

# PROPOSAL TO AMALGAMATE HAREFIELD INFANT SCHOOL AND HAREFIELD JUNIOR SCHOOL

<b>Cabinet Member &amp; Portfolio</b>	Cllr Susan O'Brien – Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education
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<b>Papers with report</b>	<p>Appendix 1 – Proposal for pre-publication – Harefield Infant School &amp; Harefield Junior School Proposal</p> <p>Appendix 2 – Pre-publication Information Session presentation</p> <p>Appendix 3 – Harefield Schools consultation Public Notice</p> <p>Appendix 4 – Harefield Schools – Statutory Proposal for Amalgamation</p> <p>Appendix 5 – Harefield Schools Amalgamation – Frequently Asked Questions</p> <p>Appendix 6 – Financial Benchmarking for Harefield Infant School</p> <p>Appendix 7 – Financial Benchmarking for Harefield Junior School</p> <p>Appendix 8 – Harefield Schools - Senior Leadership Structure 2024-2025</p> <p>Appendix 9 – Information sessions presentation – Proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Junior Schools – Summer 2025</p> <p>Appendix 10 – Academic Research of the benefits of Amalgamation</p> <p>Appendix 11 - Equalities and Human Rights Impact Assessment – Proposed Amalgamation of Harefield Schools</p>

## HEADLINES

<b>Summary</b>	<p>The London Borough of Hillingdon have consulted on a proposal for Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School to amalgamate to form a single two-form entry maintained primary school for children aged 3 to 11 years. This change would take effect from 7 April 2026, if approved, with a total pupil published admission number (PAN) of 420. In order to amalgamate the 2 schools and create a primary school, the Council are proposing to (technically) close Harefield Infant School and extend the age range of Harefield Junior School. No land or buildings will be affected by the proposal, and all assets would transfer to the Primary school if the amalgamation is approved.</p> <p>Following the DfE statutory process, it is being recommended to amalgamate the two schools.</p>
<b>Putting our Residents First</b>  <b>Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026</b>	<p>This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents</p> <p>This report supports our commitments to residents of: Thriving, Healthy Households</p> <p>This proposal is in line with the Council's Amalgamation Policy (<b>Background paper 1</b>).</p>

<b>Financial Cost</b>	If approved, there will be an eventual loss of the lump sum income phased over 2 years, usually available per school. However, in the long-term the two schools will benefit from economies of scale efficiency savings and will receive the same level of lump sum funding as all other Primary schools in the Borough. No other funding will be directly affected as a result of this proposal.
<b>Select Committee</b>	Children, Families and Education Select Committee
<b>Ward(s)</b>	Harefield Village

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**That:**

- 1) the responses from the consultation based on the proposals set out, along with the Equalities Impact Assessment, be given due consideration and;**
- 2) the (technical) closure of the Harefield Infant School on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2026 and the extension of the age range of the Harefield Junior School, to amalgamate both schools to create an all-through primary school from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026, be approved.**

### Reasons for recommendation

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

Both Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School are community-maintained schools located in the Harefield Village ward and were both graded 'Good' at their last Ofsted Inspection. Harefield Infant School was inspected in March 2023 and maintained its grade from the full inspection in December 2012, and Harefield Junior School was inspected in October 2023 and improved its grade from 'Requires Improvement' from the full inspection in September 2019.

Both schools are located adjacent to each other and effectively share one site. As they are community-maintained schools, this means they are both maintained by Hillingdon Council and the Council owns the buildings and the land. The Local Authority is also responsible for determining the school admission arrangements for both schools. No land or buildings will be affected by the proposal, and all assets would transfer to the Primary school if the amalgamation is approved.

Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School have been in a federation since October 2018. This means that, although they are legally two separate schools, they operate as one school in many ways. There is one federated Governing Board that oversee both schools, one Executive Headteacher, and one Head of School for both schools along with some other shared roles across the two schools.

