

Title of Report:	Proposed School Mergers – Calcot	Item 7
Report to be considered by:	Executive	
Forward Plan Ref:	EX0858	

Corporate Plan Priority:	S4 – Maintaining high standards of educational achievement across all our schools
The proposals contained in this report will help to achieve the above Corporate Plan priority by: Maximising the use of available resources by reducing surplus places.	

Purpose of Report: To seek Members approval for the recommended action.

Recommended Action: That the Executive agree to publish notices:

To merge Calcot Infant and Nursery School with Calcot Junior School to form a single all through (3-11yr) primary school on the same site and serving the current catchment area, opening in January 2006

Reason for decision to be taken: To reduce the level of surplus places in schools in West Berkshire.

List of other options considered: Maintaining schools as they are

Key background documentation:

- None

Portfolio Member:	Councillor Mollie Lock
Tel. No.:	0118 9332858
E-mail Address:	Mlock@westberks.gov.uk

Contact Officer Details

Name:	John Powell
Job Title:	Service Development Manager Access
Tel. No.:	01635 519031
E-mail Address:	jrpowell@westberks.gov.uk

Implications

Financial: These are set out within the report

Personnel: These are set out within the report

Legal: Notices would be required under Schools Standards and Framework Act

Property: Significant development of sites required, capital programme to be built

Supporting Information

1. Background

- 1.1 The provision of primary education within West Berkshire has historically taken place in schools that are well below the national average in terms of numbers on roll. This position leads to more costly provision, with greater fixed costs than would be the case in the majority of other LEAs, and with only very limited additional funding attracted from central government through the sparsity factor in the Education Funding Formula.
- 1.2 Audit Commission guidance indicates that between 5% and 10% is the appropriate level of surplus places to allow for efficient use of resources, whilst also meeting some level of parental preference. The current level of primary surplus stands at 10.8% across the whole of West Berkshire.
- 1.3 Given this background, officers were tasked with identifying options for the removal of surplus places within West Berkshire.

2. Initial Option Selection

- 2.1 From 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; school performance and value added; pupil mobility and turbulence; trend in number on roll; rural deprivation; popularity and community impact.
- 2.2 Based on the research carried out into these areas, discussions with Children and Young People Strategy Group and School Improvement Advisers, and with the Executive Member for Children and Young People, a range of options was identified for further consideration.
- 2.3 On the basis of further analysis and strategic planning impact, it was agreed that three infant/junior school mergers were appropriate to take forward for consultation. Executive approved the proposals that these three options be taken forward to formal consultation at its meeting on 17th June 2004.

3. Consultation Process

- 3.1 Following Executive, the consultation process began on 18th June 2004 with a closing date due for 18th August 2004. Consultation consisted of a full length document (made available online and as a paper copy version), a summary leaflet delivered to the local community, letters to parents through the schools, and a series of formal meetings with school staff, unions, governors and the local community, as well as at the relevant Area Forum and local town or parish councils, where the item was accepted for the agenda. Briefings were also provided for local members to keep them informed of progress.
- 3.2 Consultation meetings were held with staff and unions, governors, and the local community, on dates organised to be most convenient to the schools involved.
- 3.3 Due to concerns raised by Calcot Junior School, the venue for the proposed public meeting, that meeting had to be delayed until after the summer holidays, and was held on 20th September. As a result the deadline for responses to the consultation was extended to 15th October.

3.4 Meetings were offered to local Parish Councils, and this issue was discussed on the agenda of Holybrook Parish Council. The item was also offered for the agendas of Local Area Forums, and was discussed at the Eastern Area Forum. The minutes of the public meeting at the school is attached as an appendix to this report.

4. Consultation Feedback

4.1 A total of 105 responses were received from the following groups:

Category	Potential Responses	Actual Responses
Staff	66	25
Parents	379	56
Other	-	24
Total (excl other)	445	105

4.2 The overall response rate was therefore just less than one in four. The consultation leaflet inviting comments was distributed to approximately 2500 houses within the catchment area, and therefore the response rate could be said to have been significantly lower. However, this is the largest response of the three merger consultations

4.3 Of those that responded, the majority response was in favour of maintaining the status quo. Although in this instance, this majority was the lowest of the three merger proposals. The responses can be broken down into (the percentages given are for the responses over the total responses that could have been given)

79	Maintain	75.2%
6	Merge	5.7%
20	Other	19%

4.4 Other comments were: The need for more information on the proposal, suggestions to use the 'spare' classrooms for extended school activities, the view that the school would be too big if the proposal were to go ahead and amalgamating the two schools but keeping them in separate buildings were frequently offered.

4.5 Given the number of parents that could have responded, it is difficult to gauge the level of significance of this response. There has been no corporate response from either governing body but formal and informal discussions indicate that the junior school is opposed to the merger, and the infant school has a more positive view of the proposed merger.

4.6 Both governing bodies have requested a detailed business plan, covering financial and site issues. The site issue has been discussed and both schools at least understand the Council's reasoning on this, as outlined in a following section. If the Council wishes to take forward the proposal, addressing the budgetary concerns of the schools would be a priority, and some additional information on this is provided below.

General

- 4.7 A joint response to West Berkshire's proposals was received from all unions involved. This response was not in favour of the proposed mergers, and raised similar issues on sites and buildings issues, governance and financial implications, as raised by other consultees.
- 4.8 This response also raised the issues of catchment areas, although this was clearly dealt with in the consultation document. There would be no change to any catchment area as a result of any of these proposals.

Issues Arising During Consultation

5. Projected Demand - Accuracy of Forecasting Model

- 5.1 The current forecasting model was devised in 2002 and refined since, and so it is difficult to assess the accuracy over more than two years. Nevertheless the accuracy of West Berkshire projections can be seen below since 1999. The table compares actual numbers on roll, with the numbers on roll forecast by the model in use.

	Percentage Accuracy		
	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
1999 Forecast (Old Method)	95.4	96	92.9
2000 Forecast (Old Method)	97.1	97.7	98.5
2001 Forecast (Old Method)	95.9	96.7	97.9
2002 Forecast (New Method)		96.9	97.5
2003 Forecast (New Method)			98.9
2004 Forecast (New Method)			

- (1) The model uses numerous data sources as its inputs. These include birth data from Primary Care Trust, transfer rates between year groups and between schools, admissions data including feeder schools and catchment areas, and current numbers on roll.
- (2) A standard model for all schools is applied, in order to avoid bias caused by expectation.

- 5.2 Although the model as a whole and by geographical area has fairly high accuracy, the accuracy of individual schools where peaks and troughs in admissions occur is less accurate. Nevertheless the forecasts are useful for showing trends.

Oversubscribed schools

- 5.3 Generally the accuracy of forecasting for schools that are significantly oversubscribed is very good, due to intake being fairly stable. However if a school was to have a sudden increase in popularity then the model may take time to catch up with this change. The % inaccuracy of 5 such schools in West Berkshire is shown below, together with the overall inaccuracy of those 5 schools:

School A	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
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2001 Forecast	8.8%	6.1%	0.8%
2002 Forecast		1.8%	1.8%
2003 Forecast			2.4%
School B	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	7.7%	5.5%	10.0%
2002 Forecast		-9.4%	-3.6%
2003 Forecast			-0.5%
School C	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	-3.2%	-0.7%	-0.7%
2002 Forecast		-1.8%	1.1%
2003 Forecast			6.9%
School D	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	4.6%	1.6%	-3.4%
2002 Forecast		10.6%	6.1%
2003 Forecast			1.7%
School E	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	-0.9%	1.5%	0.8%
2002 Forecast		-3.6%	0.0%
2003 Forecast			-3.2%
All 5 Schools	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	1.6%	1.7%	0.1%
2002 Forecast		0.5%	1.7%
2003 Forecast			2.0%

Undersubscribed schools

5.4 The forecasting for schools that are undersubscribed follows the same pattern as above, although generally tends to overestimate pupil numbers significantly the more years ahead we look at the forecasts, although the accuracy still appears to be better than the old forecasting model.

