process of open consultation. There will be a series of consultations, evidence will be collected and a report will go to the lead member.</p> <p>Everyone has a voice in this consultation process. We cannot legislate for what the press writes.</p> |
| 9 | <p>We were not told or consulted before the article appeared in the press. It's disgraceful how you have gone about it.</p> <p>We want to influence things; how do we make our views known?</p> | <p>There is a process for consultation. Local head teachers were informed before the news became public and it was up to the head teachers to determine when they would share the news with their communities.</p> <p>There is a consultation website.</p> |
| 10 | <p>Aldershot is increasing in size with young families moving into the area, why not make plans for the future of this school?</p> <p>Put your cards on the table, you want to sell this site!</p> | <p>There are very strict rules about the use of unused school buildings. Currently the school has capacity; we do not need more capacity. This proposal will not change the capacity that is currently available.</p> <p>We are interested in establishing an all through school out of three schools and by doing so helping us plan for the future. The process to achieve this is set down in law. We expand the age range of one school and close the other two. The governing body and leadership of the expanded school determines the structure of that school moving forward.</p> <p>The site is needed. The secondary provision will continue on the current site. There are no plans to sell the site; it is needed for continued educational provision.</p> |

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| 11 | <p>Why do we have to do this? Why pick on Connaught?</p> <p>There are other schools in Farnborough which do not have good attainment, why pick on us?</p> <p>You have damaged the reputation of the school by using out of date data, we have improved.</p> | <p>We need to achieve a higher level of attainment.</p> <p>This school has been under-performing consistently for a number of years and we are looking at alternative ways to improve performance in the secondary sector.</p> |
| 12 | Who would lead the new school? | <p>There would be one governing body to make the decisions. The leadership of Belle Vue Infant school would most likely change in structure and form, to run all phases/key stages but this would be the decision of the governing body.</p> <p>The school (Belle Vue) would have the same DFE number but would change its age range; technically Newport and Connaught close to achieve the merger but their sites and the provision remains.</p> |
| 13 | <p>Will the Connaught impact on the Ofsted rating of the other two schools, meaning they pull out of the deal?</p> <p>Based on what facts?</p> <p>What happens when children come from other junior schools?</p> | <p>It is not about Ofsted it is about improving attainment levels in the secondary phase for local children. Once the merger has been achieved there can be no further change without a similar process to this.</p> <p>It is anticipated that raised expectations through the all through model would prevent any loss of time on learning early in KS3. Children from other feeders would be able to join in Y7; equally parents of children at the all through school could select alternative provision at Y7 should they wish</p> |

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| 14 | <p>My children came here five years ago and both have done well. My son is SEN, how will he be affected and how will he cope?</p> <p>The autistic children here are very upset at the thought of moving. They are happy in this small, very well supported school.</p> | <p>The school will not move; the site and the classrooms will remain, as will the staff should they wish to. The existing commitment to SEN children will be maintained.</p> |
| 15 | <p>The school is failing because the education team has not supported the teaching staff.</p> <p>This school has fantastic Value Added, they have made my son the best he can be which is what this school is all about.</p> <p>What about the autistic children? My child cannot cope with an ordinary school. Many children here can achieve and do so.</p> | <p>The school has for many years been fully supported by the County Council through it's School Improvement Service.</p> <p>Progress is important but also important is attainment at GCSE level and particularly 5 A-C including English and mathematics. We believe it is possible to achieve high standards for all and any new school structure will be expected to continue the good work already happening in this area.</p> |
| 16 | <p>What about after school clubs would they raise attainment?</p> <p>Pupils are upset and afraid about what will happen to their school.</p> | <p>They may do so but it is parental choice if they are accessed; fundamentally we need to improve provision in school hours.</p> |
| 17 | <p>Is there any proof that this plan will work and raise attainment?</p> | <p>One of the challenges nationally is that year 7 has a dip and teachers have to recalibrate. There is evidence that all-through schools can be successful in eliminating these dips in progress.</p> |
| 18 | <p>Can we achieve better results without going to a through school? Why can't we recruit more and better teachers?</p> | <p>Staff tell us they are doing the best that they can. We are happy to hear views about other ways to improve the school's performance; this is why we are consulting. Many head teachers in Hampshire and nationally have difficulty recruiting staff.</p> |

