

Draft Amalgamation Policy

Introduction

1. Harrow's schools provide a high quality education to their pupils and strive constantly to raise the standard of education they provide. All schools are committed to working collaboratively, in partnership with all their stakeholders and with a strong focus on developing extended service provision for their local communities.
2. The organisation of schools in Harrow has been the subject of debates and surveys with stakeholders. The School Organisation Debate in 2002 confirmed a consensus amongst stakeholders to increase post-16 opportunities, increase provision for early years and change the age of transfer to 11. The Harrow Sixth Form Collegiate has increased choice and opportunities for post-16, including provision on school sites and Early Years provision has been developed with the Early Years Partnership.
3. As part of the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme, in 2003 Harrow submitted a bid for capital to change the age of transfer and provide post-16 provision on school sites. Harrow was placed in Tranche E (waves 13-15) for BSF funding, which means that it is not expected that Harrow will receive capital funding for high schools until at least 2011-2013.
4. There will be a DCSF consultation in the Autumn Term 2007 regarding the BSF programme and it is hoped that there will be the opportunity to re-submit the Harrow BSF bid and secure earlier funding.
5. In preparation for a change in the age of transfer, Harrow has an amalgamation policy. This will establish combined schools. Combined first and middle schools are more aligned with National Curriculum Key Stages and the impact of the change in age of transfer will be reduced. It also enables the processes to be undertaken within current school development planning and funding opportunities.
6. With effect from 25 May 2007 a new statutory framework applies for the establishment of any new maintained school. When it is proposed to create a new school under terms of this amalgamation policy, Harrow will expect to apply to the Secretary of State for consent to publish proposals for a new school, without running a competition. An alternative route could be to change the age range of one school. The appropriate route will be informed by discussion with governors and officers.
7. At the point of implementation of a change in the age of transfer to high school, any schools that are still separate first and middle schools will become separate infant school (Reception to Year 2) and junior schools (Year 3 to Year 6).
8. This policy sets out how the change towards more combined First and Middle Schools in Harrow is to be implemented.

The educational case for amalgamation

9. The creation of all-through primary schools brings a number of benefits, including:

- Organisational structure is aligned with the National Curriculum Key Stages. Planning across Foundation, Key Stages 1 and 2 as a coherent whole for the primary phase provides greater flexibility across and between the Key Stages.
- Reducing the number of changes for children in a school system strengthens continuity and progression for children and families in the primary phase, both in terms of the curriculum and pastoral experience. Research shows that the fewer moves children have during their school career the better they perform. However, currently some children change schools at the end of Year 3 in the First School, at the end of Year 7 in the Middle School and at the end of Year 11 in the High School. There can be a further change where a child attends a non-school nursery. If there is a combined primary school and post 16 provision is available on all high school sites, the number of imposed changes will be minimised. In general, children and their families will have just two major changes. This reduction in the number of school moves is important, and particularly for children with special educational needs.
- Greater opportunities are created for older children to take on responsibility. For younger children the presence of older children provides aspirational role models and also mentoring support.
- Teachers and classroom staff have access to the whole primary curriculum. This supports and informs whole school planning, assessment, pastoral systems, etc, and provides opportunities for wider staff development and experience across the full primary phase over time.
- Growing national evidence shows that all-through primary schools create more consistency between year groups and key stages in learning, planning and assessment. There is improved use of teachers' skills, specialist teaching and improved pastoral arrangements, as well as benefits for management, leadership and financial management. The financial viability of separate infant schools with two forms of entry could be challenging.

“Where primary education is provided in separate key stages, there is generally very little effective curriculum continuity and progression. In such situations the scope for discontinuity of learning is increased, together with the attendant, wasteful, repetitive teaching of subject content and learning experiences in the receiving key stage.”

Educational Management Information Exchange

Circumstances when Governing Bodies are required to amalgamate separate First and Middle Schools

10. Governing Bodies of all separate First and Middle Schools are required to amalgamate the two schools when one or more of the following circumstances arise unless there are compelling and over-riding reasons not to:
 - A headteacher vacancy arises in either or both schools
 - Pupil numbers are 25% or more below admission number in either school
 - OfSTED Inspection in one of the schools identifies a need for Significant Improvement or places the school in Special Measures
 - Other situations whereby the educational provision would be improved through amalgamations. For example, these circumstances might include, provision of SEN support, building and accommodation issues, financial difficulties, part of the Council's strategy for schools causing concern, staffing recruitment and retention issues.

