



**Futura**  
Learning Partnership



# School Merger Consultation

8th November 2021 - 7th January 2022

Chandag Infant School and  
Chandag Junior School

# School Merger Consultation: Chandag Infant School and Chandag Junior School

The Trust Board of Futura Learning Partnership are consulting formally on the proposal to merge Chandag Infant School and Chandag Junior School to create a single Primary School.

This follows the informal consultation carried out with staff, governors, pupils, parents and carers during the school year 2020/21.

## The Proposal

The Trust Board of Futura Learning Partnership is proposing to merge Chandag Infant and Chandag Junior schools to form a 4-11 primary school with a planned admission number (PAN) of 60. This will create a single primary school from the start of the September term in 2023 with two classes in each year group and a total roll of 420 pupils. This will be a reduction to the overall number of pupils in the junior phase as Chandag Junior School currently has a PAN of 68. This change will not affect any child currently in the junior school.

It is important to note that this is an 'in principle decision' made subject to consultation. The Trust Board is now seeking the views of all stakeholders to make sure this is the right decision.

## Why are we proposing the change?

Recent changes to leadership in the junior school led the Trust Board to review the current educational arrangements for the children who attend the Chandag schools, to consider whether an alternative option may now be more suitable.

The review considered two options for the future of the schools:

### 1. A partnership model, similar to the way the two schools are currently working

Under this model, the schools would remain as a separate infant and a junior school but be linked informally, through a partnership

arrangement, under the leadership of an executive headteacher. Each school would remain separate with its own admissions process, budget, Academy Governance Committee (AGC) and Ofsted categorisation but would work more closely together with the aim of achieving a more seamless educational experience for the children from reception through to year 6. The leadership in each school would be structured to reflect the role and responsibilities of the executive head e.g. a head of school reporting directly to the executive head rather than a stand-alone headteacher.

### 2. A single, all-through primary school under the leadership of a single headteacher



## What are the Pros and Cons of each model?

	Pros	Cons
<b>1. Partnership</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easier to achieve than option 2: less controversial and not dependent on agreement from the DfE</li> <li>• Retains the choice of a separate infant and/or junior school</li> <li>• Gives opportunities for collaborative working</li> <li>• Gives additional leadership opportunities e.g. head of school, executive head</li> <li>• Has the potential to realise a more joined up experience for the children</li> <li>• Achieves some economies of scale through some shared staffing and no need for a staffing re-structure</li> <li>• Retains notion of phase specific specialisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reliant on individual relationships to make it work</li> <li>• Potential for lack of leadership clarity i.e. who is responsible for what?</li> <li>• Is more expensive because it does not address duplication of roles and adds an additional layer of management</li> <li>• Potential for one school to feel less important than the other, particularly if the head of one school is also the executive head – could be divisive</li> <li>• Seen as a half-way house and not future-proofed</li> <li>• Discontinuity and duplication remains an issue for parents e.g. application process and communications</li> </ul>
<b>2. Single primary</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gives a seamless educational and social experience for children and parents, with more time for school to develop strong relationships and partnerships</li> <li>• Model would strengthen the school's ability to achieve strong pupil progress from key stage 1 to 2</li> <li>• Removes need for parents to apply for a place in the junior school</li> <li>• Unites all staff, pupils and parents in 'one school'</li> <li>• Achieves economies of scale that would enhance resource provision and provide greater efficiency, flexibility and opportunity</li> <li>• Clear and transparent leadership structure with phase and whole school responsibilities</li> <li>• Gives greater range of professional development and CPLD opportunities for staff</li> <li>• Separate buildings are an advantage i.e. a smaller setting for the youngest children</li> <li>• Removes need for two separate Ofsted inspections and judgements and removes disparities between schools</li> <li>• Streamlines, and potentially strengthens, governance</li> <li>• A larger school is more resilient and more able to cope in difficult situations, as we have seen during the pandemic for example</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires a more complex change management process</li> <li>• Would require a leadership re-structure that could cause anxiety for staff</li> <li>• Combining the two sites into one school needs careful planning and the cost of making building alterations would require investment</li> <li>• Would not be popular with some parents and staff</li> <li>• Removes the choice of a separate infant and/or junior school</li> </ul>



Having considered both models, and the views expressed during the informal consultation, trustees decided that it is the right course of action to look at a merger with the two separate schools becoming an all-through primary school. This would mean that a single headteacher, and a single Academy Governance Committee, would oversee the running of the school. Children would start in the reception year and continue through to year 6 without having to apply to move up to the junior school. An all-through primary school would bring both schools together to become a single community, which trustees believe will be the best for the children.

