

# OUTCOME OF THE PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE GRANGE PARK INFANT AND NURSERY SCHOOL AND GRANGE PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL - SPRING 2025

<b>Committee name</b>	Children, Families & Education Select Committee
<b>Officer reporting</b>	Abi Preston – Director of Education & SEND
<b>Papers with report</b>	Appendix 1 – Hillingdon Infant and Junior Amalgamation Policy – September 2022 Appendix 2 – Grange Park Public Notice Appendix 3 – Statutory Proposal to amalgamate Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Question – Proposed Amalgamation of Grange Park Schools Appendix 5 – Academic Research of the benefits of Amalgamation
<b>Ward</b>	Belmore

## HEADLINES

The Governing Board of Grange Park Junior School and the London Borough of Hillingdon, with the support of the Governing Board of Grange Park Nursery and Infant School, are consulting on a proposal for the two schools to amalgamate to form a single three-form entry foundation primary school for children aged 3 to 11 years with effect from 1st September 2025, with a total published pupil number of 630. In order to amalgamate the 2 schools and create a Primary school, the Council are proposing to close the Infant and Nursery school, and Governing Board of the Junior school are proposing to extend their age range.

Following the DfE statutory process, approval is being requested (Local Authority as the decision-maker) to amalgamate the two schools.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That the Children, Families & Education Select Committee:**

- 1. Review the proposal to amalgamate Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School, by closing Grange Park Infant and Nursery School, and extending the age range of the Junior School from 7–11-year-olds, to 3–11-year-olds;**
- 2. Note the 84 responses from the consultation in response to both proposals; and**
- 3. Provide comments to be included in the Cabinet report which will be presented on 10 April 2025.**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Council, and schools are expected to consider the long-term vision of each school, ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people, and the sustainability of schools. Part of this responsibility is to continue to:

- improve and provide the best possible education and care for every child;
- provide an excellent working environment and experience for staff; and
- support and work with their local community

The Governing Body of Grange Park Infant and Nursery School, and the Governing Body of Grange Park Junior School, along with the Council have been discussing this proposal since Summer 2024, and see a range of benefits in combining the existing schools into a new primary school, which include:

- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught and supported, recognising the current strengths of both schools.
- Increased opportunities for children in all key stages to come together for pastoral, social and creative activities.
- Consistency of parental involvement throughout the primary phase of education by having the ability to foster longer-term relationships with families within one school.
- Communication between school and parents will be simplified, especially for parents with children in both schools. It would remove any duplication and ensure a joined-up approach for events, training and other matters.
- Removes the need for parents to apply for a place at the Junior School as children would automatically continue their education as part of one Grange Park school.
- Increased career development opportunities for staff through the sharing of a wider range of expertise and the possibility to gain experience and an understanding of all Primary Key Stages.
- Greater opportunity for cost effectiveness through economies of scale e.g. in purchasing, ensuring the best provision possible for the children;

Both Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School are maintained Foundation schools and share a building, with the Infant school operating downstairs and the Junior school operating upstairs. They both remained 'Good' at their last Ofsted Inspection. Grange Park Infant and Nursery School was inspected in June 2024, and Grange Park Junior School was inspected in November 2024.

With the headteacher of Grange Park Infant and Nursery School retiring in Summer 2024, Hillingdon Council required the governing bodies of both schools to consider amalgamation in line with the Hillingdon Council policy (**Appendix 1**). There is currently an interim Headteacher in post at Grange Park Infant and Nursery School for one academic year, and a permanently employed Headteacher of Grange Park Junior school.

The birth rate in Hillingdon has been steadily declining since 2016, which has impacted primary schools' pupil numbers across the Borough. The combined on-roll figures at Grange Park Infant and Nursery, and Grange Park Junior Schools have decreased by 12% over the past 5 Autumn census' as noted in the tables below and are expected to continue to reduce in line with falling birth rates.

### Grange Park Infant School

Census	PAN	On Roll	% of PAN filled
Autumn 2020	360	318	88%
Autumn 2021	360	286	79%
Autumn 2022	360	263	73%
Autumn 2023	360	254	71%
Autumn 2024	330	245	74%

### Grange Park Junior School

Census	PAN	On Roll	% of PAN filled
Autumn 2020	480	380	79%
Autumn 2021	480	400	83%
Autumn 2022	480	414	86%
Autumn 2023	480	380	79%
Autumn 2024	450	369	82%

To manage the falling roll in both schools, a formal consultation was undertaken by each school in Autumn 2022 to reduce the Published Admissions Number (PAN) from September 2024, reducing from 4FE to 3FE, a reduction of 30 pupils in each year group.

