

PROPOSED AMALGAMATION OF SQUIRRELS HEATH INFANT SCHOOL AND SQUIRRELS HEATH JUNIOR SCHOOL

Staff Consultation meeting held at Squirrels Heath Infant School and also held via zoom on the 10 March 2025 @ 4:30 pm

1. Attendance

The meeting was attended by staff from both Squirrels Heath Infant School and Squirrels Heath Junior School.

4 Local Authority Officers were also in attendance.

2. Opening of the Meeting

The meeting was opened by the Chair for the evening, Mr. Trevor Cook (*Assistant Director of Education Services*) who welcomed all. He expressed his appreciation and thanks on behalf of the local authority to all the staff for not just making out time to attend the meeting, but also specifically on the work they are doing to support Havering children and families.

He acknowledged that any change is unsettling but he hoped that the meeting will be an opportunity to present the rationale, benefits of the proposed amalgamation from the local authority's perspective and also gather direct views from staff as part of the consultation process. He also highlighted that in addition, all stakeholders should provide feedback using the online survey questionnaire.

The Chair then explained the format/protocol for the meeting and advised that there would be a presentation from Local Authority Officers. He said that questions can be asked following the presentation and those online can add their questions via the chat function.

3. Local Authority Presentation

The presentation consisted of details of the amalgamation proposal & statutory process, the intended benefits of the proposal if implemented on stakeholders, the impact of the amalgamation on staff and the statutory timeline for implementation if the proposal is approved. (*The presentation is attached as an appendix to this notes*)

4. Questions, Comments and responses

The following represents the questions received from attendees and the responses given by the local authority during the meeting.

Questions/Comments	Local Authority response
There will be a restructure of SLT. At what point will this happen and whose responsibility will it be to decide on the structure?	The restructuring of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) will be carried out following the formal amalgamation process. The responsibility for deciding on the new structure will lie with the Governing Body of the primary school.
How will the interests of both schools' communities be safeguarded during the amalgamation process?	The interests of both schools' communities will be safeguarded through an inclusive and transparent process. This includes regular communication updates, opportunities for feedback from parents, staff, and students, as well as dedicated support to address any concerns. Clear guidelines will be established to ensure that the values and strengths of both communities are integrated into the new collaborative ethos, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose.
You've used the phrase "new collaborative ethos" how will there be a proper amalgamation with staff being involved and it won't be this is how we do it here?	The amalgamation will involve staff through a structured approach that encourages participation and input from all levels. Regular staff meetings will be organised to gather and integrate ideas, ensuring that the new ethos is a product of collective effort rather than imposition. Additionally, working groups comprising representatives from both schools will be established to address specific aspects of the transition, ensuring that practices and values from both settings are respected and incorporated into the new framework.
There will be one GB. In the consultation document it says "The Local Authority would encourage Squirrels Heath Junior School Governing Body to consider all opportunities whereby Governors of the infant school could join the primary school Governing Body." Could doesn't seem a strong word, staff would want a stronger commitment for the Infant GB members.	The LA advises that there should be a governing body that reflects the community. We have made it clear that we would expect this to cover members from both current governing bodies. However we have no direct powers to insist on the membership of any GB. We would expect the GB to look at both balance and complementary skills sets. All governing bodies are encouraged to conduct regular skills audits which assist in identifying skills gaps when new governors need to be recruited. The DfE guidance is very clear about the range of skills, experiences and behaviours that governing bodies need and these are set out in the Governor Competency Framework.
Redundancies have been raised by staff, they want to be assured that there will be in a job after amalgamation, including temporary and supply staff.	The Local Authority is committed to ensuring job security for all staff during the amalgamation process. We recognise the concerns regarding potential redundancies and understand the importance of stability for both temporary and supply staff. There will be comprehensive assessments and consultations to ensure that staff are informed and reassured about their future roles. Measures will be taken to integrate staff from both schools into the new structure, aiming for minimal disruption and maintaining the continuity of employment. The goal is to retain as much of the existing workforce as possible, leveraging their expertise and familiarity with the schools' environments.
Finally, when would a possible visit from Ofsted take place?	The timing of a possible visit from Ofsted can vary depending on numerous factors, including the readiness of the amalgamated school and the scheduling preferences of

