



Brighton & Hove

CONSULTATION PAPER

PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE DAVIGDOR INFANT SCHOOL AND SOMERHILL JUNIOR SCHOOL IN HOVE TO BECOME AN ALL THROUGH PRIMARY SCHOOL FROM SEPTEMBER 2015

- Inviting you to have your say -

Why are we consulting you?

The council wishes to consult on a proposal that an all through primary school is created to replace Davigdor Infant School and Somerhill Junior School from 1 September 2015. This consultation paper is published by Brighton & Hove City Council and explains the reasons for this proposal and the arrangements for consultation. At the end you will find a reply slip for you to let us know what you think. There is also some information about what happens after the consultation. The paper is being distributed to the schools' staff, pupils, governors and parents and other groups who may be interested in the proposal. It is also available on the Council's website under the consultation portal.

This consultation is being conducted in accordance with the [School Organisation: statutory guidance](#) published by the Department for Education in January 2014.

Some background facts

Brighton & Hove City Council has had a policy of supporting the amalgamation of infant and junior schools where appropriate since 2000. This policy was reaffirmed in the new School Organisation Plan 2013 – 2017 adopted by the Council at its meeting on 27 March 2014. Each case for possible amalgamation is considered on its merits and any proposals for change are subject to public consultation.

The Council has a statutory duty to secure a maintained school place for any child that wants one. We are committed to working with schools to make them centres for community learning, and supporting them in meeting the wider needs of the community. Our aim is to ensure as far as possible that children can access a primary school that is local to their home.

The proposal

Davigdor Infant School and Somerhill Junior School are separate schools with their own governing bodies and leadership teams, but they occupy a single site and share some facilities including the playing field and the school kitchen, which links the two sets of buildings. They are 'linked' schools under the council's admissions policy, which means that Davigdor children have priority in the allocation of places at Somerhill. The great majority of Davigdor children do transfer to Somerhill.

Davigdor was judged to be an outstanding school by Ofsted at its last inspection in July 2008. Somerhill was judged by Ofsted in December 2014 to be a good school with outstanding leadership and management. Davigdor's head teacher, Ged Cotton, has announced that he is to retire at the end of this school year in July.

In accordance with the council's policy, council officers have met with the two governing bodies, separately and at a joint meeting of the two governing bodies, to discuss whether the time is now right to form a single school from Davigdor and Somerhill. These discussions have focussed throughout on the best interests of current and future children at the schools. The governing bodies also discussed with the head of an amalgamated infant and junior school his experience of the process.

The discussions considered factors relating to both all through primary schools and separate infant and junior schools. The council's policy is to encourage the development of all through primary schools where this is supported locally because we see a range of potential benefits. These include:

- Greater continuity in teaching, pupil care and development
- Greater continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning
- Greater flexibility that a 4-11 school has in organising classes, deploying teachers and support staff and using resources, including buildings, more effectively
- Closer contact with parents over a longer period of time and covering the full span of the children's primary education
- Practical advantages for parents e.g. same staff development days, the same school policies relating to home links, uniform, codes of conduct
- Social interaction between younger and older pupils
- Separate admissions applications at age seven will not be necessary and any uncertainty about transfer between the schools would be removed

We also recognise that there are benefits in having separate infant and junior schools. Teachers and support staff are able to develop strong specialist expertise in relation to the particular age range. They are able to focus on creating a particular environment which meets the needs of either infant or junior age children. Specialist leadership can be developed which focusses on bringing out the best characteristics of infant and junior schools. For some children, a new start at 7+ may be beneficial.

Having discussed factors such as these, the two governing bodies have concluded that they support consultation on a proposal to form a single all through community primary school for children aged 4 to 11 years. Their views will be finalised in light of the consultation outcomes.

If approved, the school would be four forms of entry (i.e. an intake of 120 pupils each year, and up to 128 each year in Years 3 – 6).

The amalgamation process

The legal process for achieving a single primary school in this situation is that one school is formally closed and the age range of the other school is extended. In this case, as Davigdor's head teacher is leaving, Davigdor would close and Somerhill would become a 4 – 11 community primary school. However, this should in no way be seen as a 'takeover' of one school by the other. It is the technical means by which a single primary school would be achieved and both schools would work together as equal partners in bringing it about.

