

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	29 March 2010
Title:	Proposed closure of Chineham Park Primary School
Reference:	1391
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This paper reports on the outcome of the publication of Public Notices, in accordance with Section 15 (1) of the Education and Inspection Act 2006, to discontinue Chineham Park Primary School with effect from 31 August 2010 and seeks approval to the school's closure.
- 1.2. Since the abolition of the School Organisation Committee in May 2007 the decision maker in respect of the County Council's own school closure proposals, except where there are no objections, is the Cabinet.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Chineham Park Primary School was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) on the 27 January 2009 and judged to be inadequate and requiring Special Measures because, as stated in the Ofsted report:

"It is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvements. The inadequate provision over a period of time, the ongoing gaps in pupils learning and the legacy of underachievement in the past, are all preventing pupils from making appropriate progress. These issues have not been resolved despite being identified in previous reports and monitoring visits".
- 2.2. The previous Ofsted inspection in October 2006 had judged the school to be inadequate and the school was served with a notice to improve. Significant support from the Local Authority (LA) was provided; LA powers of intervention were also used to place two additional governors on the

governing body. Improvements were made and the school was judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory in November 2007, although the standards achieved by children and school attendance were both judged to be inadequate. A monitoring visit in December 2008 by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) raised very serious concerns about the standard of education provided by the school resulting in the Ofsted inspection in January 2009. The January 2009 Ofsted inspection report states that:

"Standards are exceptionally low in writing and mathematics and, except for Key Stage 1 in 2007; this has broadly been the picture since 2002".

The report goes on to state that:

"Standards have been too low for several years and the pupils are not being prepared well enough for their future economic wellbeing or for the next stage of their education".

- 2.3. When a school is judged by Ofsted to be "inadequate" and requiring Special Measures the LA is required to consider the scope for the closure of the school and to comment on this within a Statement of Action. The LA's Statement of Action for Chineham Park Primary School, submitted in March 2009, included the following paragraphs:

"There are 2 Primary Schools and 4 pairs of Infant/Junior Schools within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School. In September 2009, surplus places at these 10 schools are forecast to rise to 551, representing 23% of the schools' total capacity. In 2010, surplus places at the 10 schools are forecast to remain relatively constant at 544 (22% of capacity).

Whilst a number of these surplus places will be needed to accommodate children from planned new housing in the area, the present economic climate and subsequent slow-down in building has resulted in a greater number of surplus places than anticipated, both now, and for the foreseeable future.

All 10 of these neighbouring schools are judged to be satisfactory or better by Ofsted.

Given the above, there is clear scope for the closure of Chineham Park Primary School and the LA could well decide to consult on this option. If such a course of action is pursued, and the subsequent decision made that the school will close, then the expected closure date will be August 2010".

- 2.4 The LA recognises and supports the Ofsted inspection judgement that Chineham Park Primary requires Special Measures to ensure children receive an acceptable standard of education. The school was categorised by the LA as "satisfactory" in Spring 2008, although subsequent ongoing termly monitoring raised significant concerns about the quality of teaching seen and the overall provision. This, together with pupil attainment progress evaluated in the Autumn term, led to the school and the LA's Primary Phase Inspector/School Improvement Partner recognising in November 2008, that, once again, considerable and immediate improvement was required in core areas.

- 2.5 The first monitoring inspection by HMI, since Chineham Park School became subject of Special Measures, took place on the 1 and 2 July 2009, and found that progress of the areas for improvement were satisfactory. However, it was recognised that the schools performance remained at a low level and that HMI's findings were not consistent with a satisfactory judgement on the overall effectiveness of the school. HMI commented that steady improvements and the quality of provision had been seen as a result of the well targeted support given in conjunction with LA advisors and consultants, and that teachers had been supported effectively by advisory staff from the LA.
- 2.6 The second monitoring inspection by HMI took place on 2 and 3 December 2009, and judged there to be inadequate progress overall against the areas identified for improvement. Whilst satisfactory progress was being made in improving pupil achievement, inadequate progress was being made in improving the quality of teaching, curriculum development and improving leadership and management. HMI recognised the considerable expertise and commitment of the interim Executive Board and commented on the appropriate and regular challenge provided. HMI also commented that LA support was well targeted and timely.
- 2.7 A third monitoring inspection by HMI took place on 10 March 2010. Written notification of the outcome is awaited; verbal feedback reported that satisfactory progress had been made since the last monitoring inspection in December 2009, but that progress overall was inadequate. LA support was judged to be effective.
- 2.8 On the 15 October 2009, the Executive Lead Member for Children's Services authorised consultations on the proposal to close Chineham Park Primary School with effect from 31 August 2010, and for pupils to transfer to neighbouring schools. On the 17 December 2009, the Executive Lead Member received a report providing details of the outcomes of the consultations and recommending that Public Notices be published setting out the County Council's intention to close the school. The report is attached at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.9 Public Notices setting out the County Council's intention to discontinue Chineham Park Primary School with effect from 31 August 2010 were published on the 7 January 2010 (**Appendix 2**). The Public Notice is an extract from the complete proposal, a copy of which is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.10 Further to HMI's monitoring inspection in December 2009, on the 18 January 2010 the Director of Children's Services received a letter from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (see **Appendix 4**). The letter expressed:
- "Significant Ministerial concern about Chineham Park Primary School"*.
- In addition, it required the County Council to respond with reference to the action it proposed to take regarding the school.
- The letter went on to state:

“If the Authority decides not to make its own proposals to close the school, then your response will need to include clear and compelling evidence that the Secretary of State should not use his own power to close”.

The County Council’s response is attached at **Appendix 5**.

3 Response received to the Public Notice

3.1 A single response to the Public Notice has been received objecting to the County Councils intention to close the school. A copy of the objection is attached at **Appendix 6** with exempt information at **Appendix 8**.

3.2 The objection is predicated upon two main issues:

- Pupil numbers/surplus places
- School performance

3.3 School performance

As set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 above, in January 2009, Ofsted judged that Chineham Park Primary School was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. The most recent monitoring inspection by HMI was judged there to be inadequate progress overall against the areas identified for improvement.

3.4 Appendix 6, section 4 sets out an analysis of Standard Attainment Targets (SATs) results. Calculating them in this way, as an aggregate of 3 schools, is not used in any way by Ofsted/Raiseonline*. The way in which comparisons are made is by using an average point score model. Suggesting the 2009 SATS results are strong is misleading. 2009 SATS results at Key Stage 2 are broadly in line with expectations, 2009 Key Stage 1 results were less strong than 2005 and 2007, and equal to 2006. The significant point being that there have been year-on-year fluctuations and a lack of sustained improvement.

3.5 Whilst pupil numbers/surplus places and school performance are the main issues referred to in the objection document, Appendix 6 raises other issues which warrant examination and comment.

3.6 Paragraph 2.19 of Appendix 6 claims Hampshire County Council has a:

“One size fits all Education Policy to serve middle class schools in a predominantly rural environment”.

This statement is refuted. Hampshire is both a large and diverse County, with areas of considerable affluence as well as areas of relative deprivation and poverty. Although less than 10% of the County is classified as urban, 87% of Hampshire’s population lives in urban towns and this is where the majority of Hampshire schools are located. Hampshire County Council is

* Raiseonline – Reporting and Analysis for Improvement through School Self-Evaluation provides a web-based interactive analysis of school and pupil performance data. It replaces the Ofsted Performance and Assessment (PANDA) reports.

committed to delivering children's services to match the needs of its communities.

- 3.7 With specific reference to supporting schools the County Council operates a policy of inverse proportion to success. Over the past 5 years, the support provided to Chineham Park Primary School is approximately three times greater than most schools judged to be satisfactory.

The school has had substantial English and Mathematics inspectors and consultant time, Science consultant input, advanced skills teacher time, Primary Phase Inspector (PPI) time, assessment advisor time, early years team time, in addition to monitoring and inspections from PPI and district manager.

The resources allocated have been increased and decreased with the schools categorisation although they have remained at relatively high levels to support the school in its development. A key element in any school moving out of an Ofsted category is the requirement by Ofsted that the school is able to sustain improvements independently. In most schools' this is reflected in the decrease of LA support with termly monitoring maintained. At Chineham Park Primary School, the reduction in LA support has shown that the school does not have the capacity to maintain improvements.

In monitoring visits HMI have recognised and commented favourably upon the support and challenge which the LA has provided.

