

**REPORT TO: EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 11 JUNE 2007**

**REPORT ON: EARLY MERGER OF MID CRAIGIE PRIMARY SCHOOL AND  
MOSSGIEL PRIMARY SCHOOL**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION**

**REPORT NO: 326-2007**

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

**1.1** This report advises the Committee on the results of the informal consultation exercise carried out on the proposal to merge early Mid Craigie Primary School and Mossgiel Primary School within the Mid Craigie accommodation from the start of session 2007-2008, and to rename the school Rowantree Primary School.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

**2.1** It is recommended that the Committee:

- i note the representations made during the informal consultation exercise on the proposal;
- ii remit the Director of Education to carry out the statutory publication and consultation procedure on the proposal for the early merger of Mid Craigie Primary School and Mossgiel Primary School and to report the outcome of the consultation to the Recess Sub-Committee on 16 July 2007.

## **3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**3.1** If the merger goes ahead from August 2007 there will be a saving of £194,670 in the financial year 2007/08 and £335,010 in a full financial year.

## **4.0 SUSTAINABILITY POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** There are no sustainability policy implications.

## **5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** Approval of this report will ensure enhanced educational provision for pupils currently at Mossgiel Primary School by giving them a larger cohort of peers to interact with socially and educationally.

## **6.0 BACKGROUND**

- 6.1** It was agreed that Mid Craigie Primary School and Mossgiel Primary School merge as Rowantree Primary School in October 2009 on a new site. With this in mind both schools have come together and written a joint school development plan covering the period 2006-09. Both schools have identified joint resources and introduced these simultaneously to support the ease of transition to one new school. In addition joint open days will take place to provide an opportunity for staff, pupils and parents to meet each other.
- 6.2** At the moment there are no Primary 1 pupils enrolled at Mossgiel Primary for session 2007-2008. In essence, parents are electing to put their children to Mid Craigie Primary School and start the process of integration of the two schools.
- 6.3** For August 2007 the roll of Mossgiel Primary School is projected at 70 in mainstream with a further 20 pupils in the resourced locations so a merger before 2009 would be educationally and socially beneficial for pupils. On its own, Mossgiel Primary School would not have a P1 class with the rest of the composite classes being well under the class size maximum of 25 pupils.
- 6.4** The experience of the merger of Douglas Primary School and Powrie Primary School shows an early coming together prior to entering a new building can have a very positive effect upon the new school community and its ethos, and do much of the ground work of integration of 2 groups of pupils/staff/parents before entering the new building.
- 6.5** It enables all involved to work together and realise a joint identity and the move to a new building, with all the added complications, would not also need to address the merging of two communities.
- 6.6** A merger before 2009 will allow the school to form one Parent Forum/Council for the new school at the very start of this new process rather than forming two separate bodies which would then need to come together as one on completion of the new school. This one Parent Forum/Council could be consulted on issues arising during the building of Rowantree Primary School.
- 6.7** The Head Teacher of Mossgiel Primary School retires in June 2007 so the Head Teacher of Mid Craigie Primary School would assume the role of Head Teacher of the merged school. Currently there is no permanent Depute Head Teacher at Mid Craigie Primary School so the Depute Head Teacher of Mossgiel Primary School would assume the role of Depute Head Teacher of the merged school.
- 6.8** Mid Craigie Primary School has been identified as the more suitable accommodation to house the merged school. The condition of the building fabric is not dissimilar at each school. Although they both have flat roofs the high performance single ply system employed at Mid Craigie is better suited to maintain the building wind and watertight in the short term.
- 6.9** The early merger will reduce the consumption of energy and water and make efficient use of available building resources thus ensuring best value.
- 7.0 INFORMATION CONSULTATION EXERCISE**
- 7.1** An informal consultation exercise has been carried out. This took the form of letters detailing the proposal being sent to parents/carers of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie

Primary Schools. Meetings were held with staff and parents/carers from both schools.

**7.2** Outcomes of the consultation are detailed in the attached Appendix 1. It is clear from the consultation that all staff and the majority of parents in both schools are in favour of an early merger of the two primary schools.

## **8.0 CONSULTATION**

**8.1** This report has been subject to consultation with the Chief Executive, Depute Chief Executive (Finance), the Depute Chief Executive (Support Services).

## **8.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None.

ANNE WILSON  
Director of Education

31 May 2007

**RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH MID CRAIGIE STAFF - 21 MAY 2007**

Head of Primary Education and the Primary Education Manager present with all staff.

