

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	23 January 2012
Title:	Review of school places at West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools, Aldershot
Reference:	3564
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1. This paper reports on the outcome of the public consultation regarding the proposal to close West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools to form a 420 place (two-form entry) primary school.
- 1.2. The proposal came about because standards currently attained by pupils aged 11 should be higher. The latest Ofsted inspection reports show that West End Infant School is judged to be satisfactory (as has been the case for the last two inspections) and Beaumont Junior School has recently been judged to be inadequate.
- 1.3. When a school is judged by Ofsted to be providing an inadequate education the Local Authority has a statutory duty to consider whether a structural solution would improve the quality of education being provided. The closure of both schools and the creation of a new all-through primary school offers the best opportunity of securing better educational outcomes for children.
- 1.4. In keeping with the County Council's decision making protocol the recommendation that West End Infant and Beaumont Junior schools should close and a new all-through primary school should be established falls to the Cabinet to decide given West End Infant School's Governing Body's objection to the proposal.

2. Contextual information

- 2.1. Beaumont Junior School was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) on 8 / 9 March 2011 and judged to be inadequate and given a notice to improve because it is:

“Performing significantly less well than in all circumstances it could reasonably be expected to perform”.

- 2.2. The report goes on to state that:

“Significant improvement is required in relation to pupils’ achievement, particularly in mathematics for boys, generally, the quality of teaching and opportunities for pupils to develop their basic skills across the curriculum”.
The report is attached at **appendix 1**.

- 2.3. Beaumont Junior School has required considerable intervention over the past three years. When the school was inspected in April 2008 it was judged to be satisfactory and, as such, was subject to a monitoring visit by Ofsted.

- 2.4. The monitoring visit occurred on 27 April 2010 and the judgement was that the school was making inadequate progress in making improvements but, due to the restructuring of the leadership team, was demonstrating satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvements.

- 2.5. The monitoring report goes on to state: *“Pupils’ achievement is inadequate. Attainment at the end of Year 6 is low in English and mathematics. Pupils’ progress is inadequate and continues the trend of the previous two years as evident in the results of the National Curriculum tests”.* The report is attached at **appendix 2**.

- 2.6. When a school is judged by Ofsted to be inadequate and requiring a notice to improve, the Local Authority is required to consider the scope for closure of the school or whether other structural solutions would be likely to improve the quality of education being provided.

- 2.7. On 20 July 2011, the Executive Lead Member for Children’s Services authorised consultations on the proposal to close West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools and to form a 420 place (two-form entry) primary school.

- 2.8. The substantive headteacher at Beaumont Junior School retired on 31 December 2011. The governing body, with support from the Authority, has secured an acting headteacher from January 2012 for one calendar year through a secondment from another Hampshire school. The governing body is unable to appoint to a substantive post as the uncertain future of the school requires any appointment to be on a temporary basis. Securing substantive leadership will be essential at the earliest opportunity.

- 2.9. West End Infant and Beaumont Junior schools are located on separate sites approximately half a mile apart.

3. Finance

- 3.1. Feasibility studies have been undertaken to determine how each school could be expanded to create a 420 place primary school. These have revealed that

this would not be possible on the West End site but could be achieved on the Beaumont site. It would be intended to create a single site primary school when the capital becomes available, but this should not be a determining factor in the proposal which is focussed on school improvement. In the meantime the creation of a split site two-form entry (420 place) primary school would require the provision of an additional classroom and toilets on the present West End Infant School site. These would be provided in permanent construction and funded from the Children's Services capital programme for basic need at an expected cost of £350,000.

4. School Performance/pupil achievement

- 4.1. As set out in paragraphs 2.1 and 2.2 above, in April 2011, Ofsted judged that Beaumont Junior School was failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education. The most recent monitoring inspection in October 2011 judged the school to be making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.
- 4.2. With specific reference to supporting schools the County Council operates a policy of inverse proportion to success. Over the past four years Beaumont Junior School has had substantial support from the maths and English inspectors together with Primary Phase Inspector (PPI) in addition to the monitoring from the PPI and the district manager. This has been commented upon by Ofsted in the last monitoring letter which states *"The school has received effective support and coaching from the local authority. The majority of this support has focused appropriate action on developing leadership and improving teaching."*

5. Other key issues

- 5.1. **Table 1:** shows the schools' capacities, present and projected number on roll (NOR) at schools within a two mile radius of both West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools. Pupil number forecasts for the schools show that all school places need to be retained to ensure sufficient primary provision in the area. As such there is no opportunity to consider closure of either school without the creation of alternative provision.

