



Education Consultation

To Pupils, Parents/Carers, Staff and Stakeholders

4 February 2019

The Governing Bodies of St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School and St James' Church of England Junior School, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR are jointly proposing to amalgamate the two schools from 1 September 2019

The Governing Bodies of St James' C.E. (VA) Infant School and St James' C.E. (VC) Junior School, with support from Kent County Council (KCC), are consulting on a proposal to amalgamate the two schools in order to create one all-through primary school.

1. Why are we proposing to amalgamate the schools

The Governing Bodies of the St James' schools wish to consolidate their already close links with an amalgamation into one school. The schools have well established existing ties and share the same site, with the schools only 4 metres apart at the closest point. The schools share kitchen facilities and benefit from various cross-schools staff arrangements, including sharing the same Executive Headteacher.

The Governing Bodies have already written to parents asking for comments on the possible amalgamation and have responded to the queries raised. This included responding to concerns regarding the Junior school changing to VA, with governors reassuring parents that the religious character of the school will not significantly change. Governors noted that pupils already complete Years R to 2 of their schooling within the VA Infant school before moving to the VC Junior school. Admission records indicate that nearly all the pupils who attended the VA Infant school moved onto the VC Junior school.

The Governing Bodies of both schools have met with KCC and agreed that amalgamation of the two schools to create an all-through primary school would be the natural progression for the schools, which will secure benefits for staff and pupils.

This proposal is in line with Kent County Council's policy as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018-2022*, which states KCC believes that 'all-through primary schools deliver better continuity of learning as the model for primary phase education in Kent. When the opportunity arises, we will either amalgamate separate Infant and Junior schools into a single primary school or federate the schools.'

*A copy of the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2018–2022 can be viewed at:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

2. Why are we holding a consultation?

We are seeking the views of the wider community on the educational merits of the proposal via this public consultation. This is the early stage of the consultation process and no final decisions have yet been made. The consultation process is designed to establish the views of parents and carers, pupils, staff, the local community and other interested parties. As the proposed changes are “statutory proposals” KCC will be the decision maker.

3. What are the benefits of amalgamation?

There are a number of benefits when amalgamating two schools; these are primarily educational. The key benefits are set out below.

Benefits for Children

An all-through primary school that provides education for children aged 4-11 years benefits from:

- A consistent educational philosophy from when a child first enters the school until they move on to secondary education.
- A more coherent delivery of the National Curriculum from Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage Two.
- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught.
- Greater ability to safeguard the needs of all pupils.
- Seven uninterrupted years of education without a potentially unsettling transition to another school.
- Easier sharing of good practice across the whole school.

Benefits for Parents/Carers

In an all-through primary school, parents and carers are able to develop a longer-term relationship with all of those involved in the school, including the Headteacher and support staff. School policies are the same throughout the primary years. For example:

- How children with special needs are supported.
- Arrangements for open evenings and school events.
- School closure days, etc.

This means parents and carers know what to expect. Over time the staff build up a good knowledge of children and their families as they progress through the school, creating a sense of the school as a ‘family’, which in turn helps develop trust and confidence. Another benefit to parents is that there would no longer be a requirement to apply for a Junior school place for Year 3 from September 2020.

Benefits for Staff

Teaching and support staff can draw upon their current expertise, experience and specialist knowledge in order to share and develop best practice more effectively. Staff from both schools would have the development opportunity to gain experience in all phases of primary education.

4. How will the amalgamation work?

The process of amalgamation will entail changing the age range of the Infant school to be a primary school and the closure of the Junior school. The all-through primary school will provide 630 places for children aged 4 to 11 years and be based in the existing accommodation of both schools. The changes would be implemented from 1 September 2019.

5. What will the admission criteria be for the new school?

The planned admission number (PAN) at Reception age for the school will be 90, with 90 places available in all year groups. The oversubscription criteria for admission to the primary school will be the same as it is currently for the Infant school.

The following admissions arrangements would apply:

- All pupils attending St James' Infant and Junior schools as at the time of amalgamation would automatically have places in the all-through primary school from September 2019 as appropriate.
- For September 2019 admissions, parents will need to continue to apply for Reception Year and Year 3 places as usual. If the proposals proceed, parents will receive a letter confirming that their child has been admitted to the all-through primary school.
- After September 2019 pupils in Year 2 would automatically transfer to Year 3, without the need for an application.

