

Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate St Ursula's Catholic Infant School and St Ursula's Catholic Junior School

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is this consultation about?

Havering Council and the Diocese of Brentwood is proposing to amalgamate St Ursula's Catholic Infant School and St Ursula's Catholic Junior School to become a primary school on the current school site with effect from September 2020.

The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of staff, governors, parents and carers of pupils of St Ursula's Catholic Infant School and St Ursula's Catholic Junior School and other interested parties before a decision can be taken on whether or not to amalgamate both schools.

2. What does "amalgamation" mean?

Amalgamation is the merging of both St Ursula's Catholic Infant School and St Ursula's Catholic Junior School to create one new primary school. The process would mean that St Ursula's Catholic Infant School would close and a new primary school would be established by enlarging and altering the lower age range of St Ursula's Catholic Junior School.

St Ursula's Catholic Infant School presently caters for pupils aged between 3 and 7 and has a capacity of 180 pupils. St Ursula's Catholic Junior School on the other hand, caters for pupils aged between 7 and 11 and has a capacity of 240 pupils. The amalgamation of both schools would mean that the new primary school would cater for children aged 3 to 11 with a capacity of 420 pupils.

The tables below shows the current provision in both schools and the proposed provision if the schools were amalgamated.

Current provision	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
St Ursula's Catholic Infant School	60	60	60	-	-	-	-
St Ursula's Catholic Junior School				60	60	60	60

Proposed provision	YR	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
St Ursula's Catholic Primary School	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

It is important to note that all the children currently in St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools will automatically become pupils in the primary school if the two schools amalgamate.

3. Why are we proposing to amalgamate both schools to form a primary school?

The rationale behind this proposal is to provide the children in both schools with a seamless transition through the school for their education from age three through to eleven.

Havering Council is committed to considering a move to a primary school, from separate infant and junior schools, when an opportunity arises.

The two schools have also stated that they wish to amalgamate and the diocese are in support of this proposal with a strong preference for the infant school to close.

In February 2017, Ofsted judged St Ursula's Catholic Junior to be an 'outstanding' school. The effectiveness of leadership, including governance in driving a strong ambition was also deemed to be exceptional which ensures the school's continuing improvement. St Ursula's Catholic Infant School was judged to be a 'good' school in October 2019 by Ofsted.

Admission data shows that all of the pupils on roll at St Ursula's Catholic Infant School transfer to St Ursula's Catholic Junior School at the end of key stage 1 and so amalgamation will further strengthen the transition between key stages 1 and 2.

St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools federated since September 2017. This means that they have a single governing body, but are still two separate schools. Amalgamation will formalise the partnerships already in place as it will provide greater flexibility and more influence when it comes to developing a self-improving culture.

Currently, St Ursula's Catholic Infant and St Ursula's Catholic Junior schools both have an interim head of school in place overseen by an Executive headteacher following the resignation of both School head teachers. If the proposal is approved, it will bring the two schools under a single headteacher with the aim of creating a robust structure at the school and ensuring its viability.

4. How would this proposal benefit children?

The amalgamation of both schools will provide clear benefits for pupils' learning as a single primary would have many benefits including the following:

- The newly amalgamated school would only be required to appoint a single headteacher with significant saving being made available to the governors to support teaching and learning, offer better continuity and a smoother transition between KS1 and KS2;
- greater opportunities for curriculum development, and staff recruitment and development;
- builds upon best practice within both the Infant and Junior School, and continue improving standards of pupils achievement and attainment;
- enables more of the budget to be spent upon front-line teaching and learning allowing the school to be more financially efficient; being able to buy supplies and services as a single school.
- allows parents to only apply once for the school (before

Reception) without having to reapply at the end of Key Stage 1;

- the relationship between parents and the school can build over a longer period of time; staff will know children for a longer period of time thus allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil.

5. How would this proposal benefit staff?

A larger 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.

6. What would be the impact of this amalgamation on education quality and standards?

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.

Overall, it is expected that amalgamation will drive up the standards and the quality of education offered, strengthen the management of governance arrangements already in place, ensuring continued improvement and positive outcomes for all the children in the single school.

7. What would be the admission arrangements?

Amalgamation would lead to a single admission with no application required between infants and juniors. This would remove a level of uncertainty for parents. The primary school would continue to admit 60 pupils into Reception each year, as the infant school does now, and the school would have a total of 420 places.

