



Options for the future of the Dunmore Infant and Junior Schools

November 2006



Primary education on the Dunmore site

An all through primary school was first opened on the Dunmore site in 1951. As numbers grew the school was divided into two, creating separate infant and junior schools. In the last five years the junior school has suffered periods of instability under different headteachers and has declined from being a Beacon School in 2000 to being categorised, following an Ofsted inspection in October 2005, as in need of Special Measures. The last headteacher resigned from his post with effect from 31 August 2006. The junior school is currently led by a headteacher from the Educational Effectiveness Service who is skilled in leading schools out of special measures. His objective is to remove the school from special measures by September 2007 with the help of a special Local Authority (LA) task group. In contrast, the infant school has enjoyed continuity of leadership for the past eleven years and is an effective school held in high regard by parents.

Against this background of school under-performance and the need for new leadership of the junior school, the LA has decided to look afresh at future options for the two Dunmore schools. The current vacancy for a headteacher for the junior school from September 2007 gives an opportunity to revisit the leadership and management issues facing the school. The LA, after careful consideration, has decided to offer informal consultation to all stakeholders on two options for the future of the two Dunmore schools.

You are therefore invited to consider the following options:

- 1. To create an all through primary school in place of the separate infant and junior schools.**
- 2. To create an all through 3-19 school by extending the age range of Fitzharrys School.**

Option 1

Advantages:

Creation of all through primary school:

- (a) removes a point of transition at age 7 between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 encouraging greater continuity and progression of learning leading to improved achievement at Key stage 2;
- (b) allows one headteacher and leadership team to provide consistent leadership on learning and teaching from the Foundation Stage to Key Stage 2;
- (c) enables re-designation of the school under new leadership arrangements which would lead to automatic removal of the junior school from special measures; if not already achieved by September 2007;
- (d) encourages more flexible use of staff expertise and resources and provides the opportunity to rationalise the use of the shared site including access, use of kitchens, playing fields and halls; and
- (e) aligns with the rest of the Abingdon all through primary schools.

Concerns:

- (a) removal of separate provision at Foundation and Key Stage 1 which is preferred by some parents;
- (b) disturbance of the present leadership of the infant school which is highly valued by parents;
- (c) uncertainty about the leadership of the new all through primary school as the headteacher post would have to be advertised nationally and a new leadership structure determined; and
- (d) the necessity for all staff to reapply for their jobs in a new structure.

Option 2Advantages:

Creation of an all through 3-19 school:

- (a) provides the opportunity to create an innovative and integrated model of provision from 3-19 that has been achieved elsewhere but is new to Oxfordshire;
- (b) removes two points of transition at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 thus giving enhanced continuity of provision, learning and achievement;
- (c) provides the opportunity for innovative curriculum development across Key Stage 2 and 3. This would enable secondary subjects to be sampled earlier on a fast-track basis for more able and gifted children, and thus provide good preparation for Key Stage 3;
- (d) provides the opportunity for cohesive, integrated and enhanced SEN provision running from early identification at age 3 or earlier through to 19;
- (e) removes the need to appoint a new headteacher, the opportunity to make use of the existing leadership of the secondary school, and to develop an integrated leadership model from 3-19;
- (f) means automatic removal of the junior school from special measures by closure of the school; if not already achieved by September 2007; and
- (g) gives an opportunity to rationalise use of the shared sites of the three schools but maintaining separate and safe access for the primary age children.

Concerns:

- (a) the school would cover a unique age range for an Oxfordshire school;
- (b) the school would not align easily with the pattern of all through primary schools in the rest of Abingdon;
- (c) the lack of experience of the current senior leadership team at Fitzharrys in managing primary school provision. Concerns about the leadership structure of such a large institution;
- (d) parents may feel that their children would be the subjects of an educational “experiment”;
- (e) perceptions that safety of the primary children might be put at risk in such a big school with a wide age-range; and
- (f) the necessity for all of the staff of the infant and junior schools to re-apply for jobs in a new structure.

