



Consultation on bringing together Wood End Infant School and Wood End Academy to form a single primary school

Wood End Infant School and Wood End Academy are both good schools. Governors at both schools believe that bringing the schools together into a single primary school would enable us to improve further and achieve more for our pupils and our community. This consultation seeks your feedback about this proposal.

Please have your say before 11th December 2020.

1. What is the proposal?

Ealing Council and the Governing Bodies of both Wood End Infant School and Wood End Academy are proposing to join the schools together with one head teacher and one governing body from September 2021. Wood End Infant School and Wood End Academy would become Wood End Primary – a single school for pupils from Nursery to Year 6, instead of separate infant and junior schools.

Wood End Primary would use the present sites and buildings of Wood End Infant and Wood End Academy. The primary school would have places for 60 children per year to join Reception i.e. a Published Admission Number of 60. The existing Nursery provision would continue. All pupils attending the schools at present or due to join Nursery, Reception or Year 3 in September 2021 would automatically have places at the primary school.

2. Why is this being proposed?

Almost all pupils progress from Wood End Infant School to Wood End Academy, and few join Wood End Academy who were not previously at Wood End Infant School. The schools have been collaborating increasingly closely in recent years, including sharing Mr Stainbank as Executive Headteacher since September 2019, which both Governing Bodies believe has benefited pupils.

Amalgamating the schools to form a primary school therefore reflects the pupil journey and formalises the collaboration. In addition, Ealing Council and the two Governing Bodies believe that a single primary school is educationally and financially more sustainable than separate infant and junior schools.

Both schools were judged to be 'Good' when last inspected by Ofsted.

3. What are the advantages of an amalgamated school?

An overall advantage is that primary schools provide the best opportunity for continuity and coherence in children's educational experience. It enables the Governing Body, Headteacher and staff to plan the curriculum and pastoral support for pupils from Nursery to Year 6. It also provides a consistent vision and ethos to benefit pupils, staff, parents and carers.

Educational advantages for pupils

- Amalgamation removes the transition between Infant and Junior as it would be one school;
- Greater continuity in planning the curriculum across Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 so that children make the best possible progress in learning;
- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught and supported;
- Greater continuity for the most vulnerable children and those with special educational needs, including gifted and talented pupils; and
- Opportunities for richer social development and interaction with a wider range of age groups for children.

Advantages for school families

- Consistency of parental involvement throughout the primary phase of education by having the ability to foster longer-term relationships with families within one school;
- Communication between school and parents will be simplified, especially for parents with children in both schools. It removes duplication and ensures a joined up approach for events, training and other matters;
- One set of policies and procedures for Nursery to Year 6, rather than potential for differences between infant and junior schools – such as uniform, policies, and systems for parents to follow; and
- Removes the need for parents to apply for a place at the junior school.

Advantages for the leadership and governance

- A single governing body and single leadership team to provide vision and continuity from Nursery to Year 6;
- Existing Executive Headteacher would secure progress through the amalgamation process, including effective communication with parents and other stakeholders;
- Single staff team providing greater expertise and resilience than two separate schools; and
- Potential to attract from a wider pool of teaching and support staff due to greater career opportunities provided by an all through primary school.

Advantages for the staff

- Opportunities for career development through the sharing of a wider range of expertise and possibilities for working between Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2;
- Continuous assessment, tracking and target-setting procedures for the entire primary phase of education;
- Opportunities to use the accommodation of both schools more effectively to support teaching and learning; and
- Opportunities to promote staff for curriculum development and other school initiatives.

Advantages for the use of resources

- Greater opportunity for financial economies of scale; and
- Scope for greater flexibility in use of money - a larger school would provide more options in premises, finances and staffing, which would help the school maintain greater flexibility to ensure the best provision possible for our children.

4. What are the risks in amalgamating the two schools?

Ealing Council and the two Governing Bodies believe that the potential benefits outweigh potential risks.

One risk is that the amalgamation process may distract governors and staff during 2020/21, with some uncertainty until legal decisions are taken, and then with implementation work required after legal decisions. Before this amalgamation proposal, the schools were working more closely

together in areas such as policies and systems, and the amalgamation would accelerate that integration. To mitigate this risk the schools are working closely with Ealing Council and with a project manager to minimise the impact upon governor and staff time and ensure that the process runs as smoothly as possible.

There are a number of risks that are common to all schools – such as staff recruitment and retention, pupil numbers in the local area changing, and school funding decisions by the Department for Education. Amalgamation is not considered to increase the risk of any of these issues, and indeed may help reduce or manage the risk compared to remaining as separate infant and junior schools.

Throughout the amalgamation process the two Governing Bodies, the Executive Headteacher and all staff are committed to the success of the current pupils.

5. How would amalgamation be achieved?

It is important to emphasise that both Governing Bodies and Ealing Council are approaching this as an amalgamation that takes the best features of both schools into the primary school. The process outlined below is a means to an end – we are required to follow processes set out by the Department for Education to achieve the amalgamation. In accordance with that, it is proposed that the amalgamation would be achieved by:

- Changing the age range of Wood End Academy from Years 3 – 6 to Nursery to Year 6 (and changing its name to reflect the full primary age range); and
- Closing Wood End Infant School and transferring pupils, staff, land, buildings and equipment to Wood End Primary.

