

**Pre-Publication Proposal Document**

**Birches Green Infant School & Birches Green Junior School**

**Proposal to:**

* **Discontinue Birches Green Junior School**
* **Alter the Age Range of Birches Green Infant School from 3 -7 years to 3 - 11 years and enlarge the premises (to include the junior school buildings.)**

**These proposals will result in a single all through primary school.**

# Introduction

Birmingham City Council as the Local Authority for Birmingham is consulting on proposals to make following changes to Birches Green Infant School and Birches Green Junior School:

* Discontinue Birches Green Junior School
* Alter the age range from 3 -7 years to 3 - 11 years and enlarge the Premises of Birches Green Infant School (to include the junior school buildings).

These proposals will result in a single all through primary school, through the joining or amalgamation of both schools. The term “amalgamation” will be referred to throughout this document.

**School Information**

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| **Type:** | Community |
| **Name:** | Birches Green Infant School | **DFE:** | 3302025 |
| **Address:** | Birches Green Road, Erdington, Birmingham B24 9SR |
| **Ward**: | Pype Hayes | **District:** | Erdington |
| **Age Range**: | 3 – 7 years | **Net Capacity**:  | 180 |
| **Last Ofsted:** | 3rd July 2019 | **Ofsted Judgement** | 2: Good |

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| **Type:** | Community |
| **Name:** | Birches Green Junior School  | **DFE:** | 3302024 |
| **Address:** | Birches Green Road, Erdington, Birmingham B24 9SR |
| **Ward**: | Pype Hayes | **District:** | Erdington |
| **Age Range**: | 7 – 11 years | **Net Capacity**:  | 270 |
| **Last Ofsted:** | 17th July 2019 | **Ofsted Judgement** | 4: Inadequate |

**Background**

* Birches Green Junior School was placed in special measures following an OFSTED inspection in July 2019, which judged the overall effectiveness of the school to be “inadequate”. Birmingham Education Partnership, who carry out the School Improvement Contract concur with OFSTED on their findings.
* Following the Ofsted inspection report, a Directive Academy Order (DAO) was issued by the Secretary of State on 22nd October 2019.

(A DAO is a measure introduced by the Government whereby schools judged by Ofsted to be failing are automatically ordered to convert to an Academy which allows underperformance to be tackled swiftly.)

* Birmingham City Council as the Local Authority appointed an Interim Executive Board(IEB) at the school on 31st January 2020**.** This is a small Board appointed by a Local Authority for a temporary period, with the consent of the Secretary of State for Education. The IEB replaces the Governing Board to lead a school that is judged to be in urgent need of improvement.
* Following the resignation of the Head Teacher of the Junior School, both the Governing Board of the Infant School and the IEB of the Junior School agreed for the Head teacher of the Infant School to oversee both schools in the interim.

**Why do we want to do this?**

* Both the Governing Board of the Infant School and the IEB of the Junior School have collaborated with Birmingham City Council to explore all options for the future of Birches Green Junior School.

Ultimately, a full options appraisal has been carried out and the options explored were to:

1. Do nothing
2. Implement the DAO
3. Close Birches Green Junior School
4. Federate with Birches Green Infant School ( this would still involve academisation of the Junior School).
5. Amalgamate Birches Green Junior School with Birches Green Infant School .
* Both the Governing Board of the Infant School and the IEB of the Junior School agreed to consult on a proposal to amalgamate the two schools. Both the IEB and the Governing Board believe that the proposal is in the best interests of the children and their families.

* In order for the schools to amalgamate the criteria must meet The Local Authority’s current policy on amalgamation of separate infant and junior schools (amalgamation policy approved October 2004) which states that the only triggers for amalgamation are:

(i) Falling pupil numbers on the school roll

(ii) A request from the governing bodies of a pair of schools

* The Chair of the IEB and the Governing Board sent a joint letter to The Local Authority in April 2020 to request that the necessary changes are made to amalgamate the two schools.

**When will these changes happen?**

If the proposal is approved by the decision maker, who for these types of proposal is The Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture, (following full consultation), it is intended that the proposal will be implemented from **1st April 2021**

**Will the Amalgamated School Become an Academy?**

Not at this time.

The Local Authority is in full support of the amalgamation and will liaise with the Regional Schools Commissioner regarding the revocation (cancellation) of the current Directive Academy Order at the Junior School, which is necessary should the proposal to amalgamate the two schools be approved.

**What happens about the OFSTED judgement at the Junior School?**

The infant school received an OFSTED judgement of “Good” in their last full OFSTED inspection on 3rd July 2019. If the proposal to amalgamate is approved, the Department for Education (DfE) number and OFSTED judgement of the infant school will carry forward to the amalgamated primary school.