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| 19 | Don't talk about Wavell, they don't want us, they are offended by us! | |
| 20 | How will all this affect pupils, teachers and grades? | This proposal is a structural change. Most likely to affect staff in leadership posts more than teachers. It has been proposed to improve grades. |
| 21 | Children and parents have to put effort in as well as teachers. It doesn't have to be a negative change. | Comment was noted. |
| 22 | Will my daughter's GCSE options change? | It is unlikely that any governing body will change the options of those children currently studying GCSEs. |
| 23 | How can an infant school governing body have any expertise in secondary schools? | The governing body will most likely undertake a skills audit and where they feel they lack expertise they can add experienced governors with expertise in those areas. |
| 24 | <p>This is a brilliant school, the Headteacher knows every child's first name, and they are not just a number. There are some great people here, particularly for special needs.</p> <p>You have trashed the reputation in the press.</p> <p>You are contradicting yourselves; first you say the school is closing then you say it's not!</p> <p>Admit it, you are closing the school to sell the land.</p> <p>You need to make it clear in future that you are closing the name but not the school and be careful how that comes across. This school is so passionate.</p> | <p>We can't control the press; you have my assurance that we will make the point clear to them that this issue is about attainment.</p> <p>This is a merger but technically we have to close Connaught and Newport to achieve the merger so yes, the school will close but provision and the site will remain.</p> <p>Comment noted.</p> |
| 25 | Your report listed the number of single parents and referred to this as a disadvantaged community, was that necessary? | The report uses some Ofsted terminology. |
| 26 | How can you be sure that the people who don't speak English understand what is going on? | We have offered translation services to the school as required and can also do |

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| | | separate sessions. We have left this to the head teacher to decide and let us know if this would be helpful. |
| 27 | The uncertainty of the situation may cause a slump in intake. It puts us in a very uncertain situation; we need to decide for our children. | We appreciate it's a difficult decision regardless; it's a decision for parents to fully consider and take. |
| 28 | You say our 5 A-C's were 29%, the previous year it was 48%. This year was just a blip. This school's reputation belies its qualities. Parents are amazed at how good it is. | Last year was an improvement but it was not sustained and was still below the national figure by some margin. |
| 29 | You make these decisions and we are just left to get on with it! | Comment noted |
| 30 | Belle Vue currently has one head teacher for two sites – how is that going to work here? | The governing body, in consultation with others, would determine the leadership structure. |
| 31 | There are 3,800 new houses being built in Aldershot, surely some of them will want their children to come here? | The school will not be closed; places will still be available as they are now. |
| 32 | You are judging attainment on a one-year blip, remember the children we take in. This is a community; you keep moving the goalposts. | This is about under-performance over time. We recognise the challenges of the community. |
| 33 | All children are different, what suits one child will not suit another. This school takes many children for whom English is not a first language, or who have special needs. | That is correct. A high proportion of children in this school are achieving below the national average. Regardless of their contextual factors we want all children to achieve well. |
| 34 | You will still have feeder schools coming in with that transition. | You will have a leadership team that can manage that transition. There will be an established culture and high expectations plus a better knowledge of what children are achieving in the primary phase. |
| 5. Observations | | |
| 5.1 | You owe it to the parents in this room to do another consultation and in a more structured manner. You haven't structured this well at all. | This initial session was a drop-in session. A meeting such as this was not what was intended or offered. |

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| | That was naive. | There will be further opportunities, including those already available on-line. |
| 5.2 | You did not bring any information for parents and that was disrespectful. | |
| 5.3 | All the stronger male teachers have left the school. Very strong help is needed, the Head teacher is brilliant but she can't do everything on her own | |
| 5.4 | There must be a reason we dropped this year, all this upset does not help. Teachers have not felt supported and have moved on to other jobs. | |
| 5.5 | If, on paper, Connaught and Newport close then this school automatically becomes an outstanding school and recruitment will blossom and the numbers on roll will rise. | |
| 5.6 | Why didn't you explain it like that before? Is this the only meeting? | There is another tomorrow at Newport and opportunities to share your views through individual written responses. |
| 5.7 | What happens now? | There is consultation until the end of September on our website. We will then report to the Executive member as part of the process as described. |
| 5.8 | When will we have a decision? | December at the earliest because of the statutory process we must undertake. We encourage you all to go on the website. The minutes of this meeting will go to Councillor Edgar and all consultation views will be available. If it is decided to go ahead, there will be notices to close this school. You have a month to make representations. Cllr Edgar will consider all perspectives. |

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| 5.9 | Why is it the decision of just one man? | This is a statutory process and it is being followed. |
| 5.10 | Can you guarantee that we will be the first to know because other parents are finding out the details before us? This is really important. | Councillor Edgar's decisions are reported publicly. |
| 5.11 | Why can't we get to know first? That's not right. | We will do everything we can to make sure that the school communities are the first to know. |
| 5.12 | What would happen if we became an academy? | This is another option in the report. Then a sponsor would be found and the local authority would no longer be directly involved with the school. |
| <p>Parents were encouraged to go on to the website and complete responses; hard copies were also made available at the session.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 6.30pm.</p> | | |

Minutes of the Consultation drop-in session for the parents of Belle Vue Infant and Newport Junior School, held at Newport Junior School at 4.30pm on 14th July 2016.

