

### Statutory Consultation Responses

Comments	Date Received
<p>The pre-statutory consultation was biased and a farce. No meaningful information was provided only high level platitudes. In the consultation meetings parents were patronised and told to 'dissect your data people' when raising concerns about care and nurture. In line with this, the decision document sent to members is similarly biased and does not accurately represent the consultation responses: "Generally there was little opposition to ... the junior headteacher becoming the primary Headteacher". This is simply not an honest reflection of the feedback. There is significant opposition and the junior headteacher does not have the support or confidence of a large proportion of the parent body. "The main objection to this proposal is that some parents are opposed to having a headteacher that works across three schools (which would be the case if this were taken forward)." - True but this fails to recognise that the Schools are at opposite sides of the city and the leadership team have been a VERY poor track record of being present and available at BPJS. They are not warm or welcoming and are generally aloof. I can say with complete confidence that the head of BPJS doesn't even know my child's name. WE DO NOT WANT OR SUPPORT AN EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER FOR OUR SCHOOLS UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. I do not object to a primary school but if that means we have EHT that I want two separate schools to limit the damage.</p>	3 May 2013
<p>Since I live in Sheldrake gardens, I often struggle to park in the car park at school drop-off and pick-up times which is very frustrating. Asking the parents to move their cars often results in arguments. I am concerned that if the school gets any busier that the parking will become even more of a problem. One solution would be to block off the gates which lead to Sheldrake gardens to deter parents from parking in the reserved spaces, or at least have the gates locked until the school day starts (after the parents have dropped off the kids).</p>	29 April 2013
<p>Would the co locating of school mean that more children would be housed on a smaller bit of land? Would the land of the school that is no longer required, be sold off for housing so that overall the children have less space to run and play in? Would there still be both a front and a rear access to the school? I.e. access from the top of Heathfield school? Would the primary school end up with less facilities that the current two schools have, i.e. only one sports hall assembly hall, playground etc? As a future parent of the school I would appreciate a response to these questions,</p>	10 May 2013
<p>I'm writing to inform you of my concerns of the proposed merge. The only concern I have is the proposed appointment of Mrs Montague the current executive head of the junior school. My eldest daughter is currently in year 5 and when I have gone in for any concerns I may have I have never managed to speak directly to the head as she is not at the school on a daily basis. I feel it will be impossible for her to offer our children stability and reassurance that a head provides, especially for infant school aged children. I can understand why the executive head was brought into the school but would be better for a permanent head to be appointed who can be there most days.</p>	11 May 2013
<p>I am for the proposal to bring together the two schools to create a continuous system, teaching and management staff from Reception Year 6. I am against the suggestion that the infant school should be discontinued' as a result of having no permanent head. It is clear that the Junior School does not have a permanent head either, from the fact that the school week of the head teacher is spread across three separate schools already. Commit to the community, the school and all the pupils and future pupils by doing them the service of advertising and recruiting one committed, full time, permanent head teacher to take on the role of</p>	15 May 2013

