

Full statutory proposal information to close Warley Infant School and to make alterations to Bleakhouse Junior School in order to create Bleakhouse Primary School

In accordance with Statutory Guidance for School Organisation:

- a) “Opening and closing maintained schools”; and
- b) “Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained Schools”

and

Statutory Regulations:

- a) “The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations’ to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013; and
- b) “The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council proposes to:-

- i) discontinue Warley Infant School with effect from 31st August 2020; and
- ii) make prescribed alterations to Bleakhouse Junior School with effect from 1st September 2020. The proposals are an enlargement of the school premises and a lowering of the age range from ages 8-11 to ages 5-11.

Local Authority details:

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

Sandwell Council House,

Freeth Street,

Oldbury,

West Midlands, B69 9EX

School details:

- a) Warley Infant School, Bleakhouse Road, Oldbury B68 9DS.

Warley Infant School is a community maintained infant school providing education for pupils from age five to seven.

There were 162 full time pupils on roll at the January 2020 census.

The school's current published admission number is 60.

- b) Bleakhouse Junior School, Bleakhouse Road, Oldbury B68 9DS

Bleakhouse Junior School is a community maintained junior school providing education for pupils from age eight to eleven.

There were 242 full time pupils on roll at the January 2020 census.

The school's current published admission number is 60.

Description of the proposed alterations

It is proposed to discontinue Warley Infant School whilst at the same time expanding the adjacent Bleakhouse Junior School accommodation to include the Infant School site and building. The expansion will support a lowering of the age range of Bleakhouse Junior School from ages 8-11 to ages 5-11, to form a two-form entry (420 place) primary school.

Each school currently admits 60 children to Reception and 60 children to Year 3 respectively. The proposal will continue to see the admission of 60 children to Reception, with pupils then remaining on roll through to Year 6, when they will then transfer on to Year 7. As a primary school, the expanded Bleakhouse Junior School would retain a published admission number of 60.

The schools are co-located on a site at Bleakhouse Road, Oldbury. Following the recent resignation of the Head Teacher at Warley Infant School we believe the vacancy provides an opportunity for the Local Authority to propose the school's closure, with a corresponding enlargement of the Bleakhouse Junior School and lowering of the Junior School age range to accommodate the Infant School pupil roll.

A number of benefits are expected from the proposals through the rationalisation of a number of functions and teaching / non-teaching areas duplicated across the operation of the current schools.

The total number of pupils that will attend the primary school will equal those currently attending each school, and there are no proposals to increase or decrease the number of children admitted to Reception.

The tables below indicate the pupil profile across both schools and the primary school:

Table A: Current Pupil Capacity

Year Group	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
Warley Infant School							
PAN* 2019	60	60	60	-	-	-	-
Bleakhouse Junior School							
PAN 2019	-	-	-	60	60	60	60

Table B: Planned Pupil Capacity

Year Group	Reception	1	2	3	4	5	6
Bleakhouse Primary School							
PAN 2020	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

**PAN = Published Admission Number (the number of children the school can take in)*

Standards

The most recent Ofsted inspection reports are available on the Ofsted website.

Warley Infant School:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/103963>

Bleakhouse Junior School

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/103934>

School performance data is available on each school's website.

Bringing the two schools together has a number of potential benefits to pupils which can impact on standards:

- One curriculum and assessment model which focusses on improving pupil outcomes at all key stages.
- Continuity in teaching approaches.
- Shared teacher knowledge on how to support pupils and get the best out of them.
- One set of policies and procedures with a focus on standards.

Objectives

A number of benefits will be achieved with the proposal:

- Budget and staffing flexibility

A single Head Teacher and Governing Board of one school will provide more flexibility in responding to the needs of the school through having a single larger pool of resources than either of the individual schools through the combined teaching and non-teaching staff. Deployment of staff and other resources across both sites of the school will enrich the curriculum delivery and also allow for more flexibility when additional staffing support is required.

- Management and support structure

One school will provide a single school management and support structure. Less money will be needed to be spent on management and administration, freeing it up to be spent directly on children and in the community. A revised set of 'whole school' policies and practices will be developed as part of planning the way the new school will work.

- Continuity of Learning

At present with the two schools as separate establishments, parents of Year 2 children at Warley Infant School must apply for their children to

attend Bleakhouse Junior School, with no guarantee that they will secure a place.