Other factors influencing both options

- (i) There are plans to establish a children's centre on the Dunmore site which would lower the age of children on site to include babies and toddlers, and involve £300,000 of capital investment on the site.
- (ii) Adoption of either option could attract additional funding from the DfES which might yield additional revenue and capital income.

Key questions already raised

Q Why is maintenance of the status quo not included in the options?

A There is no guarantee that the leadership difficulties would not reoccur at the junior school from September 2007, if the problems in recruiting an effective headteacher were to continue. Leadership of a junior school covering only one key stage of learning traditionally attracts fewer candidates for headship. Furthermore, the infant-junior model is outdated in the context of the rest of Abingdon and Oxfordshire, is not the LA's preferred model of organisation and retains an unnecessary transition stage between Key Stage 1 and 2, thus interrupting curriculum continuity.

Q Aren't the proposed two options really about saving money rather than educational benefits for the children?

A No, the two options have been chosen because they are seen as providing the best educational benefits for the children in the context of education for the 21st Century. It is true that there would be savings by removing separate fixed costs for the infant and junior schools. Savings in staffing costs would be small given the need to retain nearly all the staff to meet the needs of a large body of primary age children (currently just over 500 including Foundation 1 and Foundation 2 classes in the Foundation Stage). These savings could be used to support other developments in the new school.

Q It seems unfair that the infant school has to be closed, when it works perfectly well, is valued by parents, and is well lead by the current headteacher. Why is the fate of the infant school so tied in with the junior school and its recent difficulties?

A Yes, the infant school does work well on its own. The problem is that it provides only two stages of primary education and not the final stage, Key Stage 2. Crucial judgments about pupil achievement are made on the progress and achievement of children between the ages of 7 and 11, and this is reflected in all the national pupil achievement data. Recent history shows that children have not achieved in line with their expected progress between the ages of 7 and 11 because of transferring to a school where their educational experience has been less successful due to leadership and management difficulties.

We have to break the circle and not let this happen again.

We recognise the importance however of replicating the qualities and ethos of the infant school in any new establishment that we create.

- Q Why do the staff of the infant and junior schools have to re-apply for their jobs in either option?**
- A In either option the infant and junior schools will be closed. The staff will be moving into a new organisational structure so legally they are required to re-apply for their jobs. It is intended, however, to make the recruitment process "light touch" to minimise any pressure on staff. Specialist human resource support has been made available to guide staff through the change process. The priority will be to avoid redundancies.*
- Q Why not close the junior school and expand the age range of the infant school?**
- A This has been carefully considered and has the attraction of using the proven leadership skills of the infant school headteacher at Foundation and Key Stage 1. It would also mean that only the junior school staff would have to re-apply for jobs. However, the option does not present a completely blank sheet for creating a new primary school structure. In particular, there are concerns that an expanded infant school would not be able to address all the issues of underachievement between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 without the recruitment of an additional senior leader with Key Stage 2 experience. There is no-one in the current permanent junior school staff with this experience. The gap is being filled by temporary LA seconded staff.*
- The recruitment of a headteacher by a new governing body from an open field in the all through primary option would enable the Key Stage 2 leadership gap to be addressed and would not preclude the infant school headteacher from applying.*
- Q There are a lot of rumours about selling off land on the Dunmore/Fitzharrys sites if either option is chosen. Are any of them true?**
- A These rumours are quite untrue and are issues that have not been looked at. There is the opportunity to make more effective use of the sites and buildings to support extended schools' activities as outlined in the advantages of both options.*
- Q How can we be sure that our views will make any difference to the outcome and that it isn't already a 'done deal'?**
- A Because, as key stakeholders, whether you are a parent, governor, member of staff, or a member of the community, your views are crucial to the LA in determining whether to proceed with either option. All views will be reported fully to the Cabinet in January 2007, which will take them fully into consideration before making its final decision.*
- Q What is the timescale if either option is chosen by the Cabinet?**
- A The next stage would be to issue Statutory Notices for closure of both the infant and junior schools in the local newspaper, probably towards the end of January. There would be a period of between 4 and 6 weeks to object to the notices. If there were no objections to the notices, the LA could make the final decision. If there were any objections the next step would be to obtain approval from the School Organisation Committee (SOC) with a proposed implementation date for the new school in September 2007.*
- Q Why have the consultation meetings been set to happen after the closing date 20 November for Primary School Admissions Preferences?**
- A The timing of the meetings has been chosen to allow stakeholders time to consider the consultation paper and to express their views. The fact that the meetings occur after the admissions deadline is entirely coincidental. Parents can change their choices up to 8 December 2007 by contacting the LA admissions office (Tel: 01865 816267). We do urge you however, to remember that there will continue to be primary provision on the Dunmore sites from September 2007 and not to make hasty decisions.*

