

<b>Title of Report:</b>	<b>Removal of Surplus Primary School Places</b>	<b>Item 10</b>
<b>Report to be considered by:</b>	<b>Executive</b>	
<b>Forward Plan Ref:</b>	EX0789	

<b>Corporate Plan Priority:</b>	<b>CP4: Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across all our schools.</b>
<p>The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Corporate Plan priority by:  <i>Removing surplus places while retaining schools within the heart of their communities. In so doing, improving accommodation to enhance learning environments and developing extended/community schools. Any resources released will be invested in raising achievement across schools in West Berkshire.</i></p>	

**Purpose of Report:** To seek Executive approval to formally consult on three amalgamations of paired infant and junior schools.

**Recommended Action:** To approve formal consultation on the amalgamation of:  
 (1) Dunston Park Infant School and St Mary's CE(Controlled) Junior School, Thatcham  
 (2) Winchcombe Infant School and Winchcombe Junior School  
 (3) Calcot Infant School and Calcot Junior School

**Reason for decision to be taken:** Authorities are required by the DfES/Audit Commission to keep under review surplus school places and reduce these to between 5% and 10%. By implementing the amalgamations proposed the surplus places removed would significantly contribute to this target. By formally consulting, officers will be able to bring to a forthcoming Executive a balanced view of whether to proceed with the proposals or not.

**List of other options considered:** None

**Key background documentation:**

- Education Act 2002
- DfES Surplus Places Return 2003
- Draft School Organisation Plan 2003- 2008

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## **Implications**

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**Policy:** The consultation itself has no policy implications, though a decision to proceed will involve a change to the existing policy about closing schools.

**Financial:** The consultation process has no significant financial implications

**Personnel:** School staff and trade unions will be key consultees

## Supporting Information

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### 1. Background

- 1.1 Audit Commission guidance indicates that surplus school places of between 5% and 10% is the appropriate level to allow for efficient use of resources, whilst also meeting some level of parental preference. The level of primary surplus places stood at 10.4% across the whole of West Berkshire in May 2003.
- 1.2 Given the initial brief to look at removing surplus places within West Berkshire, a list of criteria was drawn up for consideration. These criteria included: level of surplus places; unit cost; pupil mobility and turbulence; trend in number on roll; rural deprivation and community impact.
- 1.3 Based on the research carried out into these areas, a range of options has been identified for further consideration. These options are outlined below, by School Planning Areas.
- 1.4 All of the figures used in the body of the report are taken from West Berkshire's May 2003 Surplus Place return to the DfES

### 2. Eastern Area

- 2.1 **Option 1:** The merger of Calcot Infant and Junior Schools into one primary school of 2fe (forms of entry).
- 2.2 Calcot Infant School shows 62 surplus places, equivalent to 24.5% of its capacity, and has had falling numbers on roll in recent years. This downward trend is forecast to continue.
- 2.3 The Junior School shows 57 surplus places, 17% of its capacity. Like the Infant School, it too has seen a drop in pupil numbers which, given the downward trend at the Infant School, seems certain to continue.
- 2.4 There would be no transport issues associated with this option, as the two schools share the same site and catchment area.
- 2.5 There would need to be some capital expenditure on whichever of the two sites any new school was to be based.

### 3. Thatcham Area

- 3.1 **Option 2:** The merger of Dunston Park Infant School and St Mary's C. E. (Controlled) Junior School into a single 1fe primary school.
- 3.2 Dunston Park Infants shows 58 surplus places, equivalent to 32.3% of its capacity. The third highest level of surplus within West Berkshire. This is exacerbated by the downward trend in numbers attending the school, a trend that is forecast to continue despite the increased levels of housing within Thatcham.
- 3.3 St Mary's Junior School, even following the removal of two classrooms from its capacity, shows 32 surplus places, 14.6% of its capacity. As with the Infants, this is exacerbated by the downward trend in pupil numbers. Clearly, given the numbers at the Infant School, this trend is forecast to continue.
- 3.4 There would need to be some capital expenditure on whichever of the two sites any new school was to be based.

3.5 Given the urban nature of the two schools, and the relative distance between them, it is unlikely that there would be any transport implications associated with this option.

#### 4. Newbury Area

4.1 **Option 3:** Merger of Winchcombe Nursery and Infant, and Winchcombe Junior Schools into a 1.5fe primary school.

4.2 Winchcombe Nursery and Infant School shows 47 surplus places, equivalent to 26.1% of its capacity, and has had falling numbers on roll in recent years. This downward trend is likely to continue.

4.3 The Junior School shows 38 surplus places, 14.9% of its capacity. Like the Infant School, it too has seen a drop in pupil numbers which, given the downward trend at the Infant School, is set to continue.

4.4 There would be no transport issues associated with this option, as the two schools share the same site and catchment area.

4.5 There would need to be some capital expenditure on whichever of the two sites any new school was to be based.

#### 5. Factors to Consider

5.1 If amalgamations are subsequently approved each pair of schools would need to be closed and a new school opened.

5.2 Summary of potential surplus places removed

Dunston Park/St Mary's CE	180
Winchcombe Infant/Junior	102
Calcot Infant/Junior	144
Total	422

#### Appendices

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Appendix 10 - Table of Primary Surplus Places

## Consultation Responses

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Pre formal consultation

**Local Stakeholders:**

Oxford CE Diocese  
Dunston Park Infant School  
St Mary's CE (Controlled) Junior School  
Winchcombe Infant School  
Winchcombe Junior School  
Calcot Infant School  
Calcot Junior School  
Governors

**Officers Consulted:**

Richard Hubbard  
Andy Tubbs  
SIA Team  
David Appleton  
Andy Couldrick  
Pam Robinson

**Trade Union:**

All relevant unions consulted.