	Ofsted itself. Generally, Ofsted aims to conduct inspections in a manner that is constructive and supports the development of the school. We will ensure that all preparations are in place to demonstrate the effectiveness and quality of education provided, and we will communicate any updates regarding the inspection timeline to staff promptly.
Historically amalgamations haven't gone very well for staff, not plain sailing, bad feeling (referred to Parklands and Crowlands), what will it be like for staff here?	We understand the concerns that staff may have regarding the amalgamation process, especially given past experiences at other schools such as Parklands and Crowlands. Our priority is to ensure that this transition is as smooth as possible for all staff members. We are committed to fostering a positive working environment and providing ample support and resources to address any challenges that may arise. Open communication and engagement with staff will be key to navigating this process successfully.
Timeline. The date of the 25/4 takes us close to the deadline for staff to resign, going to lose people as they can't afford to wait to find out what will happen.	We acknowledge that the timing of April 25th may be concerning for staff, particularly in relation to resignation deadlines. We are actively working to provide timely updates and clarity on the amalgamation process to minimise uncertainties and help staff make informed decisions. Our goal is to retain our valuable team members and ensure their confidence in the process. The statutory notice cannot be published during school holidays and therefore the earliest this can be done is after the Easter break.
Finally, when would a possible visit from Ofsted take place?	<p>If a school judged good or outstanding for overall effectiveness at its last inspection before September 2024 subsequently undergoes significant change, for example through merging with another school or by adding a new phase or key stage, its next inspection will normally be a graded inspection.</p> <p>The graded inspection will normally take place within 3 years of the change, or sooner if the prescribed statutory timeframe for inspection falls before then.</p>
You've mentioned a new GB but in the document it says the Junior GB. Is it absolutely going to be a new GB, infants to have a voice?	The document states that the Junior GB will be encouraged to consider opportunities for Infant GB members to join the primary school Governing Body. We are committed to ensuring that the new GB includes representation from both schools to provide a balanced governance structure
You've talked about a collaborative approach to ethos, how can this happen?	All schools do have different values, statements and vision and both schools will have theirs. The amalgamation is an opportunity for the whole staff to work together collaboratively to create a joint ethos and for the staff to take the best out of both schools and work on a strong vision that would enable a greater consistency for all pupils.
In the paperwork it says funding for the school would be 100%, 2nd year reduced down to 75% and the next year. Given everything is going up in price and same number of pupils and	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.

<p>staff costs how could the new school manage this? Less money will mean less jobs.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Should the amalgamation proceed, then the Primary school will receive protection in respect of the lump sum for a three year period as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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. <p>The lump sum in the formula acknowledges the cost of the structure that is required to operate as separate Infant and Junior, e.g. Headteacher, deputy Headteacher, 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.</p>
<p>The document says savings made, where would you envisage this coming from?</p>	<p>The savings will be made through various measures, including streamlining administrative processes, optimising resource allocation, and leveraging economies of scale. These efforts will help manage costs effectively while maintaining the quality of education and support provided to students.</p>
<p>I know I'm not a member of staff but I'm a governor and I'm concerned that it appears to be a takeover by the junior school, that is how it is perceived. I think the issue of the Governors is important, realise it is a DfE process but staff are seeking some assurance what the GB of the new school will look like. If I'm reading the room correctly, the infant school staff want assurances, the current SHI GB asked to join the new GB...we are pussy footing around this...clearly an issue for staff.</p> <p>Also needs to be some honesty about staff also, realise redundancies in staff...honesty about it.</p>	<p>We understand the concerns regarding the perception of a takeover by the junior school. The Local Authority is committed to ensuring that the new Governing Body includes representation from both schools to provide a balanced governance structure. This integration will be facilitated through a formalised process that prioritises the inclusion of experienced governors who understand the unique needs and strengths of the infant school.</p>