### Equality Impact Assessment for both schools

An equality impact assessment was considered, however, as the children on roll at both schools will continue to attend the same site, with the same school, staff and the same support and funding, it was deemed to have no potential impact on any children who share protected characteristics.

There will be:

- No change to the Net Capacity of the School
- No change to the Published Admissions Number (PAN) of the schools
- No change to the curriculum being taught.

Therefore, it was not deemed necessary to carry out a full equality impact assessment. However, these changes will be monitored.

### Financial Implications

As detailed in the Schools operational guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK, 'where schools amalgamate after 01 April 2025, the new school will receive funding equivalent to the formula funding of the closing schools added together for the appropriate proportion of the year. This means that they receive the combined lump sums for the remainder of the year and 70% of the second lump sum in the following year.

Local authorities can apply to provide a second year of protection. This needs to be discussed and agreed with Schools Forum."

The financial implication of the amalgamation of the two schools will be the eventual loss of the lump sum income usually available per school. The school will, however, benefit from better economies of scale which will mitigate the impact of this loss. A review of resource allocation and deployment as part of the amalgamation will also enable the school to mitigate the impact of the loss of one lump sum and gain a net positive from the amalgamation.

## **RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION**

As both schools are maintained foundation schools, Hillingdon Council can propose to close Grange Park Infant and Nursery School under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, with notice given in accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013. The Governing Body of Grange Park Junior School are proposing to extend the age range of Junior School from 7–11-year-olds to 3–11-year-olds, with notice given in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

The two proposals follow two separate guidance processes: [Opening and closing maintained schools](#) and [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools](#).

While there is no longer a statutory 'pre-publication' consultation period for proposed prescribed alteration changes to increase the age range of a school, there is a statutory requirement to consult any parties the proposer thinks appropriate before publishing proposals under section 15 proposals to close a maintained school. Consultation was carried out in Autumn 2024 with the two Grange Park schools related to this proposal, however, the following engagement with all 10 sets of Infant and Junior Schools in Hillingdon by Council Officers should also be noted:

- 11 June 2024 – a letter was sent to all Infant and Junior Headteachers in keeping with the Council's Infant and Junior Schools Amalgamation policy (Successful, Sustainable, Viable Schools). As part of this policy, 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.

Information sessions for Headteachers and Governors of Infant or Junior schools were held

- Monday 01 July 2024 at 5:00 – 6:00 pm – 27 attendees (5 Officers and 22 Headteachers/ Governors)
- Tuesday 02 July 2024 at 12:00 – 1:00 pm – 24 attendees (5 Officers and 18 Headteachers/ Governors and 1 HR lead)

These sessions provided opportunity for Headteachers and Governors of Infant or Junior schools to find out more about the process and benefits of amalgamating and answer any queries or concerns from the schools. The meeting encouraged Infant and Junior schools, as well as Governing Bodies, to work closer together for the benefit of their shared school and local community.

The key enquiries from schools were related to research on the benefits of the potential amalgamation, and the financial impact on schools that do amalgamate.

## **Consultation**

The pre-publication consultation period was held with interested parties from 25 November 2024 to 16 January 2025.

An information session for stakeholders was held at the school site on 25 November 2024 which included the Headteacher, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) from both schools, Chair of Governors, and Governors from both Schools. The themes of which have been highlighted below:

### **Options for Amalgamation:**

- Several options were discussed, including the closure of one or both schools.
- The process involves formal consultation and engagement with both Governing Boards.

### **Governance and Decision-Making:**

- Discussions on the mechanism for the proposed amalgamation, including if one school closed and the age range of the other was extended.
- Emphasis on the importance of mutual agreement and transparency in communication between all parties and across both schools.
- The requirement for a minimum number of Governors across both schools, and the decision-making process for any changes as a result of the proposed amalgamation.

### **Queries, concerns and Feedback:**

- Queries and concerns from staff and parents about the impact of the proposed amalgamation on jobs, finances, and school culture.
- Discussions on the timeline for the proposed amalgamation and the potential impact on staff and pupils.
- The importance of building trust and relationships between the two schools whether there is amalgamation or not.

### **Support and Next Steps:**

- The Council and Schools HR (organisation commissioned by the schools to support with HR related matters) will support the two schools through the process if amalgamation is approved.
- The need for clear communication and agreement on the timeline and the process for the proposed amalgamation.
- The importance of making decisions that are in the best interest of the children.

