

**Proposed amalgamation of St Ursula's Catholic Infant and
St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools**

**CONSULTATION FEEDBACK REPORT
February 2020**

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Section 1: Context to the consultation

St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools are federated. This means they have a single governing body and one executive headteacher but they are still two separate schools.

In January 2020, the governing board of the schools formally resolved to begin the process of amalgamating the two schools into one single (3-11) primary school, and approached the local authority to begin the appropriate process of consultation on the proposed amalgamation. This would be achieved through a 'technical' closure ('discontinuance') of the infant school, and an extension of the age-range of the junior school to become an 'allthrough' primary school. This initiated a period of consultation that began on 20 January and concluded 17 February 2020. This was the first of two consultation periods which will be necessary before the schools can amalgamate.

Statutory guidance underpinning the consultation; Whilst the initial decision to amalgamate was made by the governing board, both schools are voluntary aided schools, the processes for amalgamating and making changes to a foundation, foundation special or voluntary (VC or VA) school, lies with the local authority following a statutory process. This process is outlined in (Department for Education (DFE) guidance 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools.', and 'Opening and closing maintained schools'

Section 2: Consultation Process

The consultation process covered by this report ran from 20 January to 17 February 2020

The objective was to inform and gather views regarding the proposed amalgamation from key stakeholders, particularly parents/carers of pupils and staff of St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools, the governing bodies, teachers and other staff of schools within the borough and any other interested parties who may have an interest in the school.

The timescale adopted for the process of amalgamating the two schools and implementing the new primary school published in the consultation document is outlined in the timeline below.

Stage	Description	Timescale
	Pre-publication consultation	20 January- 17 February 2020
Stage 1	Publication (Statutory proposal/notice)	6 March 2020
Stage 2	Representation (formal consultation)	4 weeks following the date of the statutory notice publication. (6 March- 3 April 2020)
Stage 3	Decision	End of April 2020
Stage 4	Implementation	September 2020

The four week 'representation' period will be the second consultation period which will be a final chance to express views on the proposed amalgamation.

A hard copy of the consultation document outlining the process, rationale and reasons for the proposed amalgamation of the two schools, and a response form were made available to all was sent to all parents/carers and staff of both schools which gave them an opportunity to provide a response.

Other consultees as listed in *appendix B* including all the borough schools, special schools, ward members, MPs, Church Dioceses, all early years provision, community groups, trade unions and professional associations were sent an electronic version of the document and the survey questionnaire link to leave a feedback.

In order to ensure that that consultation was effective and wide reaching as possible, consultees (and potential consultees), were given clear and concise information on the proposal, a frequently asked questions leaflet and a survey questionnaire form to feedback their views and opinions was made available through the following channels:

- Via website – the consultation document and the frequently asked questions and the online survey link was posted on the St. Ursula's federation website throughout the consultation period directing consultees or any interested parties to find out more about the proposals, and to access the online survey questionnaire which enabled them to leave a consultation response immediately.
- By e-mail – electronic version of the consultation document and the online survey questionnaire link was also circulated directly to relevant stakeholders which provided an opportunity to leave consultation feedback.
- Attending a parents/carers consultation evening – during the consultation period, an hour and half-long meeting covering the proposed amalgamation from the perspective of both schools and the Diocese was held at St. Ursula's junior school on 5 February 2020.

All consultees were made aware that the survey response questionnaire could be obtained, completed and submitted either electronically or in a paper-format.

During the parents' consultation meeting, a presentation was made on the proposal setting out the reasons, notes were made by the school on any issues /questions covered during the meeting. These are shown in section 3 of the consultation response.

The ability to use the online survey response link, email, post, survey and attend the parents' consultation meeting at the school, as part of this consultation, has helped to ensure that all interested parties engaged effectively in the process.

Section 3: Consultation Response

The questionnaire provided an opportunity for consultees to respond to specific questions regarding the proposed amalgamation as well as allowing for general comments.

