

Part I

**Electoral Division affected:**  
Preston Central North

**Proposal to Consult on the Closure of Deepdale Junior School and the Expansion of Deepdale Infant School by Extending the Age Range**  
(Appendices 'A' to 'D' refer)

Contact for further information:

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**Executive Summary**

Between 22 April 2014 and 9 June 2014 the authority consulted on proposals to close Deepdale Junior School, with effect from 31 December 2014, and to expand Deepdale Infant School by extending the age range from 3 – 7 years to 3 – 11 years to become a primary school with a capacity for 630 pupils, with effect from 1 January 2015. Under the statutory process, the authority is now required to consider the responses to the consultation and to decide whether to proceed to the next stage and publish Statutory Notices of the proposals. The purpose of this report is to provide the information necessary for that decision to be taken.

**Recommendation**

The Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools is recommended:

- (i) to note the consultation arrangements which were undertaken and the responses that were received in respect of the authority's proposals; and
- (ii) to approve that the authority publishes Statutory Notices of its proposals to close Deepdale Junior School, with effect from 31 December 2014 and to expand Deepdale Infant School by extending the age range from 3 – 7 years to 3 – 11 years to become a primary school with a capacity for 630 primary age pupils, with effect from 1 January 2015.

**Background and Advice**

Deepdale Infant School and Deepdale Junior School are separate establishments with separate governing bodies and separate budgets. The two schools are on adjoining sites and both have a published admission number of 90. Traditionally, the vast majority of pupils on roll at the infant school go on to attend the junior school.

In September 2013, Deepdale Junior School was inspected and was graded 4 - 'inadequate'. At that time, Deepdale Infant School had an Ofsted grade of 2 – 'good' and this was confirmed at a full Ofsted inspection in November 2013.

The local authority is under a statutory duty to secure high quality education provision in its area. Since September, local authority officers have been in discussion with the governing bodies of both schools as to a sustainable means of improving standards at the junior school. The discussions focussed on 'merging' the two schools to become a primary school, thus securing continuity of education and raising standards. In a legal sense, there are two ways of achieving this:

- To close both schools and establish a new primary school; or
- To close one school and enlarge the other school by expanding the age range.

As Deepdale Infant School is performing well, the recommendation from officers was to follow the latter process – to close Deepdale Junior School and enlarge Deepdale Infant School by expanding the age range. The local authority has since received resolutions from both Governing Bodies that they wish to pursue such proposals.

The legal process involves the consultation on, and publication of, two separate but linked notices. This effectively means that the enlargement/expansion of the age range of the infant school should not be approved unless the closure of the junior school is also approved, and vice versa.

### **The Proposed Closure of Deepdale Junior School**

There are a number of concerns in relation to Deepdale Junior School that now require the local authority to consider its future. Lancashire County Council's 'Strategy for School Places and School's Capital Investment 2014/15 to 2016/17' identifies concerns around educational and financial viability as being reasons for making a closure proposal and the school's most recent Ofsted inspection places some urgency around the consideration of the school's future.

Deepdale Junior School currently has a published admission number of 90. The capacity of the school is 347 and there are currently 338 pupils on roll.

### **Educational Standards**

At an Ofsted Inspection visit in September 2013 Deepdale Junior School received an overall effectiveness rating of 'inadequate'. There were a number of issues that led to this rating. The school was rated as 'inadequate' in terms of achievements of the pupils; quality of teaching; and leadership and management. In terms of behaviour and safety of pupils the school was considered to 'require improvement'. The inspection report stated that "Frequent staff and leadership changes have resulted in a considerable decline in the quality of education provided by the school" and the inspection report also stated that "Leaders including governors are unable to bring about the necessary improvements to teaching and achievement. They are too heavily dependent on external support".

Following the 'inadequate' Ofsted rating, in December 2013 a special measures monitoring inspection was conducted. Although it was observed that "Since the inspection the acting head teacher and her deputy have been highly effective in

stabilising the school and providing the leadership the school needed", the monitoring report went on to observe that a lack of stability in the teaching staff and leadership was a significant barrier to the school's progress.

