

## **Stamford Park Infant and Junior School – Proposal to Amalgamate**

### **Consultation Comments and Responses**

A period of consultation was announced on 9 November 2020 on the proposal to amalgamate Stamford Park Infant and junior Schools by closing Stamford Park Infant School and simultaneously expanding the age range at Stamford Park Junior School from the current 7 to 11 years, to 3 to 11 years.

Information was published on Trafford Council's website which laid out the proposal and invited all interested parties to participate in shaping the proposal, by submitting their comments and ideas for consideration. Information was sent to all parents, staff members and to those who registered to receive updates about the project. The proposal was announced on the council's digital channels including their website, social media and in a press release. Online meetings for staff and union representatives were held on 11 and 12 November 2020.

The Council received 27 responses to its consultation.

- 3 consultees did not support the proposal due to concerns about the proposed leadership arrangements.
- 8 consultees were in favour of amalgamation in principle but expressed concerns about elements of the proposal presented.
- 14 consultees fully supported the proposal to amalgamate the two schools
- 2 consultees were neutral but submitted questions or comments

We responded directly to every consultee and the responses provided are detailed below.

All the comments received from consultees, along with any information sent in response by the Council, will be included in a report to Trafford's Executive for consideration in deciding whether or not to proceed to the next stage.

### **Consultees opposed to the proposal**

All 3 consultees who opposed the proposal did generally support the principles and advantages of an amalgamated education but did not feel they could support the proposal due to concerns mainly around the future leadership and governance of an amalgamated primary school given the historical poor relationship between the two schools.

#### **Comment 1**

As current Headteacher of the Infant School ([now retired](#)), I am well aware of the many advantages of amalgamation and was fully supportive of the proposed amalgamation and new build when it was first proposed by the council in January 2018.

The Headteacher and Governing body of the junior school did not recognise the many advantages of an amalgamated school and did not support this proposal. To prevent such an amalgamation they applied to become an academy, such was their opposition to amalgamation. If this amalgamation goes ahead, it will be led by a Headteacher and

governing body who have been up to this point totally against amalgamation of the two schools. Does the LA consider that an amalgamated school led by a governing body who have up to this point, been against amalgamation is the best way forward and in the best interests of both children and staff of both schools?

Teaching a 2020 curriculum in a building designed to teach a 1906 curriculum presents many challenges on a daily basis. A new purpose built school would have been wonderful not just for current children of both schools but for future generations to come and indeed the whole community.

The suitability reports for both schools clearly highlight that in several parts of both schools the buildings are such that:

"teaching methods are inhibited"

"Management or organisation of the school is adversely affected"

"Pupil/staff morale or pupil behaviour adversely affected"

The Infant school staff and governors were fully supportive of the new build recognising the huge advantages for children of both schools. The Junior school Head and Governing body did not support the new build in spite being fully aware of the information being made available to them regarding the suitability of both schools. As both buildings have now been listed, the plans for the new school are on hold. Does the LA consider it is in the best interests of the staff and pupils of both schools to be led by a governing body who did not support the offer of the new school and chose instead to remain in the current buildings?

Would the LA, on this occasion, given the widely opposing views on such crucial issues which will impact on the staff and children in both schools, consider a Governing Body made up of representatives of both schools? I strongly feel that such a Governing body will be essential to ensure that all decisions are made in the best interests of the children, and to ensure that staff in both schools are to be treated fairly.

## **Comment 2**

I am writing to express my concern over the current proposal to amalgamate SPIS and SPJS.

The recent meeting with representatives from Trafford focused entirely on the procedures and process of amalgamation and failed to address the more important implications for school leadership, staff roles and job security. Although I have always supported the principle of amalgamation as a logical joining together of two schools with the same aims and pupil base, I find it difficult to agree with this version as it appears so far from that ideal. My concerns focus in the following areas;

School leadership will be passed to a Head and Governing body who have consistently opposed the amalgamation and improvement of the two schools. The irony of this situation was further compounded by the failure of anyone from the Junior School or its Governing body to approach SPIS staff and engage in dialogue about the school's future.

The lack of information as to who will lead the school and how the Infant school will be structured within the new school set-up.

The lack of representation of the Infant school on the future Governing body. The SPIS governors have consistently supported Trafford's policy to amalgamate and also have valuable experience in Early Years and KS1 practices and issues.

The potential lack of representation of the Infant school staff on the new school SLT. The lack of balance in the new governing structure (no SPIS Governors and potentially no SPIS staff) mean that decisions can be biased towards Junior School staff and KS2 issues.

The timings of these changes in a year of such disruption and change for our children.