The following section of this report provides an overview of: the number of consultation responses received; respondents' interest in the consultation; whether or not they were in favour of the proposed amalgamation and the reasons cited by respondents who were not in favour of the proposed amalgamation. It also reports on the outcome of the consultation meeting on the proposal held during the period of the consultation

A total of 52 consultation responses were received. 11 responses were received online whilst 41 respondents submitted a hard copy questionnaire response.

The breakdown of responses by category of which role they described are shown below;

- **29 Parents of a pupil at St Ursula's Catholic Infant school**
- **8 Parents of a pupil at St Ursula's Catholic Junior school**
- **9 Parents of pupils at both St Ursula's Catholic Infant school & St Ursula's Catholic Junior School**
- **1 Parent of Nursery Child**
- **1 Teacher/other staff at St Ursula's Catholic Infant school**
- **2 Teachers/other staff at St Ursula's Catholic Junior school**
- **1 Local resident**
- **1 Other (did not specify their role)**

Question 1 asked respondents to state whether or not they support the proposal to amalgamate St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools.

Of the 52 responses received, 48 were in favour while 4 respondents were against the proposal

The table below shows the responses for and against received for each category of respondent;

Category of Respondent	Total Responses received	Responses in Support	Responses Against
A Parent of a pupil at St Ursula's Catholic Infant school	29	28	1
A Parent of a pupil at St Ursula's Catholic Junior school	8	7	1
A Parent of pupil at St Ursula's Catholic Infant & St Ursula's Catholic Junior Schools	9	8	1
Parent of Nursery Child	1	1	
Teacher/other staff at St Ursula's Catholic Infant school	1		1
Teacher/other staff at St Ursula's Catholic Junior school	2	2	
Local resident	1	1	
Other (Did not specify)	1	1	

Question 2 asked respondents to state their reasons for supporting the proposal amalgamate St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools

Of the 48 favourable responses received, 44 respondents stated their reasons for supporting the proposal as outlined in the consultation document. Their various reasons are as shown below.

I support the proposal to amalgamate St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St. Ursula's Catholic Junior schools for the following reason(s) -
<i>The school will run as one entity which should hopefully have a smoother transition year 3.</i>
<i>This is because together we stand divided we fall I think amalgamating the school would be great.</i>
<i>Less disruption for pupils and easier for transition</i>
<i>Benefit of seamless transition through the school consistent education plans.</i>
<i>Parents will not need to reapply for a place in Junior's which would cause less stress on parents.</i>
<i>It provides consistency in their education, in terms of not needing to re-apply when they get to year 2. Thus I have no objections to this proposal</i>
<i>1). It will help the children with the transition through the school and parents benefit from less paperwork and application procedures. 2). It gives the school much more stability and can progress as one unit.</i>

<i>Better use of resources and streamlined processes for all pupils</i>
<i>Staff have worked extremely hard to bring the two schools together since the Federation; however, the two separate DfE numbers have meant that the schools have had to continue investing in provisions separately and teachers have had two separate leadership teams. The amalgamation will make leadership roles clearer across both the Infants and Juniors - this includes subject leadership and will ensure that these staff can drive the school forward at a much faster pace, as they will be working across the whole school and not waiting for the agreement of leadership in a different phase. The amalgamation will provide a smoother transition for pupils moving into year 3. Information sharing between key stages will be more effective and easier. Budgetary monitoring will be easier for leadership team. A whole school vision can be created and preparation for Ofsted will be as a whole school and not key stages. There will be greater parity in the teaching and learning of pupils across both key stages. Greater opportunities for professional development for teachers who may want to teach in a different key stage.</i>
<i>This will be a fantastic and progressive welcome development from the school as parent will be reassured of a continuous level of service from Infant to Junior classes. Also as a mum with a SENCO child, it will be very beneficial for my son to have one school covering his primary education.</i>
<i>I'm glad this is happening so there will be a smooth transition from the infant school to the junior school without the stress of whether your is going to get into the next stage or not. I believe this is a perfect solution</i>
<i>I support it as it means that I will not have to reapply for the junior school, I do however need reassurance that schools times will not change and if they do they will be later and not earlier as this will affect work. I also need reassurance that this will not impact the nursery as it's a fantastic asset to the school.</i>
<i>Smooth transition to junior school, enables more budget for spending</i>
<i>There will be no need for pupil from st Ursula's infant to apply for a place at st Ursula's junior which will make transition to year 3 easy and smooth for teachers, students and parent</i>
<i>I believe the two schools becoming as one is the right way of going forward, better communication between schools and parents</i>
<i>I support because of the transition from one school to another as my third son will start nursery coming September</i>
<i>Better support for the children at the school</i>
<i>Easier to manage Less paper work when transitioning stability for parents less stress</i>
<i>The school will be stronger together with better future</i>
<i>I support the proposal to amalgamate st Ursula's catholic infant school and st Ursula's catholic junior school because changing school could disrupt their education routine and social skills</i>
<i>The school will be run as one entity which should hopefully have smoother transition into year 3</i>
<i>Being a smoother transition is beneficial to children and parents</i>
<i>I wish to support the school in any way I can because the welfare of the children is important</i>

<i>For peace of mind that my daughters education is not disrupted and she automatically transitions to year 3 without me needing to apply and worry about the process, she has friends and settled into the school</i>
<i>Parent will not need to re-apply for a place in juniors perhaps it will be better for the management of 1 school</i>
<i>I support that the whole school should be one school. It saves time to apply for year three. It help the teachers to plan correctly</i>
<i>Smooth transition to junior and enables more budget of spending</i>
<i>An easy transition for pupils the ability for staff to oversee pupils whole journey through primary</i>
<i>It will allow a smooth transition from infants to juniors & it will elevate the stresses for re-applying & potentially not getting into juniors</i>
<i>Support for children in school</i>
<i>It will be easier for us as we don't have to worry about enrolling/transitions from infant to junior school. Continue monitoring of pupils Easy Adaptations of pupils to familiar places</i>
<i>No need to worry about transferring to junior school</i>
<i>It will make the transition smoother and better for us and our child. This will promote an increase in feelings at stability security and confidence because the children are all in the same school.</i>
<i>Easy Transition from year 2 to year 3</i>
<i>Because it will allow my child to keep her friendships established in infant school into junior school</i>
<i>Seamless transition from infant to junior school shared values under strong leadership</i>
<i>It will improve continuity and progression for children's learning along with an increased ability to track long term attainment and progress. It will provide a consistent approach to their learning which will follow them all through their time at the school and help them to understand their place within the school family.</i>
<i>It should be one. Stress free for parent that have to apply for year 3 in the same school it sound better.</i>
<i>I wish to support the school in any way I can as a parent, because it's the welfare of the children that matter the most.</i>
<i>It provides consistency in education in terms of not needing to reapply when in year 2, thus I have no objection to this proposal.</i>
<i>The consistency as there will be no applying disruption of pupils - Children can realise their potentials at an early stage and it's easy to monitor their progress. In short I support the reasons stated.</i>
<i>I believe it should be amalgamated as it was like this when I went to school, it was easier for us to move without the stress of possibly changing school and having to make new friends in an already stressful time for children.</i>
<i>I support the proposal, because will be easy for kids and parents. That will save us time and paperwork for the transition from Infants to Junior.</i>

Question 3 asked respondents to state their reasons for not supporting the proposal to amalgamate St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools.

Of the 4 responses against the proposal, 2 comments were received from consultees who stated their reasons for not supporting the proposal.

Comments received are as shown below with the Local authority's response to the issue or concern raised.

