

REPORT TO: RECESS SUB COMMITTEE - 16TH JULY 2007

REPORT ON: THE FORMAL CONSULTATION PROCESS ON THE PROPOSED EARLY MERGER OF MID CRAIGIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND MOSSGIEL PRIMARY SCHOOL

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 376-2007

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report details the representations made during the formal publication and consultation exercise on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie Primary Schools and seeks approval to proceed with the proposal to merge Mossgiel and Mid Craigie in the Mid Craigie building to be known as Rowantree Primary School from 13th August 2007.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i. note the representations made thus far during the formal publication and consultation exercise on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie Primary Schools;
(The Director of Education will report verbally any further representations received between 9th July and 11th July).
- ii. instruct the Director of Education to proceed with the proposal to merge Mossgiel and Mid Craigie in the Mid Craigie building to be known as Rowantree Primary School from August 13th 2007; and
- iii. note that the Mossgiel school building and site will be surplus to requirements and it is requested that this property be remitted to the Economic Development Department for consideration of future use and/or disposal.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 If the merger goes ahead from August 2007 there will be a saving of £194,670 in the financial year 2007/08, and from 2008/09 a saving of £335,010 which has been incorporated as part funding for the new PPP schools.

4.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no sustainability policy implications.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Approval of this report will ensure enhanced educational provision for pupils currently at Mossgiel Primary School by giving them a larger cohort of peers to interact with socially and educationally.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1** At its meeting of 11th June 2007, the Education Committee considered a report by the Director of Education entitled Early Merger of Mid Craigie Primary School and Mossgiel Primary School and resolved to formally authorise the Director of Education to proceed with the appropriate statutory consultations.
- 6.2** The Director of Education subsequently published and consulted on the proposal in terms of the Education (Publication and Consultation etc.) (Scotland) Regulations 1981 during the consultation period June 13th - July 11th 2007 and held meetings for statutory consultees at that time. The only letter received was in favour of the proposal. In addition and beyond the requirements of the statutory consultations, the Head of Primary Education and Primary Education Manager met with the staff from both schools. A note of all the meetings is attached at Appendix 1. The Head of Support for Learning also met with all support staff and the Head of Education Resources offered individual meetings to all staff.
- 6.3** A summary table of issues raised at the formal consultation meetings with parents is given below.

All staff agreed to the early merger.

The issues raised at both parent consultation meetings covered the following topic areas:

- timescale for the merger
- classes in the new school
- financial implications
- uniform
- staffing
- ethos

A commentary on each of the above is made in paragraph 8.0.

At both staff meetings no issues were raised however a number of practical implications were discussed.

7.0 STATUS OF THE PROPOSAL POST FORMAL CONSULTATION

7.1 The Proposal

It is proposed that Mossgiel Primary School and Mid Craigie Primary School from 13th August 2007 merge, and that the new school, to be named Rowantree Primary School use the present Mid Craigie Primary School site.

Main Issues

The main issue is the timing of the merger. This was originally to take place in October 2009 but given the falling roll at Mossgiel Primary School it was deemed appropriate to propose merging the schools early for the educational well-being of pupils at Mossgiel Primary School. Many parents have already recognised that the roll of Mossgiel does not support the wider educational experiences of their children and have made placing requests to other schools as a result, leaving Mossgiel with an even smaller roll (42 at present for session 2007/08). Consequently, the Director of Education undertook formal consultation with all staff and parents of both schools.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Committee proceed with this proposal as it stands.

8.1 COMMENTARY ON TOPIC AREAS DISCUSSED

Timescale for the merger

Parents asked for clarification of why an early merger was being proposed.

Falling rolls were the main driver for the proposed early merger. The two schools were due to merge in October 2009 but when the decline in the Mossgiel Primary School roll became apparent the early merger made educational sense.

Classes for the new School

Parents wished to know who their child's teacher would be.

Two class plans are in place for session 2007/2008, one for Rowantree Primary School and one for the status quo. Parents and staff will be informed of classes by letter on 17th July 2007 depending upon the outcome of this recommendation.

Financial Implications

Parents asked if the Mid Craigie building would be maintained.

Rowantree Primary School will have an appropriate repairs and maintenance budget, and repairs will be carried out as per normal under Devolved School Management budgets to a satisfactory level given the short timescale prior to moving to the new building.

Uniform

Parents asked questions regarding uniform.

Pupils can wear Mid Craigie, Mossgiel or Rowantree Primary School uniform. The school will be open to take orders from parents for new uniforms during the summer holiday.

Staffing

All issues relating to teaching and support staff have been discussed with trade unions. Specific issues relating to Support for Learning staff have been explained to parents.

Ethos

All staff have given a firm commitment to work together with the pupils and communities involved to make the transition arrangements smooth. The pupils have already had an activity day together and have worked jointly to design the new school badge and uniform.

Staff from both schools have worked together on a joint School Development Plan covering 2006-2009 and regularly meet in working groups and professional development activities.

All teaching staff from both schools are in favour of the merger.

9.0 CONSULTATION

9.1 This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance) and the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services).

10.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

ANNE WILSON
Director of Education

9th July 2007

AW/LW/IR/DD

MID CRAIGIE STAFF FORMAL CONSULTATION

Formal Consultation with Mid Craigie Primary School Staff on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie Primary Schools within the Mid Craigie accommodation from the start of session 2007/08, and rename the school Rowantree Primary School - 28 June 2007.

Present: Eight staff, the Head Teacher of Mid Craigie, the Head of Primary Education and the Primary Manager.

Issues raised:

- there were no issues raised by staff.

