

Brightlingsea Infant School and Nursery and Brightlingsea Junior School

**Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate the infant and
junior schools with effect from 1 September 2018**

June 2017



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 2 to 11;
- seamless monitoring of pupil progress from ages 2 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 Brightlingsea.



Councillor Ray Gooding
Cabinet Member for Education

Dear Parents/Carers, Staff and Members of the Local Community of Brightlingsea Infant and Junior Schools

Essex County Council (ECC), together with the governing bodies of Brightlingsea Infant School and Brightlingsea Junior School, is consulting on a proposal to build on the strengths and 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. ECC, with the support of the governing bodies, is therefore proposing that the two schools amalgamate to form a primary school for children aged 2 to 11 with effect from 1 September 2018.

Why is amalgamation being proposed?

Claire Claydon is currently the headteacher at Brightlingsea Junior School but will be moving on to another position in September 2017 and the Junior School governing body has considered the range of options available to it in relation to securing the future leadership of the school.

Julia Hunt is the headteacher at Brightlingsea Infant School. Mrs Claydon and Mrs Hunt have been working together to improve the standard of teaching and performance at both schools. The schools are working well in partnership, delivering good outcomes for the children.

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 Julia Hunt, to continue to drive up standards and performance. This would involve the formal closure of the junior school on 31 August 2018 and increasing the age range of the infant school from 7 to 11 to become a primary school from 1 September 2018.

It has already been agreed by both governing bodies that Mrs Hunt will assume the interim role of Executive Headteacher at the junior school from September 2017, in addition to remaining as the headteacher at the infant school.

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 2 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;
- a single conversation with the community about primary education;
- improved use of facilities, for example specialist teaching spaces, reception areas and outdoor areas.

Leading up to amalgamation the governing bodies would provide opportunities to further develop teaching and learning across the schools and ECC would continue to support leadership at all levels, including 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 also enable the further development of community links and pastoral support.

Who would be the governors of the new primary school?

If the amalgamation proceeds the existing governing body of the infant school would formally become the governing body of the primary school. The infant governing body is committed to ensuring that the governing body of the primary school would include governors from the current junior governing body and both governing bodies are already 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 infant school at the time of the proposed amalgamation, Julia Hunt, 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 expected that the vast majority of 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. There may, however, be a need to reduce potential duplication of posts/job roles and some of the current posts/ job roles and grades may need to change.

Where restructuring is necessary as a result of duplication of posts/ job roles, or the amalgamation in general, the governing body of the infant school has expressed its intention to treat staff at both the infant school and junior schools equitably and to create a staff structure that maintains the knowledge and skills from both current staff teams.

All the teaching and support staff employed at the infant school (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in what will become the primary school, save for where any workgroups are subject to restructuring. The staff currently employed in the closing junior school will be able to be recruited to the new primary school staffing structure although, in common with staff at the infant school, there may be a need to reduce potential duplication of posts/job roles and some of the current posts/ job roles and grades may need to change. Any external staff appointments will only be made after current post holders 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 all the existing buildings on the site more effectively as a single school. The existing schools have the capacity to admit 90 pupils into Reception, and 90 pupils into Year 3. The total capacity of the primary school would be 630 permanent places and up to 90 children would be admitted into Reception each year. Although this would be a large primary school there are other schools of this size across Essex which work very well.

What would the admission arrangements be for the primary school?

Essex County Council 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.

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 about going ahead with the proposal.

There will be meetings for parents, carers and members of the local community on 5 July 2017. One will take place at 2pm in the infant school hall and there will be another at 6:30pm 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://tinyurl.com/Brightlingsea-Amalgamation>

Alternatively, you may wish to write to or email us with your comments to the address given below by 14 July 2017. All comments received through these mechanisms or made directly to council officers or members will be collected to be included in the analysis of feedback received.

All written comments should be received by ECC by 14 July 2017. 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 call Kevin Wilby, School Organisation Officer, on 03330 131147, 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 Cabinet Member for Education and Lifelong Learning will consider the feedback and views expressed by all interested parties during the consultation and decide whether to proceed with the proposal. If he decides to continue a statutory notice will be published in the local press and will be displayed at the main entrances to the schools and at some other conspicuous places in the area served by the school 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 ECC and a final decision will be taken on the proposal by the Cabinet Member.

Timescale

The consultation period will run from 19 June 2017 until 14 July 2017. Meetings will be held with staff, governors, school councils, parents and other interested parties during this period.

Date	Activity
19 June 2017	Consultation commences – consultation document can be viewed at: http://tinyurl.com/EssexCCConsultations
4 and 6 July 2017	Meetings for staff
5 July 2017	Meetings for parents and carers of both schools and the local community to be held at 2pm in the infant school hall and 6:30pm in the junior school hall Meetings with pupil representatives from both schools
14 July 2017	End of consultation period
End July/beginning August 2017	Feedback on consultation shared with governing bodies Report on consultation prepared for Cabinet Member
Early September 2017	Publication of statutory notice
Early October 2017	End of period for representations
November 2017	Decision on proposal made by Essex County Council
31 August 2018	Brightlingsea Junior School closes*
1 September 2018	Age range of Brightlingsea Infant School is extended to become a primary school*

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

This information is issued by **Essex County Council**.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By email: 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

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

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