I do not support the proposal to amalgamate St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St. Ursula's Catholic Junior schools for the following reason(s)	
Respondents' Reason/Concern	Local Authority's response
<i>As an infant school we have a much closer bond and relationship with our children parents and colleagues. This makes us more like a family where we are supportive and more nurturing than many larger primary schools. Our parents meet us daily and know we are there to talk to and confide in. As a staff we know each other so well and this can be seen in the way we care for each other.</i>	The arrangements that amalgamation brings will enable the school to operate under a single staffing structure which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the phases that would improve the quality of education on offer, drive up progress and attainment for all children who attend the current schools. The relationship between pupils and staff will build over a longer period of time; thus allowing all staff to better understand the needs of each pupil.
<i>I have been a parent in this school for last 9 years. Mr Craft was an exceptionally caring and kind man who treated everybody with dignity and respect. He always took time to ask people how they are and he was approachable and understanding if someone had problem. Apart from that during his time at St. Ursula's he made a great amount of good changes for children to improve their academic skills as well as their emotional progression. He has helped so many "difficult" children to overcome their problems. Since he left school became very unstable, especially Juniors, most of the parents are concerned about the future of this school. I believe the only change this school needs is a new chair of governors, who carelessly is making decisions that affect our children This school should be led by an executive Head teacher, hopefully they will be able to find one as amazing as Mr Craft was. Only worry is, who would like to be a head teacher in the school that ruins your whole life and career?</i>	The Diocese of Brentwood and the governing board are of the view that an amalgamation of St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and Junior Schools will be in the best educational interest of current and future pupils. And it is their aim to find the most suitable candidate for the role who will continue to drive up standards and the quality of education offered, strengthen the management and governance arrangements already in place, ensuring continued improvement and positive outcomes for all the children in the single school.

Finally, consultees were also given an opportunity to make additional comments in respect of the proposed amalgamation.

12 comments/questions were received as shown below and a response has been provided where needed;

Do you have any other comments in respect of this proposed amalgamation - Additional comment	
Additional comments/questions	Local authority's Response
<i>Job losses</i>	The impact on staff will be kept to a minimum, if the proposal is approved. All the teachers and support staff employed at the Infant and Junior School would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school. There should be no direct impact on teaching, class support and ancillary staff. Leadership staff however, will be affected as there will need to be a new structure drawn up by the Governing Body for the new school
<i>On your proposal, there is no comments regarding nursery -missing that part</i>	The nursery which is part of the Infant school will be amalgamated with the Junior school. The nursery will become part of the new single primary school if implemented.
<i>Infants' schools are very special and the staff are a great strength it doesn't feel right that financial miss management but the governors and leadership should mean the staff have to suffer.</i>	There are savings to be made in the appointment of a Head teacher as opposed to an Executive Head teacher. All the teachers and support staff employed at the Infant and Junior School would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school.
<i>I would like to know what other reasons to benefit from this amalgamate are there for pupils?</i>	If the two schools amalgamate into a primary school, it is an opportunity for stability, consistency and ease of progression between Key Stages. The primary school will benefit from an increased range of staff expertise, Interaction with a wider range of age groups for children and the ability to foster long-term relationships with parents
<i>My only concern is whether this will affect the resource in the school (staffing, budget, etc.). Will this be limited due to the amalgamation?</i>	Savings will also be made through efficiencies as resources can be shared across if the new primary is implemented. There should be no direct impact on teaching, class support and ancillary staff as a result of this amalgamation. All the teachers and support staff employed at the Infant and Junior School would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school.
<i>My only concern is whether the resource in the school will minimize as a result of this amalgamation in terms of staffing, budget etc.</i>	There should be no direct impact on teaching, class support and ancillary staff as a result of this amalgamation. All the teachers and support staff employed at the Infant and Junior School would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school. Savings will also be made through efficiencies as resources can be shared across school if the new primary is implemented.

<i>Having infant and juniors makes the school special not primary school</i>	A single school provides the opportunity for a more specialist staffing and management structure, which provides greater opportunity for staff development, and enables greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to support the individual needs of pupils. It will also will allow teachers to monitor pupils' progress more consistently
<i>I feel like this is a brilliant proposal to do this as it is for the children that are already in the school.</i>	
<i>It a good idea. I support it totally.</i>	
<i>As a working mum to reapply attend meeting all could be avoided if she automatically went from year 2 to year 3</i>	
<i>Pleased about the proposal</i>	
<i>It a good idea. I support it totally.</i>	

Feedback from the consultation meeting held at St. Ursula's Catholic Junior school on 5 February 2020.

In Attendance: Kirsten Cooper (Interim Executive head teacher),
 Chair of Governors (Alexandra Kearns)
 Maria Shepherd and David Gatheral (Diocese of Brentwood)
 Pooneeta Mahadeo (London Borough of Havering)
 7 parents of pupils either attending St. Ursula's infant and/or St. Ursula's junior school.