- 3.8 As shown in Table 1, there are 10 schools within a 1-mile radius of Chineham Park Primary School. During the consultation, strong views were expressed regarding the accessibility of Great Binfields Primary School and the potentially displaced Chineham Park pupils. As at September 2009, there were 8 children attending Great Binfields and living within Chineham Park Primary School's catchment area. However, it is accepted that the walking routes to the school might be seen as less favourable than those to alternative neighbouring schools. It is the case that there are places available for all Chineham Park Primary School children at either Marnel Infant and Juniors schools, the former having recently been judged by Ofsted to be "outstanding", the latter judged "good" following their most recent Ofsted inspections and both within half a mile of Chineham Park Primary School, or Merton Infant and Junior Schools, both judged to be "satisfactory" by Ofsted and within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School.
- 3.9 The phrase "issues of contamination" (**Appendix 6** – conclusion 16 refers) is a most concerning term. Whilst it is not clear exactly what is meant by this, a comparison of Chineham Park Primary School Special Educational Needs profile with that of Marnel Infant and Junior Schools points to these being equivalent, nor is there any evidence to suggest that there are any more disruptive pupils in Chineham Park Primary School than at any other local school.
- 3.10 With reference to a "Fresh Start" (**Appendix 6** - conclusion 17 refers), all Fresh Start Schools must be approved by Ministers who have made clear that Fresh Start should be reserved for cases where all other options,

including closure, are impracticable. As such Chineham Park Primary School does not qualify for “Fresh Start”.

3.11 Pupil numbers/surplus places

Table 1 below sets out pupil numbers, forecasts and the capacities of Chineham Park Primary School and the schools within a 1-mile radius.

Table 1:

School	Number of places	Pupil numbers Sept' 2009	Forecast pupil numbers			
			2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Marnel Infant	270	171	185	227	274	304
Marnel Junior	360	237	231	237	258	288
Merton Infant	180	93	98	116	127	138
Merton Junior	240	165	141	137	139	149
South View Infant	179	190	184	179	179	190
South View Junior	256	209	194	217	220	234
Oakridge Infant	180	162	173	162	160	175
Oakridge Junior	240	203	189	205	218	212
Great Binfields Primary	210	186	182	174	174	182
St Bede's Primary	315	282	290	301	313	326
TOTAL	2430	1898	1867	1955	2062	2198
Surplus places		532	563	475	368	232

Chineham Park	180	86	85	96	116	121
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3.12 As at September 2009, Chineham Park Primary School was less than half-full with 86 children on roll. At the same time, there were 532 surplus places at schools within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School. Surplus places at these schools have forecast a peak at 563 in 2010/11 and then a decline year-on-year, falling to 232 in 2013/14. These forecasts take into account planned new housing, including type and tenure. Regular discussions have taken place, and continue to take place with Basingstoke Borough Council officers to ensure that all new housing is accounted for in the forecast figures.

It is the case that the pace of planned housing development in the area has slowed recently, and the expected new pupil yield has not materialised. This is reflected in the number of surplus places in schools in the area, particularly so in Marnel and Merton Infant and Junior Schools. Forecast increases in pupil numbers for these schools are rising from planned new housing in and around the schools catchment areas, indicating the need for additional primary school places. As the nearest schools to the large-scale

housing development, a decision was taken several years ago to create additional capacity at Marnel Schools, with the expectation that this would be occupied by children from the new housing with a resultant increase in the numbers of children attending their catchment schools at Merton Infant and Junior. The impact of the recession on the building industry has resulted in far fewer houses being completed to the original timescale.

- 3.13 The analysis of schools inflow/outflow data in Table 2 below identifies the numbers, also shown as percentages, of pupils in Chineham Park Primary School and schools within a 1-mile radius attending their catchment schools. The data reveals considerable movement of children across catchment areas.

Table 2:

School	Number in catchment area	Number on roll from catchment area	Percentage on roll from catchment area	Catchment area children at other schools	Percentage at other schools
Chineham Park Pri	320	51	16	269	84
Marnel Inf	138	77	56	61	44
Marnel Jnr	188	110	59	78	41
Merton Inf	122	55	45	67	55
Merton Jnr	181	103	57	78	43
South View Inf	244	127	52	117	48
South View Jnr	300	161	54	139	46
Oakridge Inf	96	65	68	31	32
Oakridge Jnr	131	89	68	42	32
Great Binfields Pri	290	99	34	191	66

Note: St. Bede's Primary is not included in the above table. As a voluntary aided Catholic school it does not have an LA defined catchment area. The school services the parishes of The Holy Ghost, Basingstoke, St. Michael's, Tadley and The Sacred Heart, Hook.

4 Statutory Guidance for decision makers on reaching a decision on the proposal to close Chineham Park Primary School

- 4.1 The Secretary of State has issued statutory guidance for decision makers on the factors that need to be considered when deciding on proposals to close a school, prior to making the decision (**Appendix 7**). There are four key questions that must be considered before judging the relevant factors and merits of the statutory proposals. These are as follows:

- 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 they have all the information needed to make a decision?
- 4.2 Before publication, the Public Notice was checked against the Department for Children, Schools and Families guidance to confirm that it did comply with statutory requirements.
- 4.3 A full consultation exercise was undertaken in line with statutory guidance, the details of which were included in the report to the Executive Member on 17 December 2009 (Appendix 1 refers).
- 4.4 The proposals to close Chineham Park Primary School are 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:

What are the effects on standards and school improvement?

- 4.6 Any proposal relating to school closure should be based upon the fact that the closure of the school will contribute to raising local standards of provision and will lead to improved attainment for children. Details regarding school performance are set out in Section 2 and paragraph 3.11 of this report. The LA believes that the closure of Chineham Park Primary School and the transfer of its pupils to other local schools will improve the overall standards of education in the area and the quality of education delivered to the displaced pupils.
- 4.7 The education diversity of the area will not be affected by the proposed closure of Chineham Park Primary School. Parents will be able to express a preference for neighbouring schools which Ofsted judgements would indicate offer pupils a satisfactory, good, and in some cases an outstanding overall standard of education. This will help to raise local standards and narrow attainment gaps.
- 4.8 The DCSF guide for LA's and Governing Bodies on closing a maintained, mainstream school states that there should be a presumption that proposals pertaining to "schools causing concern" should be approved, subject only to checking that there will be sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard available in the area to accommodate the displaced pupils (appendix 7 paragraph 4.23 refers).

What is the need for places and what will happen to displaced pupils?

- 4.9 Chineham Park Primary School has a capacity of 180 with a current number on roll of 70 representing 60% surplus places. As at September 2009, 84% of primary aged children living within the Chineham Park Primary School's catchment area were attending other schools. Two pairs of infant and junior schools within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School (Marnels and

Mertons) are forecast to have 395 surplus places between them in September 2010 and are therefore, able to accommodate children displaced due to the closure of Chineham Park Primary School. It is the case that, as at September 2009, 180 children living within Chineham Park School's catchment area (56%) were attending the above-mentioned pairs of infant and junior schools.

- 4.10 The DCSF guide for LA's and Governing Bodies on closing a maintained, mainstream school states that the proposals should normally be approved to close schools in order to remove surplus places, where the school proposed for closure has a quarter or more places unfilled and where standards are low compared to standards across the local area (appendix 7 paragraph 4.36 refers). Chineham Park Primary School currently has 60% surplus places and has been judged by Ofsted to be failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education.

What will be the impact on the community and are there any travel implications for displaced pupils?

- 4.11 The closure of the school will impact on the community in terms of the loss of pupil places, but places will be available at local schools within 1 mile of Chineham Park Primary School. All these schools are judged by Ofsted to offer satisfactory, good, or outstanding overall standards of education.
- 4.12 Extended services provision at Chineham Park Primary School in the form of breakfast and after-school clubs is highly valued by those parents accessing it. The clubs are part of the core offer of extended services which schools, along with other partners and agencies, are required to deliver. The two pairs of infant and junior schools identified as being the catchment schools for pupils living within the Chineham Park Primary area in the event of closure, (Marnel and Merton) both run a breakfast club. The after-school provision for the pupils attending the Marnel and the Merton schools is provided by the "Fun House" and the Vyne Community School with pupils being transported to these facilities direct from the school.

Specific age provision issues

- 4.13 Chineham Park Primary School shares its site with "Pebbles" a phase two purpose built children's centre, designed to provide 56 full day care places for 0 – 5 year olds, weekdays between 8am to 6pm for 48 weeks of the year. Thirty places for the under 3s are housed in the children's centre, 26 places for 3 – 5 year olds are housed in the school. This core offer for childcare has recently been secured through a tender exercise with a contract being awarded to "Kids" who specialise in meeting children's special educational needs (SEN). The tender was linked with the Council's SEN strategy and the provision secures 10 places for children with special educational needs in the Basingstoke area, with the provider acting as the SEN hub of expertise in this area of the County.

There is no intention to disrupt this provision if Chineham Park Primary School were to close.

What are the implications for special educational needs (SEN) provision?

- 4.14 Pupils with SEN at Chineham Park Primary School should benefit from being able to experience the education opportunities available within a larger school, whilst at the same time continuing to receive a personalised and focussed curriculum to meet their individual needs. Educational attainment levels in neighbouring schools are generally higher than at Chineham Park, which will give the relocated pupils better opportunities to achieve good results. Teaching accommodation in the schools will be suitable and appropriate to meet pupils needs with access to specialist curriculum facilities.
- 4.15 It is for these reasons that the LA believes that the proposal will lead to improvements in the standard, quality, and range of educational provision for pupils with SEN.

