



# Objection Report

On the proposal to amalgamate Cadoxton Nursery and Cadoxton Primary schools by:

1. extending the age range of Cadoxton Primary School from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 years; and
2. Discontinuing Cadoxton Nursery School.



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## **Background**

Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Cadoxton Nursery and Primary schools commenced on 04 January 2016 and concluded on 17 February 2016.

The consultation document explained the Council's proposal to amalgamate Cadoxton Nursery and Primary schools by extending the age range of Cadoxton Primary school from 4 to 11 to 3 to 11 years; and discontinuing Cadoxton Nursery School.

The consultation process followed Welsh Government guidelines and was an opportunity for local people to learn about the proposal and for the Council to hear the views of all those with an interest so that they can be taken into account before decisions are made.

## **Consultation Report**

A consultation report was published following the consultation exercise. The Council's Cabinet considered the consultation report and outcome of the consultation on 07 March 2016. The Cabinet determined to proceed with the proposal and to the publication of a statutory notice on the proposal.

## **Statutory Notice**

A statutory notice on the proposal was published on the 11 April 2016 for a period of 28 days to allow for objections. The statutory notice period of 28 days expired on 09 May 2016.

The notice was published on the Vale website and posted on the main entrance of both schools. Copies of the notice were distributed to pupils, parents, carers and guardians, governors and staff members. All other organisations required under the School Organisation Code 2013 were either provided with a hard copy or e-mailed a link to the published notice on the Vale website. All email recipients were provided with a copy as an attachment to the email.

Where objections are received an objection report must be published summarising the statutory objections and the proposer's response to those objections.

## **Objections to the proposal**

The authority received 113 individual objections by the statutory notice closing date. A summary of the key themes and issues raised by respondents and the response from the Vale of Glamorgan Council can be found at Appendix A.

Many of the objections received are resubmitted comments received during the consultation period. These comments will be familiar as members have already read the consultation responses contained in the consultation report. Members are reminded that an individual is able to resubmit their previous

comments as objections. Therefore members should ensure that these comments submitted as objections are reconsidered.

All objections received during the objection period have been made available in the Members room at The Vale of Glamorgan Council Offices, Holton Road, Barry together with the consultation report for further perusal.

This appendix summarises the key issues raised during the statutory notice period. The issues present an overview of response themes and are not intended to be verbatim. All written objections have been made available to Cabinet members.

### **Issue 1**

#### **Detrimental Effect on the Local Community and their Families**

Respondents consider the nursery to be a vital part of the community that reaches out to the family. The nursery holds an important place in the heart of the community with a family ethos in a highly disadvantaged area. The nursery supports families and the community and offers a level of support to the community that only a small school can. The nursery school offers a significant service for residents.

Respondents are concerned that the close relationships between staff and parents will be lost in a larger school. Currently the Headteacher and staff of the nursery are in daily contact with parents and are committed to supporting the whole family. Children benefit from interacting with someone who knows them and their families.

Respondents feel that the nursery offers a homely and safe environment with open access to the Headteacher. An independent nursery is needed to ensure this and is vital to the development of children at such an early age. Cadoxton Nursery School is an excellent example of integrated practice bringing together health, education and social services to support all aspects of a child's development.

Respondents feel that the positive elements above will be lost by pursuing an amalgamation and that a combined school would not meet the specific needs of an ever-growing community.

#### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

The Council believes that there would be very little change to the nursery's position within the community. The same building would be used, providing the same safe, stimulating learning environment which is suited to the needs of nursery aged pupils. This would be enhanced by the opportunity to access additional resources of the primary school.

It is believed that nursery staff would still be able to build and sustain close working relationships with parents as they do now. Day to day support for children and their families who attend the nursery will continue to be provided by the existing nursery staff, all of which have built up strong bonds over time with the families. It is anticipated that the nursery class will have a teacher in charge who will be present every day for families to go to if they need support, and will offer a single, consistent point of contact. Families will have access to further support from a larger number of community and care partnerships have been developed across the both the primary and nursery school.