The lack of information on the status of academisation process

The implications for a new build (required as our own buildings were declared unfit for purpose) when the new school leadership has opposed all plans for investment.

Until I have the answers to some of these issues I do not feel I can support the process of amalgamation.

### **Comment 3**

I am writing to express my views and concerns regarding the proposal to amalgamate Stamford Park Infant and Junior Schools. I am writing this anonymously so I do not face any repercussions from the Junior Head if the amalgamation goes ahead.

I believe this is a unique case which is unlike any other local amalgamation. The two schools have a history of hostility. The Junior Head has pursued academisation and applied for Grade II listing status, to ensure she is unable to merge with our school. It is very clear the Junior Head is totally against amalgamation. As a member of staff this is incredibly worrying, there is no reassurance of what kind of leader she will be. How can the local authority have confidence she has the best interests of the Infant staff and pupils in mind?

I understand the proposal does not include an expansion project or new school building. This is deeply alarming when both school buildings were considered unfit for purpose in their suitability reports. Many of the assessments on space, impact on education and health and safety; showed we were unable to teach the curriculum (A) and pupil/staff moral or behaviour was adversely affected (D). The Junior Head refused a new, purpose-built school to improve the teaching and learning environment for staff and pupils. How can someone lead a school if their agenda is not to improve the quality of education for their pupils?

Furthermore, it is concerning how the site could be effectively managed as one school, when the only route through both schools is via the kitchen. It states in the proposal: "ongoing maintenance issues of the existing school buildings which have been a long standing concern." The adaptations needed to both schools would be an unnecessary expense and nonsensical.

I believe there are many benefits to amalgamating the two schools. I agree with all advantages stated in part 3 of the proposal, particularly 3.a. regarding the educational benefits for the children. However, I do not believe we should amalgamate in this way, at this moment in time. Positive suggestions have included:

- Discontinue both schools and open one primary school to allow equal opportunities to all members of staff
- Merge both Infant and Junior School governing bodies, reducing the risk of bias and prejudice
- Allowing members of staff from the Infant School to have job security by allowing them to remain in their area of specialism (unless they wish to move)

To ease uncertainty and anxiety, I feel it is crucial for the Junior Head and the L.A. to begin detailed communications of their plans and proposals.

I hope for the future of our pupils, this matter is resolved promptly and amicably.

### **Response to Comments 1, 2 and 3**

It may be helpful to revisit Trafford's previous proposal which was to create a new, 3 form entry school, to replace the separate Infant and Junior schools. Prior to the publication of the proposal, Stamford Park Junior School had applied to become an academy within the Hamblin Education Trust. This application process was "paused" by the Regional Schools Commissioner to allow the Council to consult on its proposal.

The proposal was to be funded from Trafford's Basic Need Allocation which is provided by the Department for Education specifically to secure additional school places. Trafford proposed a budget of £8m from its allocation for the ambitious proposal and, although the cost to provide each extra place was higher than is normally the case, it was considered that the benefits that could be achieved were well worth the additional costs.

Consultation had been undertaken and 282 comments were received:

181 consultees were in favour of amalgamation;

8 consultees were neutral but submitted questions or comments; and

93 consultees raised objections to the proposal:

- 5 of these were in favour of amalgamation but objected to a new build
- 17 opposed amalgamation
- 71 opposed building a new school building to replace the old building.

Subsequently, a private individual, not related to Stamford Park Junior School's staff or Board of Governors, made an application to Historic England and the building was awarded Grade 2 listed status on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. The listing protects Stamford Park Infant and Junior School, master's house and play sheds with surrounding walls, gates and railings. Without the capacity to create the additional places, the basic need funding could not be used. It was this decision alone that effectively halted the proposal to deliver a new school.

At the end of that same month, Stamford Park Junior School was inspected by Ofsted. Ofsted reported that "Pupils feel comfortable at school" "because they know that the staff understand them and look after them well". Pupils said, 'It's a safe place to learn and have fun.' They said that teachers are fair, want them to be successful and make lessons interesting. Ofsted found that the school's Leaders "have designed a vibrant and challenging curriculum. They find out about pupils' opinions. As far as possible, leaders respond to pupils' interests, planning enjoyable topics and subjects. Pupils achieve very well in reading, writing and mathematics. Over several years, the attainment of pupils in Year 6 has been in the top fifth of all schools nationally" and confirmed that the School continues to be good.

Ofsted did find that a minority of parents were very concerned about the ongoing uncertainty caused by the possible amalgamation or conversion to academy status.

Separate to its initial proposal, Trafford had determined a Presumption to Amalgamate Policy to support its long standing strategic aim to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where there were no contrary indicators to a proposal. That presumption is automatically triggered when the following criteria are met:

- That there is a vacancy in the headship of one, or both, of the schools;
- That the site(s) can be effectively managed as one school; and
- That the buildings can be adapted to meet the needs of an amalgamated school.

The retirement of the headteacher of the Infant School has triggered that presumption.

Stamford Park Junior School is a highly successful school and, like Ofsted, the Council has every confidence in the expertise and commitment of its Leaders and its staff. The Council believes that the amalgamation of the two schools, bringing together the undoubted expertise recognised within the Infant School, will address parents uncertainties about the future and will strengthen the school for the children and families it serves.

In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close. The Junior School will remain but with an extended age range. This means that the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain although, over a relatively short period of time, the members of the Board will be bound to change as the current terms of office end and new members are elected and appointed from the extended range of staff and parents without any partiality. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

Trafford is confident in the Boards commitment to these principles and the Head and Board of Governors have provided the following statement:

"The Head Teacher and Governors at SPJS are all fully committed to providing the best education for all children in our care, whether that has been as a Junior School or for the proposed future Primary School. We are looking forward to working with the Local Authority and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward."

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Consultees in favour of amalgamation with concerns about the future management of the amalgamated school.**

#### **Comment 4**

Thank you for the opportunity to give feedback. I support amalgamation, the logic for which is self-evident and the implementation of which should have taken place much sooner. It is

deeply disappointing and frustrating, however, that it will not take place alongside development of a new school building.

It reflects extremely poorly on Trafford Council that its prevarication and lack of resolve, and the obstructive, parochial approach of key parties at the Junior School and the individual/s behind the listing, has at best delayed and at worst squandered the opportunity to deliver a fit-for-purpose learning environment to best serve the current and future children and families of the Stamford Park community. I hope Trafford Council will reflect on how things were allowed to reach this point and will now move swiftly to revive the new school project which, to our huge regret, will almost certainly be too late for our own children.

I also hope the Council will ensure that the views and interests of the Infant School community and leadership will be properly reflected in the governance arrangements for the future of the combined school. Recent history suggests that, sadly, key parties at the Junior School cannot be relied upon to act in the best interests of the full school community.

#### **Response 4**

Thank you for your comments.

Trafford had determined a Presumption to Amalgamate Policy to support its long standing strategic aim to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where there were no contrary indicators to a proposal. That presumption is automatically triggered when the following criteria are met:

- That there is a vacancy in the headship of one, or both, of the schools;
- That the site(s) can be effectively managed as one school; and
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The retirement of the headteacher of the Infant School has now triggered that presumption.

Stamford Park Junior School is a highly successful school and the Council has every confidence in the expertise and commitment of its Leaders and its staff. The Council believes that the amalgamation of the two schools, bringing together the undoubted expertise recognised within the Infant School, will address parents uncertainties about the future and will strengthen the community of the school for the children and families it serves.

In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close, although practically, this is in name only. The Junior School will continue but with an extended age range and a new name. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams. The Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain although, over a relatively short period of time, the members of the Board will be bound to change as they are elected and appointed from the extended range of staff, and parents without any partiality, once the current terms of office come to an end. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

Trafford is confident in the Boards commitment to these principles and the Head and Board of Governors have provided the following statement:

“The Head Teacher and Governors at SPJS are all fully committed to providing the best education for all children in our care, whether that has been as a Junior School or for the proposed future Primary School. We are looking forward to working with the Local Authority and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward.”

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford’s Executive for consideration before moving onto the next stage.

### **Comment 5**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and comments regarding the proposed amalgamation of the Stamford Park Schools. I have a daughter who currently attends Stamford Park Junior School.

I fully support the amalgamation of the two Schools and believe this is necessary to best meet the educational needs of the local children. I hope this is a stepping stone in the Council’s process of delivering a new school building which is vital for the long term provision of education and I will continue to fully support the Council in this area.

I have two main concerns around the proposal to amalgamate.

#### **1. Mrs Downing as head teacher**

It is abundantly clear the Junior School currently have a head teacher who has put other interests ahead the children. Her attempts to thwart the Council’s new build proposal, provide disinformation and mislead parents is a grave concern and a reflection of her suitability for the role.

Many parents hold similar views but have been afraid to raise them for fear of any impact on their children’s education.

The disputes and current relationships between the two Schools is largely the result of the actions of the Junior School head teacher. I would therefore argue a new head teacher is also in the best interests of uniting the two Schools.

It is important that the views of both schools are considered for determining how best to operate the new one school approach.

As a consequence, I believe it is important the new School leadership team should contain staff member(s) from the Infant School.