<p>leading such a substantial change for both schools. As many people have already commented, the infant school has the better track record, commitment to the overall development of their pupils (not pure results based focus), and engagement with families and community. Do not just 'discontinue' this and automatically expand the empire of a head that is not even available full time on site as it is. Much can be taken from the infant school to improve the juniors, acknowledge this and create a new full time on site head teacher post which will be recruited with the involvement of Governors and teachers from both schools.</p>	
<p>The infant school is a happy nurturing school where both my children have thrived socially and academically and so I do not wish to see it closed. The school is well led with friendly and approachable staff and children thrive in the small infant environment. The junior school has been and still is going through a lot of changes and stability has not been established. The head teacher as head of three schools is rarely there and unavailable so I can not see how she will lead another school. The junior school does not appear to be well managed and parents are not aware of who is in charge. There is a real absence of nurture and the emotional needs of pupils being met and the curriculum lacks creativity. Merging will create a large school and I struggle to see how it will benefit pupils apart from not having to apply for a junior place. This is not generally an issue as long as a child is in catchment transfer occurs. The only way I could give support to this proposal would be the discontinuation of the junior school with the infant school which is a settled, established and happy school taking over the juniors.</p>	21/05/2013
<p>There are a number of advantages around having them combined:</p> <p>Single management structure, allowing reduction of duplicated functions</p> <p>Consistent policies across the infant and junior schools (where they differ please move to current best practice, don't just default to that with which the new management is most familiar)</p> <p>Coinciding inset days, a particular problem to working parents who have children in both schools.</p> <p>Avoid need of parents to apply for their children to move into the junior school.</p> <p>Increased opportunity for the junior and infant schools to share the facilities available across the whole site, e.g. access to infant school of playing field for more than just sports day.</p> <p>Already very similar, but introduce a common uniform.</p> <p>I also notice some onetime advantages to the city council, particularly with the proposed manner of the merger:</p> <p>Avoid recruiting a replacement junior school head teacher, at a time when many LEAs are struggling to find suitable applicants for head teacher positions.</p> <p>The junior school comes under the "Good" Ofsted rating of the infant school, removing another "Needs Improvement" from city books.</p> <p>Avoid the additional machinations of closing both schools and opening as a new primary school, requiring due process on recruiting a new management and governor structures.</p> <p>So, quite a number of positive aspects to the proposed merger, however I also see the following negative aspects, especially around the increased burden placed on the headteacher, with both the junior and infant schools already fairly large schools, a combined school obviously becomes a very much larger school, particularly if the current four class intake of 120 children continues for a number of years meaning a school of up to 840 children, which combined with the teachers and all the other supporting staff leaves the headteacher responsible for well on the way to 1000.</p> <p>I am not familiar with the career history of the current infant school headteacher, but I'm aware she has been in her current role for a number</p>	06/06/2013

of years working with just early years and stage 1, and would now also need to work with stage 2 where the approach to be taken with children is often significantly different, particularly at the top end as they prepare for secondary school. If one aspect of this merger is to mitigate the national shortage of headteachers, they need to consider that a larger school requires a higher standard of applicant diminishing the pool further and at some stage the current headteacher will want to move on or retire. It is unclear to me whether the infant school governing body will increase as a result of the increased size of school and increased age range, and whether there is any guidance for a reshuffle of members to give a fair representation of experience from the two schools.

I understand the junior school headteacher is leaving this summer, so some form of action needs to be taken by September, but this leaves very little run up to prepare for the change over, with a decision being made just a few weeks before the summer break.

Additionally, I'm aware of a number of other schools across the city potentially going through the same process this year and next. Is there sufficient staff with the skills and time available to support all the schools going through these transition phases?

As for my personal decision, I'm in favour of the merging of the two schools in to a single primary school, despite how large the school will become, assuming the headteacher, with support from the LEA surround themselves with a strong leadership team. Pragmatically, I think the approach of expanding the age range of the infant school to absorb the junior school is probably best for the time available. Although, were more time available I would have preferred both schools to be closed and a new, LEA controlled primary school to be formed on the same site, which would force a great deal more rigour around the process of appointing the leadership structures, including the governing body, not to mention a greater feeling of equality between the infant and junior school staff.

21st May 2013

Dear Alison,

Further to the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> May held at St Monica Infant School (SMIS) attended by governors from both SMIS & St Monica Junior School (SMJS) and yourself I am writing on behalf of the Governing Body (GB) of SMJS to clarify our position as regards to the proposed primary and start date.

Firstly, as stated at the meeting, we are enthusiastic supporters of the merger between SMIS & SMJS to form an all through primary school commencing Jan 2014.

The Governors of SMJS were initially asked to consider the conversion to primary at a meeting with you on 4<sup>th</sup> February. This meeting was held a full month after Angela Paris Head Teacher (HT) at SMJS announced that she intended to retire at the end of this academic year. You stated at that meeting that we could be fast tracked so that the primary could commence Sept 2013 this - was important to the GB because of the pending retirement of Angela. The GB discussed and agreed that if we could become a primary by Sept 2013 then we would support going out to pre-statutory consultation and seek the views of our staff, parents and community; we would also put on hold the recruitment of a new HT until the outcome of the consultation.

