

DETERMINATION

Case reference: STP/000577

Proposal: To discontinue St Augustine's Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop, Nottinghamshire and open a new community primary school in the existing buildings.

Proposer: Nottinghamshire County Council

Date of Determination: 31 May 2012

Determination

Under the powers conferred on me in Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue St Augustine's Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop, Nottinghamshire with effect from 31 March 2013 and establish a new community primary school in the existing buildings, from 1 April 2013.

Referral

1. On 15 May 2012 Nottinghamshire County Council, (the local authority), referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator its proposal to discontinue St Augustine's Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop, Nottinghamshire and establish a new community primary school in the existing buildings.

Jurisdiction

2. On 30 March 2012, Nottinghamshire County Council as (the proposer) published its proposal to discontinue St Augustine's Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop from 31 March 2013 and to establish a new community primary school in the existing buildings from 1 April 2013. The notice was in the form required by sections 15 and 11 (A3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act). I am satisfied I have jurisdiction to determine this matter under the powers conferred by Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Procedures

3. In considering this matter I have had full regard to the Act, other relevant legislation and guidance given by the Secretary of State for Education.

4. I have considered all the papers put before me including the following:
- the agenda and supporting papers for the meeting of Nottinghamshire County Council Cabinet held on 14 March 2012;
 - the views and comments made January 2012;
 - the full consultation document published by Nottinghamshire County Council;
 - a list of consultees who received copies of the consultation document; and
 - the public notice published in the Worksop Guardian on 30 March 2012.

The Proposal

5. The proposal is to discontinue St Augustine's Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop, Nottinghamshire from 31 March 2013 and open a new primary school in the existing buildings from 1 April 2013.

Objections

6. No comments or objections were received in response to the statutory notice.

Background

7. The infant school has a temporary headteacher and this has presented the local authority with the opportunity to hold discussions with the governing bodies of the infant and junior schools about the future of the two schools. The feasibility of bringing the two schools together as a primary school has been considered and the governing bodies were in support of this as a way forward.

8. The two schools occupy a single site with separate accesses. The new primary school would use the same site and the same buildings.

Consideration of Factors

9. I have considered the proposal taking careful account of the points put to me by the proposer.

Standards of Education

10. The infant school was judged to be outstanding in its Ofsted inspection in June 2008. This judgement was confirmed in an Ofsted interim assessment in January 2011. The junior school was judged to be a good school across all aspects of its work in its Ofsted inspection in January 2012.

11. There should be further gains in becoming a single school in terms of planning the curriculum across the full age range and capitalising on the expertise of all the staff and sharing their expertise across the curriculum. I am satisfied that there is the potential for further gains in the standards pupils achieve when they

attend a single school rather than transfer from one school to another. The new school should build on the ethos of the existing schools and help the children raise their aspirations and achieve the highest standards of which they are capable. Staff will be able to act as one team to give continuity across the key stages enabling the school to have one coherent set of policies.

12. There will be no substantive change in the delivery of the National Curriculum. The proposed new primary school to be established will teach all appropriate key stages. The new school will admit children with special educational needs according to normal admission arrangements and parental preference.

Need for places

13. St Augustine's Infant School has an admission number of 60 and 180 places with 161 pupils on roll. There is a nursery with 39 places and a roll of 33. St Augustine's Junior School also has an admission number of 60 and has 240 places with 158 pupils on roll. The new school would provide 420 places for children aged 5 to 11 years and the admission number would be 60 for admission to the Reception Year. The number of early years places will continue unchanged at 39 full time equivalent. At present the infant school has 19 spare places and the junior school has 82 surplus spaces. The local authority forecasts show an increase in the pupil numbers to 337 in 2012/2013; 381 in 2013/2014 and 398 in 2014/2015.

14. Children currently attending the schools will transfer to the new school unless parents wish their child to move to a different school that has places available. Parents will no longer have to apply for a place to transfer from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 provision. The admission arrangements for the new school will be those for community primary schools in the local authority. I am satisfied that the places are needed and that the children currently attending the two schools will have a place in the new school unless their parents wish to seek an alternative placement.

Finance

15. There is no capital cost involved with the proposal and no minor building work has been identified to facilitate the change. The local authority has indicated its intention to work with the new school's governing body, headteacher and staff to determine, in the best interests of the children, the most appropriate way of utilising the existing accommodation. The need for some transitional budget support has been identified and this will be phased over the three years following the change.

Views of Interested Parties

16. Consultation took place from 5 January 2012 to 17 February 2012. A consultation leaflet inviting views was distributed to all those directly involved with the schools, copies were made available in a range of public locations and on the local authority's website. Meetings were held and the views of the children at the schools were sought through their school councils.

17. The response to the consultation through the consultation response form and attendance at meetings for parents was low. The meetings for staff and governors were well attended. The views of all those directly involved with the schools and the

wider community were invited and could be made in different ways. Twenty three responses to the proposals were made of whom three people were against the proposal and eighteen people in favour, two did not know. Concerns were expressed that the infant school would lose its identity as part of a larger school; that experienced staff might be lost in the change process; that there would not be a school hall large enough for a whole school assembly and with space for parents at events; and that the school buildings were not physically joined together. Those against the proposals identified themselves as parents/carers. No member of staff objected to the proposal. It is regrettable that so few parents or carers responded, but they were given the opportunity. I am satisfied that the consultation was thorough and the views expressed at meetings and in writing were given due consideration before the local authority decided to proceed with the proposal.

Community Cohesion

18. It is intended that the new school will contribute to community cohesion through working with existing public, private and voluntary organisations. Supported through its continued partnership with the local Sure Start Children's Centre, the curriculum will follow current guidance with regards to promoting citizenship and personal, health and social education. It will encourage a positive appreciation of cultural and religious diversity and will promote racial equality and active citizenship.

Travel

19. The travel arrangements for pupils attending the new school will be the same as those currently in place for the separate schools. There are no issues concerning travel to the new school.

Other

20. I considered whether I should visit the schools and hold a meeting to hear directly the views for and against the proposal. However, in the main, the views of the schools, parents and local authority are clearly in favour and I concluded there would be little to be gained from a meeting. Any issues raised appear to have been taken into account in the decision making.

Conclusion

21. I have concluded that Nottinghamshire County Council has followed the appropriate statutory processes in publishing this proposal. In the process all the comments made during the consultation were properly responded to. The buildings are on a shared site and the proposal is to utilise the existing buildings for the new school so there are no immediate building constraints. The potential benefits of working as a single school should enable the school to make ever better provision for its pupils.

Determination

22. Under the powers conferred on me in Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue St Augustine's

Infant and Nursery School and St Augustine's Junior School, Worksop,
Nottinghamshire with effect from 31 March 2013 and establish a new community
primary school in the existing buildings, from 1 April 2013.

Dated: 31 May 2012

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: David Lennard Jones