### **Financial and Structural Considerations:**

- The financial model for the proposed amalgamation.
- Discussions on the need for any internal restructuring.
- The importance of reviewing staff structures as part of the proposed amalgamation.

### **Support from Schools HR:**

- Confirmation that Schools HR would assist with any related HR processes if the proposal to amalgamate is approved.
- Union engagement should be managed through Schools HR if the proposal to amalgamate is approved.

### **Staff Engagement and Communication:**

- Emphasis on the need for staff to have space to engage with the process.
- Joint messaging to staff will become the standard approach during the process.
- Both schools agreed on a joint statement to staff.

### **Publication**

As part of the formal consultation, the Council issued a Public Notice (**Appendix 2**) which was sent to the West London Gazette for publication on Wednesday 29 January 2025, with 4 copies put up around the school site on entrance/exits in line with the statutory process.

As the proposal for one change is linked to another, this was made clear in any notices that were published. Where a proposal by a local authority is 'related' to a proposal by other proposers such as this, the 2 notices could be published together and cross-refer to the other.

The full proposal was published on the school's websites and the Council website, and included information setting out (in line with the statutory process):

- how copies of the proposal may be obtained;
- that anybody can object to, or comment on, the proposal;
- the date that the representation period ends; and
- the local authority's address to which objections or comments should be submitted.

### **Representation**

The statutory proposal (**Appendix 3**), was available from Wednesday 29th January 2025 at 9:00am to Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 5:00pm on the consultation page of the Hillingdon Council website. This included a brief outline of the proposed change, the full proposal, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document (**Appendix 4**), a copy of the Public Notice, and a questionnaire to obtain feedback.

Information regarding the consultation was publicised to all schools within the Borough via email. Both Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School shared the information on their school webpages by including the pdfs of the above documents as well as including a link to the Hillingdon Council consultation webpage.

As Hillingdon Council also receives school admissions applications from residents who live outside of the Borough, the consultation was designed to be inclusive. Therefore, officers contacted the following surrounding Councils to share details of the consultation:

- London Borough of Ealing
- London Borough of Hounslow
- London Borough of Brent

- London Borough of Harrow
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Buckinghamshire County Council
- Slough Borough Council

There were also drop-in sessions at the school site, where Officers were on hand to answer any questions in person and to explain the proposal as necessary. This was held on Wednesday 12 February 2025 between 2:00pm – 3:00pm for stakeholders, including parents/guardians, school staff and residents (**12 attendees**) and a further session was held for school staff separately, from 3:30pm to 4:30pm (**46 attendees**), with a total of 58 attendees across the two sessions.

A virtual session was also held on Thursday 13 February 2025 at 5:00pm-6:00pm to provide another opportunity for stakeholders to ask questions or comment on the proposal (**1 attendee**).

### **Consultation Responses**

**84** responses were received in total during the consultation period with 83 submitted via the online questionnaire and 1 email. The responses are summarised below.

#### **Online Questionnaire responses are summarised below:**

1. **73** respondents agreed with the proposal to amalgamate Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School to form a single three-form primary school
  - Yes - 73
  - No - 9
  - Don't know – 1
2. Of the **10** respondents that answered 'No' or 'Don't know', reasons have been summarised below in the paper
3. **75** respondents did not agree that the proposed changes would disadvantage any Hillingdon residents.
  - Yes - 4
  - No - 75
  - Don't know – 4
4. Of the **4** respondents that agreed that the changes will disadvantage Hillingdon residents, reasons have been summarised below in the paper.
5. **83** respondents have confirmed their interest in the proposal as:
  - A parent/ Carer/guardian – 27
  - A staff member – 32
  - A local resident – 5
  - Other – 14
  - Prefer not to say – 4
  - Blank – 1
6. **42** respondents stated that they have children under the age of 18 living in their household.

7. Respondents were invited to state which school(s) their child(ren) currently attend, and the responses were as follows:

- Grange Park Infant and Nursery School – 18
- Grange Park Junior School – 16
- Grange Park (non-specified) – 11
- Out of Borough – 3
- Rosedale College – 2
- Uxbridge College – 2
- Belmore Academy – 1
- Cranford Community College - 1
- De Salis Studio College – 1
- Douay Martyrs – 1
- Hedgewood - 1
- Langley Academy – 1
- Oak Wood School – 1
- Queensmead School – 1
- St Bernard's Catholic Grammar School – 1
- Uxbridge High School – 1

8. **26** provided additional comments on the proposals which are summarised below:  
One email response was received querying the proposed new Primary Schools uniform policy.