### What are the benefits of becoming an all-through primary school?

- Continuity and progression in children's learning from age 4 through to age 11
- Creation of a seamless transition from key stage 1 (infants) to key stage 2 (juniors)
- Children will benefit from the potential of a wider range of resources and improved staff development
- Greater opportunity for relationships between pupils, parents and the school to build over a longer period of time,

allowing the school to understand better the needs of each pupil

- Greater capacity to track pupil progress between key stages
- Greater consistency and clarity for parents as their children move through the schools
- Greater capacity to develop extended services and improve the facilities
- More development opportunities for the staff, such as shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum and gain experience and understanding of all key stages
- The strengthening and developing of the community links which already exist.

### Continuity and progression in children's learning

- Both schools work closely together currently to ensure the continuity and progression of children's education as they move from the infant school to the junior school. Nevertheless, the collaborative structures necessary to achieve smooth transition from key stage 1 to key stage 2 require specific planned efforts on the part of staff in each school. Each school has its own particular ethos, school development plan priorities, and policies. Structurally it should be much easier within a single school to address the development of

common plans, priorities and policies for the progression of children from start of school to transfer to secondary school

- A single primary school will provide for greater consistency in the recording and reporting to parents of the progress of their children through the key stages. This in turn should provide parents with a clearer picture of the development of their children and enable them to support the learning of their children more effectively
- A single primary school will find it easier to respond to tracking individual pupil progress, including baseline assessment on entry to schools, from Reception through to year 6. This in turn will help to identify the 'value added' to the child by the school and to influence the development of target setting for the school. This will also support curriculum planning that meets the learning needs of children as they progress through the key stages
- A single primary school will find it easier to monitor, identify and plan to meet the academic and personal development needs of individual pupils
- A single primary school will be able to develop even stronger relationships with parents that support each child's progression through the whole primary phase.

### • Sharing of staff expertise to enhance children's achievement

- A single primary school provides the opportunity for a greater sharing of the depth and range of experience and expertise of staff, which can enhance the range of teaching and learning opportunities for children and the opportunities for professional and career development of staff. It is important that teachers have an awareness of the learning needs and process of development of children as they progress through primary education
- In a single primary school there will be a bigger pool of teachers, thus increasing the possibility for sharing curriculum co-ordination responsibilities more equitably. This should allow for more effective development of subject specialisms, curriculum leadership and monitoring across the full range of the National Curriculum
- This is particularly important in the context of the Government strategies for literacy and numeracy. The sharing of practice and increased opportunities for professional development in a single primary school will help the school meet the demands of the new Ofsted framework with its emphasis on curriculum progression and continuity.

### More efficient use of resources

- A single primary school will provide opportunities for more efficient planning and use of resources across the key stages in subjects which require investment in expensive equipment, such as Information Technology, Design Technology, Science and PE
- A single primary school will also enable the development of a wider range of resources which can be targeted more effectively at the learning needs of individual pupils throughout the ability and age range
- In a single primary school administration and management can be provided within one management team and

office, avoiding the duplication of certain tasks and functions, for example servicing one governing body rather than two, managing one budget rather than two and possibly more streamlined communication with parents, particularly those with children in both key stages. It is recognised that some administration associated with individual pupils would not decrease, but in other areas relating to the operation of the school as an institution there would be economies of scale

- A single primary school will bring greater flexibility in the use of the total teaching accommodation
- Consolidation of accommodation in a single primary school can release small areas for much needed development for group work and resource areas, thus providing more teaching accommodation than exists at the separate schools.

### The counter-arguments

The Trust Board recognises there are counter arguments for maintaining separate schools, such as:

- One of the key concerns often raised is the importance of retaining a relatively small school community, particularly for younger children and for those with special educational needs
- A further factor is the ability that separate schools have to focus on the specific learning needs of the particular age groups. Having a single co-ordinator across key stages 1 and 2 for a curriculum subject could weaken this. Alternatively, if there is a key stage 1 and a key stage 2 co-ordinator for a curriculum subject with one taking overall responsibility, this will necessitate closer working arrangements and co-operation between staff
- A third issue is the fact that existing schools have developed their own particular ethos and character, with which parents feel a sense of loyalty. Merger, however carefully planned, will involve some disruption for all



(cont.) concerned and bringing together two separate schools will take time to develop. The management and structure of the new school and staff commitment to this will be crucial to the success of the merger.

These concerns are recognised and the Trust Board is anxious to ensure that they are addressed fully through this consultation process, including any additional concerns that there may be that have not been included, so that a balanced consideration can be given to all the issues.

