



## **Frequently Asked Questions – Proposed Whitehall Amalgamation**

### **Why is an amalgamation of Whitehall Infant and Whitehall Junior schools being suggested?**

The headteacher of Whitehall Infant School has confirmed her intention to retire at the end of this academic year in August 2026. This will result in a headteacher vacancy and means the two schools meet one of the triggers outlined in the [Councils Amalgamation Policy](#)

### **What are some of the advantages of the proposed amalgamation?**

The proposal to amalgamate the schools is underpinned by the intention of the Council to further improve the quality of provision already in place at both schools by ensuring a consistent and continuous approach to teaching and learning throughout children's time at Whitehall. It will also enable the Governing Body, Senior Leadership Team, and school staff to plan pastoral support for pupils from Nursery to Year 6. Finally, the proposal will enable the two schools to merge and strengthen their community links, building on the extended school programmes in place in both schools.

### ***Educational advantages for pupils***

- The proposed amalgamation would remove the need to reapply for a school place moving to the Junior school and enable a smoother transition into Key Stage 2.
- The new school would have just one Ofsted inspection and rating, giving a clearer picture of how the whole school is doing.
- Enhanced curriculum planning which can take into account all three stages of the primary phase of education (Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) so that children make the best possible progress in their learning and development during their time at Whitehall;
- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught and supported, recognising the current strengths of both schools.

- Being able to monitor children's progress from age 3 to age 11 would enable staff to build up a comprehensive understanding of each child and build consistently on their achievements throughout their time at Whitehall.
- Continuity of experience and provision, which could be especially important for vulnerable children and those with special educational needs.
- Increased opportunities for children in all key stages to come together for pastoral, social and creative activities.
- Improved consistency of safeguarding through seamless knowledge of children throughout their time at Whitehall.
- The proposed amalgamation would allow consistency of policy and planning across primary key stages as well as the potential for cross-phase policies with a key stage specific focus.

### ***Advantages for school families***

- Consistency of parental involvement throughout the primary phase of education by having the ability to foster longer-term relationships with families and staff 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 Whitehall school.

### ***Advantages for the leadership and governance***

- A single leadership team providing vision and continuity from Nursery to Year 6;
- The opportunity to build partnerships with children, parents and families over a longer period of time.
- Working in partnership as one school within the community.
- The potential to attract from a wider pool of teaching and support staff due to greater career opportunities provided by an all through primary school.
- Greater flexibility in staffing
- A single Ofsted inspection programme rather than both schools being inspected on a regular cycle.

### ***Advantages for the staff***

- Increased career development opportunities through the sharing of a wider range of expertise and the possibility to gain experience and an understanding of all primary Key Stages.

- Continuous assessment, tracking and target-setting procedures for the entire primary phase of education;
- Opportunities to use the accommodation of both schools more effectively to support teaching and learning;
- Stability of staffing and increased opportunities for staff retention

#### ***Advantages for the use of resources***

- Increased sharing of resources and expertise would benefit both children and staff and avoid unnecessary duplication.
- As one school there is the potential to improve the use of school facilities through shared spaces;
- Greater opportunity for cost effectiveness through economies of scale e.g. in purchasing, ensuring the best provision possible for the children;
- Greater resilience for the future for both schools especially in light of falling pupil numbers, and financial pressures
- A larger workforce with a broader range of shared expertise.

#### **What are the risks in amalgamating the two schools?**

Hillingdon Council consider that the proposed amalgamation would bring a range of benefits and opportunities to the schools' pupils, staff and families as outlined above.

One possible risk is that the amalgamation process may distract governors and staff during the year with some uncertainty until a formal decision is taken, and then with implementation work required after the formal decision. This work includes the alignment of processes, procedures, ethos and culture. To mitigate this risk, the schools are both working closely with Hillingdon Council to minimise the impact upon pupils, families, governors and staff, to ensure that the process runs as smoothly as possible if the proposal is agreed.