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| 1. | <p>Reason for the Meeting.</p> <p>The meeting had been called to hear views and answer questions of the parents following a proposal dated 1st July from the Director of Children's Services to the Executive Member for Education that "the Connaught secondary school, Newport Junior school and Belle Vue Infant School should merge to form an all through age 4-16 school; this would be achieved by closing the Connaught and Newport Junior Schools and extending the age range of Belle Vue Infant School to 4-16, with the anticipated implementation being between January and September 2017."</p> |
| 2. | <p>Lead Officers present:</p> <p>Mr Brian Pope – Assistant Director (Education and Inclusion) Hampshire Children's Services</p> <p>Ms Karen Nye – School Improvement Manager for Hart and Rushmoor, Hampshire Children's Services.</p> <p>Mrs Gemma Bowry - Capital Development Officer, Hampshire Children's Services.</p> |
| 3. | <p>Introduction</p> <p>This meeting was conducted as a "Drop in Session" with parents coming into the hall as they arrived and joining one of three or four groups, according to numbers. At its most popular there were some fifty to sixty parents in the hall. The conversations and opinions below are from questions and answer sessions of a random mixture of groups. Officers outlined the process of going out to consultation and to ask for the views of parents. Data from these views will inform the process. The good work done at Connaught was acknowledged but unfortunately it was impossible to get away from the fact that attainment was much lower than the National Average. The parents were invited to ask questions.</p> |
| 4. | <p>Question and Answer Session</p> <p>There was a question and answer session a broad selection of which is captured below.</p> |

| Number | Question / Comment | Answer / Response |
|--------|--|--|
| 1 | Surely the problem is also the catchment area? Many pupils are disadvantaged, with English as a second language, etc.? | There are many challenges facing the Connaught but ultimately, their pupils are the same pupils that achieve well at primary. |
| 2 | What has caused that dip; I cannot see how a merger will improve it? | Transitions will be smoother; there will be less learning lost in transition and more continuity of curriculum and behaviour, with consistent high expectations. |

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| | | <p>There will be one governing body which would develop the leadership structure.</p> <p>There would also be a change of governance and leadership, the governing body would do a skills audit to see if they are well positioned for expertise across primary and secondary and if not bring that expertise in.</p> |
| 3 | <p>What happens if the schools merge but the attainment doesn't rise, what choice would we have then?</p> | <p>Exactly the same choices as now, you would be able to choose Connaught or any other secondary of your choice.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Why take away our excellent head teacher and spread her thinner? Why three schools?</p> | <p>We believe that your children have had a good experience at Belle Vue and Newport; they deserve a good experience at Connaught too. This is a different model of leadership and a different structure. There would be an expanded leadership team across the all through.</p> |
| 5 | <p>It is a mistake to just go by the current situation; you should look ahead to an increase in numbers.</p> | <p>Of the children in their catchment area, only 30% have elected to go to Connaught as a first preference, 70% do not. There is currently capacity.</p> |
| 6 | <p>Most of their children come from a council estate which is in upheaval; it has been being regenerated for the last four years.</p> | |
| 4 | <p>Why can't we get a grant from the council to help us recruit more teachers, the trouble is we are right next to Surrey. The council should be more adventurous. You need to look at the whole school to address the problems.</p> | <p>Belle Vue and Newport are not merged they are federated. The changes that will come about will support/improve standards and bring more children. It should be a more attractive place to work with greater opportunities.</p> |
| 5 | <p>How will it affect the curriculum?</p> | <p>It will give primary expertise to support transition. It will offer greater continuity and improved expectations. It may offer greater breadth at secondary if numbers and therefore budget improve.</p> |

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| 6 | How can this help Connaught, why do it just now? | Currently, Connaught has 547 pupils, the way the school is funded this can't raise enough finance, the school ideally needs 700 -800 pupils as a minimum to facilitate effective improvement and performance. Connaught is struggling to give the full range of options to pupils because of financial restrictions. The time has come to address the long-standing performance issue because we think the community deserves better and the good work in the primary sector is not capitalised on sufficiently. |
| 7 | If the schools merge and people can go elsewhere I still can't understand how this would benefit Connaught. League tables don't reflect the good teaching in the school. Parents themselves can sometimes be the cause of underachievement. | |
| 8 | If the budget for the three schools is merged, then won't the other schools suffer? | The National Funding Formula is changing but we don't have the details as yet. There will be one budget. The exact figures are something we will need to explore closely. |
| 9 | I'm in favour of merging but it needs to be done a.s.a.p.! We feel targeted. They should just merge. How could we stop the teachers from leaving? | There will be opportunities for the teaching staff. Lots of professional development to broaden the scope of their specialisms. There will be some overlap. All three schools will have the same ethos. Staff would hopefully have the opportunity to work in a thriving, successful school community. |
| 10 | There was a teacher here at Newport who wanted to teach in the lower school but he wasn't allowed. | I'm sorry; I'm not familiar with that case. |
| 11 | The current Newport Head is excellent; we don't want to lose her. Our schools have their own uniforms; we don't want to change that would be extra expense. | That is up to the head teacher and the governing body. There might not be any change in uniforms. |