Subsequently and during the pre-statutory consultation period the GB of SMJS were asked if we would consider moving the proposed start date from Sep 2013 to Jan 2014. This was because of logistical and timing issues, particularly the final decision by cabinet which would not be made until June 18<sup>th</sup>, giving little time between that date and the end of the academic year.

After discussions with the Chair of Governors (COG) of SMIS and Local Authority (LA) representatives the GB of SMJS held an EGM on April 24<sup>th</sup> to consider this request. At the meeting Governors were concerned that Sep 2013 was the date given to parents, staff and the community during the pre-statutory consultation and that we would be without a HT from Sept 2013. Also there was major concern that any further delay may have a detrimental effect on the on-going process of raising standards throughout the school. After much deliberation the GB decided, with reservations, to agree a proposed start date of Jan 2014 we also agreed to ask the GB of SMIS if Kathryn Bevan-Mackie could become our executive head from Sept 2013; Kathryn had indicated that she would be interested in becoming the HT of the new primary so this seemed to be a logical and practical move..

As you are aware the process has now moved on to statutory consultation which will end on June 6<sup>th</sup> so we would like to give our reasons why the new primary should start from Jan 2014 and no later. I would like to add that the reasons given are the collective view of The GB of SMJS and reflect the views of parents and staff expressed at several meetings and through various channels.

Initial expectations by governors, parents, staff and the community was that a primary would commence Sep 2013 (as stated in pre-statutory consultation)

The governors of SMJS have communicated to parents staff and the community that the Primary, if given the go-ahead, would now commence Jan 2014 (date given in statutory consultation) any further delay could jeopardise parental, staff and community support.

SMJS governors and staff are keen to start working collaboratively with all at SMIS as soon as possible; indeed the two schools are already working together in a number of important areas and as from September 13 the two schools will share the same HT and will in effect be working as a primary. 'Both GBs have indicated their desire to work together and have agreed in principal that the new primary school GB will be formed from members from both existing GBs. We would propose that this new GB is constituted ASAP and forms a 'Shadow' GB meeting regularly from this summer term making and agreeing the policies and structures for the new school.'

The benefits of becoming a primary are not in doubt and are supported by both schools and the community of Sholing. It is important that the continued good progression being made by both schools is maintained; this can be achieved if both schools come together as one sooner rather than later, but could be jeopardised by further delay.

We will need to start working with the LA as soon as possible so that we can access all the financial and logistical advice and resources that will be required. Access to a Hampshire Improvement Partner will be made available for 18 months from Sept 2013.

Staff restructuring cannot take place until we become a primary, again the longer this is left the more staff become uncertain and nervous about the future - this could have a negative impact on standards.

The GB of SMJS are enthusiastic supporters of an all through primary, and given the support and resources available feel that we can work with all at SMIS and create an excellent primary school for our community by Jan 2014 which will be of huge benefit to children, parents and staff, so why delay?

I hope that this letter clarifies the position of SMJS and also reflect the views expressed at the meeting of 9<sup>th</sup> May where you were in attendance.  
I would be grateful if you could include this letter in your report to cabinet following statutory consultation.

Yours Sincerely

Shaun M. Tew  
COG SMJS

22 May 2012

Dear Alison

You will recall my letter dated 30th April 13 on behalf of St Monica Infant School to you set out the reasons why the FGB felt the expansion of St Monica Infant School would not be conducive and in the best interests of the children and wider community if the opening of a new primary school were to be January 2014 for St Monica. After listening to advice, considering the facts and looking at the available information we then concluded the proposal was not the best way forward. Governors felt that to adopt January 2014 would prove to be a hindrance to the opening of a new and successful primary school and suggested a start date of September 2014.