Also, the proposed amalgamation may be unsettling to staff and would need to be carefully managed by the school. Hillingdon Council is committed to undertaking all steps of this process in an open and transparent way, with the best interests of the pupils, and the schools at its heart, and will continue to work with the schools during and after this process.

The timetable outlined in the proposal allows sufficient time to deliver the amalgamation. As outlined above, if the proposed amalgamation progresses, the implementation of the amalgamation will be dealt with through collaboration of the staff and leadership teams

across both schools. The school leadership teams are already working together at this time, to plan for any potential changes, and support closer working relationships.

There are a number of other possible risks that are common to all schools – such as staff recruitment and retention, pupil number changes in the local area, and school funding decisions by the Department for Education. Amalgamation is not considered to increase the risk of any of these issues and indeed may help to reduce or manage the risks compared to remaining as separate infant and junior schools.

### **How would the new school be created?**

The proposed process involves the following steps:

- Closing (technically) Whitehall Infant School and all pupils, staff, land, buildings and equipment would become part of Whitehall Junior School (which would become a Primary school) from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026
- Extending the age range of Whitehall Junior School from Years 3 to 6, to Nursery to Year 6 (and changing its name to a Primary school to reflect the full primary age range) with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026

### **Will there be any changes to the size of the school and the school buildings?**

No, the size of the school and building will remain exactly the same. The proposed Primary school will have a *published admission number* equal to the sum of the current Infant, Nursery and Junior Schools' numbers. Therefore, there would be **no change to the capacity** of the proposed amalgamated Primary school if the decision were made to proceed.

### **Does the proposed amalgamation affect school funding?**

The education budget that the Council receives from central government is 'ring-fenced' and can only be spent on education – so there is no saving for the Council through the proposed amalgamation. The budget for each individual school is determined by a formula that includes an amount for every school but is mainly determined by the number of pupils in the school. There are many primary schools in the borough which are the same size as the proposed new primary school, and they are able to provide effective education within their budgets.

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.’ As an example, if the schools amalgamated 1<sup>st</sup> September 2026 they would receive the combined lump sums for the remainder of the financial year (April 2026/27) and 70% of the second lump sum in the following financial year (April 2027/28).

‘Local authorities may 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 (amounting to approximately £165,000). The school will however, benefit from better economies of scale which will mitigate the impact of this loss, including the loss of a Headteacher salary with the retirement of the current Headteacher of the Infant school. The proposal itself is not expected to directly affect the number of teachers or teaching assistants, as staffing levels will continue to be aligned with the number of children enrolled at both schools.

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 across both schools compares with similar schools across England to identify the opportunity for any efficiencies.

### **What will happen if the amalgamation does not proceed?**

The schools would remain separate and the governing body of the Whitehall Infant School would appoint a new headteacher.

### **Will the school be renamed Whitehall Primary School if the schools amalgamate?**

If the schools do progress to amalgamation, then the governing body together with the Senior Leadership Team can liaise with staff, parents and carers on a possible new name for the all-through primary school.

### **Who would be the governors of the proposed new Primary School?**

The Governing Body of Whitehall Junior School will consult with the Governing Body of Whitehall Infant School and review its Instrument of Government to ensure it accurately records the term of office for each category of governor. They will also review the name of the school and membership of governors needed to support the school with a balanced and effective governance structure. It is envisaged that the new Governing Body will comprise of a combination of Governors of both current schools.

### **Will there be a new uniform?**

The decision on any change to uniform and when it will be introduced will be confirmed by the Governing Body of the primary school if amalgamation is progressed.

### **What would the school admissions arrangements be if there is an amalgamation?**

The Local Authority is the Admissions authority for both Whitehall Schools. If the proposed amalgamation is approved, the admissions process will be simplified. Families would no longer need to apply for a Junior School place, as children in Year 2 would automatically progress to Year 3 within the same school.

There would be no changes to the admissions arrangements for Nursery and Reception.

### **Who will be parents' first point of contact if the schools amalgamate? Will there just be one reception team?**

It is too early at this stage to know exactly how the school support team would be structured. This would be a decision for the school.

### **Will there be any job losses if amalgamation progresses?**

The staffing structure would be considered in detail by the schools if the amalgamation is formally approved. This would be a decision for the school.

### **Will staff have the opportunity to work across different key stages (EYFS, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2) if amalgamation progresses?**

This will be a decision for the school, but in principle yes, becoming a Primary School would give staff the opportunity to gain experience in different key stages where they were interested in doing so. This would be based on individual preferences and the school's requirements, and the school would decide how this would work in practice.

### **Will there be any changes to the Senior Leadership Team structure if amalgamation progresses?**

It is too early in the process to confirm what the Senior Leadership Team structure might look like. Staff would of course be consulted by the school on any changes if appropriate. Any consultations would include a timeframe for any changes. This would be the responsibility of the school. However, there would only be one Headteacher for the new Primary school if the proposal is accepted.

### **Will there be any changes to subject leaders – i.e. would there be a need for two subject coordinators?**

It is too early in the process to confirm what a primary staffing structure might look like for the new school. Staff would of course be consulted by the school on any changes to the staffing structures if appropriate. Any consultations would include a timeframe for any changes. This would be the responsibility of the school.

### **Will teachers be moved into different year groups or key stages?**

This will be a decision for the school, in consultation with individual staff, with some people potentially seeing this as an opportunity to gain experience of a different Key Stage.

### **Will the teachers and support staff stay the same?**

This will be a decision for the school, in consultation with individual staff. If the decision is made to amalgamate the two schools, then the staffing structure for the Primary School would be reviewed by the headteacher and Governing body.

### **Will teachers' contracts be affected if the proposed amalgamation goes ahead?**

Teachers' contracts would stay the same, except for updating the school name to reflect the new primary school. They would not fall under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings: Protection of Employment) arrangements, as the London Borough of Hillingdon is already the employer for staff in both schools.

### **Have other options been considered such as federating?**

The Council has considered alternative options for Infant and Junior schools, and believe it is better to bring the two schools together through amalgamation rather than any other options for the following reasons:

#### **1. Single Governance Structure**

- Amalgamation creates **one governing body** for the new school, simplifying decision-making and accountability.
- Federation still requires balancing priorities across both schools, which can lead to complexity and slower decisions.

#### **2. Unified Vision and Culture**

- A single school can develop a **cohesive ethos, policies, and improvement plan**.
- Federated schools often maintain separate identities, which can dilute strategic focus.

#### **3. Financial Efficiency**

- Amalgamation allows **one budget**, reducing duplication in administration, leadership, and services.
- Federation keeps separate budgets, which limits cost savings.

#### **4. Streamlined Leadership**

- One Headteacher and leadership team for the amalgamated school ensures clarity and consistency.
- Federations often require an Executive Head plus Heads of School, which can be more costly and complex.

#### **5. Easier Compliance and Accountability**

- Amalgamation means **one Ofsted inspection**, one set of statutory returns, and one admissions policy.
- Federation requires separate inspections and compliance for each school.

#### **6. Sustainability and Resilience**

- Amalgamation is often better for schools with **falling rolls or financial pressures**, as it creates a single, stronger institution.
- Federation may not fully address viability issues if pupil numbers continue to decline.

#### **7. Simplified Communication**

- Parents, staff, and stakeholders deal with **one school identity**, reducing confusion.
- Federation can lead to mixed messaging if schools retain separate branding.

#### **Have other options been considered such as joining a Multi Academy Trust (MAT)?**

If the decision was made to join a MAT, the LA would prefer that this would be the case for both schools, to ensure the benefits of amalgamation above could be delivered. However, if only one school wanted to become part of a MAT, this would still result in the need for a new Head Teacher at the Infant school, but could also bring a number of operational and strategic challenges if the schools operated independently from each other.