Please see themes of consultation responses below:

The information below seeks to set out the themes from the consultation to the proposal to Council's proposal to close Grange Park Infant and Nursery School, and the Governing Body of Grange Park Junior School to extend the age range of Junior School from 7–11-year-olds to 3–11-year-olds.

## **THEMES**

### **1. Safety of Younger Children**

- Some respondents were worried about the safety of younger children (reception and nursery) when mixed with older students.

During the information event, it was made clear by the junior school Headteacher that children would continue to be educated and socialize with children of their own age as in other primary schools if the amalgamation is approved.

### **2. Disruption to Pupils' Education**

- Some respondents were concerned that amalgamation might disrupt children's learning and emotional well-being.

Children remain at the heart of this proposal, and their education and wellbeing remain a priority. Both schools are working closely together to ensure that children's education or wellbeing is not impacted by the proposed amalgamation and will continue to work together whether the amalgamation is approved or not. Benefits of amalgamation for children are set out earlier in this paper.



### **3. Loss of Individual School Identities**

- Some respondents were concerned that merging Grange Park schools will dilute their unique cultures and leadership styles

It is expected that both schools will benefit from the proposed amalgamation and implement the best practice from across both schools. Benefits of amalgamation for children are set out earlier in this paper. If the amalgamation process is approved, the school leadership team will also decide on plans for uniform across the Infants and Juniors.

### **4. Impact on Special Educational Needs (SEN) Provision**

- Some respondents highlighted they were concerned that resources for SEN students might be restructured or reduced

It is expected that pupils will have access to a wider range of resources and support across the 2 schools if amalgamation is approved. This will provide a benefit to these pupils, along with the continuity for parents of liaising with one school and only having to tell their story once. Children remain at the heart of this proposal, and their education and wellbeing remain a priority. Support will continue to be provided for children that require it whether amalgamation is approved or not. Benefits of amalgamation for children are set out earlier in this paper.

### **5. Staffing Uncertainty**

- Some respondents were worried that amalgamation may lead to staff redundancies, restructuring and increasing workloads.

During the consultation event, the Headteacher of the Junior school was very clear about the value of the staff in both schools and expressed a desire to work with the staff team if amalgamation was approved to retain as many staff as possible. It is also recognised that all schools expect to have an element of natural staff turnover regardless of the amalgamation process.

The school leadership team will keep this under review if the amalgamation is approved.

### **6. Request for more information to support the rationale for amalgamation**

- Some respondents felt that more information about the rationale behind the amalgamation was needed.

The Council has set out a policy on amalgamation and the benefits to children and their education and wellbeing, along with the benefits to the schools. Benefits of amalgamation are set out earlier in this paper.

Academic research was also shared with both Governing Bodies during the initial discussions about the amalgamation process demonstrating the positive impact of amalgamation. A list of the academic research referenced can be found in **Appendix 5**.

### **7. Impact on Local Community**

- Some respondents felt the proposed amalgamation would negatively affect the local community, and choice for parents

The proposed amalgamation would see the school continue to engage in the community and provide a smoother education journey for children as they would not need to apply for a place at the junior school as they do now. Parents will retain their ability to express a preference for which school their child attends, and this will not change as part of the proposed amalgamation. Benefits of amalgamation are set out earlier in this paper.

## **Conclusion**

As noted from the consultation responses, there is overwhelming support for the amalgamation, and a range of benefits for the children and the school outlined in the paper. It is felt that the proposed amalgamation will provide a better learning experience for children, with a more consistent journey through their primary education, sharing resources from both schools, and engaging with one set of staff who will know the children, and allow them to move seamlessly between year groups during their time at the school.

## **Next steps**

If approval is granted by Cabinet, the Education Service will notify the Department for Education and implement the proposal following the requirements set within the [School organisation: local-authority-maintained schools - GOV.UK](#) guidance [Opening and closing maintained schools](#) and [Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools](#).

The school will be expected to open as a Primary school in September 2025 if amalgamation is approved.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial impediments to the recommendations within the report.

## **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to the recommendations within the report.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

[Opening and Closing maintained schools](#)

[Making significant changes \('prescribed alterations'\) to maintained schools](#).

## **APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 – Hillingdon Infant and Junior Amalgamation Policy – September 2022

Appendix 2 – Grange Park Public Notice

Appendix 3 – Statutory Proposal to amalgamate Grange Park Infant and Nursery School and Grange Park Junior School

Appendix 4 – Frequently Asked Question – Proposed Amalgamation of Grange Park Schools

Appendix 5 – Academic Research of the benefits of Amalgamation