

# **Sunnymede Infant School and Sunnymede Junior School**

**Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate the infant and  
junior schools with effect from 1 September 2023**

September 2022



Essex County Council

## Introduction

Essex County Council is committed to maximising the educational opportunities for your children. Our approach to developing diversity and improving standards in the school system includes considering the amalgamation of infant and junior schools to provide all-through primary schools where appropriate because of the benefits they offer.

These benefits include:

- greater consistency of approach to teaching and learning from ages 4 to 11;
- seamless monitoring of pupil progress from ages 4 to 11;
- increased potential for strong leadership and governance;
- continuity of experiences for young children;
- avoidance of transfer to another school at the end of Year 2 and the impact this can have on the child and their learning;
- greater sharing of curriculum and other resources.

We are therefore keen to support schools and governing bodies where they wish to pursue amalgamation to improve and enhance local educational provision.

However, not all circumstances are the same and it is important to hear the views of the local community. Please read this document and let us have your comments in order that we can provide the best possible opportunities for children in Billericay.



Clare Kershaw  
Director, Education

## **Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and Members of the Local Community of the Sunnymede Infant and Junior Schools**

The governing bodies of Sunnymede Infant School and Sunnymede Junior School are consulting on a proposal to build on the strengths and good progress in place at the schools by the creation of a single primary school, under the unified leadership of one headteacher and one governing body. The governing bodies, with the support of Essex County Council, are therefore proposing that the two schools amalgamate to form a primary school for children aged 4 to 11 with effect from 1 September 2023.

### **Why is amalgamation being proposed?**

Mrs Eades retired as the Headteacher of Sunnymede Infant School in April 2022. Since then, an Executive Headteacher, Mrs Marrion, has been working alongside the Acting Headteacher, Miss Paulson, to ensure standards of teaching and learning remain high. Mrs Marrion will continue in the role of Executive Headteacher until the governing body has considered the range of options available to it in relation to securing the long-term future leadership of the school.

Mrs Branch, as Headteacher at Sunnymede Junior School, has also been working closely with Sunnymede Infant School at an operational level to support the smooth running of the school.

Both schools are rated as Good by Ofsted and have a history of working closely to serve the school community, including outcomes for children. Some services are already shared, for example, catering services, premises management, Parent Teacher Association.

Therefore, a decision has been taken by the governing bodies of both schools to consult on a proposal to amalgamate the two schools, as the governors see significant advantages in combining the schools into a primary school under the leadership of Mrs Branch, to continue to drive up standards and performance. This would involve the formal closure of the infant school on 31 August 2023 and changing the age range of the junior school from 7 to 11 to 4 to 11 to become a primary school from 1 September 2023. Mrs Marrion will retain the Executive Headship of the infant school until the schools amalgamate in September 2023.

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

The governing bodies and ECC believe that amalgamation would have the following benefits:

- consistency of approach to teaching and learning policies, curriculum planning, behaviour management, equal opportunities and special educational needs;
- monitoring pupil progress from 4 to 11 years of age would enable staff to build up a comprehensive profile of individual children and build consistently on their achievements;
- avoiding transfer at the end of Year 2 and any worries children may have about moving to a different school;
- children would be able to come together more easily for social and creative activities;

- planning and delivery of a continuous and coherent curriculum – Ofsted inspection reports show that planning for progression and continuity for Key Stage 2 is better in primary schools than junior schools;
- it would be easier to achieve continuity and progression in children’s learning;
- it would be possible to share curriculum resources and avoid unnecessary duplication.

### **What can I expect to see?**

The key features of previous successful amalgamations have been:

- strong leadership and governance;
- promotion of high educational standards;
- high quality, good teaching as a minimum;
- consistency of approach to learning policies, curriculum planning and behaviour management;
- stability of staffing and improved staffing structures and opportunities for staff development;
- improved use of facilities, for example, improved use of shared spaces.

Leading up to amalgamation the governing bodies would begin to provide opportunities, where appropriate, to further collaborate across the schools, including collaboration between governors. Opportunities for staff development would be further enhanced by amalgamation, enabling teaching and support staff to draw upon their current expertise, experience and specialist knowledge in order to share and develop best practice more effectively.

The proposal would enable the schools to merge and strengthen their performance so that there is greater consistency in policies and practice. It would streamline communication for parents and the wider community, ensuring one consistent approach for all.

### **Who would be the governors of the new primary school?**

If the amalgamation proceeds, the existing governing body of the junior school would formally become the governing body of the primary school in September 2023. The junior governing body is committed, however, to ensuring that the governing body of the primary school would comprise governors from the current infant governing body and both governing bodies are exploring ways of working more closely together prior to the proposed amalgamation.

### **Who would be the headteacher of the primary school?**

The headteacher of the junior school at the time of the proposed amalgamation, Mrs Branch, would be the headteacher of the primary school.

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

Should the amalgamation proceed, both governing bodies are committed to putting in place a staffing structure that best suits the needs of the children in the primary school, with all staff at the infant and junior schools being treated fairly and transparently. Pupil number forecasts indicate that the primary school would need at least as many classes as there are currently across both the infant and junior schools. It is therefore planned and expected that all staff employed in the current schools (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) will be able to be recruited to the primary school staffing structure.

All the teaching and support staff employed at the junior school (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in what will become the primary school. The staff currently employed in the closing infant school will be able to be recruited to the new primary school staffing structure. There is no intention to make any changes to existing contract conditions as a result of the amalgamation and a commitment has been made that the amalgamation would not proceed if redundancies were deemed necessary. Any external staff appointments will only be made after current staff at the infant and junior schools have been considered.

### **Would there be any changes to the size of the school and the accommodation?**

The primary school would be able to use both the existing buildings more effectively as a single school. The existing schools have the capacity to admit 60 pupils into Reception, and 64 pupils into Year 3. The total capacity of the primary school would be 436 places.

### **What would the admission arrangements be for the primary school?**

The governing body would be the admission authority for the primary school and would set the admission arrangements, as it does for the existing schools. The amalgamation would mean that children at the school would automatically move from Year 2 to Year 3 without need for the current registration process. This will come into effect for those starting Year 3 in September 2024.

### **How can I make my views known?**

Meetings have been arranged to provide an opportunity for parents and carers, the children at the school, staff and members of the local community to ask questions and express their views on the proposal outlined here. At this stage no decision has been made and all the views received, either at the meetings or separately in writing, will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

There will be meetings for parents and members of the local community on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2022. One will take place at 2:30pm in the infant school hall and there will be another at 6:00pm in the junior school hall. These meetings will give an opportunity for as many people as possible to find out about the proposed primary school and to give us their views.

In addition to the meetings for parents and carers and the local community ECC, together with governing bodies of the infant and junior schools, will also be seeking the views of other interested parties, particularly members of staff and children at the school.

## **Your Comments**

You are invited to respond to this consultation using the following electronic survey form:

<https://consultations.essex.gov.uk/school-organisation/sunnymede-amalgamation>

Alternatively, you may wish to write to or email us with your comments to the address given below by 5pm on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022. All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to the governors will be collected to be included in the analysis of feedback received.

All written comments should be received by ECC by 5pm on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022. ECC handles information in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 1998 and is the data controller for the purposes of the Data Protection Act 1998. Your answers to this consultation will only be used to assess the community's view of the proposed amalgamation and not for any other purpose. We will not give information about you to anyone outside the County Council.

If you have any questions about the consultation process or the proposal you can email Rhona Long, School Organisation Officer, at [school.organisation@essex.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@essex.gov.uk), or alternatively contact the chairs of governors at the infant and junior schools, via the schools.

The information contained in this leaflet can be made available in alternative formats: large print, Braille, audio tape or disk. Please call 03330 131071.

## **What happens next?**

At the end of this consultation period the governing bodies will consider the feedback and views expressed by all interested parties and decide whether to progress with the proposal. If it is decided to proceed with the process, a statutory notice will then be published in the local press and will be displayed at the schools for a four-week period. This four-week representation period provides the final opportunity for people and organisations to comment on or submit objections to the proposal.

At the end of the four-week period any objections to, or comments on, the proposal will be considered by the governing bodies of the schools, and a final decision will be taken on the proposal by Essex County Council.

## Timescale

This consultation period will run from Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 until 5pm on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> October 2022. Meetings will be held with staff, governors, school councils, parents and other interested parties during this period.

Date	Activity
15 September 2022	Consultation commences – consultation document can be viewed on the schools' websites.
5 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Meetings for parents of both schools and the local community to be held at 2:30pm in the infant school hall and 6pm in the junior school hall.
19 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	Meeting for staff to be held at 3:45pm in the infant school hall
5pm on 27 <sup>th</sup> October 2022	End of consultation period
November 2022	Publication of statutory notice
December 2022	End of period for representations
February 2023	Final decision on proposal
31 <sup>st</sup> August 2023	Sunnymede Infant School closes*
1 <sup>st</sup> September 2023	Age range of Sunnymede Junior School is extended to become a primary school*

\*These stages only apply if the proposal is approved by Essex County Council.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By email: [school.organisation@essex.gov.uk](mailto:school.organisation@essex.gov.uk)

By post: Essex County Council, School Organisation and Planning, PO Box 4261, County Hall, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1GS

Visit our website: [essex.gov.uk](http://essex.gov.uk)

The information contained in this document can be translated, and/ or made available in alternative formats, on request.