

Appendix 2 – Concerns and alternative proposals raised during informal consultation

Concerns raised during informal consultation

1. Loss of lump sum school funding will threaten jobs and the quality of education may be impacted by reduced funding

A number of responses and comments highlighted the loss of funding resulting from amalgamation as the new primary school would mean a reduction in lump sum funding that is allocated to individual schools. A small number of comments were concerned about whether funding overall would be halved.

Many respondents said they believed jobs would be at risk due to the loss of lump sum funding, and this may affect the number of staff available to teach children, which would threaten the quality of education. Concern was expressed that there would be less money to employ teachers/Teaching Assistants and / or specialist staff to provide teaching resources.

Governing Board Response:

The governors are confident that the financial impact of amalgamation can be mitigated without impacting the school's staffing or the quality of teaching. Upon amalgamation the combined school will only be eligible for one lump sum. However, the reduction will be tapered over 3 years starting at the earliest in FY 2026/7. The funding to the schools will not be halved. Each school in Brent receives a fixed lump sum (currently about £170,000) plus a sports premium per school of £16,600. Currently this is received by both the Infant School and the Junior School. From the financial year after amalgamation, as one school there would be a reduction of 30% of the lump sum currently allocated to the Junior School plus the whole of the sports premium lump sum, equating to circa £60,000. In the following year, the school would lose 60% of one lump sum and by 2028/9 the whole of one lump sum of £170,000.

A budget forecast has been prepared that reflects this the loss of funding. In doing so it highlights savings and income that can be realised from amalgamation, as shown in section 5.5 of the report. The forecast identified potential savings from reduced admin and subscription costs and the significant reduction in maintenance costs expected with the re-build. £60,000 was spent on school building maintenance in autumn term 2024 and further expenditure of £20,000 is already required in 2025. These costs will continue to increase given the current state of the buildings. Additionally, the school will expect some extra income from attracting more pupils than it would otherwise have done due to the capital investment project and all through nature of the school following amalgamation.

A detailed budget forecast supports the school's aim to preserve staffing and teaching quality. The federated schools have previously recovered from a significant budget deficit within 2 years whilst increasing staffing numbers and increasing specialist teachers at the same time. The schools operate as one staff body and there is no intention to re-structure the staffing model as a result of the amalgamation (this was done in 2017 when the schools federated).

The school leadership team closely monitors the quality of education through staff observation, learning walks and audits. Malorees also has a Governing Board sub-committee whose sole focus is 'Learning and Safeguarding' and who carry out regular link visits to quality assure this area. Quality of Education is a standalone item in Governing Board meetings so there has been and will continue to be strong oversight on the quality of education for all pupils. The Local Authority oversees the quality of education through the Setting and School Effectiveness Service.

2. The school could become vulnerable through this process, resulting in a worsened Ofsted outcome and this could result in a forced academisation.

Concerns were expressed that disruption to the school as a result of amalgamation and the building project would impact on the quality of education and the school's Ofsted rating, with the potential to result in forced academisation and the school transferring to a multi-academy trust such as the Harris Federation.

Governing Board Response:

The risk of the proposed primary school academising as a result of the amalgamation is considered to be very low for a number of reasons. Malorees Infant and Junior Schools are good schools under strong leadership. Governors will ensure that in all aspects of the building project there is continued strong oversight of the quality of education. As set out above, the loss of lump sum funding will not impact on staffing and resources for children.

The Local Authority's School Effectiveness Framework sets out how school improvement support is provided through a school's allocated School Effectiveness Lead Professional and where there are concerns either school to school support or a Rapid Improvement Group are put in place to help schools improve. The Service will have active dialogue with Ofsted if the school is due for inspection at a difficult time during the building programme, for example during the decant process.

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill that is currently progressing through the legislative process will remove the Secretary of State's duty to academise a school that is graded as a significant concern (previously graded as 'inadequate'). Once the Bill is passed, for any school of concern, academisation will be one of several school improvement options.

Whoever operates a school (whether Council or Academy Trust), the land the school uses is classified as education land. Any proposed change of use would require the permission of the Secretary of State for Education who would be unlikely to grant permission to dispose of/change the use of land for alternative purposes, such as housing, in the unlikely event this was requested.

3. The Federated schools already operate effectively

Parents and staff expressed views that the schools already operated effectively with economies of scale meaning that the proposal to amalgamate brings no additional benefits and is unnecessary.

Governing Board Response:

For many years the long-term vision of the Governing Board has been 'One Malorees'. Therefore in 2017 a 'hard federation' created one Governing Board and in 2021 the schools came under the leadership of one Headteacher and senior leadership team. The Federation has been effective and has resulted in some economies of scale. As two separate legal entities the schools currently incur duplicate costs, for example subscriptions and administration systems e.g. SIMS/School Communications, 2 payroll systems and other commissioned services (eg HR and Legal Advice). There are, therefore, additional efficiencies to be realised from amalgamation alongside operational efficiencies such as a reduction in statutory reporting and only one Ofsted inspection process.

There are other benefits from amalgamation. The Governing Board's vision for the school is of one school, committed to high quality teaching and learning for all pupils in a nurturing environment, underpinned by core values of Respect, Excellence, Aspiration and Determination. The amalgamation will support this vision by providing a stronger school identity with a unified school culture that will unite pupils, staff, and families, fostering a deeper sense of belonging and shared purpose. Children will benefit from a seamless learning experience with continuity in curriculum, teaching approaches built on collaboration and

sharing best practice and pastoral care, allowing pupils to transition smoothly from early years through to Year 6. There will also be better coordination of enrichment activities, ensuring all pupils benefit from a well-rounded and engaging education.

4. Use of land once ownership is passed to Brent Council

Respondents suggested that transferring the ownership of land to Brent Council risked the land being sold off or used for alternative purposes.

Governing Board Response:

The land will still be classed as educational land and will be used for the new Primary School. The Council has no intention of changing this. As the land the school uses is classified as education land, any proposed change of use would require the permission of the Secretary of State for Education who would be very unlikely to grant permission to dispose of/change the use of land for alternative purposes, such as housing in the unlikely event this was requested.

5. Uncertainty over proposed building refurbishment works

Respondents suggested there was no guarantee that refurbishment works would go ahead if the schools were amalgamated.

Governing Board Response:

The Governing Board and Brent Council have received a written commitment from the DfE to proceed with the delivery of a single solution of Malorees Infant and Junior schools as part of the School Rebuilding Programme if the schools are amalgamated as one school. This is subject to the schools amalgamating by April 2026.

The DfE is already progressing a one-school solution, until such time as the final decision on the amalgamation process is completed. The initiation meeting for the building project has been scheduled by the DfE for 31 March which will trigger the feasibility and design stage of the project. The DfE has confirmed that the indicative project timeline is for planning permission to be submitted by June 2026, for construction works to start in September 2026 and project completion to take place by December 2027.

If following formal consultation, a decision is taken not to process with the amalgamation, the DfE will revert to addressing only the Junior school site and its condition need as this was the only school accepted onto the national Schools Rebuilding Programme. In this scenario, the Infant school would not be refurbished.

6. The informal consultation lacked detailed proposals/There has not been sufficient consultation with staff/parents

Comments were raised that not enough information was made available as part of the consultation, including funding details, and assurances about the future of the school.

Governing Board Response:

The Governing Board and Local Authority have been following statutory guidance set out by the DfE in 'Opening and closing maintained schools (October 2024)' and 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools (October 2024)'. These set out an expectation that interested parties are consulted informally prior to publication of a statutory proposal and formal consultation. The purpose of this informal consultation is for the Governing Board and Local Authority to gather the views of interested parties to help shape the development of final proposals prior to any formal consultation, and in doing so takes into account all relevant considerations. The informal consultation for Malorees lasted for 6 weeks during term time, which is generally accepted as a suitable time frame.

If the proposal moves to the formal consultation stage, then more detailed information will be provided, including a clear timeline for implementation and measures to manage any impacts, such as financial mitigations. A formal consultation will also follow the timelines set out by the DfE.