Are we going to make the GB bigger as the size of the school is expanding?	The size of the Governing Body will be reviewed to ensure it is representative of the expanded school. We are committed to including members from both schools to provide a balanced governance structure
Infant staff keen for amalgamation to start from the top, we would feel more represented.	The amalgamation process will involve staff from all levels, including senior leadership, to ensure that the new ethos is a product of collective effort and respects the practices and values from both settings
Query again relating to timescales and only 14 days left from day of meeting until 24/3.	We acknowledge the concerns regarding the timescales and are actively working to provide timely updates and clarity on the amalgamation process to minimise uncertainties and help staff make informed decisions.
If amalgamation is a slow process, won't Ofsted want this in place and that in place? With curriculum subjects, will there be an amalgamation of subject leaders, what extent will there be a consultation on this?	The amalgamation process will involve consultations with subject leaders to ensure that the curriculum is effectively integrated. We will work closely with the primary school to ensure that all preparations are in place to demonstrate the effectiveness and quality of education provided
The document includes quite a few positive statements made- curriculum, ethos. What evidence have you got for what is cited in the document?	On average, pupils in all-through primary schools, covering both KS1 and KS2, achieve one scaled point more in both reading and maths at KS2 compared to their counterparts in junior/middle schools https://ffteducationdatalab.org.uk/2018/03/why-do-pupils-who-went-to-infant-and-first-schools-appear-to-under-perform-at-key-stage-4/
What would make you think that this wouldn't go ahead? What would stop it?	The amalgamation process is subject to various factors, including stakeholder feedback and regulatory approvals. We are committed to addressing any concerns and ensuring that the process is carried out smoothly. Finance could be a factor which would stop it...
You have spoken about the potential need to restructure SLT and possible changes to the administrative function in the future, but that there would be no immediate change. What would the time scale look like?	No changes are expected in the first term of amalgamating the schools. If the need for organisational change is identified, then usually this process would take around one term to complete. Specific details and timeframes would be shared within a separate consultation document.
If we get to the point where there are more staff than posts, what happens to us, no job anymore? Am I made redundant?	Measures will be taken to avoid redundancy situations where possible. However, if, despite these measures, a consultation process identifies a situation where there are more people than posts, this would likely lead to a redundancy situation.
What happens in relation to TLR post holders?	Any proposed changes to the TLR structure and their associated duties and pay will be managed in line with the provisions set out in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document. Changes to permanent TLR1s and TLR2s will be subject to consultation with

	<p>those affected and managed in a fair and transparent way as part of an organisational change process.</p> <p>If there are changes to responsibilities which reduce a teachers TLR rate of pay, or if the TLR is removed completely, their pay will be safeguarded/protected for up to 3 years, starting from the point when the change in duties takes effect.</p> <p>The pay protection period is intended to give teachers time to adjust to the new role and the change in the financial circumstances, and to secure a suitable position elsewhere if they wish to.</p> <p>The teacher will retain their original pay during this period, after which the salary will be adjusted accordingly. If they secure a new role in school during that period, which receives a higher salary, pay protection will however be reduced in line with this.</p> <p>The review or end of a TLR3 will still be done in consultation with the teacher, however as they are temporary arrangements, pay protection will not apply.</p>
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5. Closure of the Meeting

All the questions and responses will be published on both schools website. All stakeholders were once again encouraged to respond to the online consultation survey with their reasons for or against the proposal.

The Chair thanked all again for making out time to attend and hoped that it will be seen as a meaningful consultation and the LA has provided further information on the process.

He acknowledged that any change can be unsettling but hopefully through this meeting those fears have been put at ease but still advised that they can still put in their feedback.

The meeting was closed at 5:30 pm.