

## Appendix 2 - Consultation Responses

### Introduction

**Response:** Don't know; "The document doesn't provide any balanced argument about why amalgamation may be a negative action."

**Response:** No; "In point 5 do not agree that there are class organisation pressures in a junior school because there are only 4 year groups. Class organisation has never been an issue for us. Teachers apply for post knowing the year groups they will teach. Please can you site the evidence to say that several schools have had difficulties recruiting staff, or been graded RA?"

**Response:** No;1. "The opening sentence is interesting in that I would agree that is the role of an LA but would be cautious in declaring or implying that is done really well across the phases and range of provision. I would also have a similar caveat on the past declaration in Par 1. Para2 agree. Para3 'support' [ used twice] from whose point of view as neither the White paper or Green Paper referenced are statute? Falling Primary Roles are an issue so Appendix 1 is worth consideration apart from point 3 in relation to establishing an ARP[ LBHspeak it would be SRP! Providing additional revenue should be the last consideration for taking on a huge endeavour such as an SRP and many schools who have done so have found them to be uneconomic in terms of cash flow and as a catch all net often used by the LA to park some very complex needs as key specialist provision has been historically and strategically underdeveloped [ primary expansion did not encompass primary specialist provision;"]

**Response:** No; "We have not had problems attracting well qualified staff in a two form entry school and the the school has been classified as good consistently doing better than many acadmys. We recognise changing demographics in Hillingdon. Our schools have been praised by the school improvement partners as examples of good practice of working together. Every time there are significant changes this has been reviewed. We have provided expertise in music and PE. I agree we can't apply for leadership schemes but have actively encouraged leadership roles in the Hillingdon primary leadership hub"

**Response:** No; "The third sentence in para 5 is misleading. Only a four form of entry junior school could ever have had a total number on roll in excess of 420. There is no recent problem caused by falling rolls. The sentence at 6b is incorrect. Amalgamations would reduce parental choice because there would be reduction in the number of separate infant and junior schools on offer."

**Response:** No; "I do not feel we are financially more vulnerable and as a teacher I have chosen to work only within the year groups I am comfortable teaching. I specifically chose to work in an Infants school so that I could never be put in a Junior class, a position that would make me leave the school. I also feel that we are more specialised to our year groups here so believe the children have a better focus on their needs by people who are experienced at teaching within this age group for their age."

**Response:** Don't know; "I don't have experience of schools across the borough so not sure whether 'Do you agree...' is an appropriate question for me"

**Response:** No; "school roll not declined"

**Response:** "Change of head teacher"

**Response:** No; "We have not found it hard to recruit, 36 teachers applied for a teaching position in our school. We recruited 4 new teachers. Next year we are over 92% full, this year we are 97% full. We successfully catch children up so they are ready for their next step in y3. The children always do well in KS2 SATS. We have not found it hard to recruit Governos and have our own separate one at both schools."

**Response:** No; "I don't agree with the following -The infant and junior schools are particularly vulnerable to financial and class organisation pressures as they only have three or four year groups to move teachers around. I feel staff become more specialised in dealing with children within those specific year groups."

**Response:** No; “We do not have smaller classes. Our numbers are sustainable. I also disagree that parents prefer 3 form entry. As a parent myself why would I choose to place my child as 1 of 90 when they could be 1 of 50 or smaller.”

**Response:** If No or Don't know, please can you provide your comments below; The introduction sets out the case for primary schools and academies with the main thrust being economic sustainability. Although it is vital to have thriving schools for the community there is still an impelling case for keeping schools smaller with expertise in the phases. Having worked in a large primary school, there is more of a likelihood of CPD being favoured for a particular age range rather than across the board. I sat through countless teachers meeting where the older phases in education were the bulk of the discussions. The early years was totally ignored. With larger schools there are many competing needs. Training days tend to focus on the majority and not so much on particular staff needs etc.

**Response:** No; “• Data errors throughout •Lack of evidence for statements made throughout no referencing for data •Lack of clarity throughout”

**Response:** No; “Where is the evidence for this that proves amalgamation improves resilience? 92% of outstanding or good schools is fantastic and something to be proud of. Why would we need to change something if it is working well? Recruitment - this has not been our experience. We have found that we have had more applicants than other schools for recruiting as people prefer the more specialist provision of Infant / Junior. Point 6 - is there any documented evidence or research for this?”

**Response:** No;- “the evidence for the statements isn't provided- Hillingdon already has 92% of schools Good/outstanding -recruitment isn't a huge issue as an infant school we have applicants who are interested in the Foundation stage /Key stage One”

**Response:** No; “We are a very successful school – from previous Ofsted reports and we do plenty of work in collaboration often with the Junior school as well as a variety of local cluster groups, the Heads Forum as well as the Safeguarding Cluster group. 92% good or outstanding schools so we see no need to change something that is working. We have no problems with recruitment and can recruit staff who are have this year group as their specialty and are therefore better practitioners ie Early Years How can we be sure that amalgamation not lower the overall performance of the school? In point 6, where is the evidence for benefits a, b and c? Are there surveys or statistics support these claims and how exactly will amalgamation increase resilience? Schools that have amalgamated do not always find it fulfils all these benefits and have spoken of negative areas too. This is a governing board decision, not the LA.”

**Response:** No; “Point 6- what evidence is this based on?”

**Response:** No; “Where is the evidence for this? Would amalgamation improve resilience? (3) - 92% of outstanding or good schools is fantastic and something to be proud of. Why would we need to fix something if it isn't broken? (5) - Recruitment – on the contrary. Most infant and junior schools experience a higher number of applicants due to the more specialist nature of the school (5) - Would amalgamation not lower the overall % of good / outstanding schools? - Point 6 – is there any documented evidence or research for this? Is this just an opinion? - Recently amalgamated schools that we are aware of have had a negative experience - As indicated, this is a governing board decision and not of the LA (8)”

**Response:** “How can we be sure an amalgamation would improve the anything. We are currently Ofsted outstanding and amalgamation could affect this rating.;No ”

**Response:** No; “Where is the evidence to show that amalgamated schools have a better achievement rate the schools that have done this haven't showed this to be true.”

**Response:** No; “Having previously worked in a Primary setting, I have found the infants school's environment more focused on the younger children development, which is not always the focus in a primary school.”