#### **2. Governance**

I have previously raised concerns over the governance of the Junior School, most notably around conflicts of interest. These have been ignored by the head teacher and the governing body.

The recent new build and academisation proposals have shown that there are individuals who are not adequately fulfilling the role of School Governor. Not devoting time to the role because “you know I don’t get paid to do this” is no excuse. If they are unable to fulfil the role for whatever reason then they should be removed. I have heard this excuse from four different Junior School Governors. Most concerning of these was the current Chair of the Junior School Governing body who also failed to attend the two academisation consultation evenings.

Not having a clear conflicts policy and allowing the School leadership team to vote on the new build proposal when redundancies within the leadership team was cited as one of the main reasons against is an unacceptable way to govern a School.

The decisions made over the last few years are amongst the most important a School Governor could make and to have individuals in the role who act in this way is reckless failure and should not be allowed to continue.

Again the infant school views should be considered as part of the governing body of the amalgamated school.

I look forward to having one School that will work alongside the local community in the best interest of the children's education.

### **Response 5**

Thank you for your comments.

The Council shares your view of one school, working alongside the local community in the best interest of the children's education and is confident that this will be achieved under this proposal. Although it is the case that the Infant school will close, this is surely in name only with the existing infant school staff continuing to provide a solid foundation by their delivery of an outstanding education for its Foundation and Key Stage 1 children.

The Junior School will continue but with an extended age range and a new name. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams. Although the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain, over a relatively short period of time, the members of the Board will be bound to change as the existing terms of office end and new members are elected and appointed from the extended range of staff and parents without any partiality. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

Trafford is confident in the Boards commitment to these principles and the Head and Board of Governors have provided the following statement:

"The Head Teacher and Governors at SPJS are all fully committed to providing the best education for all children in our care, whether that has been as a Junior School or for the proposed future Primary School. We are looking forward to working with the Local Authority and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward."

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 6**



Whilst there are definite advantages to merging the schools in terms of economies of scale, there are very particular issues with this merger.

For many years there have been tensions between the schools, increasing when the last Infant head retired and the Governing Body rejected amalgamation. I was a governor at the time, and the reasons were partly a concern that the USP of infant focussed learning would be lost, but it was largely because the relationship between the head of the Juniors and the Infant School was not a positive one.

For many years the Junior Head had regarded the Junior School as the superior to the Infant school, and this had led to their leadership being uncooperative over such things as staff sharing information on children moving from one school to another, joint school photos, the use of the playing field, kitchen etc which, at the time the Juniors said 'belonged' to them, but it has now transpired in the plans for the new build that the playing field is not, in fact, the property of the Junior School. This overall atmosphere meant that virtually none of the Infant staff were willing to work for the Junior head, and would have resigned.

I am no longer a governor or a parent of a child at the school, but from what I understand, there is nothing to suggest this situation has improved. Indeed, we have just witnessed the Junior head preventing a new build which would have benefitted the whole community and provided a fit for purpose, modern school where there was enough room, no damp etc. Because of her actions the children of our community will be taught in costly, draughty, damp and overcrowded classrooms. In addition from a teaching and learning perspective, the Junior School is rated Good, whilst the Infant school is Outstanding, and so to put in charge the lower rated Head seems counterintuitive.

I understand that if a merger takes place the Junior head will be Head of the new school, and this is not in the best interests of the local community. Whilst on paper a merger makes sense, to put in charge the person who has blocked so many things that could have been of short and long term benefit to the children of the community is something that I cannot support.

## **Response 6**

It may be helpful to revisit Trafford's previous proposal which was to create a new, 3 form entry school, to replace the separate Infant and Junior schools. The proposal was to be funded from Trafford's Basic Need Allocation which is provided by the Department for Education specifically to secure additional school places. Trafford proposed a budget of £8m from its allocation for the ambitious proposal and, although the cost to provide each extra place was higher than is normally the case, it was considered that the benefits that could be achieved were well worth the additional costs.

Consultation had been undertaken and 282 comments were received:

181 consultees were in favour of amalgamation;

8 consultees were neutral but submitted questions or comments; and

93 consultees raised objections to the proposal:

- 5 of these were in favour of amalgamation but objected to a new build
- 17 opposed amalgamation
- 71 opposed building a new school building to replace the old building.

Subsequently, a private individual, not related to Stamford Park Junior School's staff or Board of Governors, made an application to Historic England and the building was awarded Grade 2 listed status on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020. It was this decision that halted the proposal to deliver a new school because the terms of the listing prevented the Council from the demolishing any part of the existing building, the master's house, play sheds, surrounding walls, gates and railings, all of which was fundamental to its plan to provide a new building with 140 additional places.