The Council believes that both the nursery and primary schools have strong links within their community setting and this would continue if the two schools were to amalgamate, offering the same homely and safe environment for children of a nursery class age. An encompassing culture of strong family ethics, support, and one to one confidentiality across the primary age years will be maintained and developed. The school may grow in size, but the close community values entrenched in the existing cultures of both schools will grow to support a wider community need.

The proposed amalgamated school would continue to work in partnership with the Communities First and Families First teams to provide the 'Putting Families First' programme for all parents, guardians and carers of children of all ages who attend the school. The range of interventions provided by the programme, as outlined in the Community Impact Assessment (part of the proposal documentation), would continue to be offered. If the schools do amalgamate, the Headteacher of the primary school has indicated that the two separate services currently offered will join together and be run through the Cadog's Café located within the grounds of the primary school.

The primary school would continue to work in partnership with a number of agencies such as community, health, police and social services as it does now. These relationships will continue to be sustained and developed. The extensive support that is currently available to parents, pupils and extended family members will continue to support children's development and offer the best support available to families.

The Council remains confident that the proposal to amalgamate will result in the continuity in provision and cohesion for parents, while continuing to develop the sense of community and belonging that is already evident at both schools. The proposal also ensures help for families new to the area are supported in their adjustment to their new community through support to link into established networks facilitated through a single school.

The primary and nursery schools already adopt a multi-agency working ethos, working closely with partners such as Flying Start, Families First and Communities First. This support for parents and children currently attending the nursery will not be lost, but will be co-ordinated centrally through the primary school. On-going and future initiatives will be located at the community hub, Cadog's Corner. There would be no change in use of the existing buildings.

## **Issue 2**

### **Decrease in standards of education and learning outcomes for children**

Respondents expressed concerned that the standard of education at the current nursery school would not be maintained on amalgamation. Cadoxton Nursery School is considered outstanding, and there are concerns whether this can this be guaranteed under new management without a specialist Headteacher. Cadoxton Nursery School is by some objectors a flagship

school that has, they say, achieved green status for four consecutive years. It is the only school in the Vale of Glamorgan to be accepted to work as part of the Foundation Phase Alliance Group of the Central South Consortium. [There is no evidence to support claims that the educational standards of the Nursery School will not be affected by this change.](#)

Respondents pointed out that the Welsh Government want high quality education for the children in Wales, and that this is currently achieved at Cadoxton Nursery School, with its stand-alone status currently contributing to that. Concern was expressed that a nursery class within a primary school would put this at risk, and that an amalgamation is contrary to what the Welsh Government sees as the way forward in its “Ten Year Plan for Early Years”. It was put forward that standalone nurseries have better Estyn inspection results than integrated nurseries and Children’s Centres.

Respondents claim that the effect of cuts will have a negative impact on teaching standards at both schools, and that the nursery school provides an important role in breaking the link between disadvantage and achievement.

### **Council’s response to the concerns raised**

The Council is satisfied that there is no reason why the existing high quality provision cannot be maintained in a nursery class following an amalgamation. The same building, same resources, same teachers and same LSAs would deliver the same high standards of teaching and learning. Access to the resources of the wider school has the potential to improve staff’s continued professional development and would improve the range of provision on offer enabling opportunities to raise standards further.

The current staffing ratio in the nursery school is 1:6, and would not change if the proposal is determined by Cabinet. Staff will continue to provide the highest level of social and cognitive development to the children in their care alongside support for the development of their language, physical, personal and emotional skills in adherence to principles set out in the All Wales Foundation Framework for Skills (3-7 Years).

Although the nursery class would become a part of the primary school from the amalgamation, the nursery class would continue to uphold its existing values and philosophies. The highly professional and committed staff would continue to deliver the same high quality of care, learning and social development for the children in their care.

The Council have reviewed the findings of research into early years education as outlined in “The Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (Eppe) Project” (2014). The report highlights the following points:

- There are significant differences between individual pre-school settings and their impact on children; some settings are more effective than others in promoting positive child outcomes.

- Good quality can be found across all types of early years settings; however quality was higher overall in settings integrating care and education and in nursery schools.