**Response:** “In principle however there is no mention of larger establishments and what the cap on numbers may be if any. Needs to refer to the fact that not all buildings in the current state would lend themselves to making it easy to amalgamate. ;No”

**Response:** No; “I do not agree with schools amalgamating - I am aware of schools that have recently amalgamated and staff do not feel this has been beneficial for the children.”

**Response:** No; “how does only having 4 year groups make them financially vulnerable? A3 form entry infant or Junior school has 12 classes more or less the same as a 2 form entry primary school. The facts shared are not those experienced by Infant Schools. Staying as separate schools means that if one school goes into a category over 300 children are not affected if the schools are separate. Primary schools originally saw a reduction in numbers and had to reduce their PAN. This is only the case now in schools that the LA made expand and where huge amounts of money was spent on new schools. This is now starting to spread into the secondary sector where vast amounts of money was spent on rebuilds. The situation in my school does not offer a proposition of amalgamating as the LA were happy for the attached Junior school to go to an Academy. This has resulted in large numbers of children leaving the school. As well as staffing issues around leadership and performance. Negative feedback recently amalgamate”

## **The Educational Case for Amalgamation**

**Response:** No; “Amalgamation may lead to the creation of very large primary schools. This could lead to less of a focus on individual children reducing the quality of pastoral care and result in less of a focus on different parts/ key stages of the school leading to a decline in standards and outcomes. Most junior and infant schools are at least Ofsted 'good' in Hillingdon. Infant and junior schools can achieve a well sequenced curriculum between the schools through close collaboration. Collaboration and not amalgamation can achieve many of these policy's stated aims without limiting focus on parts of a school.”

**Response:** No; “We are able to focus on the Key Stage that we are responsible for. Our children achieve well and are prepared for their next stage of education as they have experienced a transition already.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Again there is no clear indication if there would for example be job losses which I believe could negatively impact children. Additionally there is no recognition that running an infant school separately for the juniors brings with it a high degree of specialism in this key stage which is of great benefit to the pupils.”

**Response:** “Point b - Can you site the evidence to say that separate infant and junior schools are more likely to be judged RI? Point d – I do not agree - all pupils will have access to such resources in infant and junior schools”

**Response:** No; Yes; “Overall a yes as there are economies of scale to be had and 9.2 out of 10 schools are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted is a testimony to both the commitment and resilience of schools which rather rebuts the notion that schools are not currently resilient enough p3 para 3”

**Response:** No; “The schools already have long established structures for sharing school field, resources and involvement in the primary forum.”

**Response** No; “The suggested benefits described in points 10a to 10e are only possibilities. No evidence has been produced to suggest that they would definitely happen.”

**Response** No; “I believe schools will be judged by OFSTED according to their performance, not more harshly just because they are an Infants/Junior school. If this was actually happening surely we would have a case to have OFSTED investigated.”

**Response** “I agree with some of it - for example, retention of staff might be hindered as a smaller school cannot offer the same level of opportunity as large. However if your aim is to e.g. only have 1 SENCO

across a whole primary, rather than 2 with specialist skills in EY/KS1 and KS2, then amalgamation isn't necessarily going to improve that. On other points in this paragraph I feel that specialism in up to 7s / 7+ education is a benefit of separate schools and you have only included an educational case \*for\* rather than a balanced evaluation of the pros and cons. I expect that the LA would still present a case that, on balance, concluded \*for\* amalgamation but the current document is limited by failing to consider any alternative point of view."

**Response:** No; "not requires improvement good plans and resources"

**Response:** "Change of head teacher"

**Response:** No; "Both the schools are and have been Good or outstanding for an extremely long time. Primary schools still struggle with the budget given to them to support all children, I worked in one for 8 years before joining the borough and had the same budget worries. The number still fell. We use the Junior's field for sports day and events as we work well together. You still have the same worries with recruitment in a primary school, some teachers will not teach in other key stages therefore prefer a Infant school as they know they will only be asked to teach in EYF/ KS1. We are already a 3 form entry school."

**Response:** No; "Don't agree with a lot of the points made especially the following - Separate infant and junior schools are disproportionately more likely to be graded Requires Improvement by Ofsted or to have budget deficit. Are the Schools Finance team actively working with these 'deficit schools' to bring their budget back in line?"

**Response:** No; "When a school amalgamates the staffing becomes too big. The curriculum becomes difficult to manage especially if there is to be only one co-ordinator per subject.. Resources become stretched because you eventually lose the amalgamation money .As a junior school we received covid devices. How does making a school larger benefit? A spreviously stated. 60 in a year group which amalgamation could extend to 4 form entry . That's 120 children in a year group. Children will become lost in a system. The whole school nurturing becomes vulnerable. School plays, sports teams all become too big and some children will not get the opportunity to take part in these."

**Response:** No; "We have had a recent good Ofsted grading, no issues with recruitment and our children's attainment is above national."

**Response:** No; "We have had a rent good foster grading, no issues with recruitment and our children's attainment is above the national average."

**Response:** No; "I understand the financial burdens placed on schools and falling or volatile numbers but I still believe parents prefer smaller schools where they are more likely to be included as part of a small community. There are many families who feel isolated or are new to our country. For these families, it will be harder to establish a sense of belonging. When parents don't feel welcome or feel lost as they may not have the confidence to vocalise their opnions; a larger school is less likely to meet their needs. Parents engagement in their children's education is vital to their children's success."

**Response:** No; "•Lack of evidence throughout • Lack of positives of amalgamation shown •Doesn't reflect reality of the partnership working already taking place in Hillingdon between schools."

**Response:** No; "Points 10b and 12 contradict each other. We do not feel that we have a lack of resources? How has this been measured?"

**Response:** No; "We do plan across the Key stages to ensure our children have continuity going through both schools. We have a very coherent transition procedure so our children are at ease with the process into the Junior school. Children are more likely to learn resilience if they can make new steps in the safety of school setting which is exactly what we do when we start the transition process into Juniors. Both schools use the same platforms for communication and recording ensuring communication is strong and effective between the two schools and with the parents of both schools. Points 10b and 12 appear to completely contradict each other – and our budget is healthy. We also have a wide range of musical, physical and wrap around facilities. Is the evidence for these 'benefits' documented to support this or are these opinions? Currently our staff take part in maths, music and English hubs."