Separate to its amalgamation and expansion proposal, Trafford had determined a Presumption to Amalgamate Policy to support its long standing strategic aim to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where there were no contrary indicators to a proposal. That presumption is automatically triggered when the following criteria are met:

- That there is a vacancy in the headship of one, or both, of the schools;
- That the site(s) can be effectively managed as one school; and
- That the buildings can be adapted to meet the needs of an amalgamated school

The retirement of the headteacher of the Infant School has now triggered that presumption.

In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close. The Junior School will remain but with an extended age range. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams.

Stamford Park Junior School is a highly successful school and the Council has every confidence in the expertise and commitment of its Leaders and its staff. Although it is the case that the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain, over a relatively short period of time, the members of the Board will be bound to change as the current terms of office come to an end and new members are elected and appointed from the full range of staff and parents without any partiality. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

Trafford is confident in the Boards commitment to these principles and the Head and Board of Governors have provided the following statement:

"The Head Teacher and Governors at SPJS are all fully committed to providing the best education for all children in our care, whether that has been as a Junior School or for the proposed future Primary School. We are looking forward to working with the Local Authority and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward."

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Comment 7**

I'm generally in favour of schools amalgamation as such even do have 2 major concerns, which I believe needs to be addressed as part of amalgamation process:

Reducing in school funding can further impact already suffering conditions of the school building, which are already in very bad state, as well as not suitable anymore to the current school size and modern education. So it needs to be addressed prior to reducing the funding.

I'm really uncomfortable with the Junior school management which demonstrated very selfish and unprofessional behaviour during the previous consultation process. I strongly believe that they should not continue even in their current roles, so not comfortable for them to expand their control over the Infant School as well.

In my opinion new amalgamated school should be lead by the new trusted headteacher who is also familiar with education in all year groups, but not a current management of the SPJS.

## **Response 7**

Thank you for your comments

Condition funding is allocated by the Department for Education each year to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate, which includes buildings and grounds. This includes Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) and School Condition Allocation (SCA).

Individual schools receive a Devolved Formula Capital allocation comprising a lump sum of £4,000 per school plus an amount per pupil. Although amalgamating the two schools will result in an overall reduction in DFC funding of £4,000 per year, there is no change to the processes linked to SCA funding. Trafford's School Asset Management Plan information combined with Area Surveyor knowledge is used to prioritise and allocate SCA funding on an annual basis. The funding process for allocating SCA for condition improvements for school buildings will remain unchanged as a result of this proposal.

The Council would also wish to assure all consultees of its confidence in the expertise and commitment of the Leadership and staff of Stamford Park Junior School. In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close. The Junior School will remain but with an extended age range. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams. Although it is the case that the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain, over a relatively short period of time, the members of the Board will be bound to change as the current terms of office come to an end and new members are elected and appointed from the extended range of staff and parents without any partiality. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

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### **Comment 8**

I feel that the school and children would benefit from becoming one school. I as a parent of the Junior school and previously of the infants that the children would benefit greatly from becoming one whole school. At the moment it can be a big change for the year 2's moving up to year 3. It can be challenging for a parent when one side of the school is closed and the other is open and explaining to the children why they are not in school or at home with their siblings also hard to find childcare. I think that the benefits outweigh any reasons not to join them as one school. My only concern would be that I feel the current head of the juniors might not be the best choice and would like to see other people have the opportunity to apply for the position.

### **Response 8**

Thank you for your comments.

This proposal is made in accordance with Trafford's presumption to amalgamate Policy which is triggered when 3 criteria are met. These are:

- That there is a vacancy in the headship of one, or both, of the schools;
- That the site(s) can be effectively managed as one school; and
- That the buildings can be adapted to meet the needs of an amalgamated school

The retirement of the headteacher of the Infant School has created a vacancy at the School and has therefore triggered the presumption.

In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close. The Junior School will remain but with an extended age range. Since there is not a vacancy at Stamford Park Junior School there would be no new Headteacher position for people to apply for. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams.

Stamford Park Junior School is a highly successful school and the Council has every confidence in the expertise and commitment of its Leaders and its staff. Although it is the case that the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain, over a relatively short period of time, the membership of the Board is bound to change as the current terms of office come to an end and new members are elected and appointed. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

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and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward.”

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford’s Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 9**

Question: Does this mean the field opposite previously marked for the new build will be left as it is and available for games etc? I certainly hope so as the original plan involved a significant loss of green space.

Feedback: Good idea all round! Demolishing the lovely old building would have been appalling, I don't know why it was ever a plan! It deserves its listed status. Only having one Head is also good, a considerable saving in salary. It is also good for prospective parents who may previously have been put off by 2 Ofsted reports showing different standards in the 2 schools - at least now they will get a sensible overview of the whole primary education on offer.