The Council believes that high quality learning is provided in both nursery classes as well as stand-alone nurseries. This has been evidenced through Estyn inspection reports for primary schools across the Vale of Glamorgan, which include attached nursery classes.

The Council believes that an amalgamated school would build on the strengths already present in the existing schools by further improving standards and outcomes for children. The Council believes that as the capacity of both schools to improve has been categorised as 'A', each phase will continue to maintain and build upon their areas of strength in teaching and learning, whilst ensuring that the children across all phases continue to achieve high learning outcomes. This will be enabled by the Headteacher promoting her clear vision to improve standards and wellbeing across all stages of the primary phase.

It is anticipated that standards in the nursery class will be at least sustained at their current levels. The nursery will continue their role to offer support across the Foundation phase on behalf of the Foundation Phase Alliance Group of the Central South Consortium.

With reference to the Welsh Government's "Building a Brighter Future – Early Years and Childcare Plan" (2013), the Council recognises the importance of the key aspirations in this document and are working with Welsh Government to achieve these goals across all of our school settings with the focus being on:

- Improving outcomes for children through strong supportive families and communities
- Supporting parental engagement in their child's learning
- Ensuring that children are safe

In relation to the proposal and the concerns raised, with specific reference to the above document, the Council believes that a great deal of effort and progress has already been demonstrated by the nursery and primary schools in achieving these goals. The Council believes that amalgamation of the two schools will further progress these aspirations.

The "Building a Brighter Future" document identifies improvement in the flexibility of the Foundation Phase as a key driver to improve early years provision. The document outlines its ambition for a universal Foundation Phase with improved transition through a whole-phase and whole-school approach.

As part of a multi-agency approach, children will move from one phase of learning to the next, whilst continuing to improve standards and educational outcomes. Although the two schools currently work effectively together to manage this transition phase, the Council believes that an amalgamated, all-



through primary school will further strengthen approaches to key transition times for the child and their family.

Individual children's need would continue to be assessed, supported and monitored, but the monitoring and evaluation of a child's progress would follow them throughout their primary schooling instead of being reassessed when the child enters the primary phase.

The Council believes that reduced management costs have the potential to ensure that funding is directed to staff and their work. Staff will continue to work in partnership to secure the best possible education and learning outcomes for the children.

Estyn have responded to the proposal, having expressed the opinion that the proposal is likely to at least maintain the current standards of education and provision in the area. The proposal is unlikely to have a negative impact on any other schools or providers of pre-school education in the area.

On balance, the benefits of the proposed amalgamation of Cadoxton Nursery School and Cadoxton Primary School would maintain and sustain the current high standards of both schools, outweighing any disadvantages.

### **Issue 3**

#### **The proposal will have a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of the children at Cadoxton Nursery School**

Respondents stated that parents choose the nursery as it is better placed to cater for children's needs and that parents build strong trusting relationships with staff. Pupils that attend nursery come from many different backgrounds and being a flying start area some parents look to staff for help and guidance on a day to day basis. This close relationship between staff and parents will be lost in a much larger school environment. An amalgamation will have an effect on children's welfare by introducing additional disruption to their lives and adding additional challenges.

Respondents felt that it is important for the nursery to have a Headteacher and staff who specialise in this area. It is important that in a socially deprived area that the early years nature of three and four year olds are of prime importance. The best possible start for children in the area gives each precious child the best chance of progressing in life

#### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

If the proposal to amalgamate were to go ahead there would be a requirement for a teacher in charge to manage the day to day running of the nursery class. This will allow the Headteacher of the primary school to have overall leadership across the phases, but will ensure that a senior member of staff is always available in the nursery building as first point of contact for parents,

guardians, and carers of nursery aged children and focus on the day to day activities and needs of the nursery class.

The Council believes that the proposal will not adversely affect pupil. The current staff/student ratio which the governing body and Headteacher of Cadoxton Nursery School have set is 1:6. It is not envisaged that this ratio would change if the proposal amalgamation were to go ahead.