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| 12 | We want the current head of Newport and Belle Vue to stay. She is well thought of by all the parents. | |
| 13 | We felt that press article was very derogatory; it did a lot of damage in the community. | |
| 14 | Because of the stigma now people will not even go and view the school. It has changed a lot since Lindsey (current head teacher) took over though. | |
| 15 | <p>Next year the numbers at Connaught will increase there are big housing developments in Aldershot.</p> <p>All these extra children, will there be room for them here?</p> <p>It can't just be a numbers game there are other issues as well.</p> <p>Surplus places will be filled within a few years.</p> | <p>Whilst there is room at the Connaught no other new secondary places can be established. A needs analysis would be undertaken if numbers grew significantly. Surrey secondary schools are also expanding.</p> |
| 16 | We don't think that the merger will make things better. | <p>Some of the teaching at the Connaught is requiring improvement.</p> <p>If you are a good practitioner in a good school there are many opportunities, by attracting different people of a high calibre. The school has tried many things but the quality of teaching and learning continues to require improvement. This is an alternative strategy to secure improvement in attainment. The bottom line is that all children in Connaught should have a good education and good life chances. They can still choose to do some of the more vocational courses.</p> |
| 17 | <p>If Connaught doesn't improve will it drag down Belle Vue and Newport?</p> <p>Can the leadership not change unless there is a merger?</p> | <p>The leadership team needs to make sure that doesn't happen.</p> <p>Possibly, it depends on the option chosen.</p> |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 18 | There have been lots of academies that have failed. | |
| 19 | <p>What about all the new housing coming to Aldershot, surely that will make a difference?</p> <p>Ash Manor has about two thousand new homes in their catchment area.</p> | <p>New developments tend to have very young children. Primary provision is currently full but it will be some years before those numbers filter through to the secondary phase.</p> |
| 20 | We are not totally against the plans but Connaught needs to be brought up to where it should be. | |

As no further parents were arriving, the meeting closed at 5.45pm

Appendix 6 – Copy of section of Minutes of Belle Vue & Newport Federation Governing Body, held 12th July 2016

4. Consultation with LA on the future of The Connaught School

The Governors introduced themselves.

The Local Authority representatives (DH, KN & AM) introduced themselves to the Governors. Chair Mr. Collings explained that the purpose of this item was to assist the Governing Body in their decision of whether to support the proposal of the Local Authority to merge the Federation of Belle Vue and Newport with The Connaught School to form a new all through 11 to 16 school. A vote would be taken at this meeting. Questions from the Governing Body had been forwarded to the Local Authority about the proposed merger. The LA responses to these questions had been circulated to governors in advance of the meeting.

Governors asked further questions of the LA representatives:

Question: Can you give a brief outline of how the consultation will proceed over the next few months? How and when will any decision be made?

Response (DH): Consultations will be taken from all interested parties and sent to Councillor Edgar (Executive Member for Education) for consideration. He will make a decision on which of the four options in the proposal will be pursued. This will happen in November 2016. If he decides to pursue the preferred option, then he must publish a notice that Connaught and Newport Schools will close. This will be followed by a statutory four-week consultation period at the end of which a report is sent to Councillor Edgar and he will make a final decision and inform all the stakeholders. The final decision will be made in January 2017.

Response (KN): The actual implementation of any changes will take place between January and September 2017.

Question: Have you done anything like this before?

Response (DH): Yes. We are currently nearing the end of two projects elsewhere in the county. One is the merger of two secondary schools to form one school on two sites in Eastleigh. The other is the merger of an infant and junior school to form a primary school in Andover.

Question: How much input did the schools have into the process in those cases?

Response (DH): There is a continuing process of consultation with the schools surrounding significant changes.

Question: What support has been given to the schools involved?

Response (DH): An implementation group was set up to enable the smooth transition. Membership of this group changed according to the issues being dealt with at the time.

Question: The benefit of any savings due to economies of scale would not be apparent for several years. The income of the school is dependent on number on role. Where is the money for initial improvements going to come from until numbers increase?

Response (AM): As a single school you would only get one lump sum amount. Transitional protection will be available for at least a year following the opening of the new school. Clarification is being sought from the DfE as to how long the transitional protection will apply.

Response (KN): Work is currently being done around the curriculum offered at Connaught and whether some savings can be made from slight changes to the curriculum offered at the school.

Question: Do you think the savings made can offset the loss of the lump sums?

Response (AM): Split site funding is available. The amount is currently under review as Hampshire has no precedent for a school split over three sites.

Additional transition funding will be available.

Response (DH): Attracting more children to attend Connaught will result in more money.