**How will this affect pupils at the school?**

* The two schools would become one single school of primary phase for pupils aged 3 to 11 years.
* All current junior school pupils would automatically transfer to the newly amalgamated school.
* There would no longer be a requirement for parents of pupils at the infant school to apply for a place for their child at the junior school. The pupils on roll in year 2 will have an automatic right of entry into year 3. Pupils would continue naturally through the school from reception to year 6.
* The school will remain in the existing buildings and the members of staff they come into contact with are likely to be the same as before.

**How will this affect parents at the school?**

Parents would apply for a primary school place before Reception and would not need to apply for a year 3 place. This enables consistent engagement with parents across the primary phase; with no need to transfer information at the end of Key Stage 1. It would also mean more consistent policies and procedures providing more continuity for parents.

**Will there be any changes to the Admission Criteria of the School?**

If the proposals are approved the school would become an all-through school and there would no longer be any need for pupils to transfer from the infant school to the junior school at year 3.

The admission number is set for the intake year group. Reception would be the intake point at the newly amalgamated school and the admission number would be 60 (which is the same as the admission number into Reception year in the current infant school).

The primary school would continue to adopt the Local Authority admission criteria for community and voluntary controlled schools for entry into Reception, as follows;

1. Looked after or previously looked after children.
2. Siblings (brother or sister who will still be in attendance in September 2021).
3. Denominational claims (in the case of voluntary controlled Church of England schools).
4. Distance (children who live nearest the school measured in a straight line).

Should the proposals to discontinue Birches Green Junior School and make the prescribed changes to Birches Green Infant School be approved an application will be sent to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator to apply for a variation to the admission arrangements. This request will include removing all reference to a year 3 intake, removal of reference to separate infant and junior schools and will create admission and over-subscription criteria appropriate to the newly amalgamated school for admissions in September 2022 and September 2023.

**How will this affect the staff at the school?**

The Governors of each school and The Local Authority recognise that change can be unsettling and that there may be challenges along the way. The Local Authority is committed to supporting the school to achieve and maintain the best outcomes for children.

* The Local Authority would still be the employer and would manage the transition of staff to the primary school. The change to become one primary school would not constitute a break in service or affect staff terms and conditions in any way.
* The proposed changes would consider duplication of shared rolls. Any staff reductions will be with full consultation with the trade unions and teaching associations.
* A school offering both infant (Key Stage 1) and junior (Key Stage 2) provision may offer staff the opportunity for career development with potential opportunities for staff who wish to teach across Key Stages, and this will be for the school to decide.

**Will there be changes to the Nursery Class?**

The nursery provision at the infant school would become the nursery provision of the primary school. No other changes are being proposed for the nursery provision.

**Will there be changes to the school building?**

There would be no building work resulting from the amalgamation. It would be the responsibility of the amalgamated primary school to maintain the combined buildings and land of the previous two schools.

**What will the Amalgamated School be Called?**

Birches Green Infant School would propose to change its name if the amalgamation is approved to reflect that it would then be a primary school.

**Will there be any effect on other schools, academies and educational institutions within the local area?**

There should be no effect on other schools, academies or educational institutions within the area. The admission number and capacity of the school will not change. The proposed amalgamation would not affect the supply of places in the local area.

**What are the benefits of an all through primary school?**

Below are some further examples of potential benefits that schools may experience by amalgamating, these have been evidenced in previous successful amalgamations.

* An all-through primary school enables a consistent ethos, vision and approach, driven by a holistic and ambitious single leadership team.
* Simplified communication between school and parents, especially for parents with children in both schools and ensures a joined up approach for events, training, pastoral care and other areas of school life.
* Transition from year 2 to year 3 will better reflect transition arrangements between other year groups.
* Continuity and consistency for pupil’s learning and progress and strengthened tracking procedures.
* The National Curriculum seeks to structure the seamless development of pupils’ knowledge, skills and understanding across all subjects during a child’s time at primary school. A combined primary school is in a better position to provide continuity because of the structure and management it can put in place and greater consistency for pupils with one set of policies and procedures.
* Strengthened pastoral systems, supporting children and families through their entire primary education.
* Further opportunities for pupils to work together across the age ranges, building on the school’s existing good work in this area.
* The relationship between families and the school can build over a longer period of time, allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil.
* There is strong evidence that continuity of learning culture has a significant impact on a pupil’s progress. Research shows that the fewer moves children have during their school career, the better they perform.
* Greater flexibility in deploying teachers and support staff, and using curriculum resources, including buildings, more effectively.
* Having a greater continuity across Key Stage 1 and 2 could also benefit the members of staff at each school. Staff would have greater opportunities for professional development and shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum. Staff could have the opportunity to work in or gain greater understanding of the full range of the primary school year groups.
* There is no need for parents to apply for a junior school place. There are also benefits in terms of the children’s personal and social development, which can be supported throughout the primary school years without a change of school at age seven.
* A more efficient school leadership and management system enabling leaders to have the required overview to make the best decision for the school as a whole with finances and resources being shared more easily.
* A single Senior Leadership Team would be able to drive through change and improvement and take a truly whole school approach.
* The school will be better able to achieve economies of scale, putting the school in a much stronger position financially, and more able to withstand the buffeting by central funding decisions and changes.
* Synchronised and uninterrupted provision of safeguarding. Designated Safeguarding Leaders have a history of support and need for some families that would strengthen further over eight years working with a family from nursey through to year 6.

