

INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROPOSED MERGER

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) proposes to merge Elms Road Nursery School and Children's Centre with Botley Primary School.

DID YOU KNOW?

- **The combined school is estimated to lose £64,000 annually compared to the two schools staying independent – this was only made public in December 2010.**
- The informal consultation is now closed and we are in the formal consultation period which runs from 7th January to 18th February 2011.
- Of the 105 responses the council received during the informal consultation period, 68% were against the proposal.

Any comments made previously WILL NOT COUNT and need to be made again if you would like the council to take them into consideration.

KEY POINTS

A Parents' Focus Group was formed in 2010 to obtain more facts and share ideas, and as a group we have the following concerns:

1) The quality of Nursery Provision could be reduced

- Nursery School was rated as Outstanding by Ofsted (November 2010).
- It would lose its nursery head teacher and the considerable expertise and knowledge of nursery education that she brings to the setting. We understand that it is planned, should the merger go ahead, that the nursery will be led by the Botley School head teacher with a focused early years role being created but this will not be the same as a dedicated Nursery head teacher and there is no extra funding available for any new roles.

2) The Primary School Provision would have less funding per pupil

- Whilst helping the Primary School clarify lines of accountability for F1 teaching staff, the newly merged school would have to run an enlarged school with £64,000 fewer funds than the two schools would receive independently, although *in the first year* this would be partly compensated for by an amalgamated school allocation of £53,750.
- The introduction of the Early Years Single Funding Formula will see the funds for the Nursery School reduce by an estimated £32,000 per year in April 2011. Therefore the merged school would lose an estimated £96,000 per year compared to now.
- Assuming that money buys the schools valuable resources, then we believe the merger could result in there being fewer resources available for our children's education.
- Botley Primary school was already asked this year to take 60 children in F1 (instead of the usual 45) this is expected to continue.

3) Impact on the Children Centre

- We understand that the Children Centre would keep a separate budget (should the merger go ahead) as it is funded by Sure Start.
- Running the Children's centre takes 30 % of the current Nursery Head teacher's time. It is different from a primary school environment, supports different sectors and operates all year round and outside school hours. Between July and September 2010, more than 200 children under 3 and their families used it.
- It is essential that the right time and expertise is invested to provide this valuable support to the

community.

4) We do not see our children's education currently affected by the problem that the merger seeks to resolve.

- One of the main reasons given for the merger is that lines of accountability are currently unclear for F1 staff and that there is an unnecessary layer of complication to management and governance (Ofsted report for the Botley Primary School June 2009).
- Teaching of Key stage one, which contains F1, is 'Good' according to Ofsted 2009 report, and the most highly graded section of the school.
- Since the 2009 Botley School Ofsted inspection, we have already seen improvements to the integration of F1 children: same starting and finishing time, patterns of breaks and formal learning and sharing outdoor space with lower school classes.
- The original consultation document agreed that the children's' education was not affected by the management set up stating "*these arrangements do not disadvantage the children....*". We think there must be a better solution to improve the accountability for F1 and reduce duplication and that improvement to the children's educational experience should be the motivating factor to any changes made.

ALTERNATIVE SOLUTIONS

Efficiency saving and clarity around F1 leadership and management could be sought through other solutions such as:

- F1 being solely under the Botley Primary School day to day management, with the use of a dedicated part of the Nursery building which has the required equipment for Early Years provision. This would not affect the quality of education and resources currently available but would ensure accountability of F1 staff and facilities under one head teacher.
- Re-consider the Federation model as it would facilitate further collaboration between the two schools, encourage potential cost and time efficiencies and would not result in the loss of £64k.
- ERNS has F1 children back on its school roll until the term they are five. This would preserve school numbers and boost funding, enable ERNS to continue its excellent Early Years practise under the leadership of their outstanding specialist Head Teacher and solve the key issue of management accountability because they would be an independent school.

NEXT STEPS

The proposed merger could affect the Primary School, Nursery School and Children Centre so it is really worth letting the right people know what you think and respond to the consultation by 18th February.

You can:

- Fill in the questionnaire (you have to register online first) on:
<https://myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult.ti/Merger2010/consultationHome>
- You can email: Merger2010-manager@myconsultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

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- Or write to Barbara Chillman, School Organisation & Planning, FREEPOST OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL (format attached).

Response to the proposed merger of Botley Primary School and Elms Road Nursery School & Children's Centre - Statutory Notice

Name:

I am (tick all that apply)

- Parent/carer of a child at Elms Road Nursery School
- Parent/carer of a child at Botley Primary School
- Parent/carer of a child at another nursery school
- Parent/carer of a child at another primary school
- Parent/carer of a child at secondary school
- User of the Children's Centre at Elms Road
- Staff/governor at Elms Road Nursery School & Children's Centre
- Staff/governor at Botley Primary School
- Other (please specify)

- I/we wish to object to the proposed merger of Botley Primary School and Elms Road Nursery School
- I/we do not wish to object to the proposed merger of Botley Primary School and Elms Road Nursery School

Comments (continue overleaf if necessary)

I/we wish to make the following comments about the proposed merger: