

Our Ref: 007.AP.HJ.Amalg

11th June 2024

Dear Infant and Junior Headteachers and Governing Boards

Amalgamation Policy

In keeping with the Council's Infant and Junior Schools Amalgamation policy ([Successful, Sustainable, Viable Schools](#)) it is council policy that on the retirement or resignation of the Headteacher from either of the linked Infant and Junior Schools, the two schools will amalgamate and form an all through primary school. The council intends to apply this approach moving forwards.

Set against the current educational climate of falling rolls and budgetary pressures for all schools, it is imperative that the most cohesive and efficient educational experiences are available for all our children. Smaller schools are more exposed to budgetary fluctuations, roll variations and recruitment struggles, resulting in an increased fragility in being able to deliver the best possible provision in the increasingly complex educational environment.

Each individual situation will be thoroughly reviewed, and the nuances of the specific situations taken into account to provide seamless transition to the new primary school. Statutory consultation processes and the subsequent findings will be included in the process.

Some of benefits seen through amalgamation can be summarised as follows:

- The staffing structure is aligned with the National Curriculum Key Stages; there may be separate leaders for Foundation, Key Stages 1 and 2 but there will be coherent planning across the primary phase and shared expertise, giving greater flexibility across and between the Key Stages, to meet the needs of all pupils.
- One school having overall accountability for the statutory assessments that run from the Reception baseline assessment through to the end of Key Stage 2, following the removal of statutory assessments at the end of Key Stage 1.
- Reducing the number of changes for children in a school system strengthens continuity and progression for children and families in the primary phase, both in terms of the curriculum and pastoral experience. Research shows that the fewer moves children have during their school career the better they perform.
- Trends suggest that separate Infant and Junior schools may be more vulnerable to becoming graded Requires Improvement by Ofsted or to have budget deficits.
- More resources spent on pupils in classes and employing specialist staff. A primary school provides strong continuity and progression for children and families in terms of the curriculum and social experience. This is particularly beneficial to pupils with special and additional needs or high abilities.

- All pupils should have access to a greater range of staff expertise and a wider range of learning resources to enhance their educational experience, both in and out of the classroom.
- Better recruitment, succession planning and retention of staff and opportunities for staff to learn and develop professionally within schools. All teachers and classroom staff have access to the whole primary curriculum. This supports and informs whole school planning, assessment, pastoral systems, etc, and provides opportunities for wider staff development and experience across the full primary phase.
- Economies of scale that come with larger budgets and more flexibility around resourcing and staffing options.
- An increased capacity to be resilient in the face of budgetary pressures.

We appreciate that there may be some concerns around amalgamating schools, such as the logistics or financial impact, for example. The team will work with leaders and governors to support you through any concerns and discuss options as part of the process.

In order to apply this policy moving forwards, the expectation is that no recruitment should take place to replace any Headteacher of an Infant or Junior maintained school – instead, please contact the Education Improvement team who will support the schools through the amalgamation process. We will also notify your HR provider, so they are aware of this expectation.

Federation of Governing Boards

Until the situation arises where either Headteacher post becomes vacant, the Council would like all Infant and Junior schools to formally consider federation of the Infant and Junior Governing Boards. The Education Improvement team will work with the Governing Boards of each pair of schools to facilitate the process of federation in preparation for amalgamation when appropriate. Please follow the link to access DfE guidance on this [here](#).

Information sessions for Headteachers and Governors of Infant or Junior schools

We will be holding two information sessions for headteachers and governors of Infant and Junior schools on:

- Monday 1st July 2024 at 5 - 6 pm [Please click here to join](#)
- Tuesday 2nd July 2024 at 12 - 1 pm [Please click here to join](#)

These sessions will be an opportunity to find out more about the process and benefits of amalgamating and ask any questions you may have.

Following these sessions, your Education Advisor will be in contact with schools where there are opportunities to proceed with amalgamation imminently to discuss the next steps. For

schools where this is not the case presently, we would like to support governors to federate boards to enable the schools to start working together more closely in preparation for amalgamation.

We appreciate given the current level of change in the educational environment that colleagues may have many questions and concerns. If this is the case, please contact your school's Education Adviser who will be able to support you and answer any questions you may have, or contact Michael Hawkins, Head of Education and Lifelong Learning by emailing MHawkins@hillington.gov.uk

We look forward to working with you to ensure all children in Hillingdon have the best possible and sustainable learning opportunities moving forward for many years to come.

Yours sincerely

Abi Preston
Director of Education and SEND