The Hillingdon Infant and Junior Amalgamation Policy, September 2022, (see **Background Paper 1**) states that “*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.**

H) Other pressures whereby the educational provision would be improved through amalgamation such as provision of SEN support, staff recruitment and retention or issues linked to the buildings.

In line with the Council’s School Amalgamation Policy, two triggers (highlighted **in bold** above) have been met by Harefield Infant school and Harefield Junior school, which warrant consideration of amalgamation for the schools:

#### **Pupil Numbers 25% or More Below Published Admission Number (PAN):**

Current enrolment data from the January 2025 census shows that total pupil numbers in Harefield Infant School are more than 25% below PAN. This under-enrolment indicates a significant surplus of places, which can lead to inefficiencies in resource allocation, reduced funding per pupil, and challenges in maintaining a broad and balanced curriculum.

#### **Small School Size and Below Two Forms of Entry:**

Both schools are either operating with PANs below two forms of entry (i.e. fewer than 60 pupils per year group) based on the census data from January 2025 or are recruiting below this level. In the context of funding, such small schools are increasingly at risk of becoming financially unviable. Smaller schools face greater difficulty in absorbing fluctuations in pupil numbers, managing fixed costs, and sustaining high-quality provision across all areas of the curriculum. Together, these two triggers highlight the growing vulnerability of the schools and the need to explore structural solutions—such as amalgamation—to ensure long-term sustainability, educational quality, and efficient use of public resources.

Over the past decade, due to a number of reasons including falling birth rate, funding pressures and an aim of improving outcomes, a total of 54 nursery and primary schools across London — comprising both maintained schools and academies—have closed as a result of a steady process of amalgamations/ mergers. This includes five cases in which separate infant and junior schools were formally closed and re-established as unified primary schools, leading to 49 Primary schools being created through amalgamation (almost 5 per year).

Total closed	Both closed	Newly created	One closed	Total amalgamated
54	10	5	44	49

## Birth Rates

The birth rate in Hillingdon has been steadily declining since 2016, which has impacted primary aged pupil numbers across the Borough. The combined pupil on-roll figures at Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools have decreased over the past 6 Spring census returns as noted in the tables below, and meet the triggers B & F listed above, despite the Published Admission Number (PAN) of the schools being reduced in 2023 / 24.

### Harefield Infant School

Harefield Infant School						
Census	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll				% Vacancies
		R	Yr 1	Yr 2	Total on Roll	
Jan-20	270	75	64	71	210	22%
Jan-21	270	55	67	63	185	31%
Jan-22	270	51	57	62	170	37%
Jan-23	270	62	52	54	168	38%
Jan-24	180	36	59	45	140	22%
Jan-25	180	39	35	60	134	26%

### Harefield Junior School

Harefield Junior School							
Census	Whole School PAN	Pupils on Roll					% Vacancies
		Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6	Total on Roll	
Jan-20	360	71	85	54	69	279	23%
Jan-21	360	67	66	82	53	268	26%
Jan-22	360	58	61	65	82	266	26%
Jan-23	360	63	53	55	66	237	34%
Jan-24	240	48	62	52	55	217	10%
Jan-25	240	43	47	60	51	201	16%

## Previous Proposal to amalgamate

In 2009, a formal consultation was conducted on a proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools (**Background Paper 2**). The process saw considerable engagement from local stakeholders, with several objections raised. Based on these concerns, officers advised against moving forward with the proposal at that time, as outlined in the 2009 Cabinet Report (**Background Paper 3**). The paper in 2009 stated: *'Whilst the Local Authority is of the opinion the potential advantages to be gained from unified management and greater efficiency will generally outweigh any disadvantages, it is also taking into account the views of stakeholders in not proceeding with amalgamation at this time.'* However, it was also noted that the *'amalgamation be reconsidered at a later date should more suitable circumstances arise'*. Officers believe that now is the appropriate time to consider amalgamation again for the Harefield schools, due to the fact that pupil numbers are continuing to fall in Hillingdon, and the schools have met the criteria in the amalgamation policy outlined above.