Response (KN): Connaught currently only attracts 30% of the catchment area as the first preference. There is the potential to significantly increase the numbers at Connaught. The current good relations that the Federation has with other local primary schools should help to attract more local children to attend Connaught.

Question: What is the potential increase in numbers at Connaught?

Response: The potential is there to increase the number on role by more than three hundred pupils. Generally speaking a secondary school with less than six hundred pupils will have financial difficulties.

Question: Is there a projected financial model for the preferred option?

Response (DH): The business model in education is more about children's futures than finance. The decision will be based upon what is considered to be the best option for the children of Aldershot and not on what is the best financial option.

The Governors agreed that the preferred option potentially offered the best future for the children of Aldershot however, some concern was expressed that the available budget would not support current standards achieved across the Federation nor enable these standards to be extended to Connaught.

Response: The Outstanding status of the school plus re-branding and building on already strong community relations would quickly increase the popularity of Connaught and therefore attract an increased budget.

Question: Will there be support available to help with the re-branding process?

Response (DH): There will be information available on what has worked in the past for similar projects.

Question? When could we expect to be inspected by OfSTED?

Response (KN): As an outstanding school Belle Vue does not have a date set for their next inspection. All data from Connaught and Newport would be wiped clear as they would both technically close.

Question: How will the new schools that are to be opened in the new housing development affect the proposal?

Response: There needs to be enough children within the community for which the school is intended in order for it to be viable to open a new school. There are currently insufficient children to open the new school and this has been postponed until September 2018. As these are primary schools they will potentially generate more pupils for Connaught School.

The LA representatives left the meeting at 19.19.

The meeting resumed at 19.23.

The Chair of Governors asked if the Governing Body were happy to make a decision this evening about whether to support the preferred option of merging the Federation with Connaught School. It was agreed that a vote would be cast.

Votes in favour: 11

Votes against: 0

Appendix 7 – Letter to EME Cllr Edgar from Connaught Governing Body

For the attention of Councillor Peter Edgar

The Connaught School's response to the consultation, 27th September 2016

Academic achievement

The Connaught has an undeniable history of under achievement in terms of Ofsted/national outcomes. However, the headline of 'Requires Improvement' from the 2013 and 2015 Ofsted inspections masks relentless and concerted efforts by the school, fully supported by the Local Authority and recognised by Ofsted, to improve outcomes for the pupils.

As a school we never make excuses for our performance and for us it is never good enough and we continue to reflect, fine tune our plans and drive improvement. However, the reality is that the context of the school makes achieving a good outcome in our next Ofsted very difficult, and we recognise that we are therefore vulnerable in 2017 to a 'Special Measures' judgement, the only option if we are not yet 'Good'.

We do not meet all of the minimum national expectations, especially with regard to Attainment and the Ebacc subjects. Therefore, the governors and leadership team recognise that remaining as we are is not an option.

In each inspection, the fundamental issue that has stopped the school achieving a 'Good' outcome has been the significantly low starting points of the children who have historically joined the school in Year 7 and variability in the quality of teaching due to a turnover of staff and challenges in recruitment.

Each Ofsted report, including an English subject report in 2012 that rated our progress in English as 'Good', has commented on the significantly low starting points of our Year 7 children. This has meant that the school has not met national averages in 'Attainment'. However, in all of the inspections it has been noted that although the pupils have starting points that are significantly below what is typical for their age, they make good progress in English and Maths compared with other schools nationally. Ofsted have also noted that the school's extensive efforts to ensure disadvantaged students (Pupil Premium) receive the additional support they need, has increased these students' rates of progress and are leading to the gap narrowing rapidly.

Indeed, our 2016 results show that Pupil Premium (PP) Progress 8 is +0.01. Non PP +0.06. There is a significant reduction in the gap between the two groups. This equates to an 11% gap in the A*-C with English and Maths (EM) results for the two groups within the school. Last year (2015) our gap was 24%. The national average last year was 27% and the Hampshire average was 33%. So we are using our Pupil Premium funding of £186K extremely effectively to achieve these results.

In 2015 the school's results unexpectedly dipped to 29% A*-C EM. We had predicted a rise from 43% A*-C with English and Maths in 2014 to 50% in 2015. However, the changed C/D grade boundaries in the English exam results meant that 29 of our students missed their C grade by only a few points. This had a huge

impact on our outcomes and as a result we were the worst performing school in Hampshire and were below the national floor level of 40% A*-C EM.

This year we are back on track:

- A 14% increase from 2015 in our 5A* - C including English and Maths - 43% (target 45%). With only 109 pupils taking their GCSEs – every child equates to just under 1%
- 58% A* - C Maths
- 56% A* - C English
- 99% 5 A* – G
- - 0.07 Progress 8 Score

The national average for the progress 8 measures is 0 so we were very close to that which puts us in a very favourable position for progress for all pupils. Our main problem is that although we have made huge strides with our progress for all pupils we cannot guarantee that will be enough in the next OFSTED as we have not shown three years of continual improvement as we had a dip last year.

