

DETERMINATION

Case reference: **STP/000562**

Proposals: **To discontinue Sutton Nursery Centre and Carsic Primary School on 31 August 2012 and to establish a 3-11 Community Primary School on 1 September 2012**

Proposer: **Nottinghamshire County Council**

**Date of Adjudicator's
Determination:** **16 December 2011**

Determination

Under the powers conferred on me by Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue Sutton Nursery Centre and Carsic Primary School on 31 August 2012 and to establish a 3-11 Community Primary School on 1 September 2012.

The referral

1. On 21 October 2011 the authorised officer of the County Council referred the proposal to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for determination.

Jurisdiction

2. The proposals include the establishment of a new community school without a competition. On 29 July 2011 the Secretary of State for Education wrote to the County Council confirming his approval for the publication of notices without a competition, and pointing out that in such circumstances, the Decision Maker is the Schools Adjudicator.
3. On 7 September 2011 Nottinghamshire County Council published a notice in accordance with the provisions of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 ('the Act') for the closure of Sutton Nursery Centre and Carsic Primary School, and establishment of new primary school serving children between the ages of 3 and 11 in the premises of the closing schools.
4. The County Council received no representations on this proposal.
5. 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

6. In considering this matter I have had regard to all relevant legislation and the statutory guidance provided for Decision Makers by the Secretary of State.
7. I have considered all the papers put before me including the following:
 - Copies of the documents used by the County Council to inform interested parties of the consultation on the proposal and seeking the views of interested parties.
 - Notes of the meetings with governors, staff and others at which the proposals were discussed.
 - Reports to the County Council's Cabinet setting out the arguments for the proposals and reporting the outcomes of consultation.
 - The public notice of the proposal.
 - The detailed submissions made to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator in the prescribed format.
 - Responses to questions which I put to the relevant specialist officer of the County Council.

The Proposal

8. In support of the proposal the County Council submits the following principal points.
 - a. The creation of a single team of staff working with children between the ages of 3 and 11 and will facilitate continuity and coherence for children's learning and welfare.
 - b. A unified provision will enable the school to build sustained relationships with families, improving collaboration between the school and parents.
 - c. A single organisation will lead to more consistent expectations and standards and will facilitate the sharing of professional expertise across the curriculum and the whole age-range.
 - d. The management of resources will be more flexible and cost-effective.
9. There were no objections to the proposal.

Consideration of Factors

10. I have considered the proposal taking account the arguments made by the proposer, the records of the consultation process which led to the proposal and the guidance provided for Decision Makers by the Secretary of State.

Views of Interested Parties

11. It is clear that the County Council took a thorough and inclusive approach to informing interested parties about this proposal, seeking their comments on it at a formative stage. There was particularly careful consultative work with the staff and governors of the schools concerned. The records of the meetings demonstrate that concerns were dealt with honestly and clearly. I note that there have been no objections to the proposal.

Standards

12. I accept that the proposed reorganised provision is likely to contribute to the raising of standards, particularly through the opportunities for more sustained parental involvement and the sharing of expertise among teachers and other staff across the age-range to be served by the school. The realisation of these benefits, however, will critically depend on the quality of the leadership of the proposed new school.

Finance

13. The new school is planned to operate in the buildings of the closing school. The proposals do not require capital expenditure which cannot be met from the school's own delegated resources. The County Council and the governors of the existing schools have considered the most effective use of the premises, and I am satisfied that their proposals are consistent with the achievement of the improved standards which the change is intended to secure.
14. The proposal will lead to a modest saving in revenue costs. Initially this saving will be available for re-investment by the new school's governors. Over time this will be phased out to the benefit of the overall resources available for schools in the County.
15. I agree that the proposed organisation of provision will enable the headteacher and governors of the school to manage resources more flexibly and, therefore, more cost-effectively.

Conclusion

16. In view of the local support for the proposal and the likelihood that it will contribute to improved standards and to the more efficient use of resources, I have concluded that the proposal should be supported.

Determination

17. Under the powers conferred on me by Schedule 2 to the Education and Inspections Act 2006, I hereby approve the proposal to discontinue Sutton Nursery Centre and Carsic Primary School on 31 August 2012 and to establish a 3-11 Community Primary School on 1 September 2012.

Signed:

Schools Adjudicator: Andrew Baxter

Dated: 16 December 2011