

The Local Authority put forward the proposal to create an all through primary from existing pairings of infant and junior schools to all six governing bodies of the affected schools. The proposal that was put to each governing body is highlighted in bold, the governing response/questions are in standard text and the Local Authority's response to the governing bodies questions are underlined in italics. Please note the governing body comments are listed in date order beginning with the comment that was most recently received.

**Bitterne Park Infant comments (in response to the proposal to close the infant and expand the junior) – 10 December**

What would the justification in the change be, since from the outset it had been stated that the Junior School would be closing?

*Following opportunities arising across the city, with other schools, we have revisited the issue of which school to close. We have had this discussion with each of the three pairings of schools. As the head of the infant is leaving and the junior has a head, we are proposing to now close the school with the head that is leaving.*

When did the possible change come about? This was only indicated to me late on Friday.

*In preparing the cabinet paper last Thursday, the change came about.*

What real differences would this make in the organisation of a new Primary School?

*There would be little difference – either way.*

Would all staff in the Infant School have their contracts 'closed' and re-written?

*No. Staff are employees of the local authority and they would remain that. We would instigate a staffing structure review across the two workforces if the primary development is agreed.*

Would the organisation of three Primary Schools impact on timelines?

*No. the timescale remains the same.*

**Bitterne Park Infant comments – (in response to the proposal to close the junior and expand the infant) 7 December**

Further to the meeting between representatives from the Local Authority, Bitterne Park Infant School and Bitterne Park Junior School on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012, and after further correspondence and discussion between members of our Governing Body, I am writing to inform you that the Governing Body of Bitterne Park Infant School agree to the Local Authority's intentions to commence a consultation on a proposal to extend the age range of Bitterne Park Infant School, from ages 4-7 to 4-11, and close Bitterne Park Junior School, thus forming an all through primary school.

As a Governing Body we have given this a great deal of thought and we understand that we will have the opportunity to communicate our position, and express any concerns or support for the proposal, during the consultation process.

**Bitterne Park Infant comments (in response to the proposal to close the junior and expand the infant) – 26 November**

- Who will be invited to the meeting? (LEA, Governors, Parents, Staff)
- What will be on the agenda? *Any meeting will have one item – the development of a primary school.*
- Would it be a forum in which questions regarding children, parental input, school organisation, staffing etc, can be put? Yes
- Regarding the logistics, will it be held jointly at one school? (There may be problems with the timings offered if this is the case, with regards to cover for children during the school day). *Yes, this can be.*
- I understand that the Junior School Governing Body are to meet this week and will formalise their response to the proposal for consultation. Since our meeting is on 11<sup>th</sup> December, would this not invalidate the date of 10<sup>th</sup> Dec? The date of 10<sup>th</sup> is set by

cabinet. The hope was that the governing body would have sufficient time between our meeting and the 10<sup>th</sup> to consider and response. It does not need a full meeting.

- What is the expected procedure after 11th Dec? Outlined below.

Step 1: I, on behalf of the LA, ask the governing bodies a question.

Step 2: the two governing bodies discuss and respond to the question posed by the LA.

Between steps 2 and 3, and before 10 Dec 2013, the Governing bodies of both schools offer a response to the question James sent through to LA.

Step 3: I submit a 'Forward Plan' report to democratic services – 10 Dec 2012.

Step 4: Democratic services publish the 'Forward Plan' report on the city council website.

Step 5: I produce a report for Cabinet on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2013.

Between steps 4 and 5 we, LA, can produce a letter setting out that we are asking cabinet to approve consultation.

Step 6: Cabinet consider the report – 29 January 2013.

Step 7: LA produce consultation documents and letters for parents.

Step 8: LA circulate consultation and letters to parents, via the school – 6 February 2013.

Step 9: LA and schools hold separate or joint meetings with parents and staff. I would suggest there are two meetings. Mtg 1: staff. Mtg 2: parents. Both should be on school site.

Step 10: 27<sup>th</sup> March LA collate the response, produce a report for cabinet with a recommendation. The LA will share with Chairs of governors the report.