As nursery pupils will be taught in the existing nursery building, the children's daily routines and contact with older children will remain unchanged. Being part of a primary school has the potential to ease transition in that, when ready, children can be introduced to aspects of the existing primary school building (such as the main hall), allowing for enriched provision and reducing anxiety associated with transition into the reception class.

Nursery age children would also continue to attend their class within their current setting, for a maximum of 2.5 hours per day in the morning or afternoon, as they do now. The mixing of age groups would be kept to a minimum for the youngest children. It has been suggested that children in their final term in the nursery class could be invited to attend assemblies in the primary school, alongside other transitional events. This should help those children moving in to the reception year by including them in the primary school environment. There will be other opportunities for the nursery age children and the rest of the Foundation phase to mix, but these would be carefully managed with appropriate support.

The Council is satisfied that the wellbeing of the children attending Cadoxton Nursery School would not be negatively impacted, and that standards of wellbeing would at least be the same as they currently are as a result of the amalgamation.

#### **Issue 4**

##### **Maintain the nursery school as it is**

Respondents identified that a stand-alone environment is a more beneficial setting for children to be taught in. Cadoxton Nursery School is seen as an outstanding nursery school and works well as it is. The nursery provides high quality early years education and as parents need a stand-alone nursery, and Cadoxton Nursery School is producing outstanding results, then there is no point amalgamation.

##### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

Whilst recognising the high quality of provision provided by both the existing nursery and primary schools, the Council believes that the proposal has the potential to lead to improved transition, enhanced provision and savings in relation to management costs. This will help reduce the threat of cuts to teachers and LSAs in times of austerity. Maintained nursery schools face higher costs than nursery classes in schools where overheads can be reduced through economies of scale due to larger pupil numbers.

Maintaining the nursery school does not provide the benefits associated with school amalgamation. One of the main benefits of moving to an 'all through' primary school is to minimise the number of transition points between schools that children currently experience. The current arrangements are expensive and limit the opportunities for teachers and support staff to work with children of different age groups if they wish to do so.

An amalgamation would build on the strengths present in the existing separate schools under a single leadership team, providing efficiency and opportunity which would not be available under separate management structures. Staff would also benefit from continuing professional development opportunities by enabling them to gain experience across the Foundation phase and key stage 2. These advantages would not be present by maintaining the status quo.

The Council believes that on balance, the benefits of an amalgamation to both Cadoxton Nursery School and Cadoxton Primary School outweigh the benefits of making no change and maintaining the status quo.

## **Issue 5**

### **Loss of funding and staffing to support nursery children**

Respondents shared a view that the Headteacher leads with an exceptionally clear view, and that a head needs to be on site. The nursery staff are trained in what they do and specialise in nursery teaching, with the team being excellent and work well together. A head needs to be in position in the nursery, not in another school.

[Concern raised that the proposal attaches no value to the specialist skills of the staff and headteacher of the nursery. Removing the leadership role will be detrimental to the educational provision of the nursery.](#)

Concerns raised that less funding will be available for staffing and resources and that children will suffer. The nursery school has an excellent Headteacher and fantastic staff with open access for parents and carers. A Headteacher in charge of 520 children will not know children in the same way. A nursery class will not offer the same staffing ratios.

Respondents are worried that there will be a loss of jobs for teaching and non-teaching staff, and expressed concerns that funding will be inadequate as it will be controlled by the primary school and as both schools remain separate it will negate any efficiency.

### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

In Wales funding for schools is based on the number of children attending the school. As it is not anticipated that the number of children at the nursery will decrease if the proposal is determined, therefore funding to support teaching

at all levels will not decrease. If the proposal is implemented from April 2017 there will be an overall budget managed by the primary school. The school will be able to find efficiencies in the running of the school through decreased management costs for roles that would be duplicated and by negotiating single contracts for services and through economies of scale. This will generate financial savings which may be reinvested in supporting the continued improvement for learning outcomes for all children.

In times of austerity, all budgets are under pressure. The Council believes that the proposal has the potential to reduce the risk of teachers and LSAs losing their jobs, as financial savings would be made in management costs and other costs of running of a school i.e. service contracts. The proposal does not necessarily lead to changes to the vast majority of staff in the existing nursery and the Council believes that there is no reason why this proposal should lead to the loss of their expertise or the support that they provide for children with additional needs.