### What will a single primary school mean for the children?

The whole purpose of the merger is to create an environment that will have a positive impact on the quality of education that children receive. On a day-to-day basis there will be no change in routine or provision in either school.

### What will it mean for my child being part of a larger school?

On a day-to-day basis very little will change. The differing needs of each age group will continue to be met. The care and importance given to each individual child, which is a strength of both schools, will always remain paramount. Children in years R to 2 would continue to be taught in the infant building and children in years 3 to 6 in the junior building. The designated playground areas would remain as they are now.

### What will it mean for parents/carers?

A merger will mean that the schools will continue to operate as usual. Parents/carers will not have to apply for a place for their child's school once their child is on roll in the infant part of the school. For parents with children in the infants and juniors, it also means that contact and communication with school is easier and

there is the opportunity for all families to build a strong relationship with the school over a longer period of time.

### What will it mean for the staff?

Again, very little on a day-to-day basis. Apart from a change of school name to a primary school, staff conditions of service will not be affected as all are already employees of Futura Learning Partnership. The main changes will be to the leadership structure, which will provide new opportunities for professional development.

### Would there be any changes to the school building?

In the event of merger, the school would remain largely the same with all the existing premises being used in the most appropriate and effective way. The primary school would continue to admit 60 pupils into the reception class each year, as the infant school does now. We would look at making changes to the site to support the creation of a strong school ethos, such as a shared staff room and a central inclusion base. We would also look to provide a secure walkway between the two sites and additional car parking for staff. The school hall in the junior school is of a good size but the school would also be able to use Mendip Hall on the Wellsway site for events and assemblies.

### Procedure to achieve the merger

It is proposed that the new Primary School will open on 1 September 2023 catering for pupils from age 4 to 11. The process to achieve this involves the 'technical closure' of Chandag Junior School and the expansion of the age range at the infant school on 31 August 2023. However, it should be noted there will be no actual closure of school buildings. Therefore, once this process has been completed, both buildings will continue to be used in much the same way as they are at present –

children will continue to be educated in the 'infant building' and 'junior building', but it will be collectively known as a primary school.

It is the intention to consult widely with staff, pupils and parents to agree the name for the new school and those aspects that will help to create its ethos and identity, such as values, uniform, logo, rules etc.

### Admissions

If the proposal is agreed, a primary school would be created on 1 September 2023 and the following would apply:

- **First admissions:** Children who apply for places at Chandag Infant School for September 2023 will be offered places through the standard admissions process. The standard school admissions criteria will apply
- **Infant to Junior transfers:** The current year 2 children at Chandag Infants need to apply for a place in the junior school in the normal manner. In subsequent years this will not be necessary, if the merger is agreed.

### Why are we consulting you?

We want to consult you to gather your views because you are part of the school and wider community. The Trust Board would not simply decide to make changes to the schools without first seeking the views of staff, parents and others. Your experience of how the schools currently operate provides a very important perspective. We do ask you to think about the proposal from the point of view of future generations of children as well as from your perspective however. It is important that the Trust Board hears your views before deciding whether to proceed.

### What is the timescale for change?

- **Board decision in principle:** July 2021
- **Communicate Board decision to HT/AGC chair:** July 2021
- **Communicate Board decision to stakeholders:** September 2021
- **Carry out statutory consultation:** October 2021 – January 2022
- **Final Board decision:** February 2022
- **Communicate final Board decision:** February 2022
- **Consultation with staff and unions:** March 2022

### If final decision is to merge the schools:

- **Gain formal approval from DfE:** March - July 2022
- **Communicate DfE decision by** July 2022
- **Appoint headteacher:** September/October 2022

- **Consultation re school name, uniform etc.** October - December 2022
- **Application deadline for new school:** October 31st 2022
- **Make staffing decisions:** November 22 - April 23
- **Building work undertaken:** June - September 2023
- **Chandag Junior School closes:** 31st August 2023
- **New primary school opens:** 1st September 2023.

### What will happen if the decision is not to merge?

If the Board decides not to proceed with the merger then we will look to develop a partnership model similar to the one that is operating currently.

### How can you submit your views?

- Email [enquiries@futuralearning.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@futuralearning.co.uk) putting 'CIS/CJS consultation' in the subject box if you have any questions
- Fill in the [online consultation form](#)
- Submit a response in writing to [enquiries@futuralearning.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@futuralearning.co.uk).

Please note that the closing date for receipt of consultation responses is **3.30pm, Friday 7th January 2022.**

**Many thanks for your help with this very important decision.**