Step 11: Cabinet consider the report – 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

**Bitterne Park Junior comments (in response to proposal to consult on the development of an all through primary school from the existing infant and junior)**

"The Interim Executive Board of Bitterne Park Junior are supportive of the request to undertake pre-statutory consultation on the development of a primary school."

**Oakwood Infant School (in response to proposal to consult on the development of an all through primary school from the existing infant and junior)**

"The Governing body of Oakwood Infant school do agree to support the LA on the undertaking of a consultation."

**Oakwood Junior comments (in response to the proposal to close the infant and expand the junior) – 6 December**

Is the proposal which is now going to cabinet different? In other words, is it changing from:  
"The Local Authority would like to ask both governing bodies to support the intention to commence a consultation on a proposal to extend the age range of one of the schools and to close the other school, thus forming an all through primary school."

to: "The Local Authority would like to ask both governing bodies to support the intention to commence a consultation on the development of a primary school"?

If this is the case, as the Oakwood Junior School governing body has already expressed its agreement to the development of a primary school based on a neutral starting point, do we need to restate our agreement to the new wording?

Whilst I appreciate that you are not able to comment in detail at this stage about the points I raised in my previous email, I would be interested to know whether the consultation timeframes would allow for the new school to open on 1 September 2013. Perhaps you would be able to talk in more detail about this when we meet.

*Local Authority Response:*

1. *We are asking governing bodies to agree with the Local Authority request to pursue a consultation – on the development of a primary school. The report to cabinet could state several things. The exact wording is being discussed with our solicitors. As soon as we have confirmation of the exact wording I will send this through to you. I will definitely have the wording by the time we meet. The wording options, at the moment include, but not exclusively:*
  - *Cabinet are asked to approve a pre-statutory consultation for the development of a primary school;*
  - *Cabinet are asked to approve a pre-statutory consultation for the development of a primary school, through closing one school and expanding one; or*
  - *Cabinet are asked to approve a pre-statutory consultation for the development of a primary school, through closing (a named school) school and expanding (a named school) school.*
2. *There is no need to restate your intentions. I will use your wording below, in the cabinet report.*
3. *The timetable could allow, if the consultation was approved, for the opening of a new primary by September 2013. This would require a lot of work over the summer term, running in parallel with the final statutory consultation period. As we can not guarantee the consultation will be approved, the work invested during the summer term could be deemed wasteful. But if it is accepted, it would allow for a September 2013 opening.*

#### **Oakwood Junior comments (in response to the proposal to close the infant and expand the junior) – 30 November**

The governing body of Oakwood Junior School met last night to formally consider the proposal you put to... [the headteacher and chair of governors] by telephone at the weekend.

As you know... [the headteacher and chair of governors] agreed in principle to the consultation process beginning on the basis of the question you put to us:

"The Local Authority would like to ask both governing bodies to support the intention to commence a consultation on a proposal to extend the age range of one of the schools and to close the other school, thus forming an all through primary school."

This is a neutral question which allows for an open and evidenced-based consultation about which school to close and which school to extend, and we fully support this. It has long been the view of the Oakwood Junior School governing body and leadership that the Oakwood schools should combine to form a primary school.

However, the consultation as presented at the meeting last night takes, as its starting point, the default position that the junior school will close and the infant school will remain open and extend its age range.

This is a position which the governing body of Oakwood Junior School does not, and cannot, support.

To be clear:

- The governing body fully supports the creation of a primary school on the Oakwood site
- The governing body fully supports a position where the decision about which school to close is subject to open, transparent, evidence-based consultation
- The governing body would support a position where consultation begins on the basis of the school with the headship vacancy being closed, and the school with the incumbent head remaining open and extending its age range.
- The governing body **does not** support the Local authority going to consultation with the default starting position being the closure of the junior school.