**Response:** No; “Point 10b- what evidence is this based upon? It is also contradicted by later Point 12. Point 10d- separate infant and junior schools have two sets of facilities- two halls, etc- so are actually able to offer more extra curricular activities separately than combined;”

**Response:** No; “Points 10b and 12 completely contradict each other - Point 10 – where is the evidence documented to support this? Is this just an opinion? Not how we feel working within the school? - ‘Lack of resources’ – according to who?”

**Response:** No; “This section contains contradictions with no evidence to support these comments”

**Response:** No; “AS an infant school we are very well resourced and the results of the school speaks for itself. Also points contradict themselves for example point 10b and 12”

**Response:** No; “With reference to 10d and having previously worked in a primary school, it would appear to me, personally, that there is a higher quality of staff expertise in specific areas relating to young children’s’ needs with ample resources readily available to support.”

**Response:** “Recruitment may still be affected by choices teachers make. Some staff really like to work predominantly in Key Stage 2 or Key Stage 1. Point c suggests that separate schools perhaps don’t have aspiration however there are examples of excellent social experience and superb challenge for the future. Point e needs clarification as all teachers do understand the whole primary curriculum as this is an integral part of high quality teaching and learning to plan, deliver and evaluate the appropriateness of the curriculum for all children.”

**Response:** No; “There does not seem to be any evidence documented to support these points.”

**Response:** No; “There are no Infant Schools in Hillingdon in an RI category. The understanding of child development and the focus of resources in an infant school mean that SEN children are identified much earlier and specific provision is put in place for them earlier meaning that they get the support that they need before they are 7 which is vital, especially in the case of Speech acquisition.. Staff like to be able to specialise recruitment very easy staff retention much better than in a primary school. points 10b and 12 contradict.. most primary schools do not provide after school clubs for infant children, infant schools do. Infant aged pupils in primary schools did not get Covid digital devices. We are able to access apprenticeships and Leadership funding ie NPQL etc”

## **Governance and Leadership**

**Response:** No; “Sort of hard federatioJ3:J41e stated aims as well”

**Response:** “Our governors and headteachers provide strategic governance and vision across their key stage.”

**Response:** “Don’t know; Does this mean there will only be one Head teacher? Thus losing talent, experience and excellent understanding of different key stages?”

**Response:** No; “Point 11 - GBs of infant and junior schools can provide strategic governance and vision, even though not across key stages”

**Response:** No; “Strategic leadership comes from communication and there are already structures within separate schools.”

**Response:** No; “Amalgamation might provide the suggested benefits but there is no guarantee that this would happen.”

**Response:** No; “You will increasingly be short of Governors even without amalgamation. I don’t feel this is a justifiable reason to amalgamate.”

**Response:** “Again, some. I can see that difficulty in recruiting governors might be helped by amalgamating 2 GBs, but we have a number of governors serving on both infant and junior GBs at our school as we recognise the efficiencies that it brings. “

**Response:** No; “strong governing body and leadership”

**Response:** Yes “Changing of head teacher”

**Response:** No; “We have just recently recruited Governors without problems.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Headteachers and governors could work more closely together”

**Response:** No; “Our governors have a good understanding across both schools and work closely with the infants and juniors.”

**Response:** No; “I think resources are better spent where there is only one phase in education. There are less competing forces. I agree it is extremely difficult to recruit governors but surely this is due to the legal expectations required of the governing body. Being held accountable for a school is an enormous responsibility and when things don't go according to plan there is a huge workload for governors, especially considering that most governing bodies work voluntarily”

**Response:** Don't know; “Lack of evidence that there is any difficulty in recruiting Governors specifically for Infant/Junior schools – there is a general difficulty recruiting volunteers overall.”

**Response:** No; “As Governors, we feel that our strategic vision and focus is clearer as we focus on children specifically at the earliest point of their development”

**Response:** No; “We feel our school is stronger for being an infant School as already we have two key stages represented. This leads to more focused resource allocation and expertise. The children get a strong foundation to the rest of their schooling”

**Response:** No; “We know what works best for the age group of children in our school, we are very focussed on the offering the best opportunities for this age group. We feel there would be a very different approach if we were to amalgamate and we would lose the focus on Early Years and KS1.”

**Response:** No; “It isn't clear what would happen in schools such as ours where the junior school are already part of a MAT”

**Response:** No; “A single governing body and headteacher can provide strategic governance and vision for all primary key stages and be accountable for outcomes across the school phases, and allocation of resources between them. Currently there are difficulties recruiting governors so a refocus of resources would improve more schools.”

**Response:** No; “The staff as a whole are specifically trained and geared up for children up to and including KS1 therefore our vision is not only clear but proven to be successful.”

**Response:** No; “In our school we know the pupils very well and that is because we are just infants. WE can meet the needs as and where needed and have a clear focus. If we became an academy it is likely to operate differently and have a different vision.”

**Response:** No; “Staff and Leadership are deeply knowledgeable in all areas of the infant's school. Personally, staff are in a much better position to remain more focussed on the specific areas of the infant environment as opposed to a primary school setting, thus providing a greater nurturing setting for the younger children.”

**Response:** Yes; “Sharing a Governing Body would also occur at the first of a Federation and this would be useful.”

**Response:** No; “There is a clearer vision and an extremely child centred approach.”

**Response:** No; “Governors feel that they know the school better, in an infant school the 2 very different keystages mean that there needs to be more specialism, the transition to Juniors is easy as it is just an extension of KS1 not a completely different structured curriculum.”

## Parents Views

**Response:** “No; I have had two different children in different schools and we managed fine. The schools liaised well together so minimised any issues for parents.”

**Response:** No; “I was a parent of these schools before teaching here and the procedures for each school were very clear and not confusing.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Point 12 – can you share the evidence to show that there are more vacancies infant and junior schools than primaries?”

**Response:** Yes; Mainly

**Response:** No; “Already close communication exists to allow continuity and progression.”

**Response:** No; “No evidence has been produced to support these assertions. There has been no survey of parents' views.”

**Response:** No; “We have considerably less vacancies than other Hillingdon Primary schools I have worked in recently and keep in touch with. That argument does not apply to Newnham.”

**Response:** No; “Having been a parent with children in the infant and junior school at the same time I didn't ever have any frustrations with different rules (and that includes SEN involvement from 2 different inclusion teams). So I see this could be a risk, but that's not necessarily a feature of separate schools. Our nearest full primary has historically been oversubscribed but talking to parents across Northwood since starting to look at schools with my oldest child (in 2004) it has always been apparent that some of that is driven by perceptions of Northwood vs Northwood Hills and a fair amount of snobbery. Once in the 2 schools, feedback from parents has generally been similar and frustrations about different rules/approaches from different staff/year groups is apparent in the full primary. I think some of this is just too simplistic - as above, failing to take into account alternative points of view. I get it, the LA wants to promote amalgamation, but the consultation document is not balanced.”

**Response:** No; “parents welcome caring, nurturing infant school”

**Response:** Yes; “Changing of head teacher”

**Response:** No; “BWI has so many places spare and is an all through Primary, Warrender hasn't filled all their spaces. The transition between our schools is smooth, we work really well with parents and only one form has to be filled in.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Yes and no, depends on how well the two schools work together.”

**Response:** “To a certain extent I agree. Infants and Juniors operate differently, and should. The juniors are preparing our children for the next stage, secondary school. They also prepare the parents. They will not be able to come to a class door and start voicing their concerns”

**Response:** No; “Parents should have the choice of a smaller school for their child. We are forcing parents into placing their children into large settings. This one size fits all policy is not acceptable. I would also like to see the statistics for these 'vacancies' and the numbers for . You cannot use words such as 'tend'. There should be actual statistics.”

**Response:** No; “This has not been a case at our school. This is reflected in recent parent surveys”

**Response:** No; “Yes; This is not the case with us. We have very strong parent partnerships. This is reflected in recent parent surveys.”

**Response:** Yes; “No;Some parents may be irritated by the different structures in different phased schools. Others may prefer a smaller school community where their child and they are more likely to be recognised.”

**Response:** No; “Which parents were surveyed for this? Ours were not asked. Many Infant and Junior Schools were encouraged to expand, hence having spaces. Most have reduced or have applied to reduce PAN now which shows that the school is taking financial control.”

**Response:** No; “Where were the parents polled from for this research? We have been forced to expand resulting in school paces since this expansion.The governors have requested to reduce the PAN which would result in us taking financial control of our school's future rather than the current uncertainty.”

**Response:** No; “Which parents were surveyed, because our parents were not? We don't believe this is an issue as we work closely with the Juniors to ensure continuity of care which is so important particularly to vulnerable children and these with SEN. Our awareness of children with these needs ensures the best outcomes for successful transition to the new school. Many infant and junior schools have had encouragement to increase their numbers and going forward find now have spaces. We have reduced our PAN showing that we as a school are taking control of our finances and this can be expanded if and when necessary.”

**Response:** No; “Point 13- what evidence is this based upon?”

**Response:** No; “Whilst most Infant and Junior schools are graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted and popular with parents it was clear by 2021 that separate infant and junior schools tend to have more vacancies than all-through primary schools and where there is a local choice the nearby primary school tends to be full and over-subscribed and parents choose to move pupils into them if there are vacancies. This has led to pupils ‘waiting’ for a while until a vacancy occurs, and this is disruptive for those pupils and others in their classes. 13. Parents with several children can be irritated by the separate structures, offices and rules applying to their children across the two schools and the differences in policies such as reading, SEN support, behaviour, spelling, homework etc. However, where separate schools work closely together, the duplication of structures adds costs.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Our parents have not been surveyed so until such times as they are we cannot comment on their views.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Which parents were surveyed? Was our parents?It looks like schools are taking financial control with reduced PAN”

**Response:** No; “In our Infants’ school, the majority of the parents are extremely happy to have the extra care and attention an Infant school can provide to their younger children.”

**Response:** “I think predominantly parents would choose a school at Key Stage 1 and 2 where they felt that all staff knew them and their children. ;Don't know;”

**Response:** No; “I would be interested to see how many parents and which parents were asked. We only have positive feedback, parents specifically choosing our school because we are a separate infant and junior school. We have parents move their children to our school from a primary school and comment on the positive difference they can see from us being an infant school. They feel there is more care, better relationships with staff are built and it is a very child centred approach.”

**Response:** No; “our parents were not consulted- the reason that parents left was because the Junior school became an academy led by a secondary school who has a poor understanding of primary provision where 1 corporate lesson plan doesn't fit all. Having to liaise with an academy has caused us huge problems around lunchtime provision, shared grounds and staff and being able to have flexibility to respond to trends etc quickly. Any large school would employ staff who are focussed on the different key stages so there is no duplication of staff in infant and Junior schools only more specialisation.Lots of parents do not like ethos of Primary schools. lots of parents want their child in a smaller setting where they are known and don't get lost among 800 other pupils.”



## Financial Implications

**Response:** No; “Schools can achieve economies of scale and other financial savings if they collaborate closely - amalgamating is not necessarily needed to achieve this.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Will redundancies be made?”

**Response:** Don't know; “Point 18 – mentions combined schools sharing the same site – how will this maximise resources for split sites?”

**Response:** Yes; “para 14 agree; 15 it is true but not that simple and it would have been good to have had these conversations about shelter much earlier before the storm arrived! And add Ukraine to that list of affecting variables as well as the unfunded support in some schools for refugees with high dependency ! Also the devolved capital amounts are so small as to make the aspiration in point 18 largely redundant.”

**Response:** No; “Schools already work to maximise efficiency with shared site manager. The governing bodies look for ways to rationalise resources.”

**Response:** No; “This section makes no mention of the medium term loss of £140,000 annually as a result of losing one lump sum. This section is more an argument for closing one form entry primary schools than for amalgamating infant and junior schools.”

**Response:** Don't know; “I don't have any budgeting experience but do know that when I have worked in Primary Schools the money is largely focussed on KS2. EYFS and KS1 rarely feel the financial benefits in a combined school.”

**Response:** Yes; “This is the most convincing section as it is obviously a fact of life that larger organisations are better placed to benefit from economies of scale. However, that does not necessarily translate into quality, and in education it is more important to consider value for money than just cost. Inclusion in an infant school with a significant number of children with EAL and no prior schooling even when arriving in year 1/2 is very different from inclusion with an 8 year old who has been in the system for several years, and specialism may require additional costs in order to provide the best support.”

**Response:** No; “financial resilience and have staff expertise”

**Response:** “Changing of head teacher”

**Response:** No; “We have set a profit budget and have funds to take through for the following years. Our schools are so large with up to 322 on each, we would still need 2 site managers, office staff etc due to the schools being vast.”

