



DETERMINATION

Case reference: STP/610

Proposal: To discontinue Perry Court Infant School and Perry Court Junior School, Bristol and establish a new community primary school in their place.

Proposer: Bristol City Council

Date of decision: 9 July 2014

Determination

Under the powers conferred on me in paragraph 10 of Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue Perry Court Infant School and Perry Court Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014; and to establish a new community primary school on 1 September 2014.

The referral

1. Bristol City Council, (the local authority) (the LA), wrote to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (the OSA) on 5 June 2014 seeking a decision on its proposals made under sections 15 and 11(A3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act). The proposals are to discontinue two community schools, Perry Court Infant School (the infant school) and Perry Court Junior School (the junior school), (the schools) on 31 August 2014, and to establish a new community primary school for pupils aged 3 to 11 years, on the current site of the schools, on 1 September 2014.

Jurisdiction

2. Under Section 15 of the Act, local authorities may publish proposals to discontinue schools. Under section 11(A3) a local authority may publish proposals for the establishment of a new community primary school where it is to replace a community infant and community junior school which are to be discontinued. The Schools Adjudicator is the decision maker for proposals made by LAs under section 11(A3) and for proposals under section 15 where these are related to other proposals where the adjudicator is the decision maker.

3. On 6 May 2014, having carried out the appropriate consultation, the LA published statutory notices, in the form required by the Act, to discontinue the schools on 31 August 2014 and to establish a new community primary school on 1 September 2014. The notices were in the form required by the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) (England) Regulations 2013. No representations were received and following the consultation period, the LA referred the matter to the OSA for a decision.

4. I am satisfied that this proposal has been properly referred to me in accordance with Schedule 2 to the Act and that; therefore, I have the jurisdiction to determine this matter.

Procedures

5. In considering this matter, I have had regard to all relevant legislation and guidance.

6. I have considered all the papers put before me including:

- a) the formal request by the LA for a decision from the adjudicator on the proposal, dated 5 June 2014;
- b) the consultation document relating to the proposals dated 12 March 2014;
- c) notice of the six week pre-statutory proposal consultation dated 12 March 2014;
- d) a summary of the responses to the consultation;
- e) a copy of the full proposals;
- f) a copy of the public notice published in the Bristol Post newspaper on 6 May 2014;
- g) a copy of the statutory notice to discontinue the schools and to establish a new community primary school dated 6 May 2014;
- h) a letter of support for the proposal from the head teacher and chair of governors of the schools dated 15 June 2014; and
- i) the most recent Ofsted inspection reports for both schools.

The Background and the Proposal

7. The schools have been working closely together since 2007 and are currently led and managed by a single headteacher and a single governing body. The LA, with agreement from the governing body, is proposing to bring the schools together 'formally'. The LA and the governing body believe that the proposals to establish a new community primary school would provide significant benefits to the school, its pupils and the local community.

8. The LA has proposed that with effect from 31 August 2014, the schools are discontinued and that a primary school for children aged 3 to 11 is established to open on 1 September 2014. The new school would occupy the same buildings as the current schools and the LA proposes that there should be up to 420 key stage 1 and 2 children on roll. This is an increase in the current number on roll which is 402. In addition the proposals include provision for up to 30 full time equivalent places in the nursery; this is the

same as the current provision. The school will have a published admission number of 60 for admissions to the reception year (YR).

Objections

9. The representation period for response to the statutory notices closed on 3 June 2014. No comments or objections were received by the proposer.

Consideration of Factors

10. I have considered the proposals afresh taking account of the relevant statutory guidance and of the arguments put to me by the LA as the proposer.

Standards of education

11. The governing body of the school and the LA's officers believe that the proposals would be in the best interests of the pupils and the local community. They believe that the establishment of an all-through primary school would develop further its unity and common purpose and this would be recognised by all stakeholders and the Department for Education. The proposals suggest that the development and promotion of the school's identity and ethos within the local community would be more effective through a single primary school and that the transition between the phases of primary education would be improved for pupils. The proposals go on to say that the new school would provide greater continuity and progression in learning for pupils which would lead to raised standards of attainment overall.

12. The infant school was inspected by Ofsted in February 2013 and assessed as requiring improvement. Key issues highlighted in the Ofsted report were the quality of teaching and the progress of pupils in the early years foundation stage. A monitoring inspection in July 2013 reported some progress in these issues.