It is clear that Governors of both St Monica schools are in complete agreement with yourself and the LA that there is a compelling case for moving towards the LA proposal of better integrated primary education. We agree the benefits of a Primary School will be lifelong for the children and wider community. After forensic discussion, Governors of St Monica Infant School feel to put, what we concur is the agreed improvement to the children's education, staff development and benefits to the residents of Sholing and our city at risk through an unrealistic timescale, would be a mistake if a January opening date were adopted.

In response to my letter dated 30th April 13, Governors would like to thank you for your email dated 01 May 13 that included legal advice stating "This confirms that we can modify the date in the cabinet paper scheduled for 18th June. I would advise at this point that we seriously consider stating July 2014 - not September 2014. The former, so that we do not go over another academic year."

As governors of the expanding school we could have simply asked you to proceed on this basis of the legal advice in your email and resolved to support your suggestion of July 14 for the new primary. Instead of acting alone on this advice, governors of St Monica Infant School invited you to address us at an EGM on the earliest possible mutually convenient date of 13th May 2013 to discuss implications of same. To ensure we took account the views of all we also invited SMJS GB (closing school) to take a full part in discussions and to listen to views and debate the issues. SMIS governors worked hard in the meeting towards a negotiated way forward but were disappointed with the engagement of SMJS governors. I hope you would agree that Governors of SMIS displayed a willingness to listen in full to what all had to say at the meeting before advising the LA of our decision and thought process to be shared with the LA and Cabinet. After the joint meeting concluded SMIS FGB continued discussions, listened closely to our respected HT (also the new HT of the said primary, as included within the proposal before cabinet) and were asked to consider fully everything they had heard and debated before reconvening in the forum of a FGB meeting on 21st May 2013 to decide on the way forward. This meeting has now taken place.

Alison, we think it is important we share with you and cabinet not only SMIS FGB position but also many of the reasons and much of the discussion that was pursuant to arriving at where we are now. The latest OfSTED evaluations of the St Monica Schools list St Monica Infant School as 'Satisfactory' and St Monica Junior School as 'Requiring Improvement'. Both schools are clearly working hard towards attaining a Good or Outstanding Judgement. At SMIS the HT has been instrumental in driving and leading sustained and embedded improvement. Along with the children, staff and parents the Governors have embraced the challenges and worked hard towards improvement. We have welcomed and value the help from the brilliant support network and partnerships across the city and beyond. I am confident the LA, through external visits, LA RoV's, discussions and data collection would testify to the stepped improvements in SMIS. We are not resting on our laurels; we know there is still

further work and improvements to be made by all. We are also aware that when a school is judged as R/I by OfSTED then there is a clear mission statement from the linked Senior Inspector to support that school towards a good or better judgement within an 18 month period. While governors sympathise this can place unwanted pressures on staff in particular we are in complete agreement that the benefits of such targeted support is immense. This support would be lost at too early a stage if a January 2014 were adopted by Cabinet. The support from HMI is invaluable and needs to be harnessed to the full for the children's education to gain maximum benefit. It will also assist the newly reconstituted FGB and HT to have a better understanding of the needs of a new primary.

SMJS has now written to SMIS and requested we authorise our HT, Mrs K Bevan-Mackie be allowed to fulfil the position of Executive Head Teacher of SMJS for a period of 12 months alongside her current role. Following challenge to Kathryn on the likely impact etc., SMIS Governors are satisfied this will have benefits to the children and staff of both schools. Despite having our Deputy Head Teacher on maternity leave and a newly appointed Assistant Head Teacher in position governors are convinced the experienced SLT in our school (including an effective SBM and FGB) can make this work and it not be detrimental to the children and both school communities. Indeed we feel that with Mrs Bevan-Mackie being given the opportunity to lead both schools separately and simultaneously for a sustained period will benefit all, and assist in a seamless transition towards a successful new primary school from day one of opening. We accept that parents and the wider community might well view this as effectively a primary. That is fine, but importantly both schools can work towards a more cohesive official coming together, in a more measured way than a January 2014 official new date for the new primary school permits. The governors of SMIS have a duty of care towards our HT. It is imperative that realistic timescales, targets and support are in place prior to official primary opening. We believe the appointment of EHT of SMJS in the interim period of the new primary will contribute to the success of the new primary. From September Kathryn needs to be in a position to lead the schools, have time to assess, make recommendations and a timeframe that is sensible to bring the two schools together as one. In this respect alone we believe January 2014 to be an unrealistic target date.