## Date of implementation

The proposal for the amalgamation of Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School is 7th April 2026, to ensure the most financially advantageous outcome for the schools. If they were amalgamated before this date (1<sup>st</sup> April) it would impact the funding the schools would receive for the financial year starting 1<sup>st</sup> April 2026. This was listed as 1<sup>st</sup> April in the original proposal, but has been updated following advice received from the DfE.

Therefore, our recommendation is for Harefield Infant School to (technically) close on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2026 and extend the age range of the Harefield Junior School, to amalgamate both schools and create a primary school from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

### **Alternative options considered / risk management**

- **Option 1:** Agree to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior School
  - This was considered the best option and is recommended by Officers as it would provide a range of benefits outlined above, and lead to a more sustainable and viable school in the long term.
- **Option 2:** Do not amalgamate the two schools
  - This would not support the schools to be more financially secure, especially in light of the reduction in demand for primary school places, and would not be in line with the amalgamation policy
- **Option 3:** Agree to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior School with an alternative implementation date set out below:
  - January 2026
  - September 2026
  - The date of April 2026 was considered to align with the financial year providing 100% lump sum payments for a full 12 months for each of the schools; Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School for 2026/27.
  - By requesting for this to be implemented earlier in January 2026 would mean that the schools would be going into the financial year 2026/27 with one lump sum of 100% and a second lump sum reduced to 70%.
  - With the September 2026 implementation date, the schools would benefit from only a further 2 terms at 100% lump sum at both schools, reducing to one lump sum of 100% and a second lump sum of 70% from 2027/28.

### **Democratic compliance / previous authority**

Cabinet is the body to consider school organisational changes where there are representations/objections.

### **Select Committee comments**

The Children, Families and Education Select Committee considered this matter at its meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2025 and formal comments from the Committee are below, with the broader minutes of the meeting available as a background paper:

*‘Whilst the Committee acknowledges the concerns expressed by parents and the school community around the financial impact for the school, it also recognises the financial pressures currently facing schools in Hillingdon. The Committee notes that the proposed amalgamation may present a more sustainable long-term future for Harefield School, enabling flexibility around resources to maintain efficiencies and improved continuity for the young people such as a continuous journey from Reception to Year Six.*

*The Committee were presented with the feedback from the informal consultation only, however, would expect that the decision-making Cabinet is presented with all the information, including feedback from both consultations.’*

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### Equality Impact Assessment for both schools

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carefully considered in relation to the proposed amalgamation of Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools (Appendix 11). It is not expected that this proposal will have any significant impact on pupils, staff, or the wider community, as the newly formed primary school will continue to operate in much the same way as it currently does.

Since all children currently enrolled at both schools will remain on the same site, within the same school community, and continue to be supported by the same staff, and curriculum, no adverse effects are anticipated for pupils with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.

Key points include:

- No change to the school's Net Capacity;
- No change to the Published Admissions Number (PAN) for either school;
- No change to the curriculum being delivered. The assessment highlights that White boys with English as their first language, and pupils with Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support are overrepresented compared to borough-wide averages. As such, these groups may be more vulnerable to any unintended negative effects of the proposed changes. However, the EIA has demonstrated that the funding to support children with SEND (SEND Support and EHCP) and those who are disadvantaged (Pupil Premium funding) are calculated on a per-pupil basis and therefore funding for these cohorts will not be impacted by the amalgamation directly.

The amalgamation process will be managed with care and sensitivity, if approved, ensuring that the needs of all pupils, particularly those with SEND, are fully considered and supported throughout.

The impact of the proposed amalgamation will be closely monitored in collaboration with the school and its governing body, and appropriate mitigation measures will be implemented if necessary.