This year we have increased pupils Levels of Progress (LP):

3LP English 67% against a target of 73% (2014/15 national %)

3LP Maths 62% against a target of 64% (2014/15 national %)

Attainment 8 is 4.44 (D+) (5 equals a C grade)

Three pupils were in off-site provision and achieved no GCSE results. However, we have to include them in these calculations. If we dis-apply these pupils from our data we have a positive Progress 8 of 0.03, Attainment 8 of 4.53 (C-) and 44% A*-C with English and Maths. Our results are improving daily as re-marks are received and pupils' grades are increased.

Our 44 pupils with English as an Additional language (EAL) achieved very well with Progress 8 scores of +0.79 (over a grade above the average score) against 72 non EAL pupils who scored -0.19.

45 boys Progress 8 score was -0.05 and 71 females +0.08. The underachieving boys are predominantly 'White British' and we work hard to change the mindsets of those pupils and their families to keep them attending school right up to their exams.

The current Year 11 is the last year group to have had significantly below average starting points. Year 11 only has 94 pupils. This will impact on our results for 2016/17 as each child will equate to more than 1%.

The profile of our intake has slowly changed over the last four years as the local primary schools have improved and more children now join The Connaught with starting points typical for their age from all of the primaries. We also have less

turbulence and our teaching and learning has improved further as we have addressed improvements recommended by Ofsted and the Local Authority. This will lead to improved outcomes against national benchmarks in the next few years. Therefore, we believe we are at the tipping point for achieving/exceeding national benchmarks in attainment, but Ofsted will visit the school before this is realised so alternative action does need to be taken to retain inclusive secondary education in Aldershot within the umbrella of the Local Authority.

Number on roll

Over past years we have had a falling role but this has now reversed as the school's reputation in Aldershot has changed and many parents at our linked primaries recognise the good leadership of our Headteacher and her team, support the ethos and values we have created and recognise the positive changes.

We now have a 'good' reputation among many parents and families and more select our school each year for its inclusivity and vibrancy and because they know that the Headteacher and staff care about every child. We are now attracting an intake with higher performance at KS2, reflected in our Years 7 to 10, and this will have a long term knock on effect when it comes to achieving future attainment levels at or above national average at KS4.

Pupils enjoy coming to school as we have 95.5% attendance and one of the lowest exclusion rates in the area, but parental support is critical to good achievement and this is evident when we look at the overall achievement of groups of children such as our EAL pupils.

Current feeder school information:

| | Yr 6 (September intake 2016) / total in that school's year 6 | Yr 7 | Yr 8 | Yr 9 | Yr 10 | Yr 11 |
|--------------|--|------|------|------|-------|-------|
| Newport | 50/67 | 36 | 35 | 26 | 13 | 20 |
| St Michael's | 32/94 | 20 | 27 | 18 | 17 | 18 |
| Talavera | 19/64 | 21 | 13 | 9 | 8 | 9 |
| Park | 18/24 | 19 | 17 | 15 | 13 | 13 |
| Wellington | 15/37 | 8 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 6 |
| Other | 8/? | 11 | 29 | 22 | 38 | 51 |
| Total | 142/286 | 115 | 126 | 92 | 94 | 117 |

Our current Year 7 has 142 pupils (116 in 2015) – only 28 below our Published Admission Number of 170. There were 286 children in Year 6 at our catchment schools. Although The Local Authority have data that they say shows we are only taking 1/3 of our catchment children, our catchment spreads over a large area and for many children there are other more local secondary schools, and some of these are in Surrey.

Some in-catchment families have not crossed the threshold to look at the school and still cling to long held and ill-informed views that the school is as it used to be or, they will not send their children to us because they do not like our intake profile and the fact that we are a multicultural school.

Finance and Staffing

In the last 12 months our leadership team has strengthened considerably with the appointment of a very able and supportive Deputy Headteacher who works tirelessly with the Headteacher and other senior and middle leaders to drive forward improvements.

However, 12 staff left at the end of last term, mostly for promotion or family moves, with others returning to their home countries after the permitted two years in our school. Our difficulties in recruiting are well known, not because of a 'poor reputation' as stated in the consultation document, but for reasons common to much of north east Hampshire. Several outstanding young staff have left because they cannot afford the accommodation in the area. We are also competing with an enhanced salary weighting in Surrey. Our Headteacher and Finance officer are innovative and work closely with an international recruitment agency to find staff from all over the world as we are unable to find good enough applicants through advertising in the UK. We have also sourced accommodation for single staff members from abroad to ensure they have a reasonable living environment. This takes an inordinate amount of time and although our induction and support programmes are very good, staff changes inevitably impact on pupils' achievement.