8. Would there be any changes to the size and accommodation?

In the event of amalgamation, the school would remain largely the same with all the existing premises being used in the most appropriate and efficient way.

The primary school would need as many classes as there are currently in the Infant and Junior Schools. Whilst, the Diocese of Brentwood is not currently proposing a capital scheme to create a single building, the newly established primary school will have greater flexibility to use the facilities at its site more effectively.

9. Is this a cost saving exercise and what will be the impact on the schools budget?

Savings will be made through efficiencies as resources can be shared across the primary school. There are savings to be made in the appointment of a Head teacher as opposed to an Executive Head teacher. However, the decision is not solely budget related as it is to create one catholic primary school with a clear vision for the children of the primary school community.

10. Both schools have a head of school who is accessible to pupils and staff, how will this be managed in a larger primary school?

The relationship between pupils, staff and the new headteacher will build over a longer period of time. Staff and headteacher will know children for a longer period of time thus allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil. In practical terms, depending on how the new school decides to integrate, it could benefit from a joint staff room, single designated reception/administrative area together with a single main entrance for visitors to the school

11. Will there be changes to staffing as a result of changes to the head teacher and amalgamation?

The impact on staff is being kept to a minimum. All the teachers and support staff employed at the Infant and Junior School (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school. There should be no direct impact on teaching, class support and ancillary staff as a result of this proposal. 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. The post of the headteacher will be advertised once a decision is taken to amalgamate and establish the new primary school.

12. What happens if you can't recruit a new head teacher for the primary school?

The school undertakes a robust process in the recruitment of a Head teacher and it is the Governing Body and Diocese aim to find the most suitable candidate for the role. With clear visioning and understanding of the school's needs, from the outset, this process should be successful.

13. If it becomes a primary, will there be the same opening and closing times?

At this present time there hasn't been any discussion in relation to changing the school opening and closing time and it is unlikely they would change.

14. What will be the name of the school?

If the amalgamation is taken forward and agreed, it is being proposed that the school will be called St. Ursula's Catholic Primary School.

15. Will there be a new school uniform for the newly established primary school?

The uniform for the current infant and junior school is the same and therefore there would be no need to change the primary school uniform.

16. If a significant number of stakeholders are opposed to this proposal, how will the Council take their views into account?

The local authority will seek views from all interested parties and will balance this against its responsibility to raise education standards. Before making any final decision, the local authority will consider a number of factors including views

gathered from this consultation, any effect on school standards, governance arrangements, the current schools budget and viability.

17. How you can make your views known?

We would like to hear your views on the proposal to amalgamate St Ursula's Catholic Infant and Junior schools.

You can tell us whether you agree or disagree with the proposal and leave your comments. You have until **17 February 2020** to let us know your views. All responses will be taken into account once the consultation closes, however, we will not be able to acknowledge or respond individually to your comments.

You can give your views by completing the response form online at: <https://consultation.havering.gov.uk/education/st-ursulas-amalgamation>

And attending a public meeting for parents and members of the local community on **Wednesday 5th February 2020 from 6:30pm – 8:00pm** at the junior school.

18. What happens next?

At the end of this consultation period, Cabinet will consider the feedback and views expressed by all interested parties during the consultation and decide whether to go ahead with the proposal. If the Council then decides to proceed to the statutory stage of the process, it will publish a statutory notice and other information on **6 March 2020**, in the Romford Recorder and will be displayed at the main entrances of the infant and junior schools for four weeks.

This four weeks 'representation period' provides the final opportunity for people and stakeholders to comment on or submit objections to the proposal.

Subject to the outcome of the representation period, the Council intends to make a final decision on the proposal by **April 2020**.

Timescale of activities

ACTIVITY	DATE
Consultation commences	20 January- 17 February 2020
Parents' consultation meeting	5 February 2020
Consultation ends	17 February 2020
Outcome of the consultation and decision taken on whether to proceed or not	18 - 28 February 2020
Publish statutory notice *	6 March 2020
Period of representation*	6 March 2020 – 3 April 2020
Council takes a final decision*	End of April 2020
New Primary School opens*	September 2020

*These stages only apply if the council decides to take the amalgamation forward.