6. What about the Governing Bodies of the existing Infant and Junior schools?

If the proposal to amalgamate the schools proceeds, the governing body of St James' Junior School will be dissolved on 31 August 2019. The Governing Body of St James' Infant School will continue to operate. However, both governing bodies believe it is important to have the right governors in place after 1 September 2019 to drive the new school forward, with experience from both existing governing bodies being included and that those governors filling elected positions (parents and staff) should be freshly elected by the new whole school community.

A new document that records the name of the School and the constitution of its governing body will be established. This document is known as an Instrument of Government.

7. Will staffing arrangements change?

No staffing changes or alterations to terms and conditions are planned as a result of these proposals. Staff of the Junior school will transfer under TUPE arrangements from being employees of the County Council to being employed by the Governing Body of the all-through primary school. There will be a separate consultation process for the staff transferring to the all-through primary school that will run concurrently to the education public consultation.

8. How will the integration of the pupils from the two schools happen?

Children attending the new school will probably notice very little difference on an everyday basis. For the majority of the time they will be in their own classroom with their friends and their teacher. At certain times the whole school will want to come together, such as celebrating important events and whole school assemblies which help create the feeling of a whole-school community.

The school uniforms are very similar and there will be no need for any change in uniform for existing pupils. New uniform will be incorporated incrementally over a period of years starting with the new year R pupils in successive years to come.

9. What are the financial Implications of amalgamation?

Included in Kent's funding formula is a lump sum for all Kent schools regardless of their size. St James' Infant and St James' Junior schools each receive lump sum funding as separate schools. Should the amalgamation proceed the all-through primary school would

eventually receive one lump sum. Funding protection will be applied for two years to enable the school to achieve the economies of scale from being one larger primary school. The governing bodies have considered this issue and are confident that the efficiencies generated by being one school mean there will be no detriment to school standards or the opportunities available to pupils.

10. The consultation process – indicative timeline

| Date | Activity |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 February 2019 to 4 March 2019 (9am) | Public Consultation Period. |
| 25 February 2019 | Public consultation meeting – 7pm in St James’ Infant School Hall |
| 4 March 2019 | The Governing Bodies of St James’ Infant and junior Schools meet separately to consider consultation outcomes and determine whether to issue a Public Notice |
| 8 March 2019 | If agreed to proceed a Public Notice will be published in a local newspaper, displayed at the schools and available on the schools’ and KCC’s websites. During this time, comments and objections can be made about the proposal. The Public Notice will run for 4 weeks. |
| 5 April (9am) 2019 | Public Notice consultation period closes. |
| 8 May 2019 | The outcome of both the public consultation and public notice consultation, together with the governing bodies views, will be reported to the Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee. |
| May 2019 | The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education considers all responses made and decides whether to confirm his decision. |
| May/June 2019 | Statutory Stakeholders have 4 weeks to appeal the decision. |
| 1 September 2019 | Subject to approval, the proposals are implemented. |

11. How can I give my views?

There are a number of ways to give us your views on this proposal:

- At the public consultation meeting held at St James’ C.E. (VA) Infant School Hall, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR on 25 February 2019, at 7pm. This meeting provides the opportunity to ask questions and complete a response form.
- By emailing: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk
- You may hand your response form in at St James’ C.E. (VA) Infant School or St James’ C.E. (VE) Junior School offices.

EDUCATION RESPONSE FORM

Proposal to Amalgamate St James' C.E. (VA) Infant School and St James' C.E. Junior School, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR from 1 September 2019

Please complete this response form by **no later than 9am on 4 March 2019** and return it by:

- handing your response form to St James' C.E. (VA) Infant School or St James' C.E. Junior School offices.
- emailing: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk

Do you agree with the proposal? Yes No Undecided

Which of the following best describes you?

Parent/Carer Member of Staff Governor Pupil Other

Which school are you involved with?

St James' Infant School St James' Junior School Both Schools Another local school Other interested party (please state interest)

COMMENTS

Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- The Governing Bodies of St James' CE (VA) Infant School, St James' CE Junior School and Kent County Council are all separate 'controllers' under the General Data Protection Regulation and ensure that any personal information is processed fairly and lawfully. Each will share your responses only for the purpose of validation, which will enable a fair and just consultation.
- Jointly the schools and KCC have completed an Equality Impact Assessment to see if the proposal could affect anyone unfairly. We welcome your views on the assumptions we have made and the conclusions we have drawn. To view the document, go to www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

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Please complete this response form by **no later than 9am on 4 March 2019**

COMMENTS

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