It has been said by SMJS that "We will need to start working with the LA as soon as possible so that we can access all the financial and logistical advice and resources that will be required. Access to a Hampshire Improvement Partner will be made available for 18 months from Sept 2013." Governors of SMIS are in complete agreement with this. This process can still be started now, even if the opening date of the new primary is after January 2014. We know from advices that you gave at the meeting that if the decision was taken by cabinet in June 13 to proceed with a new primary for St Monica that this work and the bids can still begin now. In fact we would go further and add that a pairing of schools that are not anticipated to seek primary conversion until September 2014 is already included within the stated and guaranteed SIP support. This too lends support that conversion after January 2014 does not mean a loss of resources. Throughout the process Alison, you have been candid about the limited resources available in the current difficult financial climate. Despite this you have given assurances on the separate sites additional funding, SIP support and the willingness to support measures when a case is made on a 'case by case' need. We are grateful for these assurances.

The St Monica schools are keen supporters of the LA lead on improved transition arrangements and attendance matters in education if our children are to achieve their full potential. We want and support 'more joined-up' working. We wholeheartedly endorse SMJS statement that our schools are working more closely and collaboratively than ever. This is across not just academia but also in areas such as PTA, within cluster, governors and wider. There is still further work to be done but again the timescale for closer integration needs to be worked on and agreed by all in full. Just to say "we will do it from January 2014" is not enough. We need to have an agreed, considered and attainable timeline in place. Realistically, with the different things going on in school, the retirement of a HT and the appointment of a EHT then SMIS believe the optimum time for this planning to begin in earnest is September 2014. Yes work can get underway now but this will require a great deal of the HT's time and many meetings if it is to culminate in the timeline ending with a successful new primary from day 1 in January 2014. This is not felt to be realistic unless we

are asking the HT & FGB's to attend many meetings etc. with this as the sole focus. All this would then detract from the HT of the new primary undertaking the massively important effective deployment of staff and perhaps assessing and then making recommendations for staff restructure. Let us be clear that this will not be an easy task. While the LA has promised support, and school will have a HR SLA in place this will take time. It needs to be considered in detail by FGB, unions and other parties. Applications, interviews and related processes not only take time if they are to be sustainable and effective but also questioned and tested for impact. The HT will be tasked to make proposals and have meetings in this regard. We must ensure the HT is supported, given resources and adequate time to lead and see this process through and in good health. All this while driving up standards across both schools as a EHT and HT on a limited and reduced budget if the schools stand- alone budgetary support is lost too early. In the view of SMIS we say a primary conversion date of January 2014 is not adequate time to support this without the education of the children suffering and potentially putting the wellbeing of the HT and senior leaders at risk. This is not just on the basis of finance but what is best for the children and the best for ALL staff across the entire St Monica community. Also while on the topic of duty of care could we ask there will be in place a controlled safe crossing point between the two sites of the new primary school and a likely completion date for same please?

Governors of SMJS had expressed a concern that by selecting an opening date of a new primary after January 2014 would lead to a loss of focus. SMIS FGB would categorically disagree with this. In fact it is our view it would have the opposite effect. By having in mind a more realistic target date we are of a mind that school leaders, partners, committees and working parties would be given specific tasks with realistic aims and guided by achievable target dates. The LA has inspected and attested to the effectiveness of Kathryn in ensuring leadership is effective and this is key to the success and how far the school leadership and management of SMIS has evolved (including all staff and FGB) and have recorded 'good' judgements in this area. Together, we are very much concentrating now on working towards outstanding and will work closely with SMJS to ensure we build on this. Part of the process of a new primary is the re-constitution of our FGB. We are keen to welcome members of the SMJS to the new FGB. This might include some existing governors as well as other stakeholders of both schools. In particular the FGB respects and values the views and skills of all. We are always keen to make sure that parents have a strong voice, staff is represented and we exceed statutory duties and moral obligations. Like so many others there remains to be a full discussion on the way forward. Key to this will be Glenda's advices and governors feelings on the way we move forward to best serve the children and wider community. This too will take time. In the meantime with Kathryn as senior advisor to both FGB's I'm confident that we can foster an effective working relationship. But this too takes time and means additional meetings.

