

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Executive Member for Education
Date of Decision:	18 January 2017
Decision Title:	Amalgamation of The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School
Decision Reference:	7983
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. On 18 November 2016 the Executive Member for Education decided to publish a statutory notice (Appendix A) in accordance with sections 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, setting out the County Council's intention to amalgamate The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School. This would be achieved through the closure of The Connaught School and Newport Junior School, the enlargement of Belle Vue Infant School and change of age range from 4 – 7 to 4 – 16 to form an all-through community school located across all three sites. The report for that decision sets out the history and context behind the proposal alongside the findings of the initial consultation with parents, pupils and other interested parties. This report sets out the context leading to that decision and reports back on the representations received to the statutory notice.
- 1.2. The report sets out and comments upon the statutory guidance for decision makers on factors that need to be considered when deciding on proposals to close and expand schools.
- 1.3. The report recommends that The Connaught School and Newport Junior School be closed with effect from 9 April 2017 and that Belle Vue Infant School be expanded, through the utilisation of The Connaught School and Newport Junior School sites and buildings, with effect from 10 April 2017.

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 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. 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. 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.

3. Representations to the Public Notice

- 3.1. There were no representations.

4. Statutory guidance for decision makers regarding school closure and the expansion of a school

- 4.1. The Department for Education has issued statutory guidance for decision makers on factors that need to be considered when deciding on proposals to amalgamate schools. There are four key questions that must be answered before considering the relevant factors and merits of statutory proposals,
- do the published notices comply with statutory requirements?
 - has the statutory consultation been carried out prior to the publication of the notice?
 - are the proposals related to other published proposals?
 - is the decision maker satisfied that they have all the information needed to make a decision?
- 4.2. Before publication the Public Notice was checked against the Department for Education guidance to confirm that it did comply with statutory guidance.
- 4.3. A full consultation exercise was undertaken in line with statutory guidance.
- 4.4. The proposal to amalgamate The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School is not related to any other published proposals.

4.5. The relevant factors (as identified in the statutory guidance) to be considered in this case are:

Education standards and diversity of provision

4.6. Any proposal relating to a school closure should be based upon the fact that the closure will contribute to raising local standards of education provision and will lead to improved attainment for pupils. The Connaught Secondary School has been performing poorly on academic measures for the past three years. Newport Junior and Belle Vue Infant Schools' academic performance over the last five years has been judged as good or better by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted).

4.7. The establishment of an all-through community school across the three present schools' sites will retain the diversity of primary and secondary provision in the area.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The Local Authority has met the statutory guidance to enable a decision to be made regarding the amalgamation of The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School.

5.2. The Public Notice has resulted in no representations.

5.3. There are some significant challenges facing secondary education in the areas served by The Connaught Secondary School. These challenges relate to the educational performance of The Connaught and the need to secure sufficient, quality secondary school places in the medium term to match the current growth in demand for primary school places in this part of Aldershot.

5.4. The Connaught Secondary School's governing body has carefully considered the proposed amalgamation and support it recognising that amalgamation offers the opportunity to create one shared vision for primary and secondary age pupils in the area which the schools serve with the aim of providing consistency, high aspirations and expectations and a drive for excellence.

6. Recommendations

6.1. It is recommended that approval be given to the proposal published by the Local Authority, in accordance with sections 15 and 19 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to:

(a) Discontinue The Connaught 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

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Amalgamation of The Connaught Secondary School, Newport Junior School and Belle Vue Infant School	<u>Reference</u> 7540	<u>Date</u> 11/11/2016
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u> Education and Inspections Act 2006		<u>Date</u> 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 impact identified

- **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 A



AMALGAMATION OF THE CONNAUGHT SCHOOL, NEWPORT JUNIOR SCHOOL AND BELLE VUE INFANT SCHOOL, ALDERSHOT

1. **Notice is given** in accordance with the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 that Hampshire County Council, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG intends to discontinue The Connaught School, Tongham Road, Aldershot, GU12 4AS and Newport Junior School, Newport Road, Aldershot, GU12 4PW from 9 April 2017.
2. **Notice is also given** that Hampshire County Council intends to establish a community all-through 4-16 school by enlarging Belle Vue Infant School, Belle Vue Road, Aldershot, Hampshire, GU12 4RZ through the utilisation of The Connaught School and Newport Junior School sites and buildings and the extension of Belle Vue Infant School's age range to form an all-through school for ages 4-16 across the three sites. The all-through school will open on 10 April 2017.
3. Places will be available for all pupils affected by the closure of the Connaught and Newport Junior schools ("the Schools") (including those with special educational needs) at the community all-through 4-16 school. There will be no alteration to transport arrangements for pupils currently attending the Schools.
4. The all-through school will cater for pupils between the ages of 4 and 16 and have a total capacity for 1480 pupils. For the 2017/18 academic year, the school will admit up to 90 pupils at Year R and 80 pupils at Year 7. All Year 6 pupils are able to transfer in to Year 7 however, additional Year 7 places will be offered if fewer than 90 children progress from Year 6 of the primary phase of the school, so that the total number of children starting Year 7 is 170. Pupils will be admitted to the school in accordance with the local authority's admissions policies.
5. This Notice is an extract from the complete proposals which contain reasons for the decision. Copies of the complete proposals can be obtained from Gemma Bowry, Strategic Development Office, Children's Services Department, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG (email: strategicplanningunit@hants.gov.uk).
6. Within four weeks from the date of publication of these proposals, any person may object to or make comments on the proposals by sending them to Gemma Bowry, Strategic Development Office, Children's Services Department, The Castle, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG (email: strategicplanningunit@hants.gov.uk).

John Coughlan, Chief Executive, Hampshire County Council

Publication date: 18 November 2016