Prior to initiating the informal consultation, the school leadership team have ensured continued communication with staff and governors, meeting twice with staff in the autumn term 2024 to update them as far as was possible with the information available at the time.

Additional proposals submitted during informal consultation

- 1. Complete the junior building. Then address the infant build and amalgamation at a later date.**

Governing Board response

There is no guarantee that, if the amalgamation does not go ahead and only the Junior School is included in the School Building Programme, funds will subsequently be available for the Infant school in the future from the DfE. Separate building programmes would also be more disruptive to pupils in the long term, so it would be beneficial to complete all the works at the same time.

- 2. Leave the schools as they are. They are already operating successfully as a Federation.**

Governing Board response

The Governing Board believes an amalgamated primary school would be the culmination of its 'One Malorees' approach and deliver the final economies of scale from operating as one establishment. This is as well as the other benefits that amalgamation brings for parents, such as not having to apply for a place in the Junior School at Year 3, better conditions for learning for all pupils and a better work environment for staff.

- 3. Defer the amalgamation and/or the loss of the lump sum funding until the new facilities are delivered.**

Governing Board Response

DSG revenue funding for schools is allocated by central government using the National Funding Formula that aims to ensure funding is fair and reflects pupils' needs. Although this funding is distributed to schools by the Local Authority, the Local Authority has very limited discretion on how funding is allocated locally.

All 2 FE primary schools in Brent only receive one lump sum of £170K, as would be the case for Malorees Primary School. Given the national funding system, it would not be possible for the Local Authority to defer the reduction in funding entirely until the new facilities are delivered. However, the reduction in funding will be tapered initially to help the school manage the impact of the loss of funding. The Governing Board has set out how the reduction in funding will be mitigated through savings resulting from the amalgamation as per section 5.5 of the Cabinet report. It should also be noted that overtime as the national funding formula is reduced the lump sum allocated to all schools in Brent is likely to change.

The DfE will not accept a deferral of the amalgamation until 2027 when the new facilities are expected to be available. To proceed with a one school solution, the DfE require the schools to amalgamate before key milestones, such as submission of a planning application are made.

4. Include a fully costed and funded rebuild proposal with transition plans.

Governing Board response

The capital investment project is led by the DfE as part of the national School Rebuilding Programme. A fully costed project with transition plans is not yet available. Project delivery for a primary school has been initiated at risk and will include an options appraisal and design process that will lead to a planning application being submitted and this is anticipated in June 2026. The DfE has confirmed that if the schools do not amalgamate, then they will revert to the project covering only the Junior School, which was the site accepted initially onto the national scheme due to the condition of its buildings.

Additional questions / comments submitted during informal consultation

1. When would we have a decision for this by? Who would run the school, will they be separate principals for both combined sections of the school?

Governing Board Response

A decision is anticipated by July 2025. The leadership of the school would continue to be the same as currently with the same head teacher, senior leadership team and governing board.

2. What would be the sequencing and planning that would be required for a scheme of this nature and complexity. How would demolition and construction not disrupt the learning or well-being of the children and staff at the school and not also deter parents from choosing the school further affecting funding?

Governing Board Response:

The Capital Investment Project will be led by the DfE working with the school leaders. When all necessary surveys have been completed, the DfE will provide detailed plans of the project including a clear delivery timeline. The works are expected to last no more than 18-24 months and are likely (subject to a competitive tender process) to be completed by an experienced school building contractor. The initiation meeting for the building project has been scheduled by the DfE for 31 March which will trigger the feasibility and design stage of the project. The DfE has confirmed that the indicative project timeline is for planning permission to be submitted by June 2026, for construction works to start in September 2026 and project completion to take place by December 2027.

The project will be managed to minimise impacts on teaching and learning. It is highly likely there will be a need for temporary facilities to be provided whilst the building work is undertaken. Malorees has the benefit of extensive land that can be used for this purpose. Temporary facilities are of a high standard and will not be detrimental to learning. The Governing Board do not anticipate pupil numbers will be negatively impacted by the building works. The improved learning environment will make Malorees, which is already a popular school, even more attractive to parents and their children.

