

CUDDINGTON AND DINTON C of E SCHOOLS

Consultation on education in our villages

1. Introduction

1.1 This document has been produced jointly by the Federated Governing Body of Cuddington and Dinton C of E Schools, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (DBE) and Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC).

1.2 The Governing Body of the two schools, the DBE and BCC wish to consult staff, parents, future parents and the local communities on combining our two schools. This consultation will run from 20th April to 11th May 2007.

1.3 Both schools are Voluntary Aided Church of England Schools, having been set up in the nineteenth century to serve their respective parishes. Throughout their long histories they have educated children of all ages, losing their junior aged children when Buckinghamshire reorganised to middle schools and in 1999 losing Year 3 children on reorganisation to infant/junior/combined.

1.4 Plans to combine the two schools were first made in 2006 when Dinton approached Cuddington C of E School in the Spring Term. Consultation followed and despite very good support from parents, staff, governors, BCC, DBE and many parishioners from both villages, some opposition was expressed. The decision was taken that Cuddington C of E school would withdraw from its sharing of a Headteacher to allow time for reflection by Dinton School and its community on the future of education in its village. Since that time there has been the formation of a parent's action group urging the two schools to implement the original proposals and a statement from Dinton Parish Council agreeing that they would support any decision taken by the governors of the school. Dinton has also, unsuccessfully, tried to recruit a headteacher for the second time.

1.5 To support the continuity of education in Dinton and Cuddington and to reinforce stability at our schools, Cuddington agreed to sharing a Headteacher again in January 2007. A federation was formed of the two schools starting at the beginning of April 2007 with an aim of creating a single 4-11 primary school based on two sites, to allow both villages to retain a strong educational presence. The first governing body meeting of the Federation on 18 April strongly supported, agreed upon and welcomed the consultation

2. The Proposal

2.1 The proposal involves the joining of the two Schools into one new Church of England Voluntary Aided Combined School with a single governing body and a single staff resource. The two existing school sites would be maintained with the Cuddington site becoming the infant part of the school and the Dinton site becoming the junior part of the school. The current Headteacher of the federated schools would become the Headteacher of the combined school. The governing body of the new combined school would comprise members of the existing federated governing body which has representation from both villages. All current staff who wish to be a part of the new combined school will be able to do so. The governing body would wish to consult with the Diocese, parents, local communities and children over the future name of the new school.

2.2 It is intended that the admission number for September 2008 at the combined school will be 20. The combined school will have 140 places across the two sites. At present Cuddington School has a 54 net capacity plus 13 in nursery and Dinton 81. The proposal will reduce infant places (that at

present are not being filled to capacity) and replace them with junior places. All children currently at one of the two schools will be found a place at the new school if that is the wish of parents. Buckinghamshire County Council and the schools are committed to ensuring that all catchment area children and, if possible, all siblings of children attending the schools at the date of allocation of places in 2008 will be able to gain a place in reception at the new combined school. All infant aged children would remain at their present sites as the junior department would be phased in year on year.

2.3 It is expected that the current buildings will be used much as they are now as junior aged children are taught in classroom bases with a single teacher teaching a broad range of subjects. Minor alterations to the Dinton site to accommodate library/research facilities, cloakroom improvements and offices will be needed. As well as that, sports provision will be improved with the creation of pitches and courts. Other specialist tuition, such as music, will be brought in from the relevant county service. Many of the current teachers have experience of teaching the full primary age already, with some having specialised in the junior primary range. There is much evidence that small primary schools perform very well compared with other schools.

3. Why is the proposal being made?

3.1 Both schools have wanted, for some time, to establish full Church of England primary education to allow for continuity of education from aged 4-11 years.

3.2 Many small infant schools in the county have had difficulty in recruiting a Headteacher, as has happened recently in Dinton. The school has been working with Acting Headteachers for over 18 months. Any continued/prolonged absence of a permanent Headteacher can have an unsettling effect on staff as well as a destabilising impact on pupil numbers due to a lack of parental confidence.

3.3 Both Cuddington C of E and Dinton C of E Schools have capacity for more infant pupils than they currently have or are expected to have in the foreseeable future. Dinton C of E School has seen a decline in pupil numbers in the last four years bringing their number on roll down to 50 this term with a capacity of 81. Despite schools in the surrounding area being full, it is anticipated that neither school will reach its admission number in September 2007. In the present reception year the combined total of pupils for both schools is 28. Under present arrangements the schools are operating with a class of 10 and a class of 18. This is not cost effective.

3.4 At present both schools rely heavily on out-of-catchment children in order to remain viable. However, this number can be unpredictable year on year and it makes sense for children to be able to attend their local school wherever possible. The number of catchment children has continued to decline and in the present allocation round just six children from each school are in-catchment children.

3.5 The schools and the Diocese have recognised for some time the lack of Key Stage 2 places in a Church of England School in the Cuddington, Chearsley, Nether Winchendon area. Stone C of E School would not be able to admit all the Dinton children if they chose to go there despite being their linked junior school. This proposal will secure junior places in a Church of England School and will mean that the Church ethos continues throughout the years of primary education.

3.6 Both schools are Church of England Voluntary Aided schools. It has been agreed that the school on the two sites will continue to remain as a Voluntary Aided school and will work in partnership with both churches within the two parishes. Ministers from these parishes will continue to support both sites of the new school. The Diocese has looked at the trust deeds associated with each school to ensure that the new school would meet the requirements of the trusts, which they do.

3.7 These proposals are in line with Buckinghamshire County Council's policy of having combined schools wherever possible.

