

# GOVERNING BODIES' PROPOSAL TO MAKE PRESCRIBED ALTERATIONS TO AMALGAMATE ST JAMES' CHURCH OF ENGLAND VOLUNTARY AIDED INFANT SCHOOL AND ST JAMES' CHURCH OF ENGLAND JUNIOR SCHOOL

## Introduction

The Governing Bodies of St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School and St James' Church of England Junior School 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 of both schools have met with Kent County Council (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.

The Governing Bodies, with support from KCC, are proposing to amalgamate the two schools in order to create one all-through 630 place primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years from 1 September 2019. 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 school will be in the existing accommodation of both schools.

## Contact Details

The proposal to make a prescribed alteration to amalgamate St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School and St James' Church of England Junior School, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR, is being published jointly by the Governing Bodies of both schools. Contact Name and Address: David Adams, Area Education Officer, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, TN24 8XU.

## School details and pupil numbers

St James' Infants is a voluntary aided Church of England infant school that was graded 'Outstanding' by Ofsted in March 2008. The school was also graded 'Outstanding' when inspected as a church school under the SIAMS (Statutory Inspection of Anglican and Methodist Schools) framework in February 2018.

St James' Junior School is a voluntary controlled Church of England junior school that was graded 'Good' by Ofsted in July 2017. The school was also graded 'Good' when inspected as a church school under the SIAMS framework in February 2018.

### **St James' Infant School:**

Pupils on Roll at St James' Infant School - Schools' Census Autumn 2018:

Year 2	Year 1	Year R Total	Total Statutory Roll	Total Roll
90	89	90	179	269

- 1.9% of the children were eligible for free school meals, which is well below the Kent and National averages of 13.4% and 13.7%\* (\*Spring census 2018) respectively.
- 2.6% of the children received SEN support which is below the Kent average of 10.1%

- The majority of the pupils speak English as their first language; however, 23.8% of the pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), which is well above the Kent average of 12.4%\* (\*Spring census 2018).

**St James’ Junior School:**

Pupils on Roll at St James’ Junior School - Schools’ Census Autumn 2018:

Year 6	Year 5	Year 4	Year 3	Total Roll
90	91	90	91	362

- 2.8% of the children were eligible for free school meals, which is well below the Kent and National averages of 13.4% and 13.7%\* (\*Spring census 2018) respectively.
- 8.3% of the children received SEN support which is slightly below the Kent average of 10.1%
- The majority of the pupils speak English as their first language; however, 28.2% of the pupils have English as an additional language (EAL), which is well above the Kent average of 12.4%\* (\*Spring census 2018).

**Description of alteration**

**Notice** is given in accordance with section 15(2) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that the Governing Body of St James' Church of England Junior School intends to discontinue St James' Church of England Junior School, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR on 31 August 2019. All pupils attending St James' Church of England Junior School at the time of the closure will be transferred to the roll of St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School. The Infants School name will be changed at this time to recognise its expanded age range that covers all primary year groups.

**Notice** is also given in accordance with Section 19(3) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 that the Governing Body of St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School intends to make the following prescribed alterations to St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School, Sandrock Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 3PR.

- To expand St James' Church of England Voluntary Aided Infant School by increasing the upper age range from 7 to 11 years on 1 September 2019.

These two proposals are related and each will only be implemented if both are approved.

**Objectives**

This proposal is in line with Kent County Council’s policy as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2019-2023\*, 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 2019–2023 can be viewed at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

### **The effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the area**

KCC does not anticipate any adverse impact on neighbouring schools or the local community from this proposal.

### **Project costs and indication of how these will be met, including how long-term value for money will be achieved:**

Capital - There is no capital expenditure associated with this proposal.

Revenue - 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.

### **Implementation and any proposed stages for implementation**

Following the end of the public notice period, the Governing Bodies will consider responses before confirming their support for the proposal. 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 on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2019. Following the Cabinet Committee, the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education will then consider all responses made and will decide whether to confirm the decision to amalgamate.

### **Travel**

There are no additional travel implications, as there will be no additional pupils as a result of this proposal.

### **Consultation**

The Governing Bodies previously wrote to parents asking for comments on the possible amalgamation and 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.

All applicable statutory requirements to consult in relation to this proposal have been complied with. A public consultation was carried out by the Governing Bodies, with support from KCC, from 4 February 2019 to 4 March 2019 (9am). A consultation document was produced together with an Equality Impact Assessment which can be obtained from KCC's website by the link listed below:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations>

There were approximately 200 consultation documents (hard copies) distributed via the school to parents, members of staff and governors. The consultation was available on the school and KCC websites and was emailed to all key stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:

- The Department for Education

- The Diocese of Rochester, Canterbury and Southwark
- Elected Members (KCC, Tunbridge Wells Borough and Parish Councils)
- Local MP
- Trade Unions
- Local Children's Centres
- Schools in Tunbridge Wells area
- Local Libraries in the Tunbridge Wells area

An opportunity to send in written responses using the response form, email and online was provided. A public consultation meeting was held on 25 February 2019 at 7pm in St James' Infant School Hall, with representatives present from the Schools, Governing Bodies, the Diocese of Rochester and KCC.

The School and KCC have received 17 responses in either hard copy or email: six from parents, seven from staff, one from an individual who is a parent and a staff member, and three from other interested parties. The responses can be broken down as follows:

<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided/ Not indicated</b>	<b>Total</b>
Parent/Carer	5	1	0	<b>6</b>
Parent and Staff Member	0	0	1	<b>1</b>
Member of Staff	7	0	0	<b>7</b>
Governor	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Pupil	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
Other Interested Party	2	1	0	<b>3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>17</b>

### **The procedure for responses: support; objections and comments**

A Public Notice was published in a local newspaper on Friday, 8 March 2019. The Notice is displayed at all main entrances to the school. The Public Notice is also available on KCC's website:

<http://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/schools/school-consultations>

Within four weeks from the date of publication, any person may send in a response supporting, objecting or commenting on the proposal to David Adams, Area Education Officer, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, TN24 8XU; or email [school.consultations@kent.gov.uk](mailto:school.consultations@kent.gov.uk).

The closing date for objections and comments is 5 April 2019.