

HAMPSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Decision Report

Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	30 April 2012
Title:	Review of school places at West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools, Aldershot
Reference:	3813
Report From:	Director of Children's Services

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1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 On 23 January 2012 the County Council's Cabinet decided to publish statutory notices, in accordance with Section 15 (1) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, setting out its intention to close West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools and form a 420-place (two-form entry) primary school. 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 infant and junior schools and establish a primary school.
- 1.3 The report recommends that Beaumont Junior School and West End Infant School be closed with effect from 31 December 2012, and that a split site two-form entry primary school to cater for 420 pupils aged 4–11 be established on the present schools' sites with effect from 1 January 2013.

2. Background information

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 On 23 January 2012 the Cabinet received a report providing details on the outcomes of the consultations, which recommended that statutory Public

Notices be published setting out the County Council's intention to close West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools and establish a split site primary school.

- 2.3 Public notices were published on 3 February 2012 (see Appendix A). The Public Notice is an extract from the complete proposals, a copy of which is attached at Appendix B.

3. Schools' performance

- 3.1 Beaumont Junior School has required considerable intervention over the past four years. When the school was inspected by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) in April 2008 it was judged to be satisfactory and, as such, was subject to a monitoring visit by Ofsted.
- 3.2 The monitoring visit occurred on 27 April 2010 and the school was judged to be making inadequate progress in making improvements but, due to the restructuring of the leadership team, was demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.
- 3.3 The monitoring report stated : *"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"*.
- 3.4 Beaumont Junior School was inspected by Ofsted again in 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"*.
- 3.5 The latest Ofsted monitoring visit took place in October 2011 and the monitoring report stated that : *"The local authority statement of action meets requirements and contains appropriate strategies for supporting the school to improve. The school's own action plan has evolved from the statement of action through discussion between the headteacher, the governing body and the local authority. The action plan accurately identifies the areas of provision needing attention. The headteacher and other senior leaders have been effective in targeting these areas but know there is still much to do."*
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 West End Infant School was inspected by the Ofsted in May 2007 when the overall effectiveness of the school was judged to be a grade 3 – satisfactory, (where grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 is good and grade 4 is inadequate). The leadership and management of the school at that time were also judged to be satisfactory.

- 3.8 The school was inspected by Ofsted again in June 2010 when the overall effectiveness of the school was again judged to be satisfactory as was the school's capacity for sustained improvement, and as such was subject to a monitoring visit by Ofsted.
- 3.9 The Ofsted monitoring visit at West End Infant School took place in December 2011 and judged that: *"The school has made inadequate progress in making improvements, and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement"*.

4. Representations received to the Public notice

- 4.1 The eight representations received are appended at Appendix C. The issues raised are set out and commented on below :

4.2 Issue - Consultation was inadequate

Comment – Concerns regarding the quality of education across the whole primary age range are the key factor behind the proposal, concerns reflected in the Ofsted findings for both West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools. In addition consultation meetings were held with the local communities (including parents) at each of the schools on 12 and 13 September. There were eight drop-in sessions, four at each school, two in the mornings and two in the afternoons at each school, each open to anybody to attend and make their views known. Separate meetings at each school for governors took place on 28 and 29 September and there were separate meetings at each school for staff on 21 and 22 September. In addition parents, staff, governors and other interested parties were alerted to the web-based consultation document and response form.

4.3 Issue – Disruption to children's education

Comment – Whenever structural change is proposed there is inevitably a period where the schools concerned feel some disruption. The County Council is committed to minimising this disruption and would provide practical help and support over the forthcoming months. Maintaining the status quo cannot be an option however as neither school is currently providing a good quality of education. So in addition to any structural change that should take place, the County Council is focused on working alongside both schools to bring about better quality of provision and stronger outcomes for the pupils. In the longer-term, should the pupils attend a through primary school it will minimise the disruption, which occurs when pupils have to change school at the end of Key Stage 1.

4.4 Issue – The weight of opinion from responses received and deputations made was not given due consideration.

Comment – It is the case that of the 275 responses received to the consultation 252 disagreed and 23 agreed with the proposal to close the infant and junior schools and establish a primary school. This was clearly identified in the report to Cabinet on 23 January 2012 and taken full account of. The representations made to the Cabinet by the three governors and two parents of the West End Infant School community and by a governor of

Beaumont Junior School were well made and the content taken fully into account in the Cabinet's deliberations before coming to its decision.

- 4.5 Issue – Cabinet have no “in depth” knowledge of West End Infant School and should have visited.

Comment – Cabinet Members will be visiting both schools on 20 April 2012 and have been properly and objectively advised by officers throughout.

- 4.6 Issue – Managing a split-site school will be “incredibly challenging”.