### **Proposal to Extend the Age Range and Expand Deepdale Infant School**

After discussions with local authority officers, the Governing Body of Deepdale Infant School is proposing to extend the age range of Deepdale Infant School from 3 – 7 years to 3 – 11 years and to expand the capacity of the school from 270 primary aged pupils to 630 pupils, by utilising the current Junior School building, with effect from 1 January 2015. The proposal is being made in conjunction with the proposal made by the Governing Body of Deepdale Junior School, in order to provide alternative local provision, should the proposal to close Deepdale Junior School be approved. This is a school led proposal and the proposal has the full support of the head teacher and Governing Body.

Deepdale Infant School has a published admission number of 90. The current capacity of the school is 259 and there are currently 269 primary aged pupils on roll.

Since 2001 Deepdale Infant School has been inspected by Ofsted on 4 occasions, with the last inspection conducted in November 2013. In each of these Ofsted inspections the school has received an overall effectiveness rating of 'good', with achievement of pupils; quality of teaching; behaviour and safety of pupils; and leadership and management all receiving a 'good' rating.

### **The Consultation Process**

#### Closing a Maintained Mainstream School: Guidance and Process

The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 ("Establishment and Discontinuance Regulations") stipulate that a prescribed statutory consultation must be undertaken in order to consider the merit of a proposal.

There is a defined statutory process which must be followed before making a decision on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education. There are 5 statutory stages for a proposal as set out below:

Stage1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Consultation	Publication	Representation	Decision	Implementation
Likely to be no longer than 12 months and a minimum of 6 weeks during school term time is recommended	This requires publication of the full proposal on a website (local authority and/or school) and brief notice in an appropriate local newspaper	4 weeks	LA should determine proposals within 2 months, if longer it is referred to the schools adjudicator	No prescribed timescale but must be specified in the published notice

### The Expansion Proposal

The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013 ("Prescribed Alterations Regulations") stipulates that a prescribed statutory consultation must be undertaken in order to consider the merit of a proposal.

The decision on this proposal is reliant on the decision on the proposal to close Deepdale Junior School, as these proposals are intrinsically linked.

There is a defined statutory process which must be followed before making a decision on making significant changes to a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education. There are 4 statutory stages for a proposal to make significant alterations to a maintained school. These are shown below. Although there is no longer a prescribed 'pre-publication' consultation period for prescribed alterations, the local authority believe that it is good practice to continue to include pre-consultation in the process.

(Pre-Stage1)	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Consultation	Publication	Representation	Decision	Implementation
Not prescribed	This requires publication of the full proposal on a website (local authority and/or school) and brief notice in an appropriate local newspaper	4 weeks	LA should determine proposals within 2 months, if longer it is referred to the schools adjudicator	No prescribed timescale but must be specified in the published notice

The following are the statutory requirements around consultation as set out within DfE guidance 'Expanding a Maintained Mainstream School by Enlargement or Adding a Sixth Form' and evidence of the authority's compliance with each requirement:

(Para 1.2) Proposers should '(a) allow adequate time; (b) provide sufficient information for those being consulted to form a considered view on the matters on which they are being consulted; (c) make clear how their views can be made known; and (d) be able to demonstrate how they have taken into account the views expressed during consultation in reaching any subsequent decision as to the publication of proposals.'

Arrangements: (a) a consultation period was held from 22 April 2014 to 9 June 2014; (b) the consultation document (Appendix A) provided full details of the proposal and a consultation event was held at the junior school on 6 May 2014 and at the infant school on 7 May 2014 for parents, staff, governors and other interested parties; (c) Pages 12 & 15 of the consultation document (Appendix A) provided information on how to make views known (d) this report provides an analysis of views expressed which will be taken into account prior to making a decision as to the publication of proposals. All written comments received will also be available in the Member's Retiring Room for further scrutiny. The notes taken at the consultation events are provided in Appendix C.

(Para 1.3) provides a statutory list of those to be consulted

Arrangements: all on the list were consulted (Appendix 'A' refers.)

(Para 1.4) refers to the duty to consult pupils on any proposed changes to local school provision that may affect them.

