

Amalgamation of Weybourne Infant School and William Cobbett Junior School

Public meetings were held:

Thursday 5th March at 7.00pm - Weybourne Infant School (21 attendees)

Tuesday 10th March at 3.30pm - William Cobbett Junior School (0 attendees)

Panel consisted of:

Paula Evans (South West Area Education Officer)

Kathy Beresford (South West School Commissioning Officer)

Yvonne McCleod (Chair of Governors, Weybourne Infant)

Mike Jones (Chair of Governors, William Cobbett)

Introductions were made, and an overview of the proposal was given by Paula Evans and Kathy Beresford. All information given in the overview is available in the consultation document, which can be found at <https://www.surreysays.co.uk/csf-schools-commissioning-team/weybourne-william-cobbett/>.

Record of questions from public meetings

You mentioned approval of the proposal - what level of approval is this?

The decision on this amalgamation will be made by the Cabinet Member for Schools and Learning (Linda Kemeny), who is part of Surrey County Council's Cabinet.

Is 1st September a realistic date for this to happen? What happens if things are delayed or there is pushback?

There is no question with regards to timing. The decision made in this consultation is a 'yes' or 'no' decision. If the outcome is 'yes' then the amalgamation will happen on 1st September 2015 - there will be no pushback, as this date is when everything is geared towards.

Are there any plans for how resources are going to be shared?

Surrey is currently in the process of recruiting a Headteacher. The advert is for either an executive head of both schools, or a Headteacher of an amalgamated primary school. Once the Headteacher is in place for September and a decision made as to the amalgamation, then we can start discussions as to how to share resources most effectively. There will be a working group formed of governors and the SW Area Education Officer to strategically plan for how this is to be done, but as this group has not yet been formed, there are no definitive decisions yet. Governors and the new Headteacher will want to take their time to plan this and seek advice and expertise from others who have been through the same process to ensure that everything is done as effectively and logically as possible.

What is the timescale for the Headteacher advert?

The advert closed on Friday 6th March. The appointment should be made by Easter.

Currently the schools are funded separately as two schools - how will this change?

Budgets will change slightly but it will be a gradual change. They will have a protected budget for the 1st year, which will gradually be phased out. There will not be a huge difference or reduction. Many small infant schools are struggling to be financially viable, so a primary school's budget is more viable and maintainable.

Will the governing body of the new school be larger?

Normally governing bodies are a maximum of 12 - 13 members. Governors of the existing schools will look at how they can best amalgamate the governing bodies to make the best use of their expertise and a skills audit will be undertaken to establish this. Governing body elections will take place in September - Chair and Vice Chair are elected annually, but most governors are elected for a term of 3-4 years, however, there is inevitably a higher turn over of parent governors.

What will happen to the admissions criteria of the schools?

There is the opportunity for change if this is seen to be appropriate, but this will have to go through its own consultation process. We anticipate that the criteria will largely remain the same - the published admissions numbers at reception intake will remain the same and these children will automatically progress through to the junior site without any need to make a separate application. In addition, the number of junior places will remain the same, so there will be additional intake at Year 3 above the existing infant numbers to accommodate children from the two remaining feeder schools. Sibling priority for children attending the infant site will not change as William Cobbett and Weybourne currently have a reciprocal sibling link anyway (a child with a sibling at William Cobbett would have sibling priority for reception in Weybourne currently and this will not change)

What will the children know of the new arrangements?

This will be determined and managed by the school/s. In other instances where an amalgamation has happened, schools have promoted working together, held events together before amalgamation and there have been staff that have chosen to work in a different key stage or on a different site.

How will the practicalities of amalgamation be managed - signage, school uniform, location of auxiliary staff?

This will all be determined by the new Headteacher and the working group. Parent representatives will be invited to join the governor's working group to make sure all aspects of these practicalities are taken into account. However, we cannot determine these here tonight.

How will this amalgamation affect the other two feeder schools (Badshot Lea and Folly Hill Infant Schools)?

The current admissions arrangements for William Cobbett list three feeder schools, including Weybourne. Under the current arrangements, not all feeder children are offered a place at William Cobbett because there are not enough places. As the number of places at William Cobbett will remain the same, it is not envisaged that the situation will be any different to currently.

It is worth noting that the feeder criterion is sub ranked by distance, so those students living closer to William Cobbett take priority, regardless of which of the three feeder schools they are attending. However, the geographic locations of the feeder schools to William Cobbett means that students attending Weybourne Infant typically live closer to William Cobbett than those attending Folly Hill or Badshot Lea.

Year 2 children attending feeder schools can apply for other junior schools other than William Cobbett as they do now. Equally, children in Year 2 at the amalgamated primary school are also able to apply for junior places elsewhere if they do not wish to automatically progress into the junior site (formerly William Cobbett).

How many extra houses are going to be built in this area?

Denise Le Gal (Cabinet Member for Business Services and Councillor for Farnham North) advised that there are sites identified for up to 935 dwellings, but it is unlikely that all will be approved. It is impossible to predict which of these sites will be approved and which not, but suffice to say that there will definitely be some development in the area.

The School Commissioning team obtain housing permissions and trajectories from all of the Borough and District councils and factor these into their forecasts of places required. In addition, meetings are held with head teachers at least twice a year to determine any additional need in areas as the result of housing.

Do you work cross border with Hampshire?

The School Commissioning team do work closely with Hampshire, in fact we met with them a couple of weeks ago to determine the effects of cross border school migration between the two counties.

Hampshire have commissioned the Aldershot Urban Extension, which will see about 4000 new homes built in the Aldershot area. There have been delays with this building programme, so the progress is not as quick as originally anticipated. There are 3 primary schools which are being built as part of the development which should cater for the pupil yield generated by the new houses, so there is likely to be little impact on Surrey primary schools from this development. The first primary school is set to open in 2017 with the 1st wave of houses.

What is the name of the new primary school going to be?

This has not yet been considered, and will be decided by the new Headteacher and the working group further down the line. At this point, parents should simply be considering the best way forward - it is more attractive to applicants to head up a primary school rather than an infant or junior school and currently it is significantly more difficult to recruit the calibre of Headteacher required when just advertising for an infant school.

What is the structure of teaching staff - will there be a head of each school with an overall Headteacher?

This will be decided by the new Headteacher and the governing body.

How are the schools feeling about this i.e teaching staff etc?

Weybourne interim Headteacher; the staff here are very excited at this possibility. As a small infant school it is possible to feel quite insular sometimes, so the increased opportunities for sharing good practice that this could provide are being looked forward to.

William Cobbett Headteacher: staff members are very positive about it. We do work together anyway as part of a soft federation so if this goes ahead, that will be formalised. Schools have already shared elements of good practice - this proposal will simply bring the existing links under one formal umbrella.

Have the children at the two schools currently been told about this?

Not yet - there will be programmes in place to do so if the merger goes ahead.