Through the proposal, from 1st September 2020, parents / carers of children in Year 2 will no longer need to apply to secure a Year 3 place.

With lots of opportunities for staff and pupils to work together as one school community, movement of pupils from Year 2 to Year 3 will be seamless.

- Greater breadth of staff experience

Recent curriculum developments, including new expectations from Ofsted have led to an increase in the number and range of specialist tasks to be completed in schools. The sharing of these tasks amongst a larger number of staff with a wider range of experience, will mean an improvement in the standard of education that pupils receive. A larger number of staff will enable school leaders to increase extra-curricular opportunities for pupils.

- Increased opportunities for staff development

A wide range of teaching and learning expertise is needed in a primary school. The skills and knowledge of teaching staff will be extended, that will benefit the children and support the recruitment and induction of new staff, and the retention of existing colleagues.

- Improving the environment for learning

The Head Teacher and staff of a single school can plan to use all of the available school buildings and outdoor areas to provide a greater range of educational facilities and activities.

Finance

When a school closes, any balance (whether surplus or deficit) shall revert to the Local Authority; it cannot be transferred as a balance to any other school, even where a school is a successor to the closing school.

The combined budget of both schools is currently £2.048million (taking into account the original budget share, Early Years and High Needs funding). The budget of any school is worked out on the basis of a School Funding Formula that takes into account the number of children

on roll and their pupil characteristics, i.e. prior attainment, English as an additional language. This means that the budget can fluctuate from year to year as the numbers of children go up or down and the pupil characteristics change.

The table below gives the indicative budget available to the new school following re-organisation. The base budget figure assumes that there will be no change to the School Funding Formula and is based on estimated pupil numbers for the schools as at October 2019. The figures produced in the table assume a minimum pupil funding guarantee of 1.84% in 2020/21 which is within the range stipulated by the government. The government are yet to determine the breakdown of promised increases in future years funding between mainstream schools and special education needs. The Authority is therefore unable to predict with any accuracy future year funding for schools at this time.

Ultimately funding will be reduced to reflect the reduced rates and premises costs but it is not currently possible to accurately quantify the size and timing of these savings.

Figures shown in the following table are therefore purely for indicative purposes.

Financial Year		Base budget (£m)	Early Years/High Needs Funding (£m)	Total (£m)
2020/21	1st year	1.939	0.190	2.129

The current Warley Infant School site and buildings were rebuilt in 2004 through a Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and continue to be managed through a Project Agreement with the main contractor, Total Schools Solutions (Sandwell) Limited. Following the re-organisation, the primary school will become responsible for the ongoing PFI costs relating to the current Infant School.

Project costs

There are no capital costs associated to the proposal. The Local Authority accepts that in the short term there may be limited revenue implications for the expanded Junior School becoming a primary school.

The effect on other schools in the area

As the proposal will retain the current pupil capacity at each school but delivered through the lowering of the age range at Bleakhouse Junior School to admit children from age 5 upwards, we don't see that any other school in the local area will be affected.

Consultation responses

An initial consultation process took place from 2 March to 6 April 2020. The following stakeholders were consulted:

The Governing Boards of Warley Infant and Bleakhouse Junior Schools, parents and carers of children at the schools, members of staff, all Sandwell schools, local Ward Councillors, Member of Parliament, Joint Union Panel.

Responses were received as follows:

Category	Number Responding	Yes (to the proposal)	No (to the proposal)	Don't know
Parents	5	5		
Staff	1		1	
Governors				
More than one category				
Community member				
TOTAL	6	5	1	

Implementation date

A decision on this proposal will be made by the Director – Education, Skills and Employment in consultation with the Sandwell's Cabinet Member for Best Start in Life within 2 months of the end of this representation period. If agreed, it is proposed to implement this proposal with effect from 1 September 2020.

How to make representations or comments on the proposal

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal (by 29 June 2020), any person may object or make a representation or comment on the proposal. Representation or comment can be made by writing to Martyn Roberts, School Organisation and Development Team, Education Support Services, Sandwell Council House, PO Box 16230, Freeth Street, Oldbury, West Midlands, B69 9EX (martyn_roberts@sandwell.gov.uk) or by accessing the council's website: www.sandwell.gov.uk/consultation.

Any personal information you provide will only be used to communicate with you on this issue and your details will be deleted at the end of the process.