

Notice of KEY Executive Decision

Subject Heading:	Implementation of the amalgamation of Squirrels Heath Infant and Squirrels Heath Junior Schools
Decision Maker:	Tara Geere, Director of Children Services
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Oscar Ford – Cabinet Member for Children & Young People
ELT Lead:	Tara Geere, Director of Children Services
Report Author and contact details:	Pooneeta Mahadeo , School Organisation Manager pooneeta.mahadeo@havering.gov.uk Tel: 01708 431092
Policy context:	We believe all-through primary schools (infant and junior school aged children in one primary school), deliver better continuity of learning as the model for primary phase education in Havering. When the opportunity arises we will either amalgamate separate infant and junior schools into a single primary school or federate the schools.
Financial summary:	Capital cost for implementation of this proposal is £180k for minor remodelling works for a single reception and admin office, a small MUGA and soft landscaping. For revenue funding, the proposal will result in a phased annual reduction in Havering's allocation of Dedicated Schools Grant equal to one lump sum. This reduction in the school's

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	funding can be managed through the achievement of operational cost savings. There are no implications for the Council's General Fund.
Reason decision is Key	Significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the local authority.
Date notice given of intended decision:	15/05/2025
Relevant Overview & Scrutiny Committee:	People
Is it an urgent decision?	No
Is this decision exempt from being called-in?	No

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

People - Supporting our residents to stay safe and well **X**

Place - A great place to live, work and enjoy

Resources - Enabling a resident-focused and resilient Council

Part A – Report seeking decision

DETAIL OF THE DECISION REQUESTED AND RECOMMENDED ACTION

To make a decision on the amalgamation proposal of Squirrels Heath Infant and Squirrels Heath Junior schools as set out in the Decision-maker guidance – Appendix 1.

1. To approve the statutory proposal:
 - a. To lower the age range of Squirrels Heath Junior School to 4 - 11 years, thereby becoming a primary school;
 - b. The enlargement of the premises of the school from 1 September 2025.
2. To approve the statutory proposal to discontinue Squirrels Heath Infant School on 31st August 2025.

AUTHORITY UNDER WHICH DECISION IS MADE

In the Constitution Scheme 3.3.4 Specific powers of the Strategic Director of People paragraph 3.3, the Director of Children's Services has Delegation for "all child care and educational requirements, including but not limited to, children in care, school governors, care packages, fostering and care leavers, pupil welfare, child employment, school organisation, school funding, staffing & governance, health and safety in schools, student eligibility, collective worship, exclusions, special educational needs, transport and catering."

STATEMENT OF THE REASONS FOR THE DECISION

A non-key decision was made on 17 April 2025 to publish a statutory notice regarding the proposal to discontinue Squirrels Heath Infant School and expand Squirrels Heath Junior School ("the amalgamation proposals"). A statutory notice that included details of the proposals was published in the Romford Recorder on 25 April 2025; notices were also fixed to the entrances of the schools and circulated to all interested parties. A Notice was also published on the Council's website with a link to further information about the proposals. The representation stage, from 25 April to 23 May 2025, complied with statutory requirements by inviting representations from all interested parties on the proposal.

No representation was received.

OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

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Three other options were considered during the pre-statutory consultation – No change, federation and closure of both schools and opening of a new primary school. All three options were rejected.

PRE-DECISION CONSULTATION

No representation was received within the 4 weeks' representation period of the statutory notice.

NAME AND JOB TITLE OF STAFF MEMBER ADVISING THE DECISION-MAKER

Name: Pooneeta Mahadeo

Designation: School Organisation Manager

Signature: *P.Mahadeo*

Date: 05/06/2025

Part B - Assessment of implications and risks

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Under Regulation 5 of the School Organisation (Prescribed Alterations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013/3110 an enlargement of the school premises which increases capacity by either (a) more than 30 pupils; or (b) by 25% or 200 pupils (whichever is the lesser), needs to go through the statutory notice procedure. In this case the proposals require publication as Squirrels Heath Junior School will

- a) Lower the age range of the school to 4 to 11 years, thereby becoming a primary school.
- b) Enlarge its premises by taking over the infant school site.

It is proposed to discontinue Squirrels Heath Infant School. Likewise, the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013/31 09 require a statutory notice procedure which in the context of this amalgamation was combined with the enlargement proposals.

The publication of proposals appears to have been lawful. As noted there were no representations to consider.

Otherwise provided the decision maker follows the guidance at Appendix 1 the proposed recommended decision is also lawful.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial Implications to the Council

Capital costs for this proposal is £180k for the following works:

- Small MUGA (Netball, Basketball, Tennis) (subject to GB approval)
- Minor alterations and decoration to internal spaces
- Soft landscaping

Financial implications for the school

School budgets are dependent on a number of factors, of which pupil numbers and characteristics are the key drivers in respect of the funding calculation.

As part of the amalgamation, the factor that is affected is the Lump Sum. Presently the Infant and Junior School, each receive a lump sum to support the costs for the structure for each school.

Should the amalgamation proceed, then the Primary school will receive protection in respect of the lump sum for a three-year period as follows:

- In the 2025/26 financial year the newly amalgamated school would receive 100% of the two lump sums.
- In the 2026/27 financial year the school would receive 85% of the two lump sums

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- In the 2027/28 financial year the school would receive 70% of the two lump sums.
- In the 2028/29 financial year the school would receive one lump sum.

The lump sum in the formula acknowledges the cost of the structure that is required to operate as separate Infant and Junior, e.g. Head teacher, deputy Head teacher, etc. The amalgamation of the two schools would lead to one larger budget across a single school and lead to cost savings in certain areas, whereby the structure will be aligned to a primary school leadership model, rather than two separate schools.

As noted in the report Squirrels Heath Infants school is in a position of financial deficit. Under DfE regulations and Statutory Guidance schools that are in this position are required to develop a recovery plan to come back into overall surplus within a short period of time, ideally within three years. There is therefore a need to find savings within the budget including within staffing costs since these represent the largest part of a school's costs.

The Junior school is not in deficit but has a surplus. Following an amalgamation, the balances will be combined and there is a risk that the overall total could be a deficit so there will still be a need for recovery action. However, the Local Authority will work with the governing body to agree a plan and may allow a revised timescale to ensure that the Junior school side is not unduly financially affected by the amalgamation.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS (AND ACCOMMODATION IMPLICATIONS WHERE RELEVANT)

The human resources implications for the schools to be proposed for amalgamation will be managed by the schools themselves supported when required by Education HR.

EQUALITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, when exercising its functions, to have due regard to:

- (i) the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- (ii) the need to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share protected characteristics and those who do not, and;
- (iii) foster good relations between those who have protected characteristics and those who do not.

Note: 'Protected characteristics' are: age, sex, race, disability, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnerships, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and gender reassignment.

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The Council is committed to all of the above in the provision, procurement and commissioning of its services, and the employment of its workforce. In addition, the Council is also committed to improving the quality of life and wellbeing for all Havering residents in respect of socio-economics and health determinants.

An EqHIA has been carried out and the proposals in this report have been assessed as having a positive impact on groups with a protected characteristic – Appendix 2

HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The EqHIA indicates that the impact of this activity will have a positive impact on groups with a protected characteristic.

- No children would be displaced when both schools amalgamate.
- The proposal would give the opportunity to further improve educational standards by enabling planning as a coherent whole across the primary phase of the national curriculum, providing greater flexibility across and between key stages.
- The appointment of only one Headteacher would consolidate the savings to be realised and provide stability in the primary school for the foreseeable future.
- The single admission process will have a positive impact on the parental mental health.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There aren't any environmental and climate change implications and risks associated with this project as there are not physical changes to the premises required.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Decision maker guidance

Appendix 2 - EqHIA

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Part C – Record of decision

I have made this executive decision in accordance with authority delegated to me by the Leader of the Council and in compliance with the requirements of the Constitution.

Decision

Proposal agreed

Details of decision maker

Signed

Name:

Cabinet Portfolio held:

CMT Member title:

Head of Service title

Other manager title:

Date: 3 July 2025

Lodging this notice

The signed decision notice must be delivered to Committee Services, in the Town Hall.

For use by Committee Administration

This notice was lodged with me on _____

Signed _____