The Davigdor governing body would cease to exist on the day the school closed. Legally the Somerhill governing body would continue, but both governing bodies would commit to working together to create a new governing body for the school which included representation from both Davigdor and Somerhill.

As with any process of change, the interests of staff must also be considered carefully, and all staff and their unions will be consulted as part of this consultation. We would expect that all permanent full and part-time staff from the closing school would be assimilated to posts in the approved structure for the primary school and that applications from temporary staff would be considered when all the permanent staff had been offered posts.

Consultation arrangements

We have arranged two public meetings to give parents, carers and other local people the opportunity to hear more about the proposal and to ask questions. These meetings will be held at Somerhill Junior School (Somerhill Road, Hove, BN3 1RP) on **Monday 19 January 2015 at 7:00 p.m.** and at Davigdor Infant School, (Somerhill Road, Hove, BN3 1RG) on **Wednesday 21st January 2015 at 7:00 p.m.** Anyone with an interest in the proposal is welcome to attend either of these meetings – you don't have to attend the meeting at your child's school. The meeting will be attended by council officers and members of the schools' senior leadership teams and governing bodies.

At this stage, this is a proposal for consultation and no decision has been made. Your views are important. If, having read this document, you would like to comment on the proposal, there are several ways you may do so:

- You can complete and return (either to your child's school or Kings House) the reply slip included in this document
- You can send a letter to Michael Nix, Head of Education Planning and Contracts, Grand Avenue, Hove BN23 2LS. *Please mark your letter for the attention of Michael Nix*
- You can complete a form online on the consultation portal of the Council's website at www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/DavigdorandSomerhill
- You can email your response: please address your email to educationandinclusion@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

Replies must be received by Friday, 27 February 2015

In the interests of economy, letters and emails will not be acknowledged or responded to.

The next stage

All the views put forward during the consultation stage will be reported to the Children & Young People Committee at a meeting on 9 March 2015. The views of the governing body of both schools will be made clear in the report. The Committee will decide whether to progress to the next stage in the process.

If it is decided to move to the next stage the council publishes a Statutory Notice which describes the proposal. The notice remains open for a period of four weeks during which time objections to and comments on the proposal may be made by any person or group. Details of how to make an objection or comment are explained in the Statutory Notice.

The council has the authority to make the decision on whether to implement the proposal contained in the Statutory Notice but in doing so has to take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education. Any comments or objections have to be considered as part of the decision making process. The final decision regarding this proposed change will be made by the Children & Young People Committee at its meeting in June 2015, taking into account the responses to the Statutory Notice and the views expressed by the governors of both schools.

The proposals set out in this document are put forward as a basis for consultation only. It is stressed that *no decisions have yet been made* and that none will be made until consultations have been completed and all views carefully considered by Brighton & Hove City Council and the governors of both schools. The consultation is however not a referendum and in reaching a decision at each stage of the process the Children & Young People Committee will need to take all factors into account, including the responses to consultation.

The table below sets out the timetable for this process.

Publication of Consultation Document	Monday 12 January 2015
Last date for responses	Friday 27 February 2015
Children & Young People Committee decides whether to proceed to Statutory Notice	Monday 9 March 2015
Issue Statutory Notice	Wednesday 11 March 2015
End of Statutory Notice period	Wednesday 8 April 2015
Decision by Children & Young People Committee	June 2015

The Children & Young People Committee's major objective is to ensure the outcome of this consultation has local support and is in the best interests of children in Brighton and Hove.

The two schools are located in Goldsmid Ward, although they draw some of their children from other wards. The Councillors for Goldsmid ward are:

Councillor Ruth Buckley

Councillor Rob Jarrett

Councillor Alex Phillips

RESPONSE FORM

*Please return no later than
27 February 2015*

To: Michael Nix
Head of Education Planning and Contracts
Kings House
Grand Avenue
Hove
BN3 2LS

Tel: (01273) 290732

Proposed Creation of an all through primary school to replace Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools from September 2015

Name and Address	
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Are you a: parent or carer / member of staff / governor / pupil / other? (Please indicate)

I support the proposal to create an all through primary school to replace Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools from September 2015

I do not support the proposal to create an all through primary school to replace Davigdor Infant and Somerhill Junior Schools from 1 September 2015

Please add any comments here and on the reverse of this slip if needed:

Signature and date:

