



Proposal to merge Bitterne CE Infant and Bitterne CE Junior schools to form an all through Primary School

Southampton City Council (the local authority) is keen to provide all-through primary schools where possible for the benefit of pupils' education. If the opportunity arises, the local authority will investigate ways to establish all-through primary schools by merging existing linked infant and junior schools. This is achieved by discontinuing one of the schools and broadening the age range of the remaining school.

The Headteacher at the Bitterne CE Infant School is leaving at the end of the academic year. Consequently, the governing bodies of Bitterne CE Infant & Bitterne CE Junior are consulting on a proposal to discontinue Bitterne CE Infant School and extend the age range of Bitterne CE Junior School, thus creating an all-through primary school.

While the term discontinue is used, this proposal is about merging and bringing together two schools.

The process

It is proposed that Bitterne CE Infant School would be discontinued, and the age range of pupils at Bitterne CE Junior School would expand from 7 - 11 year olds to 4 - 11 year olds, therefore providing for the lower age groups, who previously attended the infant school. This would result in an all-through primary school on the same overall site.

While the term discontinue is used, the only significant change to current arrangements would be that the governing body of the infant school would be dissolved at the point of closure, if the change is implemented. The junior school governing body would become the governing body for the new primary school. It may also be possible for some of the infant school's existing governors to help govern the new primary too.

If the proposals are approved, the current Headteacher of the junior school would become the Headteacher for the new primary school.

The primary school would continue to operate on the same site and in the same buildings as the existing infant and junior schools.

Why not discontinue the junior school instead of the infant or discontinue both schools and create a brand new primary school?

The local authority favours all-through primary schools, as opposed to separate infant and junior schools, as there are educational benefits and the disruption associated with pupils' transition from infant to junior school is avoided. One method for creating a new primary school is to discontinue either the infant or junior and expand the age range of the other. Two situations in particular encourage the local authority to explore the option of merging schools:

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1. When the governing bodies of co-located infant and junior schools seek support to establish a primary school; or
2. If a headship of a linked infant or junior school becomes vacant.

In this specific circumstance, the second scenario has arisen. As the infant school is due to have a Headteacher vacancy at the end of the school year, the proposal is to close the school that does not have a Headteacher, and to expand the school that has a Headteacher in post, thereby ensuring continued leadership across both schools.

Another option would be to close both schools and open a brand new primary school. This could be done by advertising for an external provider to come in and run the new primary school, thus withdrawing it from the control of the local authority. The Secretary of State's consent would need to be gained in order for this to happen. This option has been discounted because the preference is for the new school to be maintained by the local authority.

Alternatively, new legislation allows the local authority to open a new school if the new primary school is created from existing infant and junior schools. This option would involve removing both sets of Headteachers and governing bodies. This option is not being considered because the authority would like to retain some of the leadership and governance structures that are currently in place at the schools.

What are the advantages of an all-through primary school?

They include:

- Parents would no longer need to apply for a year three place at the junior school; they would simply progress from year two to year three at the beginning of the academic year;
- Coherence of curriculum from the early years foundation stage through to the end of key stage 2;
- Commonality of school policies; and
- Sharing of resources.

What would happen to staff at the schools?

The local authority is the employer of school staff and so staff of the primary school would continue to be employed by Southampton City Council.

The size of the primary school would be the same as the combined size of the current infant and junior schools (i.e. 60 children in each year group). The staffing requirements would be similar, but a restructuring exercise may need to take place in order to avoid the duplication of roles. All relevant parties, including trade unions, would be consulted about any potential staffing changes.

What will be the admissions arrangements for the primary?

Both schools have similar admissions arrangements. If there are more applications than there are places available at either school, Southampton City Council's Admissions Policies for Community Infant/Primary and Junior schools are applied. The existing Southampton City Council Admissions Policy would apply for the new primary.

What do the governing bodies of the schools think about the proposal?

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Both governing bodies 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.

Timescales

Pre-statutory consultation: 29th April 2013 – 14th June 2013

This first stage of consultation will give staff, pupils, parents and members of the community an opportunity to find out more information about the proposal and comment on it.

Statutory consultation: 9th September 2013 – 18th October 2013

If the local authority (after reviewing responses at the first stage of consultation) decides to proceed with the proposal, a formal notice would be published at both schools and in the local newspaper. A six week consultation period would follow.

Final decision: November/December 2013

It is likely a final decision on the proposal would be made by the local authority in November 2013.

Implementation: July - September 2014

This period would be used to put arrangements in place and finalise staffing structures ahead of the formal opening of the new primary school in September 2014.

How can I get more information on the proposal and have my say?