Table 1

		Actual			Forecast			
School	Capacity September 2011	NOR 2009/10	NOR 2010/11	NOR 2011/12	NOR 2012/13	NOR 2013/14	NOR 2014/15	NOR 2015/16
West End Infant	150	126	132	144	146	148	149	150
Talavera Infant	270	260	254	236	237	241	246	259
St Josephs RCA Primary	204	195	203	205	205	202	200	200
St Michaels CEC Infant	260	267	270	267	259	250	244	244
Belle Vue Infant	270	213	228	255	267	269	271	276
Park Primary	90	86	81	84	82	85	85	88
Marlborough Infant + J	104	100	109	107	117	123	126	131
Total	1,348	1,247	1,277	1,298	1,313	1,318	1,321	1,348
School	Capacity September 2011	NOR 2009/10	NOR 2010/11	NOR 2011/12	NOR 2012/13	NOR 2013/14	NOR 2014/15	NOR 2015/16
Beaumont Junior	189	108	117	112	110	121	127	134
Talavera Junior	360	330	295	285	262	271	253	266
St Josephs RCA Primary	272	264	262	266	270	274	277	279
St Michaels CEC Junior	350	371	378	371	375	389	389	381
Newport Junior	263	227	235	247	263	304	329	357
Park Primary	120	90	89	89	98	101	106	104
Marlborough Infant + J	35	20	10	24	14	18	23	24
Total	1,589	1,410	1,386	1,398	1,392	1,478	1,504	1,545

Grand total	2,937	2,657	2,663	2,696	2,705	2,796	2,825	2,893
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6. Consultation

- 6.1. A full list of consultees, together with a schedule of meetings and drop-in sessions, which, have taken place regarding the consultation on the proposal to close West End Infant and Beaumont Junior School to form a 420 place (2fe) primary school, are attached as **appendices 3 and 4** respectively.
- 6.2. The consultation document attached at **appendix 5** was distributed to all parents of children attending both West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools and was published on the County Council's website to enable the wider schools' communities to express their views about the proposal. A questionnaire attached to the consultation document asked respondents to indicate whether or not they agreed with the proposal to amalgamate the schools and invited comments. A breakdown of the responses is set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2:

Number of responses	Agree with proposal	Disagree with proposal	Parent	Teaching staff	Support staff	Parent of pre-school	Member of community	Other
275	23	252	134	6	6	5	103	21

- 6.3. The governing body of Beaumont Junior School is in unanimous agreement with the proposal to form a two-form entry (420 place) school.
- 6.4. The governing body of West End Infant School is unanimously opposed to the proposal.

7. Summary of issues raised by consultees

- 7.1. Comments were made by a number of consultees that a small infant school provided a safe environment for the pupils, especially those starting school with little or no English language or with learning difficulties, and that the pupils were "looked after better". Some comments suggested that children would get "lost" in a larger school.
- 7.2. Linked to the above comment the view was expressed that at least one small infant school should be kept in Aldershot to give parents the option to send their child to such provision.
- 7.3. Another point raised was that all the teachers knew all the children by name and circumstance and every child felt able to approach any member of staff with their difficulties. Because the teachers would know the children's backgrounds they would be better able to support them. In the same way parents get to know each other in a small school environment and support each other.