### **Response 9**

Thank you for your comments.

This proposal does not include notice of any intention to expand, rebuild or refurbish the school building. At this point in time there are no plans to build on the school field.

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford’s Executive for consideration before the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 10**

I appreciate that this is a consultation on the merging of the two schools BUT the consultation specifically references closing the infants school.

This proposal will affect local residents on all the surrounding roads; specifically Queens Road and Cedar Road. Residents should be included in this consultation process. At present they are not referenced and residents have not been informed of the consultation.

It is no secret that the Council have already had discussions about building a new 3 storey school on the Junior Schools present playing fields. This proposal was not thought through on a number of levels and hopefully the response from Stakeholders of that proposal will result in a more considered holistic community approach going forward.

I request that the consultation at this stage includes informing local residents.

### **Response 10**

Thank you for your comments. The proposal is to amalgamate Stamford Park Infant and Junior School. Although this is to be achieved by closing Stamford Park Infant School, the closure is, practically, in name only and will not affect the Infant School building.

Nevertheless, this consultation is a public consultation open for any stakeholder to respond, including local residents. It has been promoted via email to those who registered to receive

updates about the project; via the two schools to their staff and parents; through online sessions for staff and trade unions; and through the council's digital channels including their website, social media and in a press release.

At the end of the period of consultation, all the feedback will be included in a report to the Executive Member for consideration. If they take the decision to proceed to the next stage, we will publish a statutory notice of our intention to discontinue Stamford Park Infant School and simultaneously extend the age range at Stamford Park Junior School. The statutory notice will be published in the local newspaper and in a conspicuous place outside the school premises. The publication of the notice would mark the start of a four-week representation period (also known as formal consultation) which allows people to make further comments. At the end of the representation period, all the feedback will be included in a report to Trafford Council Executive for a final decision.

### **Comment 11**

Although I am very much in support of the amalgamation of the infant and junior schools, it is extremely disappointing to find out that this is unlikely to take place alongside the development of a new school building. The current building is unfit for purpose with cramped classrooms, a leaky roof and some children being taught in the corridors.

A few key people at the junior school have acted only in their own interests and I believe, have sought to deliberately obstruct construction of a new-build, which is clearly in the best interests of current and future students, their families and the community.

The whole process so far has been dealt with unprofessionally and certainly not impartially by the Junior School and I hope the council will ensure that the views and interests of the Infants will be properly reflected in the governance arrangements for the combined school. I have served on the PSG (Parents Support Group) for the Infants and now the PTA (Junior School) and can assure you that the vast majority of parents are in favour of amalgamation with a new build but we have been backed into a corner and feel let-down and powerless to influence this process.

### **Response 11**

Thank you for your comments.

It may be helpful to revisit Trafford's previous proposal which was to create a new, 3 form entry school, to replace the separate Infant and Junior schools. The proposal was to be funded from Trafford's Basic Need Allocation which is provided by the Department for Education specifically to secure additional school places. Trafford proposed a budget of £8m from its allocation for the ambitious proposal and, although the cost to provide each extra place was higher than is normally the case, it was considered that the benefits that could be achieved were well worth the additional costs.

Subsequently, a private individual, not related to Stamford Park Junior School's staff or Board of Governors, made an application to Historic England and the building was awarded Grade 2 listed status on 7th February 2020. The listing protects Stamford Park Infant and Junior School, the master's house and play sheds with surrounding walls, gates and railings. Without the capacity to create the additional places, the basic need funding could not be used. It was this decision alone that effectively halted the proposal to deliver a new school.

Despite this decision, the Council remains committed to its long standing strategic aim to amalgamate separate infant and junior schools where there are no contrary indicators to a proposal. In the first instance it is proposed that the Infant School will close. The Junior School will remain but with an extended age range. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams. Although it is the case that the Board of Governors of the Junior School will remain, over a relatively short period of time the members of the Board will be bound to change as the current terms of office come to an end. New members will be elected and appointed from the full range of staff, parents and the Stamford Park community, without any partiality. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes.

Trafford is confident in the Boards commitment to these principles and the Head and Board of Governors have provided the following statement:

"The Head Teacher and Governors at SPJS are all fully committed to providing the best education for all children in our care, whether that has been as a Junior School or for the proposed future Primary School. We are looking forward to working with the Local Authority and staff of both schools to ensure that there is a smooth transition during the amalgamation. We are excited by the challenges ahead of us, in enabling our two schools to build on the existing excellent provision for all our children and families going forward."

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving onto the next stage in the process.