We are keen to hear your views on the proposal and welcome any comments you have at this stage. If you would like more information about the proposal before submitting your comments, please contact the council on the details below.

You can respond to the consultation by completing and returning the response form in this document or by emailing us your comments to info@bitterneceinfantschool.net

A consultation drop-in session will be held at Bitterne CE Infant School on **Thursday 16 May 2013 at 3.15pm and 7.00pm**. Parents of both schools are welcome to attend. Representatives from the schools and LA will be in attendance so please feel free to come along if you would like to ask questions or find out more information.

Consultation response form on the proposed merger of Bitterne CE Infant and Bitterne CE Junior schools, to form an all-through primary school

Your views on the proposal are important to us. Please let us know what you think by completing the form below:

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I am a (please tick the relevant box):

| | Tick | School associated with |
|------------------------------------|------|------------------------|
| Parent/carer of a school child | | |
| Parent/carer of a pre-school child | | |
| Governor | | |
| Member of staff | | |
| Local Resident | | |
| Local Councillor | | |
| Other (please specify) | | |

Do you support the proposal to create an all-through primary school by merging Bitterne CE Infant and Bitterne CE Junior schools? (Please answer yes or no)

If you would like to leave any additional comments, please use the following page.

Please return this form to: Bitterne CE Infant or Bitterne CE Junior School.
You can email your comments to info@bitterneceinfantschool.net

Responses must be submitted by 14th June 2013.

Bitterne Church of England Infant Junior School Merger Proposal Appendix 1 Primary School Development – Bitterne CE Infant and Junior Schools

Notice is given in accordance with sections 15(2) and 19(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that the Governing Bodies of Bitterne CE Infant (Voluntary Controlled) School, Peartree Avenue, Southampton, SO19 7RB and Bitterne CE Junior (Voluntary Controlled) School, Brownlow Avenue, Southampton, SO19 7BX intend to make the following discontinuance and prescribed alterations proposals:

- To discontinue Bitterne CE Infant School From 1 September 2014

All statutory consultation requirements have been complied with in relation to these proposals.

All pupils currently attending Bitterne CE Infant School will automatically transfer to Bitterne CE Primary School and all existing SEN and home to school travel arrangements will continue to apply.

- To change the age range of Bitterne CE Junior school from 7-11 year olds to 4-11 year olds from 1 September 2014, thus creating Bitterne CE Primary School
- The capacity of Bitterne CE Infant School is 180. The capacity of Bitterne CE Junior School is 223. The capacity of Bitterne CE Primary School will be 403
- The current admission number for Bitterne CE Infant & Junior Schools is 60 and the proposed admission number for Bitterne CE Primary School will be 60
- The site of the Bitterne CE Primary School will include the sites of both the current Bitterne CE Infant and Junior Schools.

These proposals are to be treated as linked proposals.

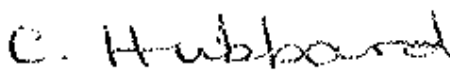
The proposals will be implemented by the Governing Bodies of the schools in consultation and co-operation with Southampton City Council.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be obtained from: Primary School Development Consultation, Infrastructure, Children's Services and Learning, Floor Four One Guildhall Square, Southampton City Council, Civic Centre, Southampton, SO14 7LY or infrastructureandcapital.projects@southampton.gov.uk. They are also available at: <http://www.bitterne-inf.southampton.sch.uk/school/>
<http://www.bitterne-jun.southampton.sch.uk/school/index.html>
<http://www.southampton.gov.uk/learning/schools/consultations/>

Within six weeks from the date of publication of these linked proposals, any person may object to or make comments on either or both of the proposals by sending them to the postal or email addresses above.

Signed: 

Claire Robinson, Chair of Governors, Bitterne CE Infant School

Signed: 

Cheryl Hubbard, Chair of Governors, Bitterne CE Junior School

Publication Date: 9 September 2013

Explanatory Notes

School Admissions arrangements: For September 2014 entry Year R and Year 3 places will be offered as if the schools are separate infant and junior schools. If the proposal is approved Southampton's Admission Policy for Community Primary Schools will apply from September 2014 onwards. No pupils will be displaced if the proposals are taken forward as pupils currently attending the schools after the implementation date will be automatically transferred to the relevant primary school under the respective linked proposals.

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SOUTHAMPTON CITY COUNCIL

PRIMARY SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT DETAILED PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO DISCONTINUANCE AND LINKED PRESCRIBED ALTERATION (CHANGE OF AGE RANGE) PROPOSALS

1. School and local education authority details

Bitterne CE Infant (Voluntary Controlled) School, Peartree Avenue, Southampton, SO19 7RB and Bitterne CE Junior (Voluntary Controlled) School, Brownlow Avenue, Southampton, SO19 7BX

2. Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation

Bitterne CE Infant School would close and Bitterne CE Junior School would change its age range from 7-11 year olds to 4-11 year olds from 1 September 2014.