Comment - A new through primary school, albeit based across two sites, would have a single governing body with one headteacher to set the strategic direction of the school, its vision, culture and expectations. As one school, the leadership would therefore be able to generate greater continuity and consistency with staff benefiting from the support and development opportunities created through greater staff numbers with expertise across key stages. The opportunity to minimise the disruption for pupils, which can occur through the transition between key stages, would be greater and therefore beneficial for the pupils.

- 4.7 Issue – Appointing a good headteacher will not be easy

Comment – Key to the success of any new primary school will be the appointment of a high quality headteacher. As stated in paragraph 3.6 Beaumont Junior School is unable to appoint a substantive headteacher and has secured an acting headteacher for one year with effect from 1 January 2012. Hampshire was judged to be an excellent authority in the recent Annual Children's Services Assessment in November 2011. 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. Hampshire's strong track record coupled with the opportunity to put their mark on a new 420-place primary school should attract a quality field of applicants from which any temporary governing body will be able to make a strong appointment. Put simply, a larger school will attract a higher salary and a wider field of candidates.

- 4.8 Issue – West End Infant School is showing it can improve pupil attainment

Comment – Paragraph 3.9 refers to the latest Ofsted monitoring visit, which took place in December 2011. In the report validating Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) stated that: *“Teachers assessments indicated that attainment in reading at the end of Year 2 rose in 2011 and was in line with national averages, recovering from a dip in 2010. Attainment in writing also rose, but average scores remained slightly below national averages. Attainment in mathematics fell over the same period. Overall, pupils' achievement remains satisfactory”*.

As stated in paragraphs 3.7 and 3.8 successive Ofsted inspections in May 2007 and a little over 3 years later in June 2010 both judged West End Infant School to be “satisfactory”.

- 4.9 Issue – Data on entry to West End Infant shows many children have below average skills, data at the end of Key Stage 1 shows standards are “broadly in line with those found nationally”

Comment – When children enter at the start of the reception year in an infant school, there is no standardised assessment undertaken. Data at local or national level necessary to make comparisons about cohort performance for this age of child is not available and therefore such comparisons are not possible. Over the last two years outcomes at the end of Key Stage 1 have been broadly in line with national averages, however, fewer children at West End than on average nationally, have attained the higher levels.

4.10 Issue – there is inadequate evidence to support the proposed increase in capacity

Comment – West End Infant School currently has a published admission number of 50, a capacity of 150 and operates 5 classes. Currently more than half of the children living within the school's catchment area attend other schools. Pressure on primary school places in Rushmoor is increasing, particularly at Year R, and is forecast to continue. As such it is expected that neighbouring schools will have less capacity to admit out of catchment children. The proposal is to create a primary school with a published admission number of 60. As this feeds through any new primary school it will enable a further 10 children per year group to attend their catchment school.

4.11 Issue – The proposal to create the additional permanent accommodation on the West End Infant School site to enable an intake of 60 for any new primary school, at a cost of £350,000, is a waste given the intention to create a single site primary school on the Beaumont Junior School site

Comment – There are three options, as set out in section 6 to achieve a split site primary school:

- the provision of additional, permanent accommodation on the present West End Infant site at a cost of £350,000
- the provision of additional temporary accommodation at the West End site at a cost of £100,000
- the use of existing accommodation on the present Beaumont Junior School site to house Key Stage 1 children.

4.12 Issue – The objectives of the proposal are purely structural

Comment – When a school is placed in a category following an Ofsted inspection because it is failing to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils, as is the case with Beaumont Junior School, the Local Authority (LA) is required to consider any structural solution designed to improve outcomes for children.

4.13 Issue – There is no evidence to support that a 420-place primary school will improve outcomes for pupils

Comment – The proposal would create one school with one governing body, one headteacher and one staff team. As a new school, a new culture, ethos and vision will 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 primary range. Potential disruption to pupil's learning such as transition from infant to junior school, where research demonstrates this results in a dip in pupils' progress, would be minimised.

There is evidence in Hampshire that pupils attending through primary schools achieve better on average than those who attend separate infant and junior schools by the end of KS2. In all the benchmark measures over the last two years, pupils in through primary schools have outperformed those attending separate infant and junior schools by on average:

3% L4+ English

2% L4+ Mathematics

7% L4+ English & Mathematics combined

7% 2 levels of progress in English

5% 2 levels of progress in Mathematics

4.14 Issue – West End Infant School building is a “Hampshire Treasure”

Comment – The proposal is to create a single site primary school subject to capital becoming available, and subject to the views of the new school leadership. When any decision is taken to proceed with the single site school full consideration will be given to the future of the West End Infant School building. In the meantime should the proposal go ahead the building will continue to be used to accommodate Key Stage 1 children as part of a split site primary school.