- 7.4. There was concern expressed from a variety of consultees, staff, community and parents, that the infant school building (quoted as a defined heritage site and a unique environment) could be demolished and one of the last historic buildings in that part of Aldershot would be lost.
- 7.5. A number of respondents mentioned that there was a sense of belonging to the schools' communities and this was felt to be important, especially with the transient population in the area.
- 7.6. There was a strong feeling that Beaumont Junior School should be given more time to show continued improvement. Other comments suggested that it was unfair to look at statistical data for Beaumont Junior over the past five years as the school had been through a turbulent time in terms of leadership.
- 7.7. There was a suggestion that some pupils achieve better results from attending separate infant and junior schools before going on to secondary education.
- 7.8. Some concerns were raised about the potential for bullying in a primary school and the exposure of the infant age pupils to those in the junior age phase.
- 7.9. A number of consultees suggested that the reason why parents did not send their children to Beaumont Junior School is the quality of education being provided at the linked secondary school. Other parents mentioned that Heath End Secondary School in Surrey is closer to that part of Aldershot than the Hampshire linked secondary school and easier to access. As such parents expressed a preference for a junior school other than Beaumont, with a view to securing a place at Heath End Secondary School. Parents suggested that by linking Beaumont Junior to Heath End Secondary more parents were likely to send their children to Beaumont.
- 7.10. A number of parents suggested that a large influx of pupils, with little or no English, to Beaumont Junior School a few years ago destabilised the school, as this was not managed properly.
- 7.11. As an alternative to the proposal to amalgamate the two schools, it was suggested that Beaumont could become a 210 place (1fe) primary school.
- 7.12. Many consultees wished to retain the schools as they are currently, but it was pointed out that evidence suggests it would not bring about the rise in standards expected.

8. Summary of comments on issues raised by consultees

- 8.1 A 2fe primary school is not a large school and there is no reason not to expect the same level of support for children currently being provided at West End Infant School to continue in a primary setting.

- 8.2 The Ofsted monitoring letter from October 2011 states that the school is making satisfactory progress to move out of the notice to improve in the expected timescale and also states that “there is still much to do”.
- 8.3 Pupils can achieve well in both junior and primary settings. The key determining factor is the quality of provision.
- 8.4 In primary schools throughout the county experience and practice would indicate that the older children help and support younger pupils in school.
- 8.5 The Local Authority’s view is that Beaumont’s linked secondary school is improving at a rapid pace and fears about the quality of provision are misplaced.
- 8.6 Beaumont Junior is now better placed to deal with pupils arriving with English as an additional language.
- 8.7 The provision of a 1fe primary school on the Beaumont Junior site would reduce the number of school places in the area at a time when there is a need for additional capacity.

9. Views of the local County Councillor

- 9.1 The local County Councillor supports the recommendation to amalgamate Beaumont Junior and West End Infant schools to create an all-through primary school and hopes to see the benefits of its implementation in due course.

10. Views of the Local Member of Parliament

- 10.1 Gerald Howarth, MP, visited both schools on 14 October 2011 and wrote to Councillor Perry on 25 October 2011 in which he stated that he was “*not persuadedthe closure of both schools and the establishment of an all-through primary school offers the best opportunity of securing outstanding educational provision for the community*”. Mr. Howarth also commented that it appeared to be somewhat premature to close Beaumont without giving the team there sufficient time to attempt to turn the school around. A copy of Gerald Howarth’s letter is attached as **appendix 6**.

11. Options and associated rationale

- 11.1. Leave the two schools as they are:

The quality of educational provision for the whole primary age range in this part of Aldershot is and has been satisfactory at best for a considerable period of time. Schools are responsible for their own improvement which has not been brought about. The educational provision is not of the necessary quality to enable the majority of pupils to make the progress needed in their learning, in order to access the life chances they deserve.

West End Infant School has been providing its pupils with a satisfactory quality of education according to Ofsted over the last five years. This has

meant that the school has not brought about real improvements in its performance over a substantial period of time. Ofsted also judged capacity to improve as only satisfactory which gives an indication that any improvement trajectory would be modest. The pupils that attend West End Infant School as a whole enter with levels of attainment below the national average. If the quality of provision at the school was good a higher proportion of pupils would meet or exceed the expected levels by the end of Key Stage One and more pupils would be able to gain greater benefit from their Key Stage Two experiences. The majority of pupils who attend Beaumont Junior School, transfer from West End Infant School.

The attainment on entry of pupils as a whole who attend Beaumont Junior School is below the national average. Outcomes for pupils when they leave Beaumont Junior School have been significantly below expectations for the last four years. The school being issued with the Notice to Improve from Ofsted is a result of the poor outcomes for pupils. Both schools, therefore, need to bring about rapid improvement to the quality of education they provide. Neither school has been able to bring this about for a considerable time as two separate schools. It is therefore very unlikely that should the two schools remain separate the necessary improvements will be brought about and outcomes for pupils will be improved.