There are also other reasons supporting the submission be delayed until after January 2014. Please reference my letter of 30th April for more details of same.

Alison, governors' hope you agree that the case for choosing an opening date **after** January 2014 is compelling if the new school is to be a success from the start. In the past we feel children in Southampton have not always been best served due to optimistic opening dates of new schools. Earlier in this communique I made reference to the SMIS FGB request to delaying the opening of a new primary until September 2014. SMIS FGB has listened to all parties. Throughout this process we have paid particular attention to our HT who will be the inaugural HT of the new primary (if it is the will of Cabinet to proceed with a new primary for St Monica), LA thoughts and advices, OfSTED guidance, SMIS governors, SMJS governors, the St Monica Community, DfE papers, cluster partners and anyone else who has a voice or anything to say. Following forensic analysis of all the information available to us and the statutory duties we discharge as governors of SMIS we have concluded that with a great deal of hard work by all, goodwill from all and support, then a collective undertaking by all parties to support a new primary school is achievable with an April 2014 start date. To move earlier we feel would prove to be a mistake and detrimental to the education and well-being of the children and staff of the St Monica Schools. The April 2014 date is a more realistic date to contribute to a successful new primary school for the benefit of all.

Understanding that 'certainty' is best for all we would ask you represent and support the following statement that is representative of SMIS FGB view. In essence SMIS endorses and supports the LA proposal put to cabinet that a decision be taken in June 13 that St Monica Infant School be expanded to become a Primary , subject to the inception date for the opening of a new primary is NOT BEFORE APRIL 2014 unless the FGB of the new primary and LA SIP advises otherwise. This will support us to be ready to open a bright new and successful Primary School to serve the community of St Monica and wider from inception.



On a personal note Alison, I would like to wish you well in your new position and we all would welcome an opportunity of working with you and your successor in the future.

Kind Regards  
Brian Eley  
Chair of Governors  
St Monica

24 May 2013

We are responding officially on behalf of the governing body of Oakwood Junior School.

We continue to support the development of a primary school from the current infant and junior schools and would seek a positive decision from the cabinet at the end of the consultation process.

We are convinced that the vast majority of parents support the merger. Positive comments vastly outweighed any negative comment in the pre-statutory consultation and most parents who speak to us in school support the move, especially because of the extra layer of the admissions process which this removes for them.

We are currently working with the infant school on a number of mutually beneficial projects which would be necessary if the two schools became a primary. Our phone systems have been linked, we have a new logo and uniform for the two schools and we have plans to link the ICT systems before the summer. This proactive approach means that we won't be running to catch up if the outcome is positive, but will not have wasted time if the two schools remain as they are.

The two governing bodies have agreed that Ian Taylor will be acting headteacher of Oakwood Infant School for the Autumn Term 2013-2014 in order to provide continuity of leadership whatever the outcome of the decision.

We are engaging fully with the support the city has offered including the steering group and the professional development group.

We remain concerned, and have voiced this concern on a number of occasions, that there are still no confirmed resources for capital works connected with turning our two schools into a successful new primary.

We note, however, that Alison Alexander has said that she would have been committed to directing resources, if available, to such works.

We are disappointed that there is no firm commitment of resources and remain of the opinion that creating a new primary school cannot be completed entirely successfully without some investment.

We look forward to future meetings with finance and building colleagues in order to continue to explore the options and anticipate that the council and Alison Alexander's successors will remain committed to allocating resources according to need if they become available.

We believe wholeheartedly that a primary school will better serve the needs of the Oakwood community.