5. Statutory Guidance for decision makers on reaching a decision on the proposal to amalgamate West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools

5.1 The Secretary of State has issued statutory guidance for decision makers on factors that need to be considered when deciding on proposals to amalgamate schools, prior to making the decision. 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?

5.2 Before publication, the Public Notice was checked against the Department for Education guidance to confirm that it did comply with statutory requirements.

5.3 A full consultation exercise was undertaken in line with statutory guidance. The full list of consultees can be found at Appendix D.

- 5.4 The proposals to amalgamate West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools were not related to any other published proposals.
- 5.5 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?

- 5.6 Any proposal relating to a 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. Beaumont Junior School has been judged to be failing to provide an acceptable standard of education. West End Infant School has been judged to have made inadequate progress in making improvements, and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement. The Local Authority believes that the closures of West End infant and Beaumont Junior Schools and the establishment of 420-place (2FE) primary school will improve the overall standards of education in the area through the creation of a single school with one governing body, one headteacher and one staff team. Policies, practices and expectations will be consistently implemented across the whole school alongside the establishment of a new culture, vision and ethos.
- 5.7 The education diversity of the area will be affected by the proposed amalgamation of West End infant and Beaumont Junior Schools as it will remove a small infant and junior school from the area. However, parents will be able to express a preference for neighbouring schools if they wish to send their child to a separate infant and junior school.
- 5.8 The DfE guide for Local Authorities 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. In this instance there will not be a reduction in school place numbers as the schools will be amalgamated to become a primary school.

What is the need for places?

- 5.9 As set out in 4.10 above the places currently provided by West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools are needed together with additional places (10 per year group) to cater for some of the growth in primary age children in Aldershot.

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

- 5.10 When deciding a statutory proposal the decision maker should bear in mind that the proposal should not have the effect of unreasonably extending journey times or increasing transport costs, or result in too many children being prevented from travelling sustainably due to unsuitable routes e.g. for walking. The proposal is to establish a split site primary school using the existing sites and buildings of the present infant and junior schools. Longer-term the intention is to create a single site primary school on the present

Beaumont Junior School site subject to capital becoming available. The distance between the present West End Infant and Beaumont Junior school sites is half a mile and is a safe walking route for children accompanied by an adult as necessary.

6. Staffing

- 6.1 If a primary school is formed from the existing infant and junior schools a temporary governing body for the new school would be constituted prior to its opening. The temporary governing body would appoint the headteacher who, together with the temporary governing body, would set the staff structure for the new school with staff then being appointed to that structure. Staff from the closing infant and junior schools would, with agreement from the temporary governing body, be given first opportunity to apply for positions in the new primary school, in line with agreed personnel procedures. Officers of the County Council would work closely with the temporary governing body to ensure that, as far as possible, staffs' professional needs and aspirations are met.

7. Finance

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 A new split site 420-place primary school could be provided either:
- through a capital investment of £350,000 to provide additional, accommodation required at West End Infant School in permanent build
 - through a capital investment of £100,000 to provide the additional accommodation required at West End Infant School in temporary build
 - through the use of existing accommodation on the present Beaumont Junior School site to house some Key Stage 1 children.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The LA has met the Statutory Guidance to enable the decision to be made regarding the amalgamation of West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools.
- 8.2 The Public Notice has resulted in the receipt of 8 representations setting out a number of objections to the proposal to discontinue West End Infant and Beaumont Junior and establish a 420-place primary school, almost all focus on the proposed closure of West End Infant. It is the case that the Governing Body of Beaumont Junior School is in unanimous agreement with the proposal to form a 420-place primary school just as the West End Infant

School's Governing Body is unanimously opposed to the proposal with strong support for this position from the wider infant school community.

- 8.3 The two schools have the same catchment area and as such serve the same community. It is clear from Ofsted reports and monitoring visits that neither is providing the quality education which children attending the schools are entitled to.
- 8.4 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 the implementation of strategies to address them.
- 8.5 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.

9 Recommendation(s)

- 9.1 It is recommended that approval be given to the following proposal, published by the LA, in accordance with Sections 15 and 10 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 to:
- (a) Discontinue West End Infant and Beaumont Junior Schools, Aldershot, 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. Either:**
- through the provision of additional temporary accommodation on the West End Infant site
 - through the provision of additional permanent accommodation on the West End Infant site
 - through the utilisation of existing accommodation at Beaumont Junior School for some Key Stage 1 children.
- (c) Establish a single site primary school subject to capital being available and subject to the views of the new school leadership**

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.)

DocumentLocation

Department for Education:
Making Changes to a Maintained
Mainstream School – A Guide for Local
Authorities and Governing Bodies

<http://www.education.gov.uk/>

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.