3. Why has the Nursery Class been excluded from the amalgamation proposal?

Governing Board Response

The nursery class has not been excluded from the amalgamation. It is an integral part of the current Infant School and will be retained in the amalgamation and catered for in the rebuilding works. If the Governing Board and Local Authority decide to continue to the formal consultation process, clarity will be provided in the statutory notice proposals that the nursery provision will be part of the amalgamated school.

4. What measures will Brent Council take to ensure funding stability during the transition, especially given the likelihood of declining enrolment and additional costs for temporary facilities?

Governing Board Response

Brent Council remains committed to supporting schools to ensure their sustainability. The Setting and School Effectiveness Service provides direct support where necessary to schools to maintain standards. The Local Authority also sets out in its School Place Planning Strategy 2024 – 2028 (1st Refresh November 2024) the measures which may be put in place for schools experiencing falling demand, although it is not anticipated that the school roll will decline as a result of the amalgamation proposal or the school building works.

Any costs associated with the capital investment project will be funded by the DfE, including the cost of temporary facilities. There should not be any direct costs to the school's budget linked to the build project.

5. If the proposal is not intended as a cost-saving exercise, why has the council not committed to maintaining current funding levels until redevelopment is complete?

Governing Board Response

Revenue funding for schools is allocated by central government using the National Funding Formula that ensures funding is fair and reflects pupils' needs.

All 2 FE primary schools in Brent only receive one lump sum of £170K, as would be the case for Malorees Primary School. Given the national funding system, it would not be possible for the Local Authority to defer the reduction in funding entirely until the redevelopment is complete. However, the reduction in funding will be tapered initially to help the school manage the impact of the loss of funding. The Governing Board has set out how the reduction in funding will be mitigated through savings resulting from the amalgamation as per section 5.5 of the Cabinet report.

6. Infant and Junior school children have different needs and so will the needs of individual infant and junior children be met as they would only receive a standardised primary education?

Governing Board Response

The amalgamated school will continue to meet the needs of all the children it caters for across all age groups as is the case for the majority of UK primary schools that provide for children from nursery through to year 6. The school would continue to offer age and phase appropriate education based upon the national curriculum.

7. Applying for a junior school place is not difficult

Governing Board Response

Although the process of applying for a junior school place is not difficult for the majority of applicants, it can present difficulties for some parents, for example if English is not a first language. If the deadline for submitting an application is missed, a family may not hear the outcome to an application until after all other offers have been made which means they may miss out on a junior school place.

The Governing Board believe amalgamation will benefit children and families already attending the school in Year 2 as they will not have to make a separate application to continue into year 3. Families with children who do not already attend the school in year 2 will still be able to apply for a place at the school at any time by submitting an in-year application. Not being guaranteed a place in year 3 is a concern frequently raised by prospective parents touring the schools.

8. There is a lack of transparency from previous Governing Board meetings

Governing Board Response

Governing Board minutes are available on request to the school office as stated on the school website. The Governing Board is preparing for minutes to be placed on the school's website to make access easier.

9. Parents' views haven't been considered because there was no parent governor on the Governing Board when amalgamation was discussed.

Governing Board Response

There has been parent representation on the Governing board for discussions about amalgamation which have been ongoing since December 2022 (former chair of governors and vice chair, as well as a parent governors). Currently there is no parent governor and steps have been taken to recruit two new parent governors to join the Governing Board.

10. There are health and safety concerns due to asbestos in the existing buildings

Governing Board Response

The council manages any asbestos containing materials (ACMs) at the school in line with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance and the 2012 Control of Asbestos Regulations (CAR). This guidance suggests that asbestos that is in good condition and not likely to be damaged should be left in place and risk managed. The ACMs are monitored regularly and the council and school undertake risk assessments and control measures to prevent disturbance of the ACMs. Any ACMs that require remediation are appropriately repaired, encapsulated or removed.