**Response:** No; “If you have 2 separate buildings how do you propose to 'save' cost? How are the staff we would no longer need to have 2 of meant to split their time over the 2 schools? A good school business manager/bursar should be able to advise the changes needed in order to run a balance budget, especially if they are buying into the school Finance SLA!”

**Response:** No; “We have maintained our finances and have actually been chosen to support other schools in sorting their finance out. Again where is your evidence?”

**Response:** “Financially, the proposal will make savings. Rather than forcing amalgamation, surely, reducing pans and finding a way of being more responsive to the fluctuations of birth rates in a more timely manner would be a better cost saving system. Temporary reductions in pans and increasing pan sizes in response to the local demographics and estimated numbers attending should be considered. There are schools that have recently been developed that have affected numbers in existing schools. For example, St Martins on the Laurel Lane site, Lake Farm so close to many schools in the Botwell community and Ruislip High in the north of the borough. Although a new school is very attractive, sometimes the consequences can be a fall in numbers in older existing schools. This again, creates sustainability issues for the older schools.”

**Response:** "No; • Who has been polled to canvas these views? Where is the evidence? • Not relevant to most Hillingdon schools as sites are shared. • Lack of clarity on what policy is referencing re: structure – is this people or buildings? • Does not reflect practical experiences at NINS. • Contradictory throughout e.g. pt 10b & pt 12;"

**Response:** No; "Our school budget is healthy and in surplus. From September 2023 we have reduced our PAN and the school is forecast to be at capacity"

**Response:** No; "we maintain a healthy school budget despite the impact of uncertain rollse umber of vacancies"

**Response:** No; "We have a number of expert staff in many areas and our budget is healthy and in surplus. We are reducing PAN, so we are expecting to be at capacity showing how we can operate in changing circumstances and are flexible in our approach. Our site team operates over both sites so this is already in place for us."

**Response:** No; "RE: avoiding duplication of staff- will this not mean there are financial implications around redundancy?"

**Response:** No; "Most of the separate infant and junior schools are below 420 pupils, that is two form entry and they lack financial resilience, scope for economies of scale or a wide range of staff expertise. 15. Local authorities are legally constrained in how much they can help schools in difficulty. School Budgets are currently under huge pressure from inflation, high fixed costs and a fall in primary rolls across London due to the impact of the lower birth rate, Brexit and Covid. Separate infant and junior schools are more likely than all-through primary schools to have financial pressures, and often the leadership structure and non-teaching costs are disproportionately expensive. The amalgamation of Infant and Junior schools should result in savings being achieved over the first few years, through a rationalisation of resources and economies of scale by combining operations and streamlining the procurement of services. 16. Combined schools sharing the same site are able to maximise the efficiency"

**Response:** "School budget is ok and we expect to be running at full capacity.;Don't know"

**Response:** Don't know; "Understanding is that school budget is very good so guess that PAN is being reduced which can only be positive ."

**Response:** No; "With reference to my reply on The Educational Case for Amalgamation...I would reiterate that in comparison to the Primary School I previously worked in, resources and expertise to help develop both the children and staff is far more superior in the Infant setting. There are also sufficient funds to support staff professional development throughout each year group."

**Response:** Don't know; "Not sure what evidence has been used. Most schools discuss procurement and services already so that the most cost effective services can be purchased."

**Response:** No; "We have a healthy budget and have been able to buy in our own specialist staff, playtherapists, SALT and EP this has been the only stablity we have had in these services as the LA provision has been very sketchy and the quality of the staff has been dreadful. Our bought in services saw children face to face throughout Covid we are still struggling to get that from LA staff. outside audits have recommended that the school look for Flagship status for SEN. We are now going back to being 3 form entry and will again have a waiting list- as this means that we are full financially we are even more secure, to ammalgamate with the Junior school where numbers are low would put the school in a poor financial state."

## The Policy

**Response:** No; "The RI judgement should be reviewed as a trigger circumstance. The Policy specifies that if one of the schools is identified as RI by Ofsted it will meet one of the trigger circumstances. However, the DfE do not issue such schools with an academy order and the school is subject to more frequent inspection by Ofsted - in this case, the school should be given opportunity to improve standards and the outcome of the subsequent Ofsted inspection reviewed before going ahead with amalgamation"

especially if there is a new leadership team in place. The receipt of two consecutive RI Ofsted judgements should therefore be the trigger circumstance.”

**Response:** No; “Point 19 d) – most schools cannot set a balanced budget for 3 years so infant and junior schools are not any different to them Point 19 g) – ‘other pressures whereby educational provision would be improved through amalgamation such as’ .... Is too ambiguous and general, sounds like any factor could be used to amalgamate.”

**Response:** No; “one RI Ofsted outcome for one school then no but two consecutive RIs then yes. 19 g is just a catch all bit of fine print that should be ejected from the document”

**Response:** Don't know; “If such trigger problems were to arise then amalgamation is one of the options which would have to be considered but it would not be the only way to solve the problem.”

**Response:** No; “If one school is suddenly deemed 'requires improvement' why should the other school be made to take them on and suffer the consequences of amalgamating. Any 'requires improvement' school should be supported for its individual situation by outside help or a range of SLT from other schools. They do not need to amalgamate to get them out of a mess. That just creates more stress and change on everyone.”

**Response:** Yes; I think it is very reasonable in that you have only required GBs to consider amalgamation - which I understand to have happened on more than one occasion in the past at my school before I was a governor and I'm sure will happen again at some point. I think that feeds into my frustrations as set out in comments above in that your policy reads as very reasonable, and therefore why not set out a more balanced assessment of separate vs amalgamated in earlier sections of the document.;

**Response:** No; “two separate schools with headteachers”

**Response:** “Changing of head teacher”

**Response:** “None of these affect us at this time.”

**Response:** No; “Could you disclose what is considered as School causing concern?”

**Response:** No; “I don't believe these are good enough reasons to amalgamate schools”

**Response:** No; “Why should a school suffer because of another school's OFSTED inspection. This is down to the borough to support. Unfortunately borough support for all schools has reduced and reduced over the years. The borough need to ensure they are supporting.”

**Response:** Don't know; “I understand the reasoning behind amalgamation but have great concerns about children with SEN/D. Those children with sensory issues, would find the large numbers of children and the consequent noise levels a great challenge.”

