

## **Appendix 1: Formal representation from the Governing Body of Whitefriars Infant School**

Statutory Process for Amalgamation of Whitefriars Infant School and Whitefriars Junior School.

Representation from the governing body of Whitefriars Infant School.

Following initial discussions of the joint working party of Whitefriars Schools and following a clear explanation of each step of the statutory amalgamation process from the local authority the governors of Whitefriars Infant School voted to go to stage 2, formal consultation. Governors of the joint working party asked the local authority representative to clarify what this entailed and it was minuted that this would be consultation with parents and staff through documentation and “drop in” sessions. It would also be the stage at which governors show “due diligence” in gaining additional information regarding premises and finance. The joint working party were informed that at the end of stage two each governing body would separately need to consider the consultation feedback and vote on whether to proceed with amalgamation. When asked for clarification it was minuted that there would need to be agreement from both governing bodies and it was not a decision that could be taken by the joint working party.

Concerns were raised at the meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 that the dates for the subsequent stages of the amalgamation process at stage 3 did not allow sufficient time for the governors to meet to vote on the proposal. Amendments were discussed with the local authority to facilitate time for both governing bodies to meet the proposed date on which the decision to issue closure would be made.

On 31<sup>st</sup> October the full governing body of Whitefriars Infant School met to review the consultation feedback and specific information on finance and premises. After the review a vote was taken and by a majority of 5 to 3 governors decided not to support the amalgamation. It was felt that the following barriers would be sufficient to significantly hinder the realisation of the educational advantages detailed in the consultation proposal:

- The reduction in budget of £125, 000 combined with the future deficit budgets showing in year 3 on the three year plans of both schools, despite there currently being healthy carry forwards. The growth in the size of the school would not provide enough scope to be innovative in ways to achieve efficiencies. The capacity to maintain the support staff infrastructure needed to even maintain the good quality of learning in both infant and junior phases may need to be compromised. There is already a funding squeeze with a forecast a budget reduction of 40 million in funding in Northamptonshire by 2020, equating to £410 per pupil. The reality for the new primary would be how these budget cuts will be managed.
- The impact of the budget reduction will limit any possibility of remodelling to provide a joint staff room and hall.

- The lack of a well communicated strategic vision and joint school improvement work to enable the schools to move seamlessly into becoming a primary.
- The time frame needed for the primary school to realise enhancement to educational outcomes and performance because of little history of previous joint improvement work to bring consistency to policy and practice.
- Recruitment of a new primary head teacher should be based on a shared and distinct teaching and learning model for Whitefriars Primary, which has evolved prior to appointment. Without this, amalgamation combined with changes of leadership will serve as a distraction to school development and teaching and learning as the key priority which has happened elsewhere.

In conclusion although the appetite for amalgamation is positive the governors feel they have to focus on delivering outcomes for the school they currently have responsibility to first. They are committed to collaborative work and would want to work with Whitefriars Junior School to become part of the same multi-academy group for the educational benefit of the pupils in our shared community.

After communicating to Northamptonshire County Council, the decision of Whitefriars Infant School not to proceed, the governing body has been informed that the decision does not lie with them contrary to earlier assurances. Statutory notice of closure of Whitefriars Junior will therefore be issued without full approval of both governing bodies followed by a period of four weeks during which time interested parties have the last opportunity to make their views on the proposal known to Northamptonshire County Council. At this stage in consultation we have been told that the final decision will be made by full cabinet of NCC.