Process to implement an amalgamation in partnership with the Council

11. The process to implement amalgamation is approached in three stages: Preparation; Planning and Consultation; and Implementation. Throughout the process, Council officers will support the work of the governing bodies.
12. Amalgamation involves the closure and opening of schools, and is governed by statutory processes that are detailed in the 'The Secretary of State's Guidance for Decision Makers on Statutory Proposals for Changes in School Organisation'. There are a number of Sections to this Guidance, which can be found on the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website at <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/schoolorg/>. Stages Two and Three of this policy are the arrangements which take schools through these statutory processes.

Stage One - Preparation

12. As soon as any party knows that one or more of the triggering circumstances above may or will apply to separate First and Middle schools, the Director of Schools and Children's Development is to be informed. Discussions between the headteachers, chairs of governors and Council officers will be arranged as early as possible to map out the arrangements and processes, including: initial discussions with the governors of each school, staff and the wider school community including parents; a provisional timeline; and planning for effective communications.
13. To facilitate the statutory processes, a joint meeting of the governing bodies will establish a steering group with appropriate membership and supported by a designated Council officer. Other Council officers as appropriate will support the work of this group. The steering group will prepare the consultation document, and plan and lead the consultation process.

Stage Two – Planning and Consultation

14. Stage Two is the process of detailed planning by the governing bodies and wide consultation. The planning will consider all the issues, implications and

opportunities for the schools, taking account of the development planning the separate schools have had and outlining a development plan for a new amalgamated school. A comprehensive document will be prepared that addresses all these issues and the timescale for implementation, and will form the basis of information for the formal consultation process on the proposals.

15. The Governing Bodies, with the support of Council officers, will consult the school community and other interested parties (for example, neighbouring local authorities, professional trade unions, local groups involved in schools) on the proposals. The consultation document will usually be circulated widely to all schools in Harrow, neighbouring local authorities, etc. Consultation meetings with governors, staff and parents will be arranged. Following these consultations, Governing Bodies are required to analyse, in light of the Council's commitment to amalgamation, the outcome of the consultation and the points made, and confirm in writing to the Director of Schools and Children's Development their decision.

Stage Three – Implementation

16. Cabinet decides whether to publish statutory notices in relation to community schools. Cabinet will determine the notices.
17. Once Statutory Notices have been approved, the proposals are implemented. Part of this work will have been started already in respect of planning with the Harrow Council officer team. The temporary governing body will be established. The appointment process for the headteacher and deputy headteacher posts is determined by the temporary governing body and no longer requires national advertisement. It is expected that the process will be undertaken in a timely manner with the proposals implemented from the start of an academic year.
18. The development plan for the new school may include essential refurbishment of existing facilities and accommodation. Harrow Council has made a small provision to support amalgamation work, which may be drawn on to support schools amalgamating during that financial year. Schools implementing amalgamation will be given priority for modernisation funding.
19. Any proposals for capital investment arising from discussions with the temporary Governing Body and officers of the Council, including the Achievement and Inclusion Advisers and the Capital and Development Team, will be considered within the context of the schools' Asset Management Plans and school development plans. Proposals will be subject to the approval of a Business Case submitted to the Director of Schools and Children's Development. Development planning may be implemented over a number of years.

Amalgamation Process Flow Chart

Stages	Process	Officer Support
Stage One Preparation	Notify Directors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify appropriate officers to work with the schools 	
	Discussion between Heads, Chairs and officers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Map out arrangements and processes Initial discussions with Governors, staff and school community Provisional timeline 	Explain process Assist with discussions and provisional planning
	Joint Governing Bodies meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Steering Group Agree timeline 	Attendance at Governing Bodies meetings to explain process, timescale etc
Stage Two Planning and Consultation	Steering Group meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plan detailed work Assign responsibilities Development plan for new school Prepare consultation paper Plan consultation 	LA support to the Steering Group with planning for the new school and for the consultation
	Consultation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distribute consultation paper Convene consultation meetings Analyse responses Governing Bodies report to Directors 	Support as required Governors and officers discuss statutory route
	Cabinet meetings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decision to publish Statutory Notices Publish Notices Analyse representations Determine Notices 	Write Cabinet reports Publish Notices Analyse representations
Stage Three Implementation	Implementation of proposals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint temporary Governing Body Deliver on implementation planning 	Support as required