### Financial Implications

The Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Schools Block Funding represents the majority of funding for schools within Hillingdon, although each school may receive additional DSG funding or grants.

If the schools amalgamate, the combined school will only be eligible for one lump sum in the future (an allocation from the Dedicated Schools Grant provided to individual schools to support fixed costs that is currently £159,662 a year – based on the budget for 2025/26).

As detailed in the [Schools operational guide: 2025 to 2026 - GOV.UK](#),, “where schools amalgamate after 1 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 can, however, benefit from better

economies of scale which could mitigate the impact of this loss. The combined school (as a primary school) would receive the same lump sum payment as all other primary schools across Hillingdon if amalgamation is approved. No other funding will be affected as part of this proposal.

Both schools' combined funding is approximately £2,231k funding per year. If the proposal is approved, this would mean that following financial year (2027/28) after amalgamation the non-inflation adjusted amounts received would be estimated as £2,183k and the second financial year (2028/29) funding would be £2,075k due to the eventual loss of one lump sum payment. The figures are detailed in the table below are based on the assumption that the number of pupils remains constant and the current funding formula.

DSG Schools Block Funding	2026/27 Financial Year	2027/28 Financial Year	2028/29 Financial Year
Harefield Infant School funding	£901k	£852k	£745k
Harefield Junior School funding	£1,330k	£1,330k	£1,330k
Combined Harefield Schools funding	<b>£2,231k</b>	<b>£2,183k</b>	<b>£2,075k</b>

Once the school receive their budget, it is the school's leadership team and Governing Body that decide how this is allocated across the school, and what the funding is spent on, including staff, capital investment, projects, and resources.

## RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

### The benefit or impact upon Hillingdon residents, service users and communities?

As both schools are maintained schools, Hillingdon Council can propose to (technically) close Harefield Infant 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 and propose to extend the age range of Harefield 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](#). This sets out an expectation that interested parties are consulted informally prior to publication of a statutory proposal and then consulted again during a formal consultation.

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. A consultation was carried out in Spring 2025 with the two Harefield schools and stakeholders 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:

- December 2020 - May 2021 – Amalgamation was discussed at several meetings with Harefield Junior School including LA Officers, Executive Headteacher, Head of School and Chair of Governors



- the consultation to reduce PAN took place in Autumn 2021 to take effect from September 2023
- July 2023 and December 2024 - Amalgamation was an item on the agenda for the Full Governing Body
- June and July 2024 -
  - A letter was sent to all Infant and Junior Headteachers reminding school about the Council's Infant and Junior Schools Amalgamation policy
  - Head Teachers Termly Meeting to go through benefits of infant and junior amalgamations
  - Amalgamation Information Session 1 for Head Teachers and Governors of Infant and Junior Schools
  - Amalgamation Information Session 2 for Head Teachers and Governors of Infant and Junior Schools Representatives from Harefield were in attendance at all of the meetings and information sessions above.
- August 2024 – Proposed timetable letter sent to Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School
- September 2024 - Governors meeting attended by LA Officer to discuss amalgamation

A period of pre-publication consultation was carried out between Monday 17<sup>th</sup> March 2025 and Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025. A total of 552 responses were received during this time.

The end of the consultation was originally Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2025, however, this was extended to 30<sup>th</sup> April 2025 following feedback and a request from an attendee at a consultation event with the school and other stakeholders to provide additional time as a result of the school holidays, which was supported by staff at the school. 26 responses were received during this extended period.

An informal consultation document (see **Appendix 1**) was made available in hard copy and electronic form, that outlined the proposals and relevant background information. Hard copies were made available on request from the Local Authority. This information was sent to the Executive Head and Chair of Governors to share with parents of all children attending both schools on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2025 on how to access the consultation document and submit a response.

Information about the informal consultation and a survey about the proposals was included on the Hillingdon 'Have Your Say' webpage.

Three online consultation meetings were hosted by Local Authority officers that provided parents/carers, staff, governors and members of the public the opportunity to comment on and ask questions about the proposals. Officers had planned for two of these events to be held face to face at the Harefield Library, however, based on the strong interest expressed by parents, carers, and members of the local community at the start of this statutory process and in anticipation of a significant turnout, Officers concluded that hosting the event online was the most appropriate and effective means of enabling broad participation and facilitating the opportunity for attendees to ask questions. One of these events was reserved for school staff only. A summary of dates and attendees is set out in the table below:



Information Session Date	Information Session Time	Attendees	Number of Attendees
Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	5:00 pm to 6:00 pm	Virtual Public Meeting	40
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	2:00 pm to 3:00 pm	Virtual Public Meeting	40
Wednesday 26 <sup>th</sup> March 2025	4:30 pm to 5:30 pm	Virtual Staff Meeting	7 (Harefield Infant and Juniors schools arranged for many of their staff to join on a single device)

Please see **Appendix 2 – Information Session Presentation** for a copy of the presentation used at the events.

Parents, carers, staff, governors and members of the public were also invited to share their views by responding to the consultation by any of the following ways;

- completing the on-line consultation form
- writing directly to the Council
- attending an online event

Following the end of the pre-publication consultation period, a report was prepared for the relevant Chief Officer to consider, which details the key themes and issues raised (**Background paper 5**). Although there was a high number of people who did not support the proposal (97%), there was confusion about the impact of the proposed amalgamation, and Officers felt that it was appropriate to hold a formal consultation, and share additional information, during a further formal consultation period.

This decision was approved on 16th May 2025, which recommended proceeding to a formal consultation process through the publication of a statutory notice for the expansion of the age range at Harefield Junior School, and the (technical) closure of Harefield Infant School, to become one school, with the change of name from Harefield Junior School and Harefield Infant school, to Harefield Primary School, to achieve the amalgamation.

- June 2025 – Virtual Meeting held between LA Officers and the Executive Headteacher and Chair of Governors to discuss the Harefield Amalgamation Consultation Proposal. This was also attended by the Head of School.
- June 2025 – Follow up call between Head of Education & SEND Commissioning and Executive Headteacher

## Publication

As part of the formal consultation, the Council issued a Public Notice (**Appendix 3**) which was sent to the West London Gazette for publication on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025, with 6 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 schools' 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 4**), was available from Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> June 2025 at 9:00am to Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July 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 5**), a copy of the Public Notice, a questionnaire to obtain feedback, financial benchmarking for Harefield Infant School (**Appendix 6**), Harefield Junior School (**Appendix 7**), and Senior Leadership Structure 2024-2025 (**Appendix 8**).

Information regarding the consultation was publicised to all schools within the Borough via email. Both Harefield Infant School and Harefield 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 two 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 scheduled for Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2025 between 2:00pm – 3:00pm (which ran over past 3.30pm), for stakeholder including parents/guardians, school staff and residents and a further session was held for school staff separately, from 4:00pm to 5:00pm. Each of these sessions were attended by approximately 30 people. It was not possible to share a presentation with stakeholders at the information sessions (**Appendix 9**) although it was referenced during the meeting and subsequently added to the Council's website. Sessions are detailed below:

Information Session Date	Information Session Time	Attendees	Number of Attendees
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	2:00 pm to 3:00 pm (ran over past 3:30)	Public Meeting at Harefield Junior School	30
Thursday 26 <sup>th</sup> June 2025	4:00 pm to 5:00 pm	Staff Meeting at Harefield Junior School	30

Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2025	12:30 pm to 13:30 pm	Virtual Public Meeting	1* meeting had unforeseen technical issues
Wednesday 2 <sup>nd</sup> July 2025	6:00 pm to 7:00 pm	Virtual Public Meeting	8
Wednesday 16 <sup>th</sup> July 2025	1:00 pm to 2:00pm	Virtual Public Meeting	1

To provide stakeholders with an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the proposal, two virtual information sessions were scheduled for Wednesday 2nd July 2025, from 12:30pm to 1:30pm and from 6:00pm to 7:00pm to ensure broad accessibility.

Unfortunately, due to technical issues, some residents were unable to access the 12:30pm session as the link had become corrupted, therefore, the correct link was not available until 12.45pm. Only one individual successfully joined the session but left without contributing. In recognition of this disruption and to ensure all stakeholders had a fair opportunity to engage, an additional virtual session was arranged and communicated to the school and included on the Hillingdon Council 'Have your say' consultation page on 2<sup>nd</sup> July. Explaining that a further virtual event would be held on Wednesday 16th July 2025, from 1:00pm to 2:00pm. This was attended by one person in addition to Officers.

The evening session on Wednesday 2nd July 2025, from 6:00pm to 7:00pm, was attended by 8 people, in addition to Officers.

The consultation closed on Wednesday 30th July. All responses have been thoroughly considered and reflected in the report presented to Cabinet, ensuring that every voice is heard.

## **Consultation Responses**

**399** responses were submitted via the online questionnaire (which can be read in full detail in **Background paper 6**). The responses are summarised below.

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

1. **11** respondents agreed with the proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant School and Harefield Junior School to form a single two-form primary school
  - Yes – 11
  - No - 388
  - Don't know – 0
2. Of the **388** respondents that answered 'No', reasons have been summarised below in the paper.
3. **375** respondents agreed that the proposed changes would disadvantage any Hillingdon residents.
  - Yes - 375
  - No - 17
  - Don't know – 7
4. Of the **382** respondents that agreed or answered 'Don't know' that the changes will disadvantage Hillingdon residents, reasons have been summarised below in the paper.

5. **399** respondents have confirmed their interest in the proposal as:
- A parent/ Carer/guardian – 265
  - A local resident – 51
  - A staff member – 19
  - Prefer not to say – 14
  - Other – 10
  - Blank – 40
6. **338** 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:
- Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools – 86
  - Harefield Infant School – 81
  - Harefield Junior School – 76
  - Other secondary school – 36
  - Harefield unspecified – 13
  - Other primary school - 7
8. **171** provided additional comments on the proposals which are summarised below:

**Online Questionnaire responses are summarised below:**

The information below seeks to set out the themes from the consultation to the Council's proposal to (technically) close Harefield Infant School and to extend the age range of Harefield Junior School from 7-11-year-olds to 3-11-year-olds.

**Consultation Themes**

**1. Loss of Funding and Impact on Educational Provision**

A large number of respondents expressed concern that amalgamating the schools would result in a substantial budget reduction, potentially affecting the quality of education, staffing capacity, and access to enrichment activities.

If the proposal is agreed, the school will no longer received a second lump sum of funding, which will reduce the overall budget over a phased period of time outlined above. However, this change would bring the school's funding in line with other primary schools across Hillingdon, ensuring consistency in how resources are allocated. The amalgamated school is expected to achieve enhanced economies of scale which may help to alleviate the financial pressures arising from the reduction in funding, but it will ultimately be the school's decision where specific savings are made.

A review of resource allocation and deployment as part of the amalgamation will enable the school to mitigate the impact of the loss of one lump sum over time. This can be supported by using the Gov.uk Financial Benchmarking and Insights Tool to see how spending compares with similar schools across England for Harefield Infant School and for Harefield Junior School and looking for efficiencies. In addition, a review of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) costs across the Harefield Infant and Junior schools appears to be higher in comparison to similar sized primary schools within the borough.

Analysis of leadership structures across two-form entry (2FE) primary schools in Hillingdon indicates that the average SLT size is approximately three members. This typically includes one Headteacher, one Deputy Headteacher, and one Assistant Headteacher, forming a core leadership team responsible for strategic direction, operational management, and curriculum oversight. In some schools, SLT hold a teaching commitment and other schools, they do not. However, across the infant and junior Harefield Schools, there are currently seven members of SLT. However, decisions on staffing models and leadership structures are a matter for the Governing Body, and there are a wide range of options available.

Given the example of the size of the SLT structure, it is possible that the staffing may need to be reviewed irrespective of whether the amalgamation proposal is approved, as the lower pupil numbers will lead to a reduction in funding over time and the structure needs to be appropriate for the size of the school(s).

The governing body are responsible for managing operational matters and deciding how the school budget is allocated, with the financial and operational impact subject to ongoing monitoring and review to ensure effective oversight and accountability.

## **2. Impact on Children with Special Educational Needs**

Several respondents expressed concerns that support for students with special educational needs (SEN) could be reorganised or diminished because of amalgamation.

Schools receive notional budgets for children who are on the SEND register (SEND Support/EHCP) and the support provided to children on the register should not experience a change as a result of school becoming a primary school (if the proposal is approved). As well as the notional funding schools have, any child who has an EHCP also attracts individual funding that is paid to the school per pupil and this does not change whether the school operates as an infant and junior school compared to a primary school. We do not foresee any challenges with the school providing support to children with SEND needs as a result of the amalgamation, as the funding provided for children with SEND will not change. All schools have statutory duties in relation to SEND irrespective of whether they are separate infant and junior schools or a primary school, therefore, there should be no direct impact to children with SEND as a result of the proposal. The budget will be in line with all other primary schools in Hillingdon.

## **3. Loss of Infant School identity and Age-Appropriateness**

Some parents have voiced concerns about the suitability and safety of placing younger and older pupils within the same school setting. They worry this could increase the risk of bullying and lead to the loss of age-appropriate facilities and tailored support for younger pupils.

The school will be required to put in place appropriate measures to safeguard all pupils and provide age-appropriate support, consistent with practices across other primary schools. This includes establishing distinct areas for younger and older children, ensuring sufficient supervision, and maintaining facilities and programmes tailored to each age group. Based on current assessments, the proposal is not expected to have any negative impact on pupil safety.

## **4. Community engagement and transparency**

A number of respondents feel that the council has not clearly communicated the rationale behind the proposed amalgamation or its potential consequences. This has led to a lack of trust in the Council's intentions, with some perceiving the proposal as being financially motivated (particularly related to possible land sales), rather than driven by educational improvements. Other comments referred to a reduction in school places, overcrowded classrooms and increases in traffic.

The local authority confirms that there will be no sale of land or buildings on the current school sites and do not expect there will be any day-to-day impact for pupils or parents. As there will not be any changes to the school land, buildings or infrastructure, and all children will continue to remain at the newly formed primary school if the proposal is approved, there will not be any impact on school places, class sizes, or traffic in the area as a result of this proposal.

The Council have been open about the amalgamation policy and shared details of the proposed amalgamation including any financial impact, and benchmarking information. Officers also held engagement events with the school and other stakeholders to address any questions and provide additional information.

#### **5. No educational benefit for children from amalgamation**

Some respondents felt that more information was needed about the educational benefits of amalgamation.

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. A list of the academic research can be found in **Appendix 10**.

#### **6. Postponing date of amalgamation to September 2026**

Some respondents questioned the date of amalgamation and suggested that a more appropriate date would be September 2026

The proposed amalgamation date of April 2026 has been carefully considered to align with the start of the financial year. This timing offers the most financially advantageous scenario for both Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools, ensuring that each school receives 100% of its lump sum funding allocation for the full 2026/27 financial year. This approach supports financial stability and allows for a smoother transition in terms of budget planning and resource allocation. Alternative implementation dates present less favourable financial outcomes. For example, an earlier amalgamation in January 2026 would result in the schools entering the 2026/27 financial year with only one school receiving the full 100% lump sum, while the second would receive a reduced allocation of 70%. This could create financial pressures during a critical period of transition.

Similarly, a September 2026 implementation would allow both schools to benefit from two additional terms of full funding. However, from the 2027/28 financial year onwards, the funding would revert to a single 100% lump sum and a second reduced to 70%, potentially limiting the schools' ability to plan and invest in the newly amalgamated structure.

By selecting April 2026 as the implementation date, the local authority aims to maximise financial continuity and minimise disruption, ensuring that both schools are well-positioned to manage the transition effectively and maintain high-quality provision for all pupils.

#### **Other correspondence received relating to the proposed amalgamation**

A total of 14 complaints were received, for reasons including the difficulties accessing the virtual information session held on Wednesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> July as well as the consultation process. All of these were addressed through the corporate complaints process. Additionally, four further letters were submitted to the Council via email which were not in support of the proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools.

## Consultation conclusions

The proposed amalgamation aims to enhance the learning experience for children by offering a more consistent and seamless journey through their primary education. By combining resources from both schools and having one unified staff team, children will benefit from stronger relationships with familiar adults and smoother transitions between year groups. The proposed amalgamation will also provide longer term sustainability for the two schools.

## Next steps

As detailed in the relevant guidance, Making significant changes to maintained schools (**Background paper 7**) and Opening and closing maintained schools (**Background paper 8**), the next steps are set out for decision makers below following the consultation process

When issuing a decision, the decision maker can:

- reject the proposal;
- approve the proposal without modification;
- approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; such as an alternative implementation date set out below:
  - January 2026
  - September 2026

or

- approve the proposal, with or without modification, subject to certain conditions (such as the granting of planning permission) being met.

If approval is granted by Cabinet, the Council's 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 open as a Primary school on 7<sup>th</sup> April 2026 if amalgamation is approved. In order to amalgamate the 2 schools and create a primary school, the Council are proposing to (technically) close Harefield Infant School on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2026 and extend the age range of Harefield Junior School. No land or buildings will be affected by the proposal, and all assets would transfer to the Primary school if the amalgamation is approved.

## CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

### Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and concurs with the Financial Implications set out above, noting the recommendations to consider the responses from the consultations and to approve the technical closure of Harefield Infant School, to extend the age range of Harefield Junior School, to amalgamate both schools to create a Primary School from April 2026.

Furthermore, it is noted the amalgamation will result in a reduction in Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), Schools Block Funding. While the combined school will continue to receive a single lump sum in line with other primary schools across Hillingdon, the overall funding will decrease for the new Harefield Primary School over time. Based on current pupil numbers and non-inflation adjusted projections the funding will reduce from £2,231k in 2026/27, £2,183k in 2027/28 and



further to £2,075k in 2028/29. Budgetary control will remain with the school's leadership and Governing Body, who will be responsible for the allocation of available funds.

It is also noted that the other DSG funding streams and targeted grants will remain unaffected by the amalgamation as these are determined by pupil demographics and needs.

## Legal

The local authority must have regard to the statutory guidance on opening and closing maintained school. There are no legal impediments to the recommendations within the report.

## BACKGROUND PAPERS

- [Background paper 1](#) – Hillingdon Infant and Junior Amalgamation Policy – September 2022
- [Background paper 2](#) - Statutory Proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Junior Schools – September 2009
- [Background paper 3](#) - Decision on the proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools – 24<sup>th</sup> September 2009
- [Background paper 4](#) – Proposal to amalgamate Harefield Infant and Harefield Junior Schools – Select Committee minutes – Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> July 2025
- [Background paper 5](#) – Chief Officer Decision Notice – Harefield Infant and Junior Schools
- [Background paper 6](#) – School Place Planning Consultation – Proposal to Amalgamate Harefield Schools (1-399)
- [Background paper 7](#) – Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools
- [Background paper 8](#) – Opening and Closing maintained schools