### **Tanners Brook Infant Comments (in response to the proposal to close the junior and expand the infant) – 6 December**

... [the headteacher and chair of governors] have discussed the proposal for becoming an all through Primary with TBIS and TBJs, and have received replies from the Governing Body. The governing body fully support the proposal to cabinet in becoming a primary. However, do have a few concerns, which we'd like you to note:

- 1) Funding – Would there be additional funding to support the transition process? On some occasions we can secure additional funding. *We can discuss this further when we meet. The decision would be based on need. Governors would like an early indication of what the budget would be, for 3 form entry primary school, so that a staffing structure for the new school could be drawn up. I will ask finance if they can model the future schools funding and will provide this as soon as possible.*
- 2) Size of the school – The Governing Body would request that it become a 3 form entry school. *As we discussed, a change in PAN requires a formal consultation. It will be harder to run two consultations simultaneously. I would suggest on completion of the primary development consultation, we set a timeframe for a new consultation regarding PAN.*
- 3) Support – Would SCC be able to provide support and guidance for the leadership team. *Yes, support would be readily available. I would ask the team to work with the current leadership team to identify specific support.*
- 4) Closure of TBJs – Can you please confirm in writing that Tanners Brook Juniors School will be closing, and Tanners Brook Infants School will be expanding? *Any closure will be based on the consultation being agreed. I can confirm that we are proposing to expand the Infant school and close the Junior school.*
- 5) Head – The Governing Body would like confirmation that the current Head of the Infant school would become the Head of the Primary school. Can you please confirm? *If the proposal was accepted the current head would be offered the position. The head would have a choice to accept or reject the position.*

### **Tanners Brook Junior comments (in response to the proposal to close the junior and expand the infant) – 14 December**

Firstly, whilst we accept that LA policy dictates that the issue is considered when a vacancy arises, the timing in this instance is of great concern. There was a feeling among the majority that we are being rushed into a process and seemingly being presented with a fait accompli. Not only does the school have to deal with the resignation of the Head, but we have also been set some challenging targets for improvement by OFSTED which requires urgent consideration and action. I think it is fair to say that whilst some of us agree in principle that a through Primary might improve outcomes for the children, at this stage we feel we have only been presented with arguments for delivery of the LA policy and a budget saving. There has been no undertaking to re-invest any resource savings in the school infrastructure or buildings.

It is clear that there is evidence both for and against conversion in terms of benefits to the children, but it seems that creating a new school from scratch has the most identifiable benefit for children since there seems to be some consensus that it is not the size or range of a school that improves outcomes, but the ethos of the school and the quality of teaching. We have not been told anything yet that leads us to believe that either of these factors will be improved by creating a single primary school, nor as already stated, is there any indication that money will be made available to change the physical separation of the two schools and create a cohesive environment.

There are some other unanswered questions yet:

What are our options if we do not consider that the time is right to convert - interim Head, etc.?

*Whilst the focus for the school is on improving standards the two activities can run in tandem. We are not promoting an alternative.*

Will (or must) the Infant school dissolve and re-constitute its Governing Body?

The expanding school will be asked to reconstitute and draw new membership from the Governing Body of the closing school

Are teaching staff TUPE'd to the new Primary school? What arrangements will there be for consultation with the staff (teachers, LSAs, admin and site)?

If Cabinet approves the pre-statutory consultation, mediated sessions should be set up for staff to discuss the proposal.

What are the Governor's and LA's obligations to them and for consultation with Trade Unions?

Consultation with the Trade Unions is necessary and will be managed collectively by the school Governing Body and LA.

Is there an expectation that the new school will increase in size even more than currently planned?

At present, it is planned that Tanners Brook Infant will remain as 4 form entry infant, although this will be reviewed in the New Year after year R applications have been received. If the number of places allocated is significantly below 120, it may be that the PAN of the infant school is reduced back to 90. The PAN of the new primary will be the same as the PAN of the infant at the time of implementation (September 2013).

There also seemed to be an expectation that, if she so desired, the Infant's HT would be made HT of the new primary. Whilst we have every respect for... [the headteacher of the infant school], as Governors of the Junior school we are not best placed to judge if this would be the right appointment. As a matter of good governance we must have some assurance that we can assess any applicant by means of a transparent and credible appointment process.