**Response:** Don't know; “Is this a local standalone policy or a national view?”

**Response:** No; “How does this work in our school if one school has decided to join an academy?”

**Response:** No; “How would the policy work where one school is mainstream and one is in an academy? Does the policy still apply? Would amalgamation be possible, and what would that look like?”

**Response:** No; “If No or Don't Know please can you provide your comments below.”

**Response:** No; “19g- this is too open and not specifically defined”

**Response:** No; “The London Borough of Hillingdon will require Governing Bodies of all separate infant and junior schools to consider amalgamating their two linked schools when one or more of the following ‘trigger circumstances’ occur, unless there are compelling and overriding reasons: a) A headteacher vacancy arises in either or both schools. b) Total pupil numbers in either school are 25% or more below the Published Admission Number. c) Ofsted inspection in one of the schools identifies a ‘Requires Improvement’ judgement. d) One or both of the schools cannot set a balanced budget or has financial problems. e) One or both of the schools involved is judged to be a ‘School causing concern’ by the

London Borough of Hillingdon. f) One or both schools have PANs or are recruiting at below two forms of entry – making the individual schools relatively small and at risk of becoming unviable within the Hillingdon funding context. g) Other pressures whereby the educational provision would be improved through ;”

**Response:** Don't know; “If the Infant school remains mainstream whilst the Juniors is an academy will the policy still apply?”

**Response:** “How does the policy work if one school is mainstream the other an academy?”

**Response:** No; “The Governing body at our Infants school is extremely knowledgeable on all areas of the school’s setting. Personally, I feel amalgamating infant and junior bodies would impact the quality of the governing presently in place.”

**Response:** “I believe that this has previously been the case. Governors will always make considered judgements for their school as this is part of their own accountability. ;Yes”

**Response:** No; “How Will this work where one school is not LA? Our schools are seen as large by Ofsted as you are only comparing within Hillingdon not Nationally.”

## Implementation

**Response:** No; “Point 21 - Seems that the LA are very clear that even though the policy is out for consultation, the policy will be put into place regardless”

**Response:** No; “21 is a tautologous argument as the 'advantages' as listed are singularly setting out the case for amalgamation and taken with point 23 is a fait accompli! Point 22 might not be allowed in the proposed scope of the NFF.”

**Response:** Don't know; “As foundation schools we have always been conscious of trigger points and, in the past, have discussed this with the LA after looking at financial factors etc especially when senior leaders leave.”

**Response:** No; “There is an apparent assumption that the LA would use its powers to impose amalgamation. There is no description of the spread of advice and consultation that would be required before any decisions were made.”

**Response:** No; "Some protection for at least one year" is vague and does not provide certainty. "Progress towards amalgamation will be presumed unless the educational advantages set out in this policy would not be delivered by combining the two schools" takes no account of any disadvantages that might result (again, and sorry to repeat, but lack of balance in earlier sections of the document!).

**Response:** “Changing of head teacher”

**Response:** No; “What if we choose to stay as we are for now?”

**Response:** “No; I've been through this process twice now and the consultation process with teaching staff was non existent.”

**Response:** No; “I am not in favour of amalgamation”

**Response:** “How would redundancies be covered? Points to a negative experience for staff in school.”

**Response:** No; “How would we cover redundancy costs? Surely this would place a huge financial strain on schools. How would this work in our circumstance if one school is mainstream and one academy?”

**Response:** Don't know; “How would redundancies be covered?”

**Response:** No; “How would we cover any redundancy costs caused by this? How would this work with one school that is mainstream and one that is an academy?”

**Response:** No; "Point 23- what if the MAT our junior school has decided to join does not fit our ethos and values?"

**Response:** No; "mentation 20. Discussions, advice, reports, and consultations about school organisation matters will be led by the Head of School Place Planning on behalf of the Director of Education. 21. Progress towards amalgamation will be presumed unless the educational advantages set out in this policy would not be delivered by combining the two schools. Both school Governing Bodies will need to work with the Local Authority to address any concerns and plan the timescale for amalgamation. The London Borough of Hillingdon will consider using the powers available to it to require amalgamation if there is a pressing case for this and Governing Bodies are not addressing the matters. 22. Newly amalgamated schools retain both lump sums in the year of amalgamation and then get some protection for at least one year (two if Schools Forum and DfE agree) and can choose to plan a longer phasing in of different changes; such as to policies, use of the building or staff structures; in order to maximise benefit"

**Response:** No; "Is there more likelihood of redundancies and if so how would this be funded?"

**Response:** No; "You talk about redundancies on what basis would this be done? Who would cover the cost of the redundancies?"

**Response:** No; "With reference to my comment on Parents View, the majority of parents feel an amalgamation would fail to deliver the quality of education, support and benefits their children receive in a junior setting only."

**Response:** "The implementation section states importantly that there would need to be an educational advantage therefore much would need to be reviewed to ensure that it did not in turn disadvantage children and their families."

**Response:** No; "The LA have put our school in this position by allowing academisation even though the local community were very against it and many of these points were raised at the time and we were told that we wouldn't have to join the same academy, this is disgusting that the Academy can get in by the back door as they have a foot in the camp."

## Further comments

**Response:** "There should be a freeze on senior leader recruit in infant and junior schools particularly those facing amalgamation in the short term."

The LA should provide all effected schools with a timeframe for amalgamation.

To limit change and disruption, schools should go into a straight into a MAT as specified in the White Paper"

**Response:** "We already have links between the schools such as sharing the mobile facilities and holding joint training sessions. I think both schools are well managed with strong leadership. I have worked in a junior school, primary school and infant school. I feel the children benefit more from attending an infant and then junior school rather than a primary school as staff are more specialised in teaching those key stages. Subject coordinators can also concentrate on one key stage to develop rather than two which is beneficial. Both schools are great at what they provide and should be left to stay as separate infant and junior schools."

**Response:** "I would prefer more honesty in the policy - that the main reason for amalgamation is financial. If there was any pressing educational reason for amalgamation it should have happened a long time ago. If the policy draft was more upfront about this, I might have agreed with a lot more points; instead it seems to clutch at spurious reasons for amalgamation and comes across as dishonest."