School V	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	72.4%	46.8%	11.6%
2002 Forecast		23.4%	21.3%
2003 Forecast			5.8%
School W	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	10.9%	8.9%	3.8%
2002 Forecast		3.2%	4.7%
2003 Forecast			-2.0%
School X	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	2.0%	3.6%	0.1%
2002 Forecast		-5.0%	0.3%
2003 Forecast			-0.3%
School Y	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	7.6%	6.3%	3.1%
2002 Forecast		9.1%	7.9%
2003 Forecast			-2.0%
School Z	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	16.2%	7.6%	-0.1%
2002 Forecast		5.1%	3.9%
2003 Forecast			-2.3%
Total All 5	3 years ahead	2 years ahead	1 year ahead
2001 Forecast	19.4%	13.4%	3.7%

2002 Forecast		5.7%	6.9%
2003 Forecast			-0.2%

6. Sites and Buildings

- 6.1 Throughout the consultation process the Council has taken a consistent line on the issue of the development and use of the sites and buildings for any merged school.
- 6.2 This position has always been that the configuration and use of the buildings and site would be agreed with the new governing body and headteacher, and it would be important to involve the local community in these discussions as well as determining what additional services could also be delivered from the same site, meeting central government's extended schools agenda (during and beyond the school day/year) as well as delivering on West Berkshire's aim for primary schools for the future as neighbourhood hubs for service delivery.
- 6.3 Such services could include, childcare, healthcare, family learning, adult learning, out of school clubs, ICT, community sports facilities, focus on community activities, extended opening times, to name but a few, dependant on community need and aspirations.
- 6.4 Currently the Council's position is not to approve the disposal of school playing fields, except in exceptional circumstances. It should also be noted that the DfES have also adopted a position that assumes the Secretary of State will not permit any disposal that adversely affects the provision of team game areas. Whilst this has not been formally adopted as policy by the Council, it is clear that there is no intention, or support, for any of the proposed mergers to lead to a disposal of playing fields.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 All maintained schools are funded via a delegated budget calculated by means of a formula. The funding formula is mainly driven by the number of pupils in the school, but there are also fixed elements of funding which all schools receive to help support their fixed costs e.g. the Head Teacher, Deputy Head and site manager. Small schools (i.e. those with less than 200 pupils) also receive some additional funding to reflect the fact that their fixed costs are proportionately higher than those of larger schools, and to boost the funding generated by their pupil numbers in order to ensure that the full national curriculum to be delivered.
- 7.2 If two schools are merged, the basic formula budget for the new school will be lower than the combined budgets for the former schools (assuming pupil numbers are unchanged) because the new school will only require funding for one Head Teacher, Deputy and Site Manager etc. It is also unlikely that the new schools would require small school protection as the combined pupil numbers are likely to be sufficient to generate enough funding to contribute towards fixed costs and to ensure that the full curriculum can be delivered.
- 7.3 However, under West Berkshire's Schools' Funding Formula newly opened schools will receive transitional funding in addition to their basic formula budget for up to three years from the date of opening. This is to allow for costs such as additional staffing, management allowances or site management, or to compensate for any temporary fluctuation in pupil numbers which may surround the opening of the new school.

- 7.4 The ongoing full year savings arising from the proposed mergers are currently estimated to be in the region of £40,000-£50,000 per pair of merged schools. These savings would be used for the first three years of operation to meet the transitional costs of the new schools.
- 7.5 The figures quoted above may be affected if changes are made to the funding formula following annual consultation with schools during the autumn term 2004. However, if the mergers go ahead as planned, the closing schools and the temporary governing bodies of the new schools will be informed of the final level of funding for the whole of the 2005/06 financial year (including transitional funding for the new schools) by March 2005. Comparative 2004/05 figures have been shared with schools.
- 7.6 The current DfES regulations concerning passporting of increases in education funding to schools require that any savings in individual schools' delegated budgets must either be used to increase the amount delegated to other schools or to increase funding of services within the School's Block of the Education Budget (e.g. centrally managed services for children with special educational needs). The DfES has also set rules to ensure minimum year on year increases in delegated budgets and that central expenditure does not increase at a faster rate than schools delegated budgets. These rules are also likely to mean that any such savings must be recycled into the overall amount available for delegation to schools. The Council is also required to consult with the Schools Funding Forum on changes to the deployment of funding within the School's Block.
- 7.7 It is therefore clear that the efficiency savings, which may be generated if the proposed mergers go ahead as planned, would be used in the short term to help the new schools through a period of change and to support the raising of standards in those schools and in the longer term, to benefit the education of children in all schools across West Berkshire.