11.2. Federate the two schools:

Federation means that the two schools involved remain as separate schools with separate budgets, DfE numbers and on separate sites but under one governing body. It is the role of the governing body to determine the leadership structure to drive forward school improvement.

Although there is some liaison between West End Infant School and Beaumont Junior School at leadership and staff level, there has not been effective collaborative working. In order to bring about the necessary improvement across the primary provision in this part of Aldershot, there is a need for more effective collaboration so common policies, practices and expectations around teaching and learning can be developed, embedded and good practice shared. Historically, and at present, despite attempts to address this matter, there is not a culture within or between the two schools that will bring this about.

A federation would maintain two separate schools on two separate sites as at present. A federation would not provide the most conducive arrangements to encourage the rapid change in culture needed to address the pressing issues. As stated previously, the quality of education the two schools have been able to provide as two separate schools has not been strong enough to obtain good outcomes for pupils.

11.3. Become a sponsored academy:

The drive from the government for schools to become academies provides the opportunity for Beaumont Junior School and West End Infant School to do so. As neither school is providing the required quality of provision, good or better in Ofsted terms, then if they were to become an academy they would

need to become a sponsored academy. This would involve a sponsor, which could be an academy trust, holding the school directly to account and directly line managing the headteacher and governing body.

There were strong views from staff and governors and parents that this is not what they would want to happen for either school. As such this is not something that the local authority would want to impose on the schools.

11.4. Amalgamate both schools to form a new all through primary school:

Forecast pupil numbers indicate the need for 420 places (2fe) of primary provision in the area. A single primary school of this size would grow over time until a full two forms of entry is established.

Such an 'amalgamation' would require the closure of both schools and the opening of a new primary school. A temporary governing body would be formed with responsibility for the setting up of the new school which would entail the appointment of a headteacher who in turn would propose the staffing structure for the new school with staff then being appointed to that structure.

The amalgamation would create one school with one governing body, one headteacher and one staff team. As a new school a new culture, ethos and vision would be established together with the formulation of policies, practices and expectations consistently implemented across the whole school. As such there would be opportunities for staff development, including developing teaching and learning methods across the whole age range whilst potential disruptions to pupils' learning such as transition, would be minimised.

An amalgamation would result in the closure of both West End Infant and Beaumont Junior School. As such the satisfactory Ofsted judgement of West End Infant and the inadequate judgement of Beaumont Junior would both be erased. This would provide the new school with an opportunity to establish improved practice and outcomes for pupils.

12. Conclusions

12.1 Hampshire was judged to be an 'excellent' authority in the recent Annual Children's Services Assessment in November, one of only 28 out of 144 authorities in the country so far to achieve this. Central to this outcome was the quality of the educational provision in schools and the strong track record of school improvement that has been demonstrated. An important element of the success in bringing about school improvement has been the accurate identification of needs and strategies which address them. The amalgamation of schools has been a successful strategy used to bring about improved outcomes for pupils in Hampshire. The formation of Cherrywood Primary School in 2001, Cranford Park Primary in 2010 and most recently Barncroft Primary in 2011 are all examples where this has been achieved.

12.2 The amalgamation of Beaumont Junior School and West End Infant School and the creation of an all-through primary school is the option most likely to be successful in effectively bringing about rapid improvement in the quality of provision and outcome for pupils.

13. Recommendation(s)

It is recommended that;

13.1. Public notices be published in accordance with sections 15 and 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to:

(a) Discontinue Beaumont Junior and West End Infant Schools with effect from 31 December 2012, and

(b) Establish a split site two-form entry community primary school to cater for 420 pupils aged 4-11 with effect from 1 January 2013.

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:	yes
Corporate Improvement plan link number (if appropriate):	

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.)

Document

Responses from consultees are available and on deposit .

Location

Winchester Information Centre,
Mottisfont Court, High Street,
Winchester, SO23 8ZB.

IMPACT ASSESSMENTS:

1. Equalities Impact Assessment:

1.1. Equalities have been considered and no adverse impact identified.

2. Impact on Crime and Disorder:

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

3. Climate Change:

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

No impact has been identified

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

No specific measures have been identified.