There is the potential for the expertise of nursery staff and reception staff to be shared, facilitating transition and improving provision. The “Building a Brighter Future – Early Years and Childcare Plan” (2013) supports this workforce development initiative. An amalgamated school would offer opportunities for all staff to develop their continued professional development through access and training with other age groups as part of individual’s career development plans.

The skills, experience and commitment of the existing nursery Headteacher is acknowledged by the Council, parents and the local community. The primary school also has an excellent Headteacher. In the majority of primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan which include a nursery class, the nursery classes perform well under the leadership of the primary Headteacher, providing a quality start to a child’s schooling.

It is anticipated that the staff of the nursery school would be incorporated into the staffing structure of the proposed amalgamated primary school. The staffing structure of the proposed school would be decided upon by the Headteacher and governing body of the proposed amalgamated school. There would be recognition of staff’s specialist expertise in certain age groups, but there would also be opportunities for staff to develop their pedagogy through working across the primary phase. The proposal will not necessarily lead to changes to the vast majority within the nursery setting

It is stated in the Frequently Asked Questions section of the consultation document that as a result of amalgamation, there will be the requirement for one Headteacher of the primary school, which will be the existing head of Cadoxton Primary School, Janet Hayward.

If the amalgamation is progressed it is envisaged that the nursery class will have a teacher in charge appointed. This individual would oversee the day to day activities of the class, whilst still having a teaching role. The teacher in charge would be a first point of contact for parents, guardians, and carers of nursery age children.

Recent figures from the Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey (2014) indicate that there is a pattern of declining numbers of qualified teachers and leaders in nursery schools. Welsh Government has also indicated that from 2011-2014, the number of stand-alone nurseries across Wales has decreased from 22 to 11. An amalgamation would secure the future workforce and sustainability of the nursery setting.

The Council is confident that the proposed amalgamation will help avoid the risk of a reduction in teaching and support staff given current financial challenges. The planned change will ensure a single point of contact for parents and staff in relation to the day to day running of nursery provision.

## **Issue 6**

### **Concern that the Nursery will just become a class in the primary school**

Respondents felt that there will be a small percentage of Headteacher commitment and a lack of a bond between the Headteacher and the nursery children. Concerns were also expressed that nursery age children would be intimidated within a larger setting.

Respondents pointed out that the nursery is an excellent example of integrated practice bringing together health, education and social services to support all aspects of a child's development. The nursery school has always operated a strict level of security, giving parents confidence that the children are safe and protected.

Further concerns expressed were that the primary school will not have the resources to continue daily communication with parents and if here is a problem within the school, parents wouldn't know who to speak to.

### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

In the majority of primary schools in the Vale of Glamorgan which include a nursery class, the nursery classes perform well under the leadership of the primary Headteacher, providing a quality start to a child's schooling.

If the proposal to amalgamate were to go ahead there will be a requirement for a teacher in charge to manage the day to day running of the nursery who will be the first point of contact for parents and carers. If there are issues that either the teacher in charge or parents needs further support with then the Headteacher will be available to help find a solution or give further guidance. The Headteacher of the primary school has a strong bond with her current pupils and this practice will be extended to include the children in the nursery class.

Security of the nursery class will continue to be strong and this will not change. The Headteacher will work with the governing body and staff to review all safeguarding policies to ensure that they are extended to meet the needs of nursery age pupils and their families.

The primary school would continue to work in partnership with a number of agencies such as community, health, police and social services as it does now. These relationships would include the nursery class and they would continue to be sustained and developed. The extensive support that is currently available to parents, pupils and extended family members will continue to support children's development and offer the best support available to families.

The children who attend the nursery will continue to be taught in the existing nursery building. The nursery class will not move into the existing primary school's buildings. The Council believes that in many ways the children's daily routines and contact with older children will remain unchanged. Being part of a primary school has the potential to ease transition in that, when ready, children can be introduced to aspects of the primary school building e.g. the hall, thereby enriching provision and reducing anxiety associated with transition into the Reception class.