This process reflects DfE expectation (which prefers academies to council-maintained schools), the financial reserves of the two schools, and the Executive Headteacher being employed by Wood End Academy.

Alternative approaches would be:

- Change the age range of Wood End Infant School and close Wood End Academy. It is not believed that the DfE would approve this approach due to the points raised above in favour of changing the age range of Wood End Academy and closing Wood End Infant School.
- Establishing a brand new school and closing both existing schools – this creates additional process complications, including potentially requiring a competition whereby other organisations could seek to run the new school, and increases the period of uncertainty for staff and parents, without commensurate benefits to pupils given that both schools are 'Good'.

6. What is Ealing Council's view of primary schools?

There are a small number of separate infant and junior schools across the Borough, but the vast majority of children in Ealing are taught in all-through primary schools that educate children from Nursery or Reception through to Year 6. Children can, and do benefit from a good education in either system, as they do at Wood End Infant and Junior schools but there are acknowledged benefits to an all-through primary school which were outlined in the earlier section about advantages of an amalgamated school.

It is also the case due to changes in how education is managed in England that it is becoming increasingly necessary for schools to become more self-reliant - working both independently and within their cluster groups. Ealing believes an amalgamated primary school would best combine the strengths of the two schools.

7. Would the primary school use both the current infant and junior school sites?

In the event of amalgamation, the primary school would use both the current infant school and junior school sites. As these are adjacent, it would operate as one larger site. The Governing Body and Headteacher would determine the most appropriate and efficient way to use the overall site and buildings.

The use of part of the site by John Chilton for the next three years would be unaffected by the amalgamation.

8. How many pupils would there be in the primary school?

All pupils due to attend Wood End Infant School or Wood End Academy in September 2021 would automatically join the primary school. This includes those who are offered places in spring 2021 to join Nursery, Reception or Year 3 in September 2021.

The primary school would have a Published Admission Number of 60 – meaning that up to 60 pupils would be expected to join each September. The buildings on the site would enable this to increase to 90 if this is required to provide sufficient pupil places in the area for local residents.

The amalgamation of the schools would not affect the number of pupils attending the site and have no implications on traffic or site access.

9. What would the school uniform be?

Our current thinking is that we would consult about developing a new school logo and a new school uniform. However over the first year the children would be able to wear Wood End Infant, Wood End Academy or the primary school uniform so there would be no need to purchase new uniform just because of the amalgamation.

10. Who would be the Headteacher of the primary school?

The current Executive Headteacher, Mr Stainbank, would be the Headteacher of the primary school.

11. What legal type of school would the primary school be?

Wood End Infant School is a foundation school and Wood End Academy is an academy. The primary school would be formed by changing the age-range and name of Wood End Academy – so it would legally be an academy school.

12. What is the proposed size and constitution of the single Governing Body?

It is proposed that the single governing body would consist of:

- The Headteacher;
- 2 staff governors;
- 2 or 3 parent governors; and
- Up to 8 community governors appointed by the Members of the academy trust.

This would be subject to approval by the Department for Education. It is expected that the governors in September 2021 would be individuals who are currently on the Governing Body of either Wood End Infant School or Wood End Academy.

13. Who is being consulted?

Ealing Council's Cabinet and both Governing Bodies approved undertaking this consultation. This document has been circulated to:

- Pupil School Councils at both schools;
- Parents of current pupils of both schools;
- Governors of both schools;
- Staff of both schools;
- The local Councillors;
- The local M.P.;
- Relevant professional associations (e.g. staff unions);
- Regional Schools Commissioner (North West London); and
- Headteachers of nearby primary and secondary schools.

Further copies of this document are available at the schools.

14. How will the decision be made?

All consultation responses will be considered by both Governing Bodies and Ealing Council. They will then decide whether to:

- Keep the schools as they are now – in which case the process would stop and no further action would be taken; or
- Proceed with the proposed amalgamation – in which case Wood End Academy would apply to the Department for Education for permission to change its age range to include Early Years and Key Stage 1, and Ealing Council would publish a Statutory Notice to close Wood End Infant School.

If a Statutory Notice is published any interested individuals would have four weeks to comment on the statutory notice. Once again, all responses would be carefully considered. A final decision will then be made by the Department for Education for extending the age range of Wood End Academy to enable it to become a primary school and by the Cabinet of Ealing Council about closing Wood End Infant School.

It is anticipated that, if the decision is to proceed, the Statutory Notice would be published in February 2021 and the final decisions would be made in April 2021.

15. How can I express my views?

The consultation runs between 2nd November 2020 and 11th December 2020 (six term time weeks). Please have your say before 11th December 2020.

To share your views please:

- Complete the questionnaire either online (available on the website of either school) or a paper copy (return to either school office); and / or
- Attend the meetings that have been arranged for staff and parents.

Please tell us what your views are on any aspects of the proposals outlined in this document or you may wish to propose an entirely different option. If you want the schools to remain unchanged, it is important that you tell us why you think it would provide the best educational outcome.