

# **Buttsbury Infant School and Buttsbury Junior School**

**Consultation on a proposal to amalgamate the infant and  
junior schools with effect 1 January 2025**

May 2024



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 Buttsbury Infant and Junior Schools**

The Governing Bodies of Buttsbury Infant School and Buttsbury 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 (ECC), are therefore proposing that the two schools amalgamate to form a primary school for children aged 4 to 11 with effect from 1 January 2025.

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

In February 2022, Mrs Ann Robinson started working as Interim Executive Headteacher at Buttsbury Infant School alongside her substantive role as Headteacher of Buttsbury Junior School. Initially, the role was anticipated only to be for a period of about nine months; however, Ms Gould did not return from her maternity leave, so the role was extended until July 2024.

During the two years that Mrs Ann Robinson has been working across both schools, we have seen huge benefits for children, staff, parents and governors. Consequently, both Governing Bodies formed a Joint Working Party, approximately one year ago, to build on this success and explore the potential opportunities for the future of the schools.

Significant benefits have already been seen from the closer working relationship between the two schools, including, for example:

- A single cohesive and progressive curriculum;
- Improved transition for Year 2 to Year 3 pupils;
- Improved SENCO provision and continuity of care (Buttsbury Infant School SENCO and SENCO assistant are working across both schools);
- Strengthened safeguarding;
- Opportunities for children to work alongside their peers in other year groups;
- More staff development opportunities;
- Best practice sharing for both classroom and administration;
- Greater clarity and consistency in communication with parents and co-ordination of school diaries;
- Identification of operational cost savings and joint policy development.

To continue to drive up standards and performance, the Governing Bodies of both schools propose to amalgamate the two schools into one primary school under the leadership of Mrs Ann Robinson.

This would involve the formal closure of the infant school on 31 December 2024 and changing the age range of the junior school from 7 to 11 to 4 to 11 to become a primary school from 1 January 2025. Mrs Ann Robinson will retain the Executive Headship of the infant school until the schools amalgamate in January 2025.

The junior school has been an academy since May 2011 and the Secretary of State for Education must formally decide on the change of age range proposal. The infant school is a foundation school and Essex County Council must formally decide on the closure

proposal. Therefore, these are two linked proposals which must be taken into consideration together. If the proposal is approved, the infant school will become part of the junior school Academy Trust.

### **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 will continue to provide opportunities, where appropriate, for further collaboration across the schools. 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 January 2025. The junior school Governing Body is committed, however, to ensuring that the Governing Body of the primary school would include governors from the current infant school Governing Body.

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

The headteacher of the junior school at the time of the proposed amalgamation, Mrs Ann Robinson, 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?**

No. The primary school will use both existing sites and the capacity (i.e. number of pupils) will remain the same. The existing schools have the capacity to admit 120 pupils into Reception, and 128 pupils into Year 3. Thus, the total capacity of the primary school would be 872 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 2026.

### **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> June 2024. One will take place at 2:00pm 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.

Essex County Council 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/buttsbury-amalgamation>

Alternatively, you may wish to write to or email us with your comments to the address given below by 5pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024. 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 Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June. 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' offices.

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 and the Department for Education.

## Timescale

This consultation period will run from Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2024 until 5pm on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Meetings will be held with staff, governors, school councils, parents and other interested parties during this period.

Date	Activity
3 <sup>rd</sup> May 2024	Consultation commences – consultation document can be viewed on the schools' websites.
5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Meetings for parents of both schools and the local community to be held at 2:00pm in the infant school hall and 6:00pm in the junior school hall.
5 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Meeting for infant school staff to be held at 3:30pm in the infant school hall.
6 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	Meeting for junior school staff to be held at 3:45pm in the junior school hall.
5pm on 14 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	End of consultation period
September 2024	Publication of statutory notice
October 2024	End of period for representations
November/December 2024	Final decision on proposal
31 <sup>st</sup> December 2024	Buttsbury Infant School closes*
1 <sup>st</sup> January 2025	Age range of Buttsbury Junior School is extended to become a primary school*

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

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.

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