The diocesan representatives welcomed attendees to the school and explained the purpose of the meeting and introductions were made. A power point presentation was given outlining the proposal to amalgamate both the infant and junior schools and the timescales for the consultation process.

The meeting was then opened to seek the views of parents and for parents to ask any questions they may have on the proposal.

The following questions / comments were asked and the responses given:

Q: Why is the amalgamation being considered now?

R: The school federated two years ago and created a closer working relationship of the two separate schools but amalgamation was triggered partly, because of the resignation of the Executive Head teacher. Since then, the school has had an interim executive headteacher in place. A post which is currently unaffordable if the status quo is maintained. Therefore, a decision was made to pursue an amalgamation as this was seen as the best option with the added benefits it will provide as outlined in the presentation earlier.

Q: What is the impact of the proposed amalgamation on the education standard?

R: it is expected that amalgamation will drive up standards and the quality of education offered and attainment for all children who attend the current schools. The arrangements that amalgamation brings will enable the school to operate under a single staffing structure which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the phases that would improve the quality of education on offer in the single primary school.

Q: Does the funding change with the proposed merger?

R: The financial impact of amalgamation would be in stages and over the same period it would be possible to offset these with savings made. There will be savings through the appointment of a Head teacher as opposed to an Executive Head teacher and efficiencies as resources can be shared across the primary school. These savings will be available for the Governing Body to reinvest in their priorities to the benefit of the education of the pupils.

Q: Will the transfer of pupils from Nursery into reception be automatic if it becomes a primary school?

R: There will be no automatic transfer for Nursery children into the primary school. There is also no automatic offer of a sibling place without making an application. To apply for a place in the primary school parents/carers must submit an application to the Local Authority by the specified closing date, adhering to the Admissions code and the primary school's admission criteria.

Q: How will this amalgamation affect the current year 2 pupils?

R: If the proposal is agreed the primary school will be implemented from 1 September 2020, therefore, the current year 2 pupils will still need to apply for a year 3 place at the junior school through the normal admission process for the academic year 2020/21. After implementation and onwards, Parents will only apply for a reception place at the primary school and will no longer need to apply for a year 3 place.

Section 5: Conclusion and Next steps

The Diocese of Brentwood and the local authority are of the view that the proposed amalgamation would deliver the best educational outcomes for children currently on roll at both schools, and for the future.

In summary, on considering the balance of the factors and issues expressed by all parties, it is recommended to proceed to the publication of statutory notices on the proposal to amalgamate St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools and implementing a single primary school.

Thank you to all parents, staff, residents and families who have responded and taken time to submit the feedback questionnaires.

Work will continue with all stakeholders and the school up to and beyond this consultation to address all concerns and issues that groups or individuals may have raised as part of this process.

Appendix 1: Consultation Stakeholder List

Consultees
The governing body of St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools
Parents/carers of pupils at St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools
Teachers and other staff at St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools
The governing bodies of all maintained schools in the borough
Teachers and staff of all maintained primary, secondary, special schools and academies in the Borough.
Families of pupils in all maintained primary, secondary, special schools and academies in the Borough.
Early Years Providers, specifically serving the Harold Hill planning area
Voluntary organisations and Community groups who work with children with SEND
Trade unions who represent staff at St. Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools and representatives of any trade union of any other staff at schools who may be affected by the proposal.
The Department for Education via the SchoolOrganisation.NOTIFICATIONS@education.gov.uk
All Havering Councillors
MPs whose constituencies include the schools that are the subject of the proposal or whose constituents are likely to be affected by the proposals. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hon. Julia Lopez, Hon. Andrew Rosindell and Hon. Jon Cruddas
Dioceses of Brentwood and Chelmsford <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chelmsford: Tim Elbourne, Director of Education • Brentwood: Maria Shepherd, Assistant Director of Education
Neighbouring local authorities where there may be significant cross-border movement of pupils. London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and London Borough of Redbridge
Chief and Senior Officers of London Borough of Havering