### **Consultees in favour of the proposal**

Consultees in favour of the proposal expressed their support for the advantages that would be achieved through the proposal. They considered that amalgamation would provide an opportunity to bring the two schools together into one body with consistent policies and ethos across the primary age range, with continuity and fewer transitions for children.

### **Comment 12**

I am writing to register my support for the amalgamation of Stamford Park Infants and Junior schools.

As a parent of a child in Year 2, a child in Reception and a child who will join the school in 2 years time, I feel that an amalgamated school would be a vast improvement on the current situation. Joined up communication and planning would be major benefits for us, with children who will be in both halves of the school at the same time.

As was shown in the recent new building proposal, two schools may have conflicting interests or opinions and so the decision making process for school improvements are much more difficult. A single school could proceed with improvements in a much more efficient manner.

The lack of communication between the schools is quite an embarrassment and a cause for concern. I am aware that parents have left the school and others have been put off joining, due to this lack of coordination between the two schools. A single school would be able to

give off a more confident appearance of community and would become a more attractive option for local families.

I was in favour of amalgamation when it was first proposed last year and with the departure of Mrs McDowell, I feel that it is the best route for the school to take.

### **Response 12**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Comment 13**

I fully support the proposed amalgamation, and think this would make perfect sense and make life much easier for families with children in both schools.

The consultation does not appear to mention whether the number of places will change. The original proposal was for 90 places but I can't see how that would work without the expansion of the buildings as originally planned. Some of the buildings at the infant school are in poor repair from outside, I would like to see this addressed.

### **Response 13**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's amalgamation proposal. During the consultation for the original proposal, a private individual applied to Historic England for listed building status which was granted on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020, effectively bringing a halt to that proposal and preventing the Council from accessing the related funding stream. As a result, the proposal to expand the number of school places has been withdrawn at this point.

However, condition funding is allocated by the Department for Education each year to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate, which includes buildings and grounds. This includes Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocated to individual schools and School Condition Allocation (SCA) to the local authority. Trafford's School Asset Management Plan information combined with Area Surveyor knowledge is used to prioritise and allocate SCA funding on an annual basis. The funding process for allocating SCA for condition improvements for school buildings will remain unchanged as a result of this proposal.

### **Comment 14**

I would support Amalgamation and new school building.

### **Response 14**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's amalgamation proposal. However, during the consultation for the original amalgamation and expansion proposal, a private individual applied to Historic England for listed building status which was granted on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020, effectively bringing a halt to that proposal and preventing the Council from accessing the related funding stream. As a result, the proposal to expand the number of school places has been withdrawn at this point.

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Comment 15**



I am fully supportive of the amalgamation of the two schools, I feel it will result in a more cohesive learning process for all pupils.

### **Response 15**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Comment 16**

I would be very keen to amalgamate the infant and junior schools. This would provide continuity for my children.

### **Response 16**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage.

### **Comment 17**

I firmly believe that this is great news for the children of the Stamford Park community. Having 2 schools is divisive and breeds inconsistency for children and parents. Having one clear view of a child's education from nursery through to year 6 can only be of benefit to all children, especially those who struggle with transitions.

Amalgamating the schools will also further highlight the disparities in the facilities and the dangerously poor condition of the infant building which has already been declared unfit for purpose by Andrew Western. Whilst amalgamation will potentially offer a short term relief to some of the space issues suffered by the infant school, having a focussed approach to managing the entire building will hopefully help the new head teacher to put some much needed pressure on Trafford to solve the issues which they have failed to address now for far too long.

### **Response 17**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's amalgamation proposal.

This proposal does not include any building project such as an expansion, refurbishment or new build. However, condition funding is allocated by the Department for Education each year to improve and maintain the condition of the school estate, which includes buildings and grounds. This includes Devolved Formula Capital (DFC) allocated to individual schools and School Condition Allocation (SCA) to the local authority. Trafford's School Asset Management Plan information combined with Area Surveyor knowledge is used to prioritise and allocate SCA funding on an annual basis. The funding process for allocating SCA for condition improvements for school buildings will remain unchanged as a result of this proposal.

### **Comment 18**

This is a no-brainer decision. I can't think of a single reason why the schools should continue a separate schools, and particularly as a parent who will have children at both the infant and junior schools, the amalgamation makes perfect sense.

### **Response 18**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

#### **Comment 19**

In favour of amalgamation of the two schools. It would lead to much needed improvements and consistency in education provision for our young people.

#### **Response 19**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

#### **Comment 20**

I totally support the amalgamation of the two schools. This is long overdue. The aligning of governance, workforce, communication, and estate development will all contribute to a smoother and enhanced educational journey and experience for our children.