We have also not replaced staff when natural vacancies occur as we struggle to match our income, so our staff are stretched to capacity. Small schools are finding it increasingly difficult to work within the budget allocated because of the current, national funding methods. Greater income would enable us to appoint additional staff in those key areas that need greatest improvement. We have a small deficit this year but by further reducing staff we will have removed this deficit by 2017.

Local Authority Consultation regarding the future of The Connaught School

The governors have discussed the process of the consultation in detail with the Local Authority and it is acknowledged that it could have been better managed and that the way the consultation document was written was not helpful to the community, creating potential to undermine the school's improving reputation as well as upsetting parents, pupils and staff at the school and the community. We do not feel that the community has had an opportunity to fully understand the implications of the options on offer and these could have been better explained – including to the governors of all of the schools that could be affected by some of the options.

However, the governing body of The Connaught School recognises that a change is needed to avoid an Ofsted outcome that would lead to a forced sponsored academy as there is not a good track record of success for this option in Hampshire.

As we are being asked to show preference for an option with few facts or data other than the Local Authority's own view, we have had to rely on what we do know:

- The leader of our school is highly respected by the Local Authority, school and community. She has rebuilt the reputation of the school over the past eight years and created a positive learning environment so that pupils enjoy coming to school.
- The leadership of the school has the trust, confidence and belief of parents, pupils, governors and staff and has brought about improvements and an increasing number on roll
- Governance is strong with high expectations for improvement and a realistic view about the school's future. Members of this governing body would be keen to join governance of a new school
- Our school is not failing but under achieving due to historical context. We are at the tipping point to meet national expectations however, although we have made huge strides with our progress for all pupils we cannot guarantee that will be enough in the next Ofsted as we have not shown three years of continual improvement as we had a dip last year.
- We have very good working relationships with all the primary Headteachers in our catchment and this would continue in any future local arrangement
- We engage with all of our primary schools and have excellent transition in place, shared as a model of good practice with other Hampshire schools and because of this, we can show that our pupils do not regress as they move from Year 6 to Year 7. This strength needs to be built on in any future option.

- We offer equal opportunity to all children irrespective of ability or background and a community school will continue to support this ethos. An Aldershot school should reflect the needs and ability of all of the children in the community not a selected few.
- We have recruitment challenges but our staff are committed to improvement and well supported through professional development.
- Economies of scale created by a merger would benefit the finances of the school and impact on the recruitment and retention of good teachers and leaders.

Therefore, after careful consideration we believe that the 4-16 option would be the least disruptive to our community and centre education in Aldershot around the needs of all of the community. We have no evidence to show that this change in itself will cause academic success, however it will allow the improvements that are in place to continue to fruition.

Should a 4-16 model be your preferred choice, we appreciate that there will be one Headteacher with oversight of the new school. We firmly believe that there are opportunities that should be made available to the current Headteacher to allow her to continue her work with KS3 and KS4, at least in the short term. We feel strongly that as we move into a new arrangement, her contribution to leadership at secondary level will be crucial. It will ensure stability among the staff, provide continuity for the pupils and reassure the many parents who have chosen The Connaught for their children because of the Headteacher's leadership. Every opportunity should be taken to smooth the transition into the future and we would wish the option choice, whatever it may be, to successfully serve the children of Aldershot as the improvement journey continues.

 Chair of Governors

On behalf of the Governing Body of The Connaught School

The following is the letter sent to parents regarding the decision of the Governing Body:

Dear Parents/ carers,

I am writing to you following our recent Governing Body meeting where we discussed our response to the Local Authority consultation regarding the future of The Connaught School. We felt it was important to share this with you as early as possible so that you are able to consider our chosen way forward and the reasons behind it.

Firstly I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for the overwhelming show of support for the school from both you and the local community. There have been a huge number of responses to the consultation and your support for the school is very much appreciated.

Having reviewed the four proposed options it is clear to the Governors that the option to do nothing is not a viable one given the current position of the school. Although we have made huge strides with our progress for all pupils, there is further work to be done to secure a 'good' judgement at the next inspection. Although we may achieve a 'good' in the next inspection we cannot guarantee this and this is an unacceptable risk for our pupils and community. The options to become a sponsored academy or to merge with Wavell are, in our view, not appropriate for our pupils or community.

Therefore, the Governors have decided that the option that offers the best future for education in our community and the greatest security for the school is the 4-16 through school proposal. It is clear that this is the preferred model for Hampshire schools although there is currently only one example in the county and this was created in different circumstances to ours. This would mean that The Connaught would be merged with Bellevue and Newport to become a 4-16 school spread over the three existing sites. The present Connaught school will be renamed but will continue as it is in every other respect.

We will, therefore, be advising the Local Authority that the 4-16 through school is the option that we will be supporting. We believe this is the least disruptive option for our community and will centre education in Aldershot around the needs of its young people.

