

PROTOCOL

on the creation of an all through primary school

1. Introduction

1.1. The Council produced a Primary Strategy for Change for the DCSF in June 2008. This document reflected Brighton and Hove City Council's policy of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate. The Council believes the advantages of the creation of all through primary schools are as follows:

- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development under a single headteacher and teaching staff. It is very important to ensure continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning.
- The school could offer a greater range of teaching skills, including the opportunity to appoint curriculum co-ordinators with the time to oversee the effective teaching of individual subjects across the whole 4-11 age range.
- Greater flexibility that a 4-11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively.
- Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children's nursery and primary education.
- Practical advantages to parents e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to homelinks, uniform, codes of conduct etc.
- Transfer to a different school environment after three years or less of schooling might be seen as an unnecessary disruption to pupil's sense of security and well being. A positive feature of 4-11 schools is the social interaction between younger and older pupils

1.2. Given the reasons for creating all through primary schools the intention of this guidance is:

- to recognise the sensitive and difficult nature of managing such a significant change; and
- to ensure that there is a clearly laid out process to be followed.

1.3 It should be noted that this protocol would affect a limited number of schools in Brighton & Hove. It has been discussed with a group of headteachers who have either been through a merger/amalgamation, or know that their school could be part of a future proposal to create an all through primary school. The protocol has also been discussed with the School Workforce Unions on 11 July and with the Headteachers Steering Group on 7 July. The protocol will be used for the development of any future all through primary school.

1.4. The protocol is in two parts. The first part is intended to aid understanding and the second to outline the process to be followed.

2. Part 1 – Developing Understanding

2.1. Process

The creation of an all through primary school from existing Infant and Junior schools can be achieved by:

- a) closing both schools and opening a new school
- b) closing one school and extending the age range of the other

2.2. Basis for creating an all through primary school

The main reason for creating an all through primary school must be to provide a better school. The triggers for consideration include:

i) A Headteacher leaving

In the case of separate infant and junior schools serving the same area, if one Headteacher leaves then the school is automatically considered as a possible all through primary school.

ii) Wider plans for School Organisation including the use of school accommodation for community services

Any proposal must take account of the wider planning implications for local schools, including any plans for wider community use of the school site. The creation of an all through primary school is a formal process subject to approval by the council, the decision can be referred to the Schools' Adjudicator. This process can prolong what is already a difficult change and result in a temporary 'blight' on the schools when parents/guardians select schools. It is therefore important that clear timescales are provided to try to avoid a 'blight' on the schools.

iii) Poor results/transition issues

Where school results are below targets or there are issues around transition between key stages, these would be contributing factors in considering creating an all through primary school.

3. Part 2: Protocol

3.1. Communication

The numbered points represent the order in which the procedure would take place.

i) Discussion of the future by LA officers following notification of a headteacher leaving and/or serious decline in schools numbers and/or a pattern of poor results.

ii) Informal discussion with the director, Assistant Director, and Lead Member for CYPT.

iii) Preparation of a report to CYPT Committee indicating that an all through primary school is being considered; inform and discuss with the headteacher and governors before CYPT Committee and the proposal becoming public knowledge.

iv) Consultation to be held with the workforce unions which may need to be confidential.

v) Discussion to be held with the Director/Assistant Director and the staff of the schools at a special staff meeting. Staff to be told of the proposal and the briefing sessions (see point vii below).

vi) Headteachers of the schools affected to be provided with support from the press office and assistance with dealing with the media.

vii) Briefing sessions to be provided for staff affected by the proposal. Staff must be absolutely clear when they are attending to hear about the steps in the process (information and reassurance) and to have their views listened to and taken into account (consultation). Whole staff sessions to be held at each school separately at the beginning of the process. Smaller group meetings can then be arranged for staff from each school throughout the process. Prior to the briefing sessions staff who are members of the school workforce unions will want the opportunity to meet with their representatives. Provision should be made when scheduling the briefing sessions for these meetings to take place.

viii) Clear schedule and timescale prepared which is distributed to staff at the beginning of the process. The schedule will include the dates of meetings and the minimum time which will be allowed between proposals and decision. The schedule should be agreed with workforce union representatives. The names of key LA officers to whom queries can be directed will be included.

ix) A single named CYPT Officer will be appointed as the main point of contact.

x) Public consultation and information sessions to be provided for parents and the local community supported by the press office.

3.3. **Personnel including staffing**

i) A copy of the Staffing Protocol on the Creation of all through primary schools was updated in July 2008 is appended to this document (Appendix 1). It is strongly recommended that governing bodies follow the principles in the Staffing protocol. When the creation of an all through primary school is approved the protocol will be reviewed/customised to the circumstances of the relevant school/s by the LA and the staff side and will be agreed by the governing body. The protocol enables

permanent staff (teachers and support staff, full time and part time) to be assimilated into posts in the new structure. If any member of staff is re-deployed to a post at a lower salary level, any protection of salary will be in accordance with their national/local terms and conditions of employment. Under the School Staffing (England) Regulations 2003 the requirement to advertise headteacher and deputy headteacher posts at schools subject to a reorganisation has been relaxed. Therefore if the governing body considers that the remaining headteacher/deputy headteacher is suitably qualified and experienced then they may be appointed to the new post/s in the new school.

ii) In the case of extending the age range of a school the headteacher continues as head of the new school (subject to 3.3i above)

iii) Particularly vulnerable staff such as those in tied accommodation should be provided with additional support.

3.4. **Governors**

i) If the all through primary school proposal is agreed for both schools to close and a new school to be created, a shadow governing body would be appointed for the new school. The shadow governing body should include membership of the outgoing governing bodies where possible to ensure continuity and equality of representatives of governors from existing schools.

ii) There should be regular meetings between the governing bodies (existing and shadow) to ensure that there is adequate communications and a clear understanding of roles. A written protocol will be drawn up clarifying the respective roles of the local authority, the shadow and existing governing body and the headteacher setting out who is responsible for what in the process, including the election of a chair.

iii) The LA staffing protocol should be adapted and 'owned' by the shadow governing body.

iv) If the all through primary school proposal is agreed for one school to be expanded, legally the governing body of the expanded school will be the governing body of the new school. The LA expects both governing bodies to work together to create a new Governing Body for the new school which attempts to achieve an equal representation.

v) The LA also expects the existing governing bodies to work together to agree with the headteacher the initial staff structure for the new school which should include all staff from the closing school. The new school governing body is expected to adopt this structure for the first year at least.

vi) Guidance and support will be arranged for governors involved in sensitive issues.

3.5. Forward Planning

- i) The appointment of a headteacher should be made or agreed as soon as possible and ideally two terms, but at least one term, in advance of the commencement of the new school but this would be subject to budgetary consideration.
- ii) Funding for building works and completion of the building works should be substantially completed prior to the all through primary school opening whenever possible.
- iii) The equipping of the new school and moving of furniture should be carefully planned in advance. There should be limited school closure for both the physical movement and preparation of the environment for operation as a safe and effective school. Appropriate resources will need to be allocated for the physical movement.
- iv) The provision of ICT should be considered at the earliest stage in the planning process.