8. Performance and Standards

- 8.1 When comparing the achievement outcomes of children against national benchmarks it is important to take account of the socio-economic circumstances of the communities they serve. Individual schools benchmark their performance against similar schools based on pupils' prior attainment. This information is provided to each school by Ofsted in a PANDA report each year.
- 8.2 Achievement of pupils in Baseline Assessment on entry into schools 2001/02

Average score per pupil out of a maximum total of 32	WBC average all schools	WBC Average Primary Schools only	WBC Average All Infant schools only	Calcot Infant School	Winchcombe Infant School	Dunston Park Infant School
Average Score	16.6	16.9	16.2	17.7	20.6	10.1

- 8.3 The attainment of pupils in national tests suggests that pupils attending infant and junior schools are less likely to reach the standards of literacy and numeracy expected nationally than their peers in primary schools. In some schools this may be due to pupils starting from a lower base level on entry to the school system. However, the average for West Berkshire Infant schools is close to the average for primary schools as shown above.
- 8.4 Achievement of 7 year olds in Summer 2004 national tests

Percentage of pupils achieving level 2 or above	WBC average all schools	WBC Average Primary Schools only	WBC Average All Infant schools only	Calcot Infant School	Winchcombe Infant School	Dunston Park Infant School
READING	83.8	86	81.6	91.5	66.7	77.5
WRITING	79.5	82.4	76	70.4	68.6	90
MATHS	92.3	93.7	92.2	95.8	82.4	97.5

8.5 These figures are based on the same pupils identified in paragraph 8.2.

8.6 The averages for primary schools are above those for infant schools

8.7 Achievement of 11 year olds in Summer 2004 national tests

Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 or above	WBC average all schools	WBC Average Primary Schools only	WBC Average All Junior schools only	Calcot Junior School	Winchcombe Junior School	St. Mary's Junior Thatcham
ENGLISH	80	83.8	76.3	83.3	60.9	60.4
MATHS	73.9	78	69.1	62.5	67.4	60.4
SCIENCE	88	90.4	84.1	86.1	76.1	90.6

8.8 The averages for primary schools are above those for junior schools

8.9 The progress that children make can be measured by comparing their achievement between 2 points in time with the average for children of similar ability. This is called a "value-added" measure. Value added measures tend to show average progress for pupils in most West Berkshire infant schools but negative value added in junior schools. This may be attributable to the disturbance to children in making the transition from one school to another at age 7 which their counterparts in primary schools do not experience.

8.10 Other areas of potential benefit would include:

- (1) The ease of transfer of key pupil information relating to curriculum level targets and the identification of whole school improvement targets, providing consistent support for pupils with Special Educational Needs, developing schemes of work that cover key transition periods within the school,
- (2) Maximising the potential for consistency in approaches to Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Innovation, Behaviour Management, Assessment Procedures, Pupil Welfare and Guidance (pupil access to well-informed support, advice and guidance as they progress through the school), links with outside agencies supporting the pupil or family and links with parents which can be established over six to seven years.

9. Staffing

- 9.1 Meetings have taken place with the staff of all schools and trade unions have been involved throughout the process. An agreed procedure for the appointment of staff following a reorganisation of schools is now under discussion with union representatives.

10. Governance

Arrangements for the constitution of temporary governing bodies

- 10.1 The new schools (general) (England) regulations 2003 specify the consultation of the temporary governing body and the methods of appointment.
- 10.2 Once proposals for a new school have been approved and the Council have determined to implement the proposals, the Council must set up a temporary governing body for the new school in accordance with regulations 19-22 of the regulations. Where it is essential to do so, Councils can make arrangements to establish temporary governing bodies in anticipation that the proposals will be approved.
- 10.3 The Council must consult the promoters where arrangements are being made for the establishment of a new voluntary controlled school. The Council and the promoters must agree the arrangements where a new voluntary aided or foundation school is being established.

Existing Governor Constitution

Calcot Schools

- 10.4 Currently the Calcot Infant School Governing Body comprises 14 governor positions with 10 currently filled. This includes the headteacher and the school is a community school.
- 10.5 Calcot Junior School Governing Body comprises 18 governor positions with 14 currently filled, which includes the headteacher and the school is a community school.

Types of Governors and Method of Appointment

- 10.6 In appointing members or nominating candidates for membership of the temporary governing body of new schools, the Council and other appointing or nominating bodies should ensure that the individuals being appointed or nominated have relevant experience which will contribute to the success of the new school.

Community

- 10.7 Temporary community governors are appointed by the Council to represent wider community interests. The definition of temporary community governor is wide and can include people from a business or professional background and minor authority nominees who are committed to the good governance or success of the new school.