3. Consultation

Consultation on the proposals was carried out with all affected parties between 29 April 2013 and 14 June 2013.

- (a) Consultees included parents and staff at both the schools included in the proposals, Southampton City Council staff, all Southampton headteachers, Church of England and Catholic Dioceses, local Councillors, local MP's, Hampshire County Council, Portsmouth City Council.
- (b) Minutes of relevant consultation meetings are attached at Appendix 1
- (c) Representations received from consultees are included at Appendix 2
- (d) All statutory requirements imposed by virtue of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and associated secondary legislation in relation to the carrying out of consultation have been met.
- (e) Appendix 3 includes copies of all consultation documents. These were sent to all parents & staff at Bitterne CE Infant & Junior and were also published on the schools' websites.

4. Objections and comments

The proposals will be published on 9 September 2013.

Within 6 weeks from the date of publication of the above proposals any person may object or make comment on the proposals by sending them to the local education authority (by 21 October 2013).

Objections or comments should be sent to Primary School Development Consultation, Infrastructure, Children's Services and Learning, Floor Four One Guildhall Square, Southampton City Council, Civic Centre, Southampton, SO14 7LY or to infrastructureandcapital.projects@southampton.gov.uk.

5. Alteration description

Bitterne CE Infant School would close (discontinue) and Bitterne CE Junior School would change its age range from 7-11 year olds to 4-11 year olds from 1 September 2014, thus forming an amalgamated all through primary school.

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6. Objectives

The objective is to create an all through primary school from linked infant and junior schools because the Local Authority and governing bodies of the schools believe that the primary model has many positives. For example, primary schools:

- Are in a stronger position to plan for continuity and progression through the key stages of learning, Early Years, Key Stage 1 and 2.
- Provide staff with greater opportunities to gain a broader and deeper understanding of the learning continuum for children from 4 to 11 years.
- Have a single, larger budget which offers the opportunity to deliver quality more efficiently, through greater economies of scale.
- Have a streamlined admissions process. Parents have to apply to secure a place in an infant school, at year R and a junior school, at year 3. Only one application is required for primary school – for admission to Year R.

7. Standards & Diversity

If implemented, the proposals have the potential to reduce progress lag at the transition stage from infant to junior school. It would also lead to a more consistent leadership structure across all year groups and a more efficient use of resources. It is hoped that these advantages would contribute to a rise in standards across both schools included in the proposals. The establishment of an all through primary school would provide children in the area with the option to apply for a nearby primary school. At present, this option isn't available for some parents/pupils.

8. Need for Places

The number of primary school places in the city will not change as a result of these proposals. The same number of places will be available at the primary schools as there are at the separate infant and junior schools. While the infant would close under this proposal, no children would be displaced. Pupils at the closing school will still attend the same school site/building only under the guise of a primary as opposed to separate infant and junior schools.

9. Impact on the Community

It is not anticipated that there will be a significant impact on the communities in which the schools are based because the schools will continue to operate on the same site and buildings, will continue to have the same number of places available and there will be no alteration to the current catchment areas of either school.

10. Travel

It is not anticipated that the proposals would have any impact on travel arrangements for any of the schools as they will continue to operate on the same sites and the Council's Home to School Transport Policy will continue to apply.

11. School capacity

Current & Proposed Capacity:

The capacity of the Bitterne CE Infant is 180. The capacity of Bitterne CE Junior is 223. The capacity of the primary would be 403.

Current & Proposed PAN's:

Bitterne CE Infant and Junior have a PAN of 60 and the PAN of the Primary would be 60.

Number of Pupils on Roll at Time of Publishing Proposals:

Bitterne CE Infant – 179
Bitterne CE Junior – 235

12. Implementation

The Proposals relate to Voluntary Controlled Schools and will be implemented by

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governing bodies of both schools in consultation and co-operation with Southampton City Council.

13. Sites

The primary school will operate out of the same buildings as the current infant and junior schools, which are located on the same site.

14. Project costs

It is not anticipated that any capital costs will be incurred as a result of these proposals. All ongoing costs for the proposed primary school will be met from within existing school delegated budgets and capital allocations.

15. Age range

The current age range of the relevant schools is set out below. The proposals will result in the changes in age range set out in section 2 above.

Bitterne CE Infant: ages 4-7

Bitterne CE Junior: ages 7-11