Practical implications discussed:

- Can teachers get class lists with pupil names/numbers?
- Will 16 July be the final decision?
- There was a specific issue raised about a temporary placement of one nursery pupil for the proposed two days exceptional closure.
- How many Support for Learning Support staff would be at Rowantree Primary School?
- Can the school be opened during the school holiday for staff to have access?
- Staff found the "don't know" scenario unsettling and wish the process had been started earlier so that things could have been finalised before the summer break.
- Who in the "committee" will make the decision?
- Concern was expressed over the redeployment of a long standing member of the office staff and the loss of their expertise.
- Would there be an extra ancillary staff member to help with toileting etc of pupils in the resourced location.

The above were discussed and answered.

All staff present were in favour of the proposed early merger.

MID CRAIGIE PARENT FORMAL CONSULTATION

Mid Craigie Parent Formal Consultation on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel Primary School and Mid Craigie Primary School in the Mid Craigie building and be known as Rowantree Primary School - 28 June 2007 at 7.00pm.

Present: Eleven parents, the Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher of Mid Craigie Primary School, Head of Education Resources, Primary Education Manager

Issues raised

- There were no issues raised.

Practical implications

- Why is the decision on the merger not happening earlier than the 16 July? - it was explained that there was legislation we were required to follow and 16 July was the earliest date.
- How many Mossgiel parents/staff are against the early merger - no staff against and 2 parents against.
- When will pupils know their teacher for next session? - if the proposal is approved this information will be included within the letter which will be sent to parents on 17 July.
- Will the money for repairs and maintenance be the same and not cut if the early merger goes ahead - yes.
- Where/when will parents be able to get a school tie? - it was explained a new design for the tie had been approved by pupils and should be ready for the start of the new term. Every pupil will be given a new Rowantree tie from the school.
- What uniform should pupils wear - pupils can wear Mid Craigie, Mossgiel or Rowantree uniform from August 2007 irrespective of the outcome of the consultation.
- Why was the date for the new build put back from April 09 to August 09? Parents thought this was a good idea but wondered why - this was due to the delay in signing contracts.
- If the merger does not go ahead will the composite classes stay the same - the class structure would be more or less the same given the number of placing requests from pupils currently at Mossgiel.
- Has parking been looked at? - there are no plans to address this.
- The fun day bringing the 2 schools together was a very good idea.
- Will there be a buddy system to support the Mossgiel pupils - yes, the school will have a strong buddy system.

At the end of the meeting all 11 parents were in favour of the proposed early merger.

MOSSGIEL STAFF FORMAL CONSULTATION

Formal Consultation with Mossgiel Primary School Staff on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie Primary Schools within the Mid Craigie accommodation from the start of session 2007/08, and rename the school Rowantree Primary School - 26 June 2007.

Present: Ten staff, the Head of Primary Education and the Primary Manager.

Issues raised:

- There were no issues raised by staff.

Practical implications discussed:

- What will be done to stop the Mossgiel Primary School building being vandalised over the summer?
- Staff would have liked to pack resources before 16 July.
- When would staff have access to Rowantree Primary School during the summer should the early merger go ahead?
- When will parents be informed of their child's teacher?
- Why is there only a roll of 47 for Mossgiel Primary School as of August 2007?
- Will computer networks at Rowantree Primary School be ready for mid August?
- Has parking for staff been looked at?
- Will the visiting specialists for PE, Music, Art and Drama be the same next session?

The above was discussed and answered.

All staff present were in favour of the proposed early merger.

MOSSGIEL PARENT FORMAL CONSULTATION

Mossgiel Parent Formal Consultation on the proposed early merger of Mossgiel Primary School and Mid Craigie Primary School in the Mid Craigie building and be known as Rowantree Primary School - 27 June 2007 at 7.00pm.

Present: Eight parents (representing 6 families), 2 Tayside Contracts staff, the Head Teacher and Depute Head Teacher of Mossgiel Primary School, Head of Education Resources, Primary Education Manager

Issues raised

- One parent referred to the feedback from the informal consultation with Mossgiel Primary School parents on the proposed early merger as being full of inaccuracies and lies. It was explained by the Primary Education Manager and Head Teacher of Mossgiel Primary School who were both present at this meeting that this was accurate.
- The same parent asked why the whole merger process had been rushed - it was explained that when the department had collated figures for pupil numbers for session 2007/08 for Mossgiel Primary School it became apparent the numbers had fallen dramatically and so the proposal for an early merger was put forward on educational grounds.
- The same parent commented that Fiona Hyslop MSP had stated that class sizes should be 18 so why was this not the case in Mossgiel Primary School. It was explained that this was a proposed target for the future.
- The same parent stated the department was in breach of legal requirements and a letter would soon be received from his lawyers.
- Another parent asked about the placement of SEN in a larger school - she had chosen Mossgiel Primary School because of the small classes. Would the resources/staffing be the same? It was explained that all Mossgiel Primary School staff would transfer if the early merger took place.
- Another parent asked about uniform - it was explained pupils could wear Mid Craigie, Mossgiel or Rowantree uniform if the early merger took place.
- One family had specific concerns about their individual child's support in the merged school and what this would be - it was explained that all staff would move to the merged school and appropriate support would be given for all pupils. These parents stressed they were neutral regarding the merger and not opposed to it. If their child's support would be the same as at present in Mossgiel Primary School they would be happy with the proposed merger.
- If the proposed merger did not take place, would parents have the option of reconsidering any placing requests they had made for their children and return them to Mossgiel Primary School for session 2007/08 - an assurance was given that this would be the case.

At the conclusion of the meeting the following was noted:

Four parents (3 separate families) were in favour of the early merger.

Two parents (of 1 child) had a specific concern regarding their own child.

Two parents (of 2 separate families) had significant concerns.