



DETERMINATION

Case reference: STP/602

Proposals: To discontinue Anfield Infant School and Anfield Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014.

Proposer: Liverpool City Council

Date of Determination: 11 April 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 Anfield Infant School and Anfield Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014.

The referral

1. On 3 March 2014, the Pupil Place Planning and Access Manager wrote to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA) on behalf of Liverpool City Council, the local authority, (the LA), applying for a decision on its proposals to discontinue (close) Anfield Infant (the infant school) and Anfield Junior (the junior school) Schools (the schools) with effect from 31 August 2014 and establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014.

Jurisdiction

2. On 22 November 2013, the LA's Mayor approved the publication of statutory notices to discontinue the schools on 31 August 2014, and to open a new community primary school on 1 September 2014. On 9 January 2014, having carried out the appropriate consultation, the proposer formally published the proposals. The notice was in the form required by the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (the Act). I am satisfied that these proposals have been properly referred to me in accordance with Schedule 2 of 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 agenda and supporting papers for the meeting of LA held on 22 November 2013;
 - prescribed information from the proposer as set out in the relevant School Organisation Regulations;
 - Ofsted reports on both schools; and
 - maps of the area.

The Proposal

5. The proposal is to discontinue Anfield Infant School and Anfield Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014.

Benefits of the Proposals

6. The LA identifies the benefits of the proposals as follows:

Children:

7. "There would be greater continuity of education in one school from 3+ to 11 years, which would: make it easier to plan across the whole age range with additional benefits, for example, of greater continuity of curriculum methodology and policies; reduce the potential for stress / upheaval as children transfer from one school to another at the end of Year 2; create the climate for a sense of 'oneness' or 'togetherness' throughout the school community and give greater opportunities for the academic, social and moral development of older pupils using cross school projects; support more informed assessment leading to better progression, better setting of individual targets and better tracking of individual pupils."

Staff:

8. "The larger "pool" of staff should mean: that individual teachers have fewer areas of responsibility; greater professional interaction as discussions and decisions are informed by inputs from a wider group; and enhanced career prospects for staff, i.e. opportunities to work across the key stages of the curriculum."

Parents and Guardians:

9. "Continuity of education will mean that parents do not have to re-assess their choice of school or get to know another school, its staff and policies

only three or four years after their child has started school. Parents will have a longer relationship with the school and staff and will therefore be able to contribute more fully in the education partnership with the school”.

Objections:

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

Background and Consideration of Factors

11. The schools both admit three forms of entry and are located on a single site; there is a 52 full-time-equivalent place nursery. The head teacher of the junior school left in March 2012 and the school has had a number of interim head teachers. The governing bodies of both schools resolved to work towards federation with a view to full amalgamation in the long term future. In February 2013 the schools’ governing bodies consulted on a model of collaborative working “the Anfield Road Partnership”.

12. I summarise this proposed partnership below:

- The head teacher of the infant school as executive head teacher will provide overall leadership to both schools.
- The schools will work in collaboration as the Anfield Road Schools Partnership.
- Each school will continue to have its own governing body, exercising statutory functions in relation to each school.
- A strategic executive leadership team will be established, consisting of representatives of both schools to develop, promote and oversee the areas of joint working.
- Each school would continue to be funded as a separate school.
- A joint governors’ committee would be established.
- The joint governors committee and strategic executive leadership team will be responsible for the on-going development of the framework for collaboration and the development of structures which will further assist joint work.

13. The consultation received positive feedback and the schools have worked collaboratively under this arrangement since September 2013.

14. The LA’s School Organisation Policy states “where separate infant and junior schools share a site, and where numbers on roll permit, the Authority will facilitate the creation of an all through primary as and when the opportunity presents itself.”

15. As it considered that the school met the criteria and had the support of the governing bodies, the LA consulted on proposals to formalise the arrangements by discontinuing the two schools and establishing a new primary school.
16. The consultation ran from 4 September 2013 to 11 October 2013. Having considered the consultation result, on 22 November 2013, the LA's Mayor approved the publication of statutory notices to close the infant school and the junior school on 31 August 2014, and to open a new community primary school on 1 September 2014. On 9 January 2014 the LA published the statutory notice.
17. On 11 February 2014 the governing bodies of both schools met and formed a temporary governing body to oversee the amalgamation of the schools.