## **Issue 7**

### **Removes choice for local parents**

Concerns were expressed that parental choice will be removed. Parents choose the nursery school because it is a stand-alone nursery.

### **Council's response to the concerns raised**

The Council is not reducing the number of nursery places available to parents in the area. Admission arrangements for admission to nursery and reception will remain unchanged as a result of the proposed amalgamation. The catchment area for the school will remain the same.

The council believes that there will be very little change for parents who will still have access to high quality nursery places at the school. The same building will be used and standards in the nursery class will be at least sustained at current levels.

Parents will still have access to the same number of high quality nursery places in a safe stimulating environment suited to the needs of nursery age children. This would be enhanced by the opportunity to access the resources, both physical and personnel, of the primary school.

The Council believes that high quality learning is provided in both nursery classes as well as stand-alone nurseries as evidenced through Estyn inspection reports for primary schools across the Vale of Glamorgan, which have nursery classes attached.

## **Issue 8**

### **Lack of Fairness and Transparency of Process**

The Governing Body of Cadoxton Nursery School raised concerns that the process has not been fair or democratic. It points out that of the three ward members, one is a governor of Cadoxton Primary School and has been vocal in the past about the independence of the nursery. Another is Leader of the Council and as such, was involved in the decision to publish a statutory notice on the proposal. It is “not aware of either party declaring an interest”. No reference is made to the third ward member.

The Governing body is of the view that it has not received support from its elected councillors and claims that no one in the Council has listened to it. It further asserts that because there is no local Councillor on its governing body, it has “not had the same influence or presence in Council as the primary school”.

Given the above, THE Governing Body is of the view that the decision to proceed should be called in for further scrutiny.

### **Council’s response to concerns raised**

The Councillor who is a governor at Cadoxton Primary School is not a member of the Cabinet or the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee. He has not been involved in decision making or scrutiny in relation to these proposals which means that the situation in which he would be required to declare an interest has not arisen. The Leader of the Council is also not required to declare an interest as he has no direct association with either the primary or nursery school. The fact that the Leader and the ward member represent the Cadoc ward would not require an interest to be declared.

A report seeking approval to consult on a proposal to amalgamate the schools was initially presented to Cabinet on 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Following representation from the chair of the governing body of Cadoxton Nursery School, the report was deferred and amendments were made to address the concerns raised before it was resubmitted to the Cabinet meeting of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015. This demonstrates that Cabinet has given consideration to issues raised by the governing body of the nursery school. The relevant minute of the meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> October 2015 is provided below.

### **C2939 PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE CADOXTON NURSERY AND CADOXTON PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND EXTEND THE AGE RANGE OF CADOXTON PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM 4 TO 11 TO 3 TO 11 YEARS (CSS) (SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – LIFELONG LEARNING) -**

“At the meeting the Cabinet Member for Children’s Services and Schools, tabled a [statement](#) from the Chair of Governors at Cadoxton Nursery School, and in light of the tabled information wished to defer the report for further discussions to take place around points 8 and 9 of the proposal.

In response to concerns raised by the Chair of Governors under the heading “Officers consulted”, the Cabinet Member further commented that it was part of the Council’s statutory consultation for Councillor Johnson to be consulted on the report as a Ward Member. Councillor Johnson played no part in the writing of the report.”

The decision of Cabinet on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2016 will be referred to the Learning and Culture Scrutiny Committee (formally the Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee) for further consideration.

Cabinet’s decision of 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015 to consult on proposals to amalgamate the schools was scrutinised by the Lifelong Learning Scrutiny Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2016 (minute ref 742). The Scrutiny committee recommended that, “the Scrutiny Committee fully supports the Cabinet proposal to amalgamate Cadoxton Nursery and Primary School by extending the age range of Cadoxton Primary School from 4-11 to 3-11 years”.

In making a decision to publish a statutory notice to amalgamate the schools, the Cabinet carefully considered the issues raised by respondents to the consultation including the detailed response from the governing body of the nursery school.