3.8 It will remove the uncertainty felt at present by parents over admissions at Key Stage 2. No movement will be needed, so there will be no need for admission processes.

3.9 Since the reduction in the age of transfer in Buckinghamshire in 1999, infant schools have often faced disadvantages relating to surplus places as a whole year group (Year 3 junior aged pupils) was effectively removed overnight. This has had an impact in reduction of budget allocation and consequently viability for rural infant schools.

3.10 Recent experience shows that some parents are increasingly opting for combined schools and younger siblings are lost from the infant school when junior aged pupils enter a combined school.

3.11 A significant number of parents choose private education at the end of Key Stage 1. It is felt that many of these parents will choose to keep their children in the state system if this proposal goes ahead.

3.12 There continues to be a strong commitment from both the Local Authority and the Diocese to support local communities and their local schools.

4. What about the existing sites?

4.1 Forming a new combined school would enable improved overall use of both sites and would ensure that both villages retain their schools— local schools for local children.

5. What are the advantages of the proposal?

5.1 The major advantages of the proposed amalgamation are in the continuity of education provided to the children by a Combined Church of England Aided school, continuing a school in each village and removing the concerns of parents regarding the transfer of pupils at the end of Y2.

- i. Children would join the new school at Reception stage and continue their education at the same school until they are old enough to go to the appropriate secondary school.
- ii. In the combined school, the approach to teaching Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 would be the same due to a common educational ethos and close collaboration between the teachers coordinating subjects across Key Stages. The children would benefit from this continuity that would help them to maintain progress.
- iii. The ethos of a Church school would be maintained throughout the primary education of the children.
- iv. The children would remain in a school which sets exceptionally high standards in a small school environment.
- v. In the combined school a child's profile would be passed to the next teacher more easily, enabling the new teacher to respond to the child's needs more readily.
- vi. Both villages would retain a school site that was less prone to fluctuations in pupil numbers with the resultant budget and staffing implications.
- vii. As one school, financial savings could be made to organisational overheads such as procurement of services.

5.2 Combined schools offer teaching staff advantages too and therefore make it easier to retain and attract good staff:

- i. Teachers are more able to specialise in both coordinating subjects and managerial roles covering a wider range of years. There is the potential to increase expertise, professional stimulation and to improve career prospects.
- ii. There could be greater flexibility in the way in which the school can be staffed, and the staff will be able to offer a broad education to the children.
- iii. A combined school would be more likely to attract and retain staff because of its ability to give staff a chance to gain management and leadership experience. Teachers are more attracted to combined schools as it gives greater opportunities for professional development. There is also the opportunity to gain leadership skills to provide for the school's future needs.

6. When would amalgamation take place?

6.1 There are statutory processes which have to be undertaken. The new school would start in September 2008 with the first intake of Year 3 children to the Dinton site. This time frame will allow for staff development and changes to accommodation to take place.

7. Would all those who currently attend the two Infant schools be able to go to the new combined school?

7.1 Yes. Movement from infant to junior phase would be seamless with no need to be part of the admissions allocation to junior schools. For new Reception pupils in September 2008, the catchment areas of the existing schools would be added together to make the catchment area for the new combined school. Distance criteria would be measured from home to whichever site was the closest.

8. What will happen now?

8.1 Through this consultation document your views are formally sought. Please fill in the *pro forma* at the back of this document and return it to the collection box at either school or by post to:

The Chairman of Governors, The Federated Governing Body of Cuddington and Dinton C of E Schools

at Cuddington C of E School, Upper Church Street, Cuddington. HP18 0AP

or

Dinton C of E School, School Lane, Dinton. HP17 8UZ

by 11th May 2007

If you do not wish to fill in the *pro forma* and wish instead to write a letter, please return it to either of the addresses above.

8.2 All the views received will be considered by the governing body.

8.3 If the governing body decides to proceed with amalgamation, the governing body will then have to publish "Statutory Notices" (like the public notices that you see around the town when somebody is applying for planning permission). By law these "notices" must remain public for six weeks.

Throughout this document the following terminology applies:

Reception- children who will be five during the school year.

Key Stage 1- children who are aged 5-7years

Key Stage 2- children who are aged 8-11years

Combined School – a school that caters for children aged 4-11 years.

Infant school – a school that caters for children aged 4-7 years.

Junior School – a school that caters for children aged 8-11 years

First School – a school that caters for children aged 4-8 years.

Middle School – a school that caters for children aged 9-12 years

Primary education – education for children aged 4-11years

PROPOSAL TO MERGE CUDDINGTON C of E SCHOOL and DINTON C of E SCHOOL TO FORM ONE COMBINED SCHOOL FROM SEPTEMBER 2008.

1. Do you support the proposal to join the two schools into one new combined school?

Yes

No

2. What is the main reason for your decision?

3. Do you have any other comment to make on the proposal?

4. Do you have children currently attending Cuddington or Dinton School?

Cuddington

Dinton

5. If you have children attending either school please put the number in each year group.

Year 2

Year 1

Reception

Nursery

6. Do you have children who are due to come to either of the schools?

September 2007

September 2008

September 2009

Optional:

Name

Address

All responses will be treated in confidence

Please return this proforma (or a letter if you prefer) by hand or post to:

The Chairman of Governors

The Federated Governing Body of Cuddington and Dinton C of E Schools

Cuddington C of E School, Upper Church Street, Cuddington. HP18 0AP

or Dinton C of E School, School Lane, Dinton HP17 8UZ

by 11th May 2007

Thank You