We will also be making clear to the authority a number of key points that we feel need to be borne in mind as this process continues:

- The Headteacher is highly respected by the Local Authority, school and the local community. She has rebuilt the reputation of the school over the past eight years and created a positive learning environment so that pupils enjoy coming to school and the number on roll has increased.
- We have very positive relationships with all the primary headteachers and have excellent transition programme in place, which has been promoted as a model of good practice within other Hampshire schools.
- Any move to create a through school would need to respect the relationships and practice currently in place with all our feeder primaries and ensure the smooth transition of pupils into KS3.
- We offer equal opportunity for all pupils irrespective of ability background or ethnicity and, as a community school, we will continue to support and promote this ethos.

Whilst we have no evidence to show that this change in itself will lead to further academic success it does facilitate the sharing of expertise across schools and phases as well as providing the potential for some economies of scale. We feel strongly that as we move into a new arrangement, the continuing leadership of the current Headteacher at secondary level will be crucial in ensuring stability, continuity and confidence for our whole school community.

19th September 2016

The following is an email from a parent that succinctly expresses the view of the many families:

I just wanted to write personally to [REDACTED], Connaught Headteacher, concerning the school particularly in light of the school's recent difficulties and ongoing open evenings.

My Son started Year 7 this year and the transition has been amazing. The best Year transition in his school life to date so far and I was expecting trouble.

We chose Connaught because we loved it. The press regarding the current difficulties was worrying to say the least and very, very badly handled by the Council in my opinion, but I have faith as do all of your current parents and indeed any parent who has had children at the school in recent years. The good word is being spread despite the best endeavours of the council and, in some cases, the media. The School and the Headteacher has my support and to that end I felt it necessary to make direct contact.

I would like to say that one of my concerns was that the bad press would affect the intake for September 2017 therefore compounding the difficulties being experienced. However, I have been so pleased by the very positive comments currently making the rounds on Social Media and the local school playgrounds following your open evening/mornings. So many parents (with children in current year 5 and year 6) who are attending these open evenings/mornings are raving about their positive experiences. Many went along to expecting to rule it out (which I admit was my stance last year) especially so because of the recent difficulties however they have not been able to do that and have expressed what a positive experience visiting the school and more that they loved the school, pupils are a credit to the school and the Headteacher is wonderful.

I am sure that there is much going on in the background that us parents do not know or understand however I wanted to re-enforce that I believe you are doing an amazing job and long may this continue.

I was very pleased to note the final paragraph in the letter from the Chair of Governors received this morning confirming that your continuing leadership is considered crucial. I certainly have no doubt on this point and not one parent that I have spoken to feels any differently, in fact most people state that your status as Head is top reason for choosing Connaught.

I look forward to what I hope will be my son and then daughter's years at Secondary School under your guidance.

Appendix 8 – Copy of Press Release by Rushmoor Borough Council

NEWS RELEASE

Thursday 22 September 2016

Council backs all through option on Connaught School

Rushmoor Borough Council's Cabinet is backing plans for an 'all through' school in Aldershot, which would cater for children from four to sixteen years of age.

Hampshire County Council has been consulting on four different options for the future of Connaught School in Aldershot since the beginning of July because of concerns over its attainment levels, which are below the national average, and low numbers of students, which affects the school's funding and ability to recruit and retain teachers.

At a meeting on Tuesday (20 September), Rushmoor Borough Council's Cabinet opted to back the county council's preferred option of an 'all through' school. A single school would be created which would cater for infant, junior and secondary school children by merging Belle Vue Infant School with Newport Junior School and The Connaught School. The school would be located across the three existing sites, but be run by a single governing body. It would have teachers with a mix of primary and secondary experience and skills, led by one head teacher.

All members of the council had the opportunity to discuss the various options at a meeting the day before the Cabinet.

At Cabinet, councillors agreed a response, which will now be submitted to Hampshire County Council as part of the consultation process. In it, Rushmoor Borough Council will make clear:

- It supports the preferred option of an 'all through' school but does not want academy status ruled out for the future
- That it is keen to work with the county council on exploring the future possibility of a new building for the new school to come together on a single site in Aldershot
- That it welcomes the opportunity to continue working with the county council on the future of Connaught School and improving educational attainment across Rushmoor

Councillor Sue Carter, Rushmoor Borough Council's Cabinet member for Leisure and Youth, said: "Every child in Rushmoor deserves the best education that can be offered. We are pleased that some action is being taken and we agree that creating an 'all through' school is a good option for improving the attainment of secondary school children in Aldershot. If, in future, we can help provide the new school with a new building on a single site, we think this would be ideal.

"However, wherever the new school is, we pledge to continue working very closely with Hampshire County Council to drive up educational attainment for our children."

ENDS

- For further information please contact the communications team at Rushmoor Borough Council on 01252 398 744 or email communications@rushmoor.gov.uk