The Head of Primary outlined the reasons for the proposed early merger.

At the conclusion of the meeting all staff were in favour of the proposal.

**RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH MOSSGIEL STAFF - 21 MAY 2007**

Head of Primary Education and the Primary Education Manager present with all staff.

The Head of Primary outlined the reasons for the proposed early merger.

At the conclusion of the meeting all staff were in favour of the proposal.

## **RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH MID CRAIGIE PARENTS - 29 MAY 2007**

20 parents/carers present plus the Head Teachers of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie, Head of Primary Education, Primary Education Manager.

The Head of Primary Education outlined the reasons for the proposed early merger.

The Head Teacher at Mossgiel spoke to the parents about the effect of such a small roll was having on extra curricular activities such as sport where there were not enough pupils to form an age appropriate team. The same concerns were raised for school shows, sports day and other integral parts of school life.

### **Positive responses:-**

- parents very happy with the proposed merger.
- some parents had had very positive experiences of their child being in a composite class.
- no one present was against the early merger.

### **Negative responses:-**

- concern re parking at the new school.
- some parents had concerns re their child being in a composite class, they felt their child would be at a disadvantage.

### **Questions raised:-**

- were there going to be composite classes in Mid Craigie if the two schools don't merge?
- are the pupil mixings good?
- why don't schools in the same area use the same resources?
- how are staffing levels arrived at?
- why can't we have extra teachers and have no composite classes?
- would siblings be put in the same class?
- why is the new building not being built on the Mid Craigie site?
- what are the road safety implications?
- will any pupil rooms be lost?
- will there be enough choice at dinners?
- would SfL staffing be at the same level?
- will nursery pupils be put into P1 with their friends?
- what resourced location would be in the merged school?

At the conclusion of the meeting all parents present were in favour of the proposal.

## **RESULTS OF CONSULTATION WITH MOSSGIEL PARENTS - 29 MAY 2007**

19 parents/carers present plus the Head Teachers of Mossgiel and Mid Craigie, Head of Primary Education, Primary Education Manager.

The Head of Primary Education outlined the reasons for the proposed early merger.

The Head Teacher at Mossgiel spoke to the parents about the effect of such a small roll was having on extra curricular activities such as sport where there were not enough pupils to form an age appropriate team. The same concerns were raised for school shows, sports day and other integral parts of school life.

### **Positive responses:-**

- concern over the age spread of pupils were there to be a P1-3 composite class.
- most of Mid Craigie had been flattened so it was a new community with no real divisions with Linlathen so a merger would be successful.
- a parent had had experience of a school merger with another of her children and found this to be a very positive experience.
- the morale of pupils and staff had deteriorated over the past few years due to the falling roll so the merger would be a good thing. This very point had been raised by a parent focus group who met with the Primary Education Manager as part of a recent extended review of Mossgiel.
- the HT of Mossgiel stated that all her staff were very positive about the early merger and were excited at the prospect.
- some parents were initially against the Nurture Group being housed in Mossgiel but have since found it a good facility and saw no problem with it moving to another school.
- the HT of Mid Craigie saw the early merger as an ideal opportunity for families, pupils and staff from both schools to work together prior to the move to the new building. There was also an opportunity for a new Parent Council representing Rowantree primary to be formed immediately to support the merger.

### **Negative responses:-**

- concern re the short notice to allow pupils to settle into the new environment.
- this was 2 communities coming into 1 and there would be problems for the 2 schools merging on the Mid Craigie site.
- this was a divisive move.
- concern over a specific pupil's difficulties and whether or not he/she would be supported appropriately in the merged school.
- walking distance - 0.5 of a mile.
- boxes already in school so a decision has already been made.
- not a merger, a takeover.
- facilities have consistently been lost in Linlathen and this is another example

### **Questions raised:-**

- were there examples of a P1-3 composite working well anywhere else?
- what would the class sizes be in the merged school?

- what would happen with the nurture group?
- will the resourced location/base in the merged school be secure?
- are all staff from Mossgiel moving to the merged school?
- will there be joint activities to bring pupils/parents together prior to the move?
- did the Education Department consider moving the merged school to the Mossgiel site?
- who makes the decision and when?
- when will we know?
- what is happening to the nurture group?
- will parents be able to choose another school rather than the merged school?

At the conclusion of the meeting only 4 parents were against the proposal.