**Will this definitely happen?**

No, there is government guidance and a statutory process that Birmingham City Council must follow to make these sorts of changes to schools. Birmingham City Council is consulting in two parts.

**Part One: Pre-publication Statutory Consultation**

Length of time: 6 weeks

This is the current stage. We are entering the six week pre-publication consultation stage during which we want to hear your initial views and answer any questions you may have on the forthcoming proposal.

This part will start on **Monday 7th September 2020** and will close on **Friday 16th October 2020.**

All comments and feedback received during the pre-publication part of the consultation will be considered by both the Local Authority, the Governing Board and the IEB of the two schools.

After considering your views, we will then decide whether to continue with the proposal and to proceed to part two.

**Part two: Statutory Publication and Representation period**

Length of time: 4 weeks

This is the second and final part of the consultation. A final proposal document is published incorporating feedback from the pre-publication consultation period.

We again invite comments on the proposal. This part allows four weeks for anyone to comment on the proposal. All comments received during this part will be forwarded to the decision maker who will consider them to inform their decision.

This part will commence on **Thursday 5th November 2020** and will close on **Thursday 3rd December 2020.**

**Decision process:**

Within two months of the end of the representation period a report will be produced with all of the comments received and this will be passed to the decision maker (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Culture) for a decision to be made. It is only at that point that we will be able to say with certainty whether or not the two schools will be amalgamated.

**What will happen if the proposals are rejected?**

If a decision is taken that the two schools should **not** be amalgamated, then the existing infant and junior schools will continue to be separate schools. The Directive Academy Order (DAO) issued by the Secretary of State for the Junior School will  stand and the process to convert Birches Green Junior School to an academy will commence.

**How can I make my views known?**

We welcome comments in writing, by email or via the BeHeard webpage within the 6 week pre- publication consultation period between **7th September 2020** and **16th October 2020.**

* You can comment online via BeHeard:

 [https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/birchesgreenij-part1](https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/birchesgreenij-part1%20)

* Or in writing to;

Birmingham City Council’s Estates Management Team:

Education Infrastructure

PO Box 15843

Birmingham

B2 2RT

* Or by emailing: edsi.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk

Please include birchesgreenij in the email subject line for immediate redirection.

A consultation response form can be found at the end of this document and can be used if anyone would like to send their comments in writing by post or by email.

**What happens next?**

The dates set out below meet the government requirements for us to consult fully with the people affected by the proposal.

Key dates

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| **Action** | **Date** |
| Start of 6 week Pre – Publication Consultation | Week commencing 7th September 2020 – Week ending Friday 16th October 2020\* |
| Public Notice Published | 5th November 2020 |
| Start of 4 week Statutory Consultation  | 5th November 2020 |
| End of 4 week Statutory Consultation | 3rd December 2020\* |
| Final decision to be made no later than | 3rd February 2021 |
| Changes implemented |  1 April 2021 |
| \*date for comments to be received by |

**Proposal to Amalgamate Birches Green Infant School and Birches Green Junior School**

Thank you for taking the time to send us your thoughts on these proposals.

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| **Consultation Response Form** |

Please help us to analyse your response by completing the following:

Your name (optional): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your contact details (optional, if you would like a reply) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Are you in favour of the proposal? (yes/no/neither-don’t know\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your interest in the proposal (please indicate one of the below):

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| --- | --- |
| Pupil |  |
| Parent |  |
| School Governor |  |
| School Staff |  |
| Local resident |  |
| Local Councillor |  |
| Member of Parliament |  |
| Other (please specify) |  |

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Please provide your comments to the proposal.