**Response:** "There is a lack of balance in the overall proposal. It has strong theme of blame and judgement which is absent from Opportunity for All even though the Ofsted stats for LBH turn the percentages quoted by the minister in supporting academisation, on their head which means there is a great deal that is currently going well in LBH. That said, I do agree that the cumulative logistical and

financial pressures on some mainstream infant/junior schools will make delivering an outstanding service to our community extremely challenging if not insuperable.”

**Response:** “I agree a thorough review of educational advantages should be reviewed regularly and welcome LA advice and involvement. We also would like to record, should LA build new joint building we would have worked towards amalgamation 7 years ago. However, separating schools although on same site, has made the function more as separate schools. We did make representations at that stage.”

**Response:** “There are problems with falling rolls across the Borough but these affect academies as much a maintained schools. The schools least able to manage falling rolls are one form entry primary schools not separate infant and junior schools. The LA should be working closely with the regional schools commissioner to make plans for all schools in the Borough.”

**Response:** “Minet infant school has been an independent school since my kids studied there from 1994 - present, there’s no need for change it’s accommodating for the immediate diverse community at present and always has , if changes happen our children, our community will be at a loss , so please bear our families and local community in mind , minet serves a diversity like no other and we want to keep celebrating that as long as we can . Kind regards.”

**Response:** “I specifically choose to work in an Infants school. I think the children get more specialised attention by people who have lots of experience in that age group. It is a more secure environment for young children. Bigger is rarely better and young children get lost or inhibited in large establishments. The budgets can be better channelled fairly to each year group in split schools. Schools that work together make transition smooth and can share facilities anyway, they don't need to amalgamate to do this. An SLT including 1 SENDCO stretched across all of the Primary age groups would be too great of a workload. It’s bad enough as it is and always increasing. Teachers are adult enough to know that if they apply they will be working in a more limited age range - many of us choose that.”

**Response:** "Completely understand the need to consult and have a coherent policy on this and, as responsible GBs at our infant and junior school we will of course continue to consider amalgamation when appropriate. However, I think there are disadvantages as well as advantages and this document has ignored those which gives the impression that this is just about saving money not quality of education."

**Response:** “I don't believe this approach is the best way forward for children, teachers, and parents to ensure quality education for our children.”

**Response:** “Proposed Amalgamation was considered on three separate occasions in the past and deemed not viable by staff, governors, parents and school as a whole. My opinion has not changed since then and I do not support amalgamating Hillside and Junior schools.”

**Response:** “My own children’s school have gone through this recently in Hillingdon and it has been the best thing for the school, staff, families and ultimately the children. This needs to happen with Coteford.”

**Response:** “I think it will be a great idea, it will: help the community, consistency for the children and parents and allows teachers to work together rather than being two schools.”

**Response:** “I think it will be a real shame to get rid of Infant and Junior schools. They are very special places where children can grow and explore happily. The parents are very happy with what is happening and children enjoy heading to the junior school as they feel grown up. We do not get the same problems as all through primaries due to them finding things new and exciting and only staying their for 4 years. In Primary schools behaviour tends to get worse as children reach 5-6. This has caused a great deal of stress to staff and headteachers. I was appointed a year and a bit ago and do not wish to loose my job.”

**Response:** “In theory, amalgamation sounds good...until you apply it to individual schools, that is. I cannot see how Whiteheath Infants and Juniors pupils would benefit from amalgamating, since the economies of scale are simply not there. Physically they are further apart than is practicable. As a passionate teacher of KS1 and Early years, I cannot endorse this proposal.”

**Response:** "On paper this sounds great, however, I don't believe this would work. Infants and junior school operate differently, and they do so to cater for the children's needs. Some individuals at these types of schools may have experience working in their type of school, and therefore they may have little or no experience working in the other type of school. This will impact their understanding when asking to implement a policy or alter the way something is done.

This paper was written generically and therefore has not consider individual schools. The policy does state great benefits, however, how many times has this been done and what was the process like for the staff and the pupils? "

**Response:** "I totally disagree with the whole process. I believe it is letting children down. Children need small nurturing environments so they can be the best they can be, not so they can be a statistic. I have seen this process leave staff in tears and leave the profession. What were once supportive environments in which to work become too big and impersonal for staff. If one headteacher stays and another leaves this can be really difficult for the staff who worked under the headteacher that has left.

Financially, after the first year it becomes difficult as finances are cut. Long serving staff are often the first to go as schools look for a cheaper option. A school needs a balance of young and older staff.

Decisions in year groups and as a school become difficult as everything gets too large. Staff struggle to cope with such a wide curriculum.

In the two schools I have been through this process with I can honestly say that for the first 5 years it was horrendous and the whole experience deeply unsettling.

This is not an education decision, this is purely a financial decision which I find deeply upsetting."

**Response:** "Whilst it may be a difficult transition between the two schools, however, I feel it would be hugely beneficial for the children to have consistent teaching and practices from KS1."

**Response:** "I understand the financial difficulties that are occurring in a number of schools, however, this year there were a significant number of schools with surplus budgets beyond 8%. I am in favour of retaining the schools in phases as I believe that the outcomes are better for the child, the community engagement and children with SEN/D. Good or outstanding schools will not necessarily do better by amalgamating with schools that require improvement or have falling numbers. For the child, who needs to be considered beyond financial savings, surely a smaller classroom will help support them to thrive in their education?"

**Response:** "In addition to the points I have noted above, the overall policy does not present a balanced view or highlight any possible disadvantages."

**Response:** "As a Governing Board we consider it to be disappointing that the unique and specialist status an Infant / Junior School offers is not recognised by the local authority as being a positive and a strength."

**Response:** "There are inconsistencies throughout the policy and data is not a balanced. I am against the implementation of the amalgamation policy"

**Response:** "Introduction -

There are data errors throughout this section. The information provided lacks clarity and there is no apparent evidence for the statements made.

E.g. section 2 claims that - "Many pupils and schools have experienced high movement of pupils since Covid, and across London, primary school rolls have declined in the past few years and many now have some smaller year groups with fewer classes in." This is a completely generalised statement and is the complete opposite to the experience at our school.

Educational cases -

Again a general lack of clarity and data evidence shown in this section. A biased view of amalgamation is shown and does not reflect the reality of the partnership working already taking place in Hillingdon between schools.

