

## **Appendix 2: Formal representation from the Governing Body of Whitefriars Junior School**

Proposed amalgamation of Whitefriars Infant School and Whitefriars Junior School

### **Representation to Cabinet by the Governors of Whitefriars Junior School**    December 2016

Following the overwhelming support shown by parents of both schools during the first phase of formal consultation, the governors of Whitefriars Junior School voted unanimously at their meeting on November 2<sup>nd</sup> for the amalgamation of the two Whitefriars schools to go forward. Only after the vote, were governors advised that their Infant School colleagues had decided by a small majority, not to continue. Although it was noted that the combined vote of the two governing bodies was 11 to 5 in favour of going ahead, we have since chosen to review key aspects of the proposals.

**Staff responses:** firstly, our Acting Headteachers confirmed that all Junior School staff had been fully informed during the consultation period, and that there remains strong support for the change.

**Funding reduction:** secondly, because some concern had been expressed (mainly by staff of the Infant School) about the possible consequences of the reduction in funding arising from amalgamation, our governors, including well qualified members of our Finance Committee, carefully reconsidered this aspect. We are satisfied that the transition is affordable (as it has been elsewhere), and that the new leadership team will be able to address this challenge in a practical and sensitive way. The comparatively modest loss of revenue, phased in over several years, is in our view a small price to pay for the educational advantage afforded by amalgamation.

**Educational advantage:** we remain firmly convinced that the best way to move two 'good' schools towards becoming 'outstanding', and to improve the overall level of pupil progress and attainment, is by establishing a single management responsibility for movement through, and transition between, the key stages. Evidence from elsewhere clearly supports the change to an all-through Primary. Under the current arrangements, scope for closer collaboration is limited; formal amalgamation offering a much more direct and accountable way to drive up standards.

**Headteacher recruitment:** now is also the right time to make the change. The retirement of one headteacher and the upcoming retirement of the other, presents an opportunity for amalgamation which is unlikely to arise again. Moreover the increasing difficulty of recruiting headteachers for small schools is also well documented. Amalgamation offers us the best opportunity to appoint a high quality leader willing to commit to the school for the long term. The worst possible (but not unlikely) outcome of staying as we are, would be for both schools to attempt to recruit at the same time from a smaller pool of candidates.

**Governance:** although Whitefriars Junior School has an able and committed governing body, it has become increasingly difficult to attract new governors. We understand that the Infant School, drawing largely from the same constituency faces a similar difficulty. Amalgamation of the two adjacent schools promises to ease this situation.

**Wider context:** finally, we considered the wider educational environment in which we will be required to operate, and we concluded that amalgamation is likely to make us more resilient and allow us to have greater influence in changing external circumstances, such as may arise for example from academisation.

In summary, we have concluded that the opportunity to amalgamate at this time should not be missed; that the educational benefits clearly outweigh any other concerns; and that amalgamation represents the best chance to secure high quality long term leadership supported by a more robust governing body.

We hope that the foregoing comments will be helpful in arriving at a final decision - one which will secure the most benefit for Whitefriars pupils, both now and in the future.

David Richens    Chair of Governors, Whitefriars Junior School