#### **Response 20**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

#### **Comment 21**

I support the proposed amalgamation, and believe it will be the single biggest factor influencing the success of the school(s) going into the future. The amalgamation should be effected as soon as possible.

Even in previous years, it has been quite frustrating, as a parent, to experience the poor communication and lack of coordination between the Infant School and the Junior School, despite their obvious proximity. Continuing to run the schools separately will disadvantage them, and the pupils, compared to other local primary schools. A combined school would be able to manage and share its resources more effectively across all year groups.

For example - and notwithstanding the unprecedented nature of the school closure this year - the Infant School was unable to reopen to all Reception and Year 1 pupils this June due to limited space. It was understandable, as they were being asked to take back two years out of three, in addition to children of key workers. There wasn't enough space. Meanwhile, the Junior School was only required to take back one year out of four. They might disagree that they had space 'going spare' but common sense suggests an agreement could and should have been reached for the Infant School to use part of the Junior School. I don't know whether this was ever discussed, but it never happened. This meant that our children were likely falling further behind on their learning compared to those at other schools, and many parents who were struggling to combine home-working with home-schooling were unhappy, and it was a factor in some moving their children to other schools.

There are many challenges to be faced over the coming years; the decision on rebuilding or refurbishing the schools, maybe a decision on converting to an Academy as the Junior School was planning to do (and which would have scuppered any chance of the schools working

more closely together, perhaps for good). All of these can be better faced together, which is why this opportunity to amalgamate the schools MUST be taken.

### **Response 21**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 22**

Fully support proposal.

### **Response 22**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 23**

I support this proposal to amalgamate the two schools.  
My four children attended both schools (2003 to 2016) and I used to be a parent-governor. It would be far better to amalgamate the schools because:

- it gives consistency;
- It gives the children (and parents) a greater sense of community.
- Often there are problems over transition. For examples:
  - it is not automatic to move from SPIS to SPJS - causing problems;
  - SEN - sometimes transition causes problems. Sometimes evidence was difficult to obtain cross schools.
  - difficulties caused data protection.

### **Response 23**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 24**

Amalgamation is the most sensible solution to the issue in hand. It will bring about huge curriculum benefits, safeguarding developments for all students, especially vulnerable students and those with SEND, benefits for teaching staff through more joined up approaches and CPD.

Most of all, it will benefit the young people of Altrincham and Hale.

### **Response 24**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Comment 25**

I am fully in support of the proposed amalgamation. It would seem to create an opportunity to make the best use of the available space, a joined up experience for children through their primary years and more career opportunities for staff and reduce any unnecessary duplication releasing funds back to direct education spend.

### **Response 25**

Thank you for your support for Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

### **Neutral comments and questions**

#### **Comment 26**

I am really pleased that the proposal to pull down the historic school building has been removed, a decision seemingly taken by Historic England rather than Trafford council. I am quite content that if an amalgamation is in the interests of pupils (their parents) and the staff then it should be supported.

### **Response 26**

Thank you for your comments regarding Trafford's proposal. Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.

#### **Comment 27**

Please could more information be provided on how the School Governing body will be formed? Will this be a combination of the existing governing bodies or will a new governing body be formed for the school?

At the recent school rebuild consultation, there was a big difference in opinions between the junior and infant school governing bodies. How will it be ensured that the infant school governing body and teachers opinions on future expansion programmes are fairly heard in the future?

### **Response 27**

Thank you for your comments regarding Trafford's proposal. In line with the Council's Presumption to Amalgamate policy, triggered by the vacancy in the headship at the Infant School, the proposed method of amalgamation is to discontinue the Infant School and expand the age range of the Junior School. This is not a reflection or judgement of the Infant School, rather it is an objective way of bringing about the amalgamation of two equally respected teams.

As the school which remains open, Stamford Park Junior School's Board of Governors would become the Stamford Park Primary School Board of Governors with responsibility for the full school community. The Department for Education's Governance Handbook lays out the core role and functions of a governing body and summarises the legal duties on boards. Boards must be ambitious for all children and young people with a commitment to continuous school improvement that enables the best possible outcomes. The term of office for a Governor is 4 years and, as a result, the membership of the Board will be bound to change as the current terms of office end and new members are elected and appointed from the extended range of staff and parents without any partiality.

This proposal does not include any building project such as an expansion, refurbishment or new build. Any expansion or rebuild proposal in the future would be subject to its own statutory process. Any design working party would include representatives from the School

along with Council officers and designers that are experienced in providing provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. Any such proposal would also be subject to the usual town and country planning consultation processes.

Your comments, and any information provided in response, will be included in a Report to Trafford's Executive for consideration before moving on to the next stage in the process.