To Parents/ Carers, Staff, Governors and Members of the Local Community of the Murston Infant and Junior Schools

17 June 2015

THE PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF MURSTON INFANT SCHOOL AND MURSTON JUNIOR SCHOOL

Kent County Council would like to hear your views on a proposal to amalgamate Murston Infant School and Murston Junior School and create an all-through primary school. The process of amalgamation will entail the closure of both schools and the establishment of a “new” community primary school, including a maintained nursery unit.

- The primary school would provide 315 places for children aged 4 to 11 years, with a maintained nursery unit providing 26 full time equivalent places for children aged 3 to 4 years.
- The school would have a published admission number (PAN) of 45 for entry into Reception Year.
- It is planned to open the new primary school with effect from September 2016.
- The new primary school would open in the existing accommodation of both schools.
- There may be the opportunity to allow the school to operate from a single site in the future.

This proposal is in line with Kent County Council policy as set out in the Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2015-2019*, which states “when the opportunity arises, the local authority will consider the possibility of either amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school; or federation of the schools”.

The Governing Bodies of both schools have met with the County Council and agreed that amalgamation of the two schools to create an all-through primary school would be the natural progression for the schools, which will secure benefits for staff and pupils.

Consultation

This is the early stage of the consultation process and no final decisions have yet been made. The consultation process is designed to establish the views of parents and carers; pupils; governors; staff; the local community and other interested parties.

A public meeting is being held at Murston Junior School, Sunny Bank, Murston, Sittingbourne, ME10 3QN on Thursday 2nd July at 7 pm where you will have an opportunity to give your views. The public meeting will be chaired by a Kent County Councillor. KCC Officers and School Staff and Governors will be able to answer any questions you may have on the proposal.

If you would like to make a response and “Have your Say”, details of how you can do this and where to send your completed response form are included within this document. You can also email your views to school.consultations@kent.gov.uk. The consultation closes on Wednesday 15 July 2015.

1. What are the benefits of amalgamation?

There are a number of benefits when amalgamating two schools; these are primarily educational and set out below.

**Benefits for Children**
A primary school that provides education for children aged 3-11 benefits from:

- A consistent educational philosophy from when a child first enters the school until they move on to secondary education.
- A more coherent delivery of the National Curriculum from Foundation Stage through to the end of Key Stage Two.
- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught.
- The ability to safeguard the needs of all pupils.
- Seven uninterrupted years of education without a potentially unsettling transition to another school.

**Benefits for Parents/Carers** – In an all-through primary school parents and carers are able to develop a longer term relationship with all of those involved in the school, including the Headteacher and support staff. School policies are the same throughout the primary years. For example:-

- How children with special needs are supported
- Arrangements for open evening and school events
- School uniform
- School closure days, etc.

This means parents and carers know what to expect. Over time the staff build up a good knowledge of children and their families as they progress through the school, creating a sense of the school as a ‘family’, which in turns helps develop trust and confidence.

**Benefits for Staff** – In an all-through primary school there are greater opportunities for staff to build upon their professional knowledge and skills across a wider age range.

- Provide opportunities to increase the range of expertise and experience of teaching staff.
- Provide opportunities for improvement in the deployment and development of all staff.
- Provide opportunities for sharing good practice across the whole school.

2. What will the admission criteria be for the new school?

If the new primary school goes ahead, the planned admission number (PAN) at Reception age for the school will be 45. The oversubscription criteria for admission to the primary school will be the same as it is currently for the infant and junior schools.

- All pupils who are attending Murston Infant and Junior Schools at the time of their proposed closure in July 2016 will automatically have a place in the new primary school from September 2016 as appropriate.
- Admission to the nursery would not guarantee admission to the new primary school.

3. It is proposed to establish the new school on two separate sites. What effect will that have upon the children?

Children attending the new school will probably notice very little difference on an everyday basis. For the majority of the time they will be in their own classroom with their friends and their teacher. At certain times the whole school will want to come together, such as celebrating important events and whole school assemblies which help create the feeling of a whole-school community. The junior hall will be able to accommodate whole school assemblies. The new governing body will want to ensure that safe and secure arrangements are in place for the children on the infant site to access the junior site and vice versa.

4. How will the integration of the pupils from the two schools happen?

If a decision is made to establish the new primary school, the infant and junior schools will begin to hold ‘getting to know you’ events for the pupils, staff and the parents/carers.
5. What about the governing bodies of the existing infant and junior schools?
A temporary governing body will be set up to oversee the process of establishing the new school including:
- Agreeing a staffing structure (a separate consultation will be held with staff)
- Appointing a Headteacher
- Deciding on the school name
- Agreeing policies for the new school and
- Making arrangements for the handover to the full governing body of the new school.

6. What happens next?
The consultation process – indicative timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 July 2015</td>
<td>The last day for sending in a response to the consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 July 2015</td>
<td>Following the consultation, all views received, either by post, email or at the public meetings will be reported to the KCC Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform.</td>
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<td>11 September to 8 October 2015</td>
<td>The Cabinet Member decides whether to continue with the proposal. If so, KCC will publish a public notice for a four week period in a local newspaper and at the school. During this time comments and objections can be made about the proposal.</td>
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<td>Week commencing 12 October 2015</td>
<td>The proposal, including the outcome of the consultation and public notice, is referred to the Schools Adjudicator for a decision.</td>
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<td>End of November</td>
<td>Final decision</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sept 2016</td>
<td>Implementation, subject to agreement</td>
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At the end of the consultation period a report summarising the responses received during the consultation will be sent to the Education and Young People’s Services Cabinet Committee and the Cabinet Member for Education and Health Reform, who will then decide whether to proceed with the amalgamation proposal and publish statutory proposals in the form of a public notice. The public notice would be published in a local newspaper and for a period of four weeks following the publication date any person can comment on the proposals. The proposal, together with all the consultation information and outcome will be forwarded to the Schools Adjudicator, who will make the final decision.

Continued overleaf……

RESPONSE FORM – Murston Infant and Junior Schools – proposed amalgamation

Please complete this response and hand it in at the school office or send it to Marisa White, Area Education Officer, Brook House, Reeves Way, Whitstable, CT5 3SS. Please return no later than midday Wednesday 15 July 2015.

Do you agree with the proposal?    Yes ☐   No ☐   Undecided ☐

Which of the following best describes you?
* Parent/Carer    /   Member of Staff    /   Governor    /   Pupil

Which school are you involved with?
* Murston Infants   /   Murston Juniors   /   Both Schools   /   Another local school

* Please delete as appropriate

OR - Other interested party ................................................................. (please state interest).
There are a number of ways to give us your views on this proposal:

- At the public consultation meeting being held at the junior school on Thursday 2\textsuperscript{nd} July where there will be the opportunity to ask questions and complete a response form.
- By sending the attached response form to Marisa White, Area Education Officer, Brook House, Reeves Way, Whitstable, Kent CT5 3SS. Alternatively you may hand your response form in at one of the schools. All written responses need to be received by midday on Wednesday 15 July 2015.
- By emailing: school.consultations@kent.gov.uk
- We have completed an Equality Impact Assessment to see if the proposal could affect anyone unfairly. We welcome your views on the assumptions we have made and the conclusions we have drawn. To view the document, go to: www.kent.gov.uk/schoolconsultations

If you have any concerns about how the change might affect children at the new school or the local community, do come and talk to us at the consultation meeting being held on Thursday 2\textsuperscript{nd} July at 7pm.

Yours sincerely

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Marisa White
Area Education Officer
East Kent
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