Standards

18. The most recent inspection in January 2013 into standards achieved at the infant school found it to be good. An inspection of the junior school in November 2012 found it to be requiring improvement.
19. In summary, the view of the LA of standards at the infant school is that attainment at key stage 1 is significantly below the national value in all subjects, reading, writing and mathematics. However, there has been improvement, for example in phonics which has risen approximately 11 per cent to 22 per cent to the current 52 per cent; strong teaching and tight focus have been the main reasons for the marked improvement. The school offers a strong experiential curriculum.
20. At the junior school attainment is very low and using the average point scores it is significantly below national values in all end of key stage tests and teacher assessments. Standards have fluctuated over the previous three years, but have always remained below national values. Progress is slow in reading and significantly below the national value. The school has focused on this area and made many improvements to reading in order to accelerate progress.
21. The LA is of the view that standards will improve at the schools because:
 - the expertise of teaching and support staff will be increased and developed by gaining practical knowledge of the "other" key stage;
 - there will be increased professional development opportunities for staff;
 - a whole school curriculum will be developed and consolidated using the successful element from both key stages; and
 - there will be smoother transition between key stages.

22. I note that the Ofsted report on the infant school commented “The strong focus on improving teaching and pupils’ achievement by a vibrant head teacher, supported by energetic senior leaders and conscientious governors, has been successful”.
23. I am satisfied that these factors suggested by the LA should lead to improvement in standards. I accept that to continue with and formalise the existing approach to joint learning under one successful head teacher and governing body should enable the staff and community to work together to raise standards.

Finance

24. There is to be a phased programme of refurbishment works at the school, assuming receipt of routine capital funding. The LA reports that this work is not essential for the amalgamation to proceed and it is largely major repairs, but there is some internal remodelling. The works programme shows roofing and heating works but also: “Creation of a larger staff room to support the amalgamation process and allow whole school staff meetings and social areas. This last item is not essential for the amalgamation to proceed but will vastly improve staff morale and support the process of the joining of the two schools.”
25. The arrangement the LA proposes is that the budget for the infant and junior schools would be calculated separately for the whole year and 5/12 would be allocated to the infant and junior schools. The remaining 7/12 of each school’s allocation would be allocated to the new school. The new school would therefore benefit from being allocated two lump sum amounts for 7/12 of the year.
26. No comment has been made that the funding may be inadequate and the LA intends to support amalgamation from its capital resources if possible. I am satisfied with these arrangements.

Need for places

27. Both schools admit three forms of entry. Children currently attending the schools will transfer to the new school. Parents will no longer have to apply for a place to transfer from key stage 1 to key stage 2. The admission arrangements will continue to be those for community primary schools in the LA. 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.

Travel and Transport

28. The proposed new school is on the site of the two existing school so no revised travel arrangements are proposed and I am satisfied that there should be no implications for transport and travel.

Special Educational Needs

29. There is no evidence or expectation that provision already provided by the schools will be altered by the proposal.

Views of Interested Parties

30. The relevant bodies of both schools are in favour of the proposals. Consultation took place between 4 September 2013 and 11 October 2013. A consultation document inviting views was distributed to all parents, staff, governors and other interested groups and meetings were held at the schools. The evidence shows that the LA consulted those parties required by the statutory guidance and within the required timescale. Meetings were held at both schools; one parent attended and was in favour of the proposals. One person, a governor responded to the consultation, and sent an email in favour of the proposals.
31. The consultation was with all relevant stakeholders and in my view appropriate. The views of all those directly involved with the schools and the wider community were invited and could be made in different ways. The leaflet provides factual information about the processes being followed and explained the purpose of the proposals.
32. Much consultation about the intent to establish a primary school had been undertaken earlier, under the schools' partnership arrangements. I take the lack of comment to mean that the parties are in favour of the proposals which formalise the existing arrangements to bring the schools together.

Conclusion

33. I have concluded that I should approve the proposal for the reasons given above. The proposals are to close the two the schools and open a new school in the same site. The potential benefits of working as an all through primary school should enable the school to make improved provision for its pupils.

Determination

34. 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 Anfield Infant School and Anfield Junior School with effect from 31 August 2014 and establish a new community primary school with effect from 1 September 2014.

Dated: 11 April 2014

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Miss Jill Pullen