13. The junior school was inspected by Ofsted in January 2013 and was judged to require improvement. The quality of teaching, pupil progress and the evaluation and monitoring of pupil progress by leaders and managers were reported as requiring improvement. Some progress was reported by inspectors who conducted a monitoring inspection in April 2013. Key aspects suggested for improvement in that report were the need to establish stability in the senior leadership team and the appointment of a full complement of governors.

14. It is my view that replacing the separate schools with a single primary school has the potential to raise standards of education further, through the development of policies and procedures that secure continuity and consistency. This will provide the opportunity for the single governing body and leadership team to continue to address the improvement issues identified in the schools' Ofsted reports.

Leadership and vision

15. A new headteacher was appointed in the summer term of 2013 and she worked alongside the acting headteacher during the autumn term 2013 for one full day each week. She took up her full time appointment as headteacher of both schools in January 2014. The single governing body has been reorganised and a new chair appointed.

16. The LA reports that a single governing body with an agreed identity and ethos will enable the school's leaders to continue to drive up standards and promote continuity and consistency in teaching and learning. It suggests that the proposals would improve communication through the publication of a single prospectus and common policies.

17. The LA further suggests that within a single school, the governing body and leadership team will be able to make better use of staff knowledge and expertise in order to coordinate and deliver the curriculum across the whole age range. The proposals suggest that this will provide greater opportunities for staff to develop and broaden their skills and experience and that it will enable the school to recruit and retain high calibre staff.

18. I am satisfied that the proposals have the potential to provide continuity, progression and stability for pupils through their primary education and should allow the headteacher and governing body to continue to promote improvement.

Need for places

19. There are currently 211 pupils on roll at the infant school and 191 on the roll of the junior school. A new community school would offer 420 places for 4 to 11 year olds and a further 30 full time equivalent places in the nursery. The published admission number (PAN) for entry to YR would be 60.

20. The proposal suggests that all pupils who already attend the infant or the junior schools will be able to transfer automatically to the new community primary school, if parents choose to do so. As a community primary school, the LA would be the admission authority and determine admission arrangements (the arrangements), as it does for the existing schools. It is not anticipated that the arrangements would change for the primary school. Currently the oversubscription criteria have looked after and previously looked after children; siblings and distance from the school as the three priorities.

21. The infant school is currently full and the junior school has some capacity. There are no plans for expansion to the buildings and the proposals suggest that any increase in overall numbers, which would occur if the school was full, would be easily accommodated. Therefore I am of the view that it is appropriate that the admission number of 60 into YR should be maintained.

Community Cohesion and Travel to School

22. It is envisaged that the majority of pupils would transfer onto the roll of the new community primary school. The impact of the closure of the two schools on the community is therefore expected to be minimal.

23. The children will travel to the same site and use the same buildings. They are therefore expected to continue to use the same patterns of transport to school that they currently have.

Premises and Costs

24. As the buildings and site will remain the same there are no immediate capital funding implications for the LA to consider in respect of the proposed new school.

25. The LA reports that a single school would benefit from increased efficiencies in the deployment of staff and resources brought about by operating a single budget and management system.

26. I am of the view that the proposed school on the same site using the same buildings and facilities should provide the opportunity for more efficient financial administration.

Consultation

27. The consultation on this proposal was carried out between 12 March 2014 and 23 April 2014. The consultation document was sent to all houses in the immediate vicinity of the schools, neighbouring schools, church dioceses, trade unions, parents' groups, ward councillors, the local member of parliament and other stakeholders and partners prior to the beginning of the consultation process.

28. Consultation meetings were advertised in the local press. Two meetings were held for parents and two with staff and trade union representatives. Meetings were also held with pupils. During the consultation process 48 responses were received and all were in favour of the proposals. One member of staff, who was in favour of the proposals in general, expressed concern about the sentence in the proposals which read "*Wherever possible staff from both schools will transfer to the primary school*". This member of staff suggested that this was not a guarantee that all jobs were safe. This point was clarified for staff by the LA who report that "*no posts would be terminated as a result of the proposal*". I am satisfied that the consultation process met requirements.

Conclusion

29. All responses to the consultation support the proposal to replace the infant and the junior schools with an all-through primary school. The governing body is also in favour of the proposals. The LA's proposal to discontinue the schools has the potential to support further improvements across all year groups. The buildings will not change and therefore the

capacity of the new school will enable all pupils in the current schools to transfer if they wish to do so.

Determination

30. Under the powers conferred on me in paragraph 10 of Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue Perry Court Infant School and Perry Court Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014; and to establish a new community primary school on 1 September 2014.

Dated: 9 July 2014

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Mrs Ann Talboys