Arrangements: Pupils' views were invited through the consultation arrangements and the questionnaire that consultation respondents were invited to complete. In addition, the children at the junior and infant schools were consulted via pupil questionnaires, facilitated by the school. The summary of these responses is given below.

(Para 1.5) It is for proposers to decide what their consultation arrangements will be and, for example, whether to hold public meetings. It is recommended that Stage 1 consultation should be for at least 4 weeks during term time.

Arrangements: Consultation documents were provided (Appendix A) which were widely circulated. Furthermore, a consultation event was held at the junior school on 6 May 2014 and at the infant school on 7 May 2014. Consultation was held for 4 weeks, which were during term time. A summary of the consultation responses is given at Appendix B. Notes from the consultation event can be found in Appendix C.

(Para 1.6) Refers to the possibility of considering new options if they arise during the consultation.

Arrangements: The consultation response section below reports the views which were expressed. No new options arose as a result of the consultation process.

For proposals to close a maintained school and to permanently expand a maintained school there is a statutory process which the authority, as the proposer, must follow.

The outline process for the consultation is set out below:

Action	Timescale
Stage 1 consultation on the proposal to enlarge the Primary School.	22 April 2014 to 9 June 2014
Report to the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools on the responses to the consultation and permission to publish notices	<b>Current stage</b>
Publish Statutory Notices	July 2014
Representation period	July - August 2014
Decision by the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Schools	October 2014
Implementation	31 December 2014 – Closure of junior school 1 January 2015 – Expansion of infant school

## Consultation Responses

The consultation document asked whether people supported the closure of Deepdale Junior School, with effect from 31 December 2014 and the expansion of Deepdale Infant School by extending the age range from 3 – 7 years to 3 – 11 years to become a primary school with a capacity for 630 primary aged pupils, with effect from 1 January 2015.

All responses received, together with the notes of the public consultation event, have been placed on a file available in the Members' Retiring Room.

A total of 50 responses were received, all via completion (either manually or on-line) of the questionnaire provided at the back of the consultation booklet.

Of the 50 questionnaire responses, the following information was obtained with regard to the view as to whether or not there was support for the joint proposals:-

<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Totals</b>
37	5	4	3	1	50

Of the 50 respondents, 45 (90%) of the respondents gave a reason for their response and 5 others (10%) gave no reason.

The responses came from the following categories of people with an interest in the school:

29 (58%) from parents/carers of pupils currently attending Deepdale Junior School/Deepdale Infant School;  
5 (10%) from members of staff at Deepdale Junior School/Deepdale Infant School;  
4 (8%) from governors of Deepdale Junior School/Deepdale Infant School;  
5 (10%) from a parent/carer of a pupil wanting to attend the Deepdale Primary School in the future; and  
7 (14%) from other interested members of the local community.

## Support

From the questionnaires, the following comments were received:-

Of the 42 respondents (84%) that agreed or strongly agreed with the proposals, two did not provide a reason. Of those that gave a reason:

- 13 stated that the proposals would result in increased continuity and consistency;
- 9 stated that a change of leadership will improve standards;
- 6 stated that the new operation arrangements will improve standards;
- 2 stated that a complete overhaul at junior level was required and this was the best way of doing this;
- 6 stated that a united school will provide a stronger sense of community, benefiting both the pupils and the community;
- 4 stated it was a good idea; the only viable option or a logical step.

## **Opposition**

3 respondents (6%) stated that they did not agree with the proposals and 1(2%) respondent stated that they strongly disagreed. Of the three responses that disagreed with the proposal two were from parents who had children at the junior school and one was from a parent who had children at both the infant and junior schools. The respondent who strongly disagreed stated that they were a parent of a pupil at the infant/junior school but did not specify which. The person who strongly disagreed did not provide a reason. Reasons provided by the respondents who did not agree with the proposals are provided below:

- Concern over the size of the school following the changes;
- The junior school has not been given time to improve;
- Would prefer improvements within the junior school;
- Happy with performance at the junior school.

## **Response**

### Size of School

The head teacher and governors are committed to ensuring that by expanding the current infant school the increase in the number of pupils does not make the school feel 'too large' for pupils. The size of individual classes will not increase as a result of the proposals. The leadership team at the infant school are already considering options to ensure that the current ethos of the school can be maintained following expansion.

### Happy with progress at junior school and school not had time to improve

At an Ofsted Inspection visit in September 2013 Deepdale Junior School received an overall effectiveness rating of 'inadequate'. There were a number of issues that led to this rating. The school was rated as 'inadequate' in terms of achievements of the pupils; quality of teaching; and leadership and management.

In order to ensure continuity of education and raise standards the governing body entered into discussions with Lancashire County Council about the possibility of merging the two schools. The Department for Education requires local authorities to take swift and incisive action around schools that are a cause for concern and an Ofsted judgement of 'inadequate' places Deepdale Junior School in this category.

## **Respondents Neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the Proposal**

Of the four respondents (8%) that neither agreed nor disagreed, one potential future parent at the school provided no reason for their response. The other three responses were from parents who currently have pupils at the school. One stated that not enough information is available; one stated that standards needed to be improved, but provided no detail of how this should be achieved and one response stated that increased continuity and consistency was required.

## **Consultation events**

As part of the consultation an appointment led consultation event was held at Deepdale Junior School on 6 May 2014 and at Deepdale Infant School on 7 May 2014.

### Deepdale Junior School Consultation Event

In total there were 7 appointments at the event. The appointments were attended by the following:

4 x Parent with pupil at the junior school  
2 x Parent of pupils at infant and junior school  
Parent of pupil at junior school and school governor

6 of the 7 attendees stated that they agreed with the proposals. 1 parent stated that they were undecided at this time.

The stability of the junior school was a concern raised by all attendees, with particular reference made to leadership and staffing and also standards. The parent who was undecided stated that she was not sure where merging the schools would address these issues. She expressed concern that there was a risk of a negative impact on the standards of the expanded school.

Each of the appointments raised questions about how the larger school would perform in terms of leadership and management and what will be put in place to ensure higher standards are maintained.

### Response

- The parents were advised that a leadership review would be conducted by the head teacher and Governing Body to ensure the good performance of the infant school is maintained throughout the expanded school. This activity would be supported by Lancashire County Council. Furthermore, at present the junior school is limited in terms of recruitment opportunities. If the infant school were expanded it would have greater opportunity to develop the staffing structure as required.

### Deepdale Infant School Consultation Event

In total there were 5 appointments at the event. The appointments were attended by the following:

2 x Parent with pupil at the infant school  
Parent of pupil at infant school and school governor  
1 County Councillor  
1 Preston City Council Councillor

2 attendees (one parent and one county councillor) stated that they strongly agreed with the proposals and 1 parent/governor stated that they agreed with the proposals. 1 parent stated that she was undecided at this time and the councillor from Preston City Council did not offer a preference.



The parents who were undecided about the proposals raised the following concerns:

- The standards at the infant school could be brought down by the performance issues at the junior school;
- An expanded primary school would be too big to be run by just one person.

All of the attendees enquired about how the current good standards at the infant school would be maintained. Four attendees stated that they felt that more information was required, specifically in relation to leadership and management. Furthermore, the county councillor who attended the consultation raised the issue of holding a public meeting to discuss the proposals and specific issues of concern. He suggested that this would improve engagement with interested parties. This view was shared by the Preston City Council councillor and by one parent/governor.

### Response

- From the outset the Governing Body and head teacher from the infant school have been clear that they would only proceed with the proposals if they were confident that the existing standards and good performance could be maintained. It will be the responsibility of the Governing Body and head teacher, supported by Lancashire County Council, to ensure that the leadership put in place can achieve this.
- The head teacher and Governing Body are confident that the expanded school would not be too big to be run by one person. There are other 3 form entry schools within Lancashire, which are performing well. The key issue is to ensure an appropriate leadership structure is put in place.
- Lancashire County Council identified from the consultation event that interested parties felt that more information was needed about the leadership and management of the expanded school, in terms of how it would work. A public meeting had been suggested and this approach was discussed with the head teacher. The head teacher felt that individual face to face appointments would be more appropriate to identify and discuss specific queries or concerns. Therefore, all parents at the infant and junior school were offered appointments with the infant school head teacher, together with the school adviser, on 3 June 2014. The head teacher surgery was well attended with 22 appointments. The conclusions of the school adviser indicate that parents did have concerns about leadership and maintaining performance. However, there was also a strong view that the infant and junior school were an integral part of the local community and should be supported to address performance issues in the junior school. This was a particular concern for parents of infant pupils who would soon be moving into key stage 2.

A comprehensive list of comments made at both consultation events can be found in Appendix 'C'. A summary of the discussions from the head teacher surgery can be found in Appendix 'D'.

### **The Children's Consultation**

In order to obtain the views of children at the school, a children's consultation was carried out with pupils from both the infant and junior schools. At the infant school a questionnaire was provided to every pupil. 53 pupils returned completed questionnaires. All 315 pupils were consulted at the junior school. At the infant school 50 (94.3%) pupils thought the proposal was a good idea and 3 (5.7%) pupils

disagreed. At the junior school 274 (86.9%) pupils supported the proposals and 41 (13.1%) pupils did not support the proposals. Overall, there was strong support for the proposals, with 87% of all pupils consulted expressing support. Of those that were not in support, issues raised largely related to concerns about being part of a larger school.

The full children's consultation response is provided in the Member's Retiring room for inspection.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The local authority is under a statutory duty to secure high quality education provision in its area. There are a number of concerns in relation to Deepdale Junior School that now require the local authority to consider its future. The objective is to establish a sustainable means of providing continuity of education and improve standards.

The findings of the consultation indicate that there is strong support for the linked proposals. The consultation process did highlight some concerns about the expansion of Deepdale Infant School, mainly relating to ensuring that the proposals did not result in a negative impact for infant pupils and the size of the newly phased primary school. Parents from both schools have been offered the opportunity to discuss any concerns directly with the head teacher and school adviser.

Having considered the responses received as part of the consultation, it is recommended that a Statutory Notice is published to propose the closure of Deepdale Junior School with effect from 31 December 2014; and that a Statutory Notice is published to propose that Deepdale Infant School by extending the age range from 3 – 7 years to 3 – 11 years to become a primary school with a capacity for 630 pupils, with effect from 1 January 2015.

## **Implications**

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

### **Risk management**

The Authority has a statutory duty to secure high quality school places for its residents. A failure to address the future educational viability of Deepdale Junior School runs the risk of the Authority being seen by the Department for Education and Ofsted to be failing in its statutory responsibilities. Alternative school places can be provided at the significantly enlarged and rephased Deepdale Infant School for children affected by the proposed closure.

There are implications for staff employed in Deepdale Junior School but the Authority has experience in staff redeployment and retraining and a good record in avoiding compulsory redundancies.

### **Legal and Financial Implications**

The legal process involves the consultation on, and publication of, two separate but linked notices. This effectively means that the enlargement/expansion of the age range of the infant school should not be approved unless the closure of the junior school is also approved, and vice versa.

When a school closes any balance (whether surplus or deficit) reverts to the Authority. The Authority will continue to receive Dedicated School Grant funding for the pupils if they were to relocate to Deepdale Infant School. Deepdale Junior School will receive 9/12ths of its budget up to the closure date. The Authority has an agreed growth fund criteria which determines that Deepdale Infant School will receive funding for each pupil admitted into any year group from the date deemed by the authority to be the date of transfer of all pupils due to the closure of a school or academy to the end of the financial year at the equivalent rate per pupil as applied within the primary and secondary growth fund.

There will be requirement for some remodelling of the accommodation to bring the adjoining sites together and establish the newly phased primary school. The County Council is confident that funding is available to address these costs.

### **Land and Property**

The infant and junior school currently operate on adjoining sites. Some remodelling will be required to facilitate the smooth operation of the primary school.

### **List of Background Papers**

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
All consultation responses for the proposals to Deepdale Junior School/Deepdale Infant School	22 April 2014 to 9 June 2014	Provision Planning Team, Directorate for Children and Young People, 01772 531774

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A