#### Governance and Leadership -

There is no evidence to show that there is any difficulty in recruiting Governing bodies in Hillingdon. We are currently at full quota and there is no recognition that voluntary roles are generally more difficult to fill as standard. This should not be a reason to make a huge decision to amalgamate.

#### Parents View -

This section does not reflect the practical experience at our school. Who has been polled to gain these views and how was the decision made to represent their views as general statements in this proposal. Again, without evidence of how these views were gathered there is not grounding to what context they have been given.

There is a lack of clarity on what this section of the policy is referring to e.g. the word "structure" is used and it is not evident whether the people or the buildings are being reference.

#### Financial implications -

A couple of points to raise here -

- section 14 The use of the word 'most' is vague and it isn't clear who is being referenced.
- At our school we can demonstrate that shared purchasing and procurement activities already take place successfully and the borough is aware of this so unsure how point 15 is valid.
- How would this section be adapted to address schools who do not share a site?

#### Implementation -

- The issue of how redundancies would be covered should be addressed here.
- The process outlined points to a negative impact for staff in the schools.

#### Overall policy comments

Further to the above comments it is clear that this is a document that needs further work to provide clarity on a number of points and to ensure that Hillingdon looks at the individual schools in his borough before trying to implement a 'one size fits all' policy.

The policy contains many contradictions throughout, for example - 10 b. Separate infant and junior schools are disproportionately more likely to be graded Requires Improvement by Ofsted or to have budget deficits. VS Point 12. Whilst most Infant and Junior schools are graded Good or Outstanding by Ofsted

I am disappointed by the proposal and the short time that has been given for the 'consultation' stage. I would ask that the Borough consider carrying out real consultation sessions with schools that would be impacted by this. We all have the children's quality of education at the centre of our work and I do not feel that amalgamation implemented in this way would be beneficial to that goal.

I hope that, if you decide to carry out no further consultation, that comments are read and taken on board before anything is formally adopted.

Many thanks for taking the time to read this feedback."

**Response:** "As a school that was 'forced' by the LA to expand in 2013, to meet growing needs and numbers within Hillingdon, it now seems grossly unfair that such an amalgamation will be forced upon us, as a junior school, yet again. Whilst not in post at that stage, the school argued against such an expansion, preferring to operate on a system of bulge years if the need arose, but this was not supported by the LA, citing predicted growth of schools based on birth rates and other undisclosed figures. None



of this has been remotely apparent over the years and in fact, there is never shared information by School's Planning about predictions based on such intelligence that you as Hillingdon hold.

Since taking up the role as Headteacher in September 2016, we have broached the topic of capping years groups, allowing us to operate as three-forms of entry but this was never supported. Jointly, both infant and junior schools leaders and Governing Boards wrote joint letters to Dan Kennedy, wrote to Councillor Simmonds, and met with Sarah Phillips as the newly appointed Place Planning Advisor, but this had no effect on this decision-making process.

Since then, all conversations with both Dan Kennedy and Sarah Phillips have fallen silent, with Sarah now simply not responding to any of our school's correspondence on where we are with discussions on potential 'capping of numbers', leading us to the false sense of us simply continuing as 'business as usual' whilst strategically monitoring our unique year-group formations of 3/4/3/4 (for 21-22) and then 4/3/4/3 (for 22-23). Why and how has Hillingdon allowed this to happen?

The biggest issue discussed during these meetings was the forced expansions and the mobility issues that we face, largely centred around the affordability of housing within our catchment area, leading to many families being offered more permanent homes outside of Hillingdon or London. Our exit interviews are very clear in noting that none of our parents leave due to being dissatisfied with the quality of education offered by Whitehall Junior School. Whilst we serve the same community, each of our schools has its unique characteristics. How then do we justify forcing a merger of schools which operate in totally different ways and with totally different reputations within our local community?

Due to our unique characteristics and totally different leadership and management styles by the Whitehall Junior School's SLT and Governing Board, we have a strong and stable staffing body, allowing us to drive the standards that we currently maintain and in many ways, surpass. Such an amalgamation would destabilise our staffing body, particularly if I was not the one to stay on at the helm, resulting in many staff leaving our well-established school. We are the fabric of Whitehall Junior School and this is widely known in our local community who speak highly of our staff and how we bring about a uniqueness not seen in any other local school. What is extremely frustrating is that, until now, no mention of such amalgamations was out there for schools to consider. In fact, we are dumbfounded by the fact that such an important decision that solely affects infant and junior schools was not specifically discussed with us first. Instead, it was buried within a LA circular which is even more alarming as many of us had actually missed it amidst all other email content that we have to process daily.

We would much prefer a joint discussion with all parties concerned, allowing us to accurately assess each school's situation and factors directly affecting each school, before executing such a policy which could prove detrimental to the livelihoods of many stakeholders within our school communities. Given the lack of opportunity to fully understand the LA's rationale behind such a decision being made, and given that no meaningful conversations can take place over the summer break, we strongly urge that there be a delay in presenting it to cabinet."

**Response:** "I have read my schools views on proposed amalgamation. I do not agree for the above reasons this would be good for our school."

**Response:** "As an infant school I believe we can meet the needs of the children and we can prepare them for the next step to Juniors with confidence. We are well resourced and know the parents/carers which enables us to have positive relationships with them and enables us to have them working with us for the benefits of the children. How would this be the case if we amalgamated? The children are the most important people within a school and their needs should always be the number 1 priority and I believe that as an Infant school we do this very successfully."

**Response:** "Ofsted have graded most Infants school as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' which proves that the quality of teaching, resources, support and benefits these young children and their parents/carers receive, is clearly more superior than that of a Primary school setting."

**Response:** "It is important of course to review whether amalgamation would lead to a loss of pupils due to the size and nurturing of children. Furthermore it would be good to reflect on staff skills and expertise in curriculum and SEN. Different phases may automatically attract specialist staff who may

otherwise choose not to teach in an all through Primary. Is there any evidence already to suggest teachers have applied to transition from one phase to another in infant/ junior schools when there is a vacancy. In my own experience I am unaware of this. "

**Response:** "I do not agree with infant and junior schools amalgamating. I feel this would be detrimental to the children's mental wellbeing. I am unable to see the benefits of this and instead can see many negative impact this would have."

**Response:** "There are so many inaccuracies stated in the Amalgamation Policy, this is not founded in sound educational practice. Hillingdon is failing its Infant and Junior schools and losing the unique qualities that it used to offer parents and children."