Two public consultation meetings as part of this informal consultation are planned:

At Dunmore Junior School on 21 November 2007 at 7.00 p.m.

At Fitzharrys School on 22 November at 7.00 p.m.

These meetings will provide further information on the background and options outlined above, and provide an opportunity to discuss these and any other options that you might wish to suggest.

We will then make a full report of your responses to the Cabinet in January 2007. A summary of responses from the consultation will be put on the County Council website: www.oxfordshire.gov.uk.

We would be grateful for any written response by 22 December 2006 either by using the attached form, or e-mailing: irene.kirkman@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

People wishing to respond to the consultation are asked to print off this page and return to: Irene Kirkman, Children, Young People & Families, Macclesfield House, New Road, Oxford, OX1 1NA, or responses may be e-mailed to: irene.kirkman@oxfordshire.gov.uk.

This is an important decision. Please give your views on the options proposed and suggest any other options on the form below.



I wish to make the following views on the future of primary provision on the Dunmore site:

Dotted lines for writing responses.

Signed Date

- Parent - Dunmore Infant
Parent - Dunmore Junior
Parent - Fitzharrys
Parent - Prospective
Governor/Teacher at Dunmore Infant, Junior or Fitzharrys schools (please specify ...)
Resident Abingdon
Partnership Headteacher/Governor/Parent
Other (Please specify)

(Please tick box as appropriate)

“Formate alternative te ketij publikimi ofrohen me kerkese. Kjo perfshin dhe gjuhe te tjera, me shkronja te medhaja, shkronja per te verberit, kasete degjimi, disk kompjuteri ose email.”

Albanian

আপনি যদি অনুরোধ করেন তাহলে এই পুস্তিকাটি বিকল্প ছাঁদে, যেমন, অন্য কোনও ভাষায়, বড় হরফে, ব্রেইলে, অডিও-ক্যাসেটে, কমপিউটারের ডিস্কে বা ইমেলের মাধ্যমে পেতে পারেন।

Bengali

“本刊物備有其他的格式可供索取。這些包括有其他語言版，大字版，盲人用版，錄音帶版，電腦磁碟版或電子郵件版。”

Chinese

प्रार्थना करने पर यह प्रकाशन दूसरे रूपों में प्राप्त किया जा सकता है। जिस में सम्मिलित है, दूसरी भाषाओं में, बड़े छापे में, ब्रेअल, सुनने की टेप पर, कम्प्यूटर की डिस्क पर या ई-मेल द्वारा।

Hindi

“ਇਹ ਪੁਸਤਕ ਬੇਨਤੀ ਕਰਨ ਤੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ। ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ, ਵੱਡੇ ਛਾਪੇ ਤੇ, ਬ੍ਰੇਲ ਵਿਚ, ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੀ ਟੇਪ ਤੇ, ਕੰਪਿਊਟਰ ਡਿਸਕ ਜਾਂ ਈ ਮੇਲ ਤੇ।”

Punjabi

“اس اشاعت کو متبادل اشکال میں درخواست کرنے پر حاصل کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ اس میں دوسری زبانیں، بڑا پرنٹ، بریل (جسے اندھے چھو کر پڑھ سکیں)، آڈیو کیسٹ، کمپیوٹر ڈسک یا ای میل شامل ہیں۔”

Urdu

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