5 Personnel implications

- 5.1 The closure of Chineham Park Primary School will affect all existing staff, placing them in a potential redundancy situation. The retention of high quality staff is a crucial element in the County Council's drive to raise standards and raise pupil achievement. As a responsible and caring employer, the County Council is managing the situation sensitively and if the school closes every effort will be made to redeploy staff into appropriate alternative posts and to avoid redundancies.

6 Financial implications

- 6.1 The closure of the school will result in a net saving of £75,000 per annum, which will be revert to the overall HCC Schools Budget.
- 6.2 As stated in paragraph 4.13 Chineham Park Primary School shares its site with a children's centre and part of the school buildings are used to house childcare provision for 3–5 year olds through lease arrangements. If the school were to close, the aforementioned arrangements would continue but the majority of the building would be empty resulting in implications for ongoing running costs in the region of £50,000 per annum. Consideration is being given to alternative uses/occupation of the school buildings to offset this potential cost to the County Council.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 The LA has met the Statutory Guidance to enable the decision to be made regarding the closure of Chineham Park Primary School.
- 7.2 The Public Notice has resulted in the receipt of one representation objecting to the County Council's proposal to close the school. Appendix 1 sets out details of consultation responses.
- 7.3 Notwithstanding the number of surplus places in the area and the low numbers of pupils attending Chineham Park Primary School, which raise

serious questions regarding the schools economic sustainability, the County Council's proposal to close the school is predicated upon improving the life-chances for children in this area of Basingstoke.

- 7.4 School performance and pupil achievement at Chineham Park Primary School has fluctuated considerably over a period of time. The school has struggled to ensure its pupils have received a satisfactory standard of education for a number of years. During this time the school has failed Ofsted inspections on three separate occasions, the latest being January 2009 when Ofsted stated in their report that "pupils are not being prepared well enough for their future economic wellbeing or for the next stage of their education".
- 7.5 The failings of the school have been noted by the Secretary of State resulting in a letter to the LA "Appendix 4" reminding the LA of the reserved powers which the Secretary of State has to direct closure of the school and seeking "clear and compelling evidence" why these powers should not be used in the event of the LA not making its own proposals to close the school.
- 7.6 Chineham Park Primary is a "school causing concern" having been judged by Ofsted as requiring "special measures" because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. With 70 children currently on roll the school has 60% surplus places. DCSF statutory guidance for LA's on closing a maintained, mainstream school which is causing concern states that there should be a presumption that closure proposals should be approved, and that the LA should normally approve proposals to close a school with 25% or more surplus places and where standards are low compared to standards across the area.
- 7.7 If Chineham Park Primary School closes, its catchment area would be split between Marnel Infant and Junior and Merton Infant and Junior schools. All of which are within a reasonable walking distance and would be able to accommodate all displaced Chineham Park pupils. These schools, together with the 6 other schools within a 1 mile radius of Chineham Park Primary School, have been judged by Ofsted to be satisfactory, good or outstanding with regard to the overall effectiveness of the schools.
- 7.8 The LA has engaged with parents of pupils at Chineham Park to determine preferences for an alternative school for their child/children in the event of the school's closure. Although this has been undertaken in advance of any final decision regarding the closure proposal, and as such potentially unnecessary, should it be decided that the school will close then the LA will be in a position to ensure timely and effective planning takes place, and links are established to facilitate children's smooth transfer.

8 Recommendation(s)

- 8.1 It is recommended that approval be given to the following proposal, published by the LA, in accordance with Section 15 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

To discontinue Chineham Park Primary School, Basingstoke, with effect from 31 August 2010.

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

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

Other Significant Links

Links to previous Member decisions:		
<u>Title</u> Consultation on the future of Chineham Park Primary School.	<u>Reference</u> 996	<u>Date</u> 17.12.2009.
Direct links to specific legislation or Government Directives		
<u>Title</u> Education and Inspection Act Section 15 (1)		<u>Date</u> <u>2006</u>

Section 100 D - Local Government Act 1972 - background documents

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

<u>Document</u>	<u>Location</u>
Objection to the proposed closure of Chineham Park Primary School.	Appendix 6 of this paper.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

8.2 Equalities have been considered and no adverse impact identified.

9 Impact on Crime and Disorder:

8.1 The proposals will have no impact on crime and disorder.

10 Climate Change:

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

No impact has been identified.

10.1.2 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.