

DETERMINATION

Case reference: STP 591

Proposal: To discontinue Grange Lane Infant School and Grange Lane Junior School and to establish a new community primary school

Proposer: North Lincolnshire Council

Date of Decision: 19 June 2013

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 Grange Lane Infant School and Grange Lane Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and to establish an new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014, but with the modification to the proposal to provide 26, not 39, full-time equivalent nursery places.

The referral

1. On 26 February 2013 the Schools Services Manager of North Lincolnshire Council, the local authority (the LA), wrote to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) seeking a decision on its proposal to close Grange Lane Infant and Grange Lane Junior Schools, Scunthorpe and to establish a new community primary school with a 39 full-time equivalent (FTE) place nursery. This letter was sent to the OSA in an e-mail dated 1 March 2013 but was wrongly directed and was not received. The LA contacted OSA on 16 April 2013 and as a result forwarded the letter dated 26 February 2013 again on that date.

Jurisdiction

2. On 20 December 2012, having carried out the appropriate consultation, the Cabinet Member for People gave approval for the publication of the proposal. This took place on 10 January 2013. The notice was in the form required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act).

3. 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 jurisdiction to determine this matter.

Procedures

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

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

- the supporting papers and the record of the decision taken by the Cabinet Member on 20 December 2012;
- the published proposal and the prescribed information from the proposer as set out in the relevant School Organisation Regulations;
- copies of the reports of the most recent Ofsted inspections of the infant and junior schools;
- pupil number projections for the area served by the existing schools and those for its immediately neighbouring areas;
- net capacity calculations for the designated premises for the new school;
- the responses made during consultation on the proposal.

I have also visited a website image of the location of each of the existing schools and their environs.

The Proposal

5. The proposal is to discontinue Grange Lane Infant School and Grange Lane Junior School and to establish a new community primary school using, initially, the premises of the existing schools, which are approximately 660 yards apart. As part of the proposal, the existing 26 FTE places in the nursery will be increased to 39 FTE places. A new single set of premises is planned, to be constructed on the site of the current junior school under the Department for Education's "Priority School Building Programme". The intention is that the new building will open during 2016.

6. The proposer contends that benefits will result from the following aspects of the proposal:

- closer integration and better transition between the two key stages;
- greater opportunity for curriculum development;
- improved staff development;
- the creation of single leadership and governance with increased flexibility of the use of available resources;
- greater consistency in the approaches adopted to teaching and

learning, monitoring and the tracking of pupil performance; and

- improved efficiency of administration, a single admission process for the school, and the potential for efficiencies resulting from economies of scale.

7. I have carried out the checks listed in the statutory guidance required of the Decision Maker on receipt of statutory proposals.

8. The consultation which was carried out prior to the publication of the proposals took place between 20 May 2012 and 1 July 2012 and I am satisfied that it met the requirements of the Act.

Objections

9. The consultation period for responses to the statutory notices closed on 21 February 2013. No comments or objections were received by the proposer.

Consideration of Factors

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

Standards

11. Grange Lane Infant School was inspected by Ofsted in October 2011, when the inspectors reported that the proportion of children attending the school who were eligible for free school meals was well above the national average and that a high proportion had special educational needs/disabilities. They found that the school was a good school, with a good capacity for further improvement.

12. In May 2011 Ofsted judged Grange Lane Junior School, which had a similar profile, also to be a good school with a good capacity for further improvement.

13. The LA believes that the factors listed above will lead to improved standards. The proposal will not affect the current range of extended services which are provided.

14. Although both existing schools are currently regarded by Ofsted as good, I am satisfied that the creation of a single primary school is likely to have the benefits envisaged and as a result that it is likely to lead to the raising of standards. The new school will serve a high proportion of children who come from groups whose attainment levels are most likely to benefit from such a change.

The need for places

15. The existing infant school has a published admission number (PAN) of 60, providing 180 school places. The existing junior school has a PAN of 65 and 260 places. The proposed replacement primary school is to have a PAN of 60 and it will therefore provide 420 places. The proposal overall will have the effect of reducing slightly the total number of places available locally for children of junior age.

16. The existing infant school provides 26 FTE nursery places, and the proposal intends that this provision be increased to 39 FTE places. Accommodation for a larger nursery will be included when the school's new premises open, but having reviewed the net capacity calculations for the existing buildings I have been concerned that they would not allow such an expansion unless temporary additional accommodation were provided. I have therefore consulted both the LA and the schools, suggesting that the proposal be modified to approve a continuation of a 26 FTE nursery as part of the new primary school. The LA has reported that both welcome this suggestion, and the schools have not responded directly to me.

17. I have obtained projected pupil numbers for the Grange Lane Schools and for their nearest neighbouring schools. Pupils have been admitted to the existing infant school above the PAN in recent years to provide places for a housing estate which now has its own new school. Pupil projections for Grange Lane Infant School show a continuing need for at least 60 places annually once the new school for the housing estate is taken into account.

18. Neighbouring schools all show a healthy continuing need for places locally, and I am content that the size proposed for the replacement primary school at Grange Lane is appropriate in this context. The LA has told me that it will continue to keep projected pupil numbers under review during the planning of the replacement building for the new primary school, funding for which has been approved as part of the Department for Education's "Priority School Building Programme".

The Views of Interested Parties

19. Consultation on the proposal took place between 18 June 2012 and 12 August 2012, a period of 8 weeks. A consultation document was produced and distributed widely. The views of all parents, staff, governors, pupils and other interested parties were sought. Informal drop-in sessions were held and there was a single public meeting, held at the existing junior school. Feedback from the wider public was invited through the LA's website.

20. The consultation document provided helpful information and a clear means for responses to be made.

21. I have read in full the helpful "Consultation Feedback" document produced by the LA. This contains an analysis of all the responses made to the consultation, and breaks these down by stakeholder group. It contains minutes of the public meeting and summarises the points made by pupils when asked to say what they thought would be good, and what bad, about

having a single school.

22. One hundred and eighty five parents, 33 members of staff and 10 Governors responded, and all these groups were strongly supportive of the proposals. I wrote to the two governing bodies and to the two existing headteachers on 22 April 2012 seeking any further comments which they may have on the proposals, and have received no response.

Pupil admissions

23. Pupils on roll at Grange Lane Infant School and Grange Lane Junior School will be offered places at the new school on 1 September 2014. The admission arrangements for the new school will continue to be those for the LA's primary schools.

24. Parents of children on roll in the nursery in Grange Lane Infant School who are old enough to enter Year R at that point will need to apply for a place in the new primary school under those arrangements.

25. I am satisfied that no children will be disadvantaged by the proposal, which will have the benefit of removing the current need for there to be an application for a school place on the behalf of children transferring from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. Currently 98 per cent of children leaving Grange Lane Infant School at the end of Key Stage 1 seek a place in Grange Lane Junior School.

Conclusion

26. I have concluded that the proposal is likely to contribute to the raising of standards, and that it secures the provision of needed school places for which appropriate premises will be available. Parents and the relevant bodies of both schools favour the proposal.

27. Having raised my concerns about needing additional accommodation for the proposed enlarged nursery capacity, with the agreement of the proposer I am modifying the proposal such that the nursery will have 26 FTE places and not the 39 listed in the proposal.

Determination

28. 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 Grange Lane Infant School and Grange Lane Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and to establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014, but with the modification to the proposal to provide 26, not 39, full-time equivalent nursery places.

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Bryan Slater

Dated: 19 June 2013