LEA

- 10.8 Temporary LEA governors are appointed by the Council. Councils can appoint any eligible person but they are encouraged to appoint high calibre governor candidates to new schools that need most support and to appoint candidates irrespective of any political affiliation or preferences.

Parent

- 10.9 Temporary parent governors are appointed by the Council from parents whose children are likely to become registered pupils at the new school or if that is not practicable, a person who has a child under or of compulsory school age. At new voluntary aided or a foundation schools proposed by promoters. A person is disqualified from appointment as a temporary parent governor if they are an elected member of the Council or if they work or are likely to work at the new school for more than 500 hours in a school year.

Staff

- 10.10 Temporary staff governors are individuals who work at Council maintained schools. They should be appointed by the temporary governing body. At new voluntary aided or foundation schools established by promoters, the temporary staff governors must be nominated by the promoters before they can be appointed. At least one temporary staff governor must be a teacher unless no school teacher is willing to serve. Where there are three or more temporary staff governor places, one place should be filled by a non-school teacher unless no such person is willing to serve.
- 10.11 The headteacher or headteacher designate is a member of the temporary governing body by virtue of their office and counts as a member of the staff category.

Sponsor

- 10.12 Temporary sponsor governors may be appointed by the temporary governing body following nominations by the sponsors of the new school (if any). The temporary governing body can decide to appoint as temporary sponsor governors persons who provide or have provided the new school with considerable support, financial or in kind. Persons providing the new school with substantial services will also be eligible to be appointed as temporary sponsor governors.

Associate Members

- 10.13 In addition to temporary governors, persons interested in contributing to the work of temporary governing bodies can be appointed as temporary associate members. Associate members are not governors. They can attend meetings of the temporary governing body but they do not have voting rights at these meetings. They can be given voting rights at committee meetings but will not be able to vote on staffing, finance, admissions and discipline matters and on election or appointment of temporary governors.

Transition from Temporary Governing Body to Governing Body

- 10.14 The Council must ensure that every new school has an instrument of government before its opening date, made in accordance with regulations 28 to 30 of the School Governance (Constitution) (England) Regulations 2003. The instrument of government is the document which records the name of the school, the number and category of governors and other relevant information relating to school. The instrument takes effect from the date it is made for the purpose of making appointments to the

permanent governing body, but for other purposes the instrument takes effect from the date the school opens.

- 10.15 Once a temporary governing body has prepared a draft instrument, it must be submitted to the local education authority that will check if it complies with the statutory requirements, including the guiding principles for the constitution of governing bodies of the relevant category of school. Governing bodies and Councils can review and change the instrument at any time. The same procedures will be followed each time any detail on the instrument is amended.

Implications

- 10.16 In order to reflect the bringing together of two existing schools into one new primary school, it is suggested that the temporary governing body be constituted of governors from both existing schools, as well as governors new to both schools, perhaps in equal proportions of one third of the new governing body from each group.

11. Way Forward

- 11.1 If the Executive decides to proceed, it is likely that the process will follow this timeline:

- (1) Notices published early January
- (2) 8 week objection period ends early March
- (3) School Organisation Committee meeting to determine proposal end March
- (4) Appointment of shadow governing body confirmed April
- (5) Appointment of headteacher April/May (if existing headteacher of one of merged schools)
- (6) Appointment of headteacher Summer term (if external advertisement/appointment)
- (7) Headteacher appointed early summer term
- (8) Staffing structure agreed summer term
- (9) Sites and buildings discussions begin summer term
- (10) New school opens January 2006.

- 11.2 After discussions with both headteachers, a proposed start date of January 2006, if the merger were to proceed, was felt to be the preferred option, as causing the least disruption and uncertainty for parents, and staff within the schools.

Appendices

Appendix 7(a) - Consultation Document for Calcot Schools
Appendix 7(b) - Minutes of Calcot public meeting

Consultation Responses

Local Stakeholders:	Local communities (through public meetings, Town Councils and Area Forums), School staff and governors
Officers Consulted:	Richard Hubbard, Ian Pearson, Andy Tubbs, Elaine Ricks, Jeanne Lapsley, Gabrielle Esplin, Andrew Butler, Donald Fraser
Trade Union:	ATL, GMB, Unison, NAHT, NUT, NASUWT

