

Consultation on the amalgamation of Orchard Lea Infant School and Orchard Lea Junior School within a single primary school

We are running a consultation from Monday 4 November to Monday 2 December 2024.

What is the purpose of this consultation?

To get your views on the proposal.

Why is this change being proposed now?

As part of the Department for Education (DfE) School Rebuilding Programme (SRP), both schools have been identified for replacement or, significant refurbishment. SRP carries out major rebuilding and refurbishment projects at schools.

Following an initial feasibility study for the Junior School building and the subsequent identification of the Infant School to be part of the programme, HCC engaged with the DfE to explore the option of a combined scheme that would result in a single building suitable for a 2fe Primary School.

Pupil forecasts over the next five years indicate that there is a 2fe (form of entry) or 60 pupils per year group demand for places in the locality.

The development of a single 2fe building and the subsequent amalgamation of the two existing schools through the extension of the age range of the Junior School is the preferred option for both HCC and the governing body of the federation. A single building would further support the sustainability of the two schools given the reduced costs associated with running two buildings.

It is possible that, following further feasibility studies, the DfE propose to proceed with a scheme that does not result in a single building. Should this be the case, the decision to amalgamate would need to be re-considered given that the potential gains associated with a single building would not be realised.

Why is a primary school organisation being proposed?

As a result of the potential investment from the DfE through their SRP, Hampshire County Council and the governing body of the federation feel that amalgamation of the two existing schools is the preferred option. If approved, this will result in the closure of Orchard Lea Infant School and the extension in age range to provide primary education on the Orchard Lea Junior School

site. The school will continue to offer 60 places for Year R (age 4+). If agreed, it is anticipated that this proposed change would take effect from July 2028.

This approach would reinforce the many benefits already achieved through the federation and closer working between the two schools, some of which are listed below:

- Greater continuity in planning the curriculum across the stages of education so that pupils make the best possible progress in learning.
- A consistent approach to the ways in which children are taught.
- Enhance teachers' professional development through increased opportunities to teach across a wider age range within the same school.
- Removes the need for separate admission and transfer at the end of key stage 1 (infant to junior transfer)
- Parents are able to develop a longer-term relationship with the school.
- Gives children the opportunity to work with or alongside younger or older pupils allowing them to put their own learning in context and develop important social skills.
- Removes potential disruption to children's education when transferring from infant to junior schools.

How will a primary school be created?

In order to make the proposed changes to the organisational structure of the school, we have to follow a statutory procedure. To do this we are proposing the closure of **Orchard Lea Infant School** (4 to 7) and a change to the age-range of **Orchard Lea Junior School** to 4 to 11 to form a primary school. Should the proposal be implemented, the school will continue to offer **60 places for Year R (age 4+)**.

What does this mean for school staff?

If an amalgamation were approved, support would continue to be provided to the junior school to assist them in re-designing their staffing structure to accommodate the change from a junior to a primary school.

As a federated governing body, support will be provided to ensure governors understand when they are taking staffing decisions related to the junior school which will become the primary school and when they are making decisions in respect of the infant school which would be closing. Governors would be engaged in any discussion regarding HR processes for the new primary school and would be expected to provide infant school staff with preferential consideration for any new roles within the primary school.

In the event any staff from the infant school were unable to secure a role in the new primary school, they would be made redundant by the infant school upon closure. Redeployment support would be provided to any staff affected and redundancy payments made if efforts to redeploy were not successful.

What does this mean for parents / carers applying to school?

Currently, parents / carers wanting their child to attend the two schools for the duration of their child's primary education will need to apply twice, for Year R and Year 3 entry at both schools. The change of age range will mean parents only need to apply for a place at school once.

Will the catchment area change?

If the amalgamation is approved, there will be no change to the catchment area, and the primary school will adopt the current boundary line used by Orchard Lea Infant School and Orchard Lea Junior School.

When will the change happen if approved?

Should the proposal be approved it is planned the change will occur from July 2028. This is to coincide with the opening of a single 2fe primary school building.

How can you be sure that the number of pupils expected in the future is accurate?

Predicting school place demand is a complex task. Where children go to school involves a range of different factors such as housing growth, inward and outward population migration as well as parental preference. As a result, planning for school places uses historical trends, immunisation and vaccination data, and some assumptions rather than certainties. While pupil forecasts are derived from sound methodology, external influences mean student forecasts come without a guarantee.

Will I have the opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask questions?

This consultation will run from **Monday 4 November** until **Monday 2 December 2024**. A drop-in session will be held at **Orchard Lea Junior School**, to be held on **Wednesday 27 November from 3pm to 6pm**. At this session, you will have an opportunity to discuss the proposals with the school leaders, governors and Hampshire County Council officers.

Further information

If you are unable to attend the session detailed in this letter and wish to make a comment, please write to Amanda Vaughan, Strategic Development Officer, Children's Services Department, Ell Court North, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UG or e-mail strategicplanningunit@hants.gov.uk by **Monday 2 December**.

How can my views be heard?

We will listen to views at the drop-in session and supply you with a form for you to write your views down.

We will also consider all responses received via e-mail or letter.

What happens after this consultation?

This consultation will run until **Monday 2 December**. Officers will then take into consideration all the consultation responses before deciding whether the proposal should continue to the formal publication stage.

If the proposal does progress, a statutory Public Notice will be published setting out Hampshire County Council's intent to close the infant school and extend the age range of the Junior school. It is anticipated that this will be published in February 2025.

After the date of publication, there will be a four-week period in which any representations can be made. After the conclusion of this period, the County Council will decide whether or not to proceed with the proposal.

The closing date for responses to this consultation is Monday 2 December 2024.