



# Consultation on the future of Merrow C of E Infant School and Merrow Junior School



June 2026



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## Local authority details

<b>Local Authority</b>	Surrey County Council
<b>Address</b>	Woodhatch Place 11 Cockshot Hill Reigate Surrey RH2 8EF

## School details

<b>Name of School</b>	Merrow CofE Controlled Infant School
<b>Category of School</b>	Infant
<b>Type of School</b>	Voluntary Controlled
<b>URN</b>	125160
<b>Address</b>	Kingfisher Drive, Merrow, Guildford, Surrey
<b>Postcode</b>	GU4 7EA

<b>Name of School</b>	Merrow Junior School
<b>Category of School</b>	Junior
<b>Type of School</b>	Foundation
<b>URN</b>	125009
<b>Address</b>	Sheeplands Avenue, Merrow, Guildford, Surrey
<b>Postcode</b>	GU1 2SG

# Consultation on the future of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School and Merrow Junior School

We are seeking your views on the future of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School (Merrow CE Infant) and Merrow Junior School (Merrow Junior), and specifically on the two options presented below.

During the previous consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Merrow CE Infant and Merrow Junior to form a single Church of England Primary School, published on 2 March 2026, we received a wide range of feedback from parents, staff, governors, and the wider community. In response to that feedback and to ensure that all perspectives are fully understood and considered before any decisions are made, we are now consulting you on a set of options rather than a single proposal.

We would now like your views on the following two options:

**Option 1 – Amalgamate the two schools to form a Church of England Primary School**

**Option 2 – Amalgamate the two schools to form a Foundation Primary School.**

## Background Context

In recent years, most local authorities across England, including Surrey, have been experiencing a significant fall in pupil numbers. At the height of Surrey's pupil population in October 2016, there were 13,374 children who had just started in Reception classes at Surrey primary phase schools. By October 2025, this number had fallen to 11,950 children, which is a decrease of 1,424 or 10.6% - equivalent to 47 fewer Reception classes. The reasons behind this include the lower birth rate and families leaving Surrey because of the pandemic, Brexit and the cost of living.

Schools receive money from central government based on the number of pupils they have on their roll. This means that schools with a high number of vacant places have less money for staff, resources, equipment, extracurricular activities, to pay bills and to carry out maintenance work.

While Surrey schools are recognised for their high performance and excellent results, the fall in the number of children has meant a higher number of surplus primary school places and the subsequent reduced funding from central government has meant that our schools are facing difficult challenges. For some schools, these challenges have now reached a significant level and are beginning to affect their ability to fully support their pupils, especially those with the greatest needs. Surrey County Council (the Council) has a responsibility to protect the high-quality education that Surrey is known for and to ensure it is financially sustainable.

Across south-west Surrey, births have fallen by 417 or around 15% between 2016 and 2024. As a result, the number of pupils starting in Reception in Guildford and Waverley schools has also decreased – falling by 12% between 2016 and 2025, which is equivalent to approximately 11 fewer Reception classes. These reductions have placed increasing pressure on school budgets.

We know that our schools have close ties to the local area and communities, sometimes over many generations, and producing innovative ways to sustain schools who are most vulnerable to the challenges of falling pupil rolls is a priority.

## Why are we consulting you?

In Surrey, our goal is to ensure that no one is left behind and that every child has access to enriched educational opportunities. This is only achievable when schools can admit as many children within their Published Admission Number (PAN) as possible and maximise the funding they receive. In some areas of Surrey, the current education model of infant schools and junior schools provides additional challenges to securing pupil numbers, as families can prefer an all through primary model as this negates the need to reapply for a school place at Year 3. Furthermore, it should be acknowledged that schools which operate as smaller separate schools on more than one site can find it difficult to achieve savings through economies of scale.

We now want to hear your comments on the future of Merrow CE Infant and Merrow Junior, and the two options being considered to sustain the schools for the future. Your input and feedback are important in helping us to further understand the views of families, staff and the local community.

## Merrow C of E Voluntary Controlled (VC) Infant School

Merrow CE Infant is a one form entry infant school, with a PAN of 30. The overall capacity of the school is 180 with a PAN of 60, but the school has recently reduced its PAN to 30 because of falling pupil demand. It was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2023.

In October 2018, there were 58 pupils on roll in Reception class but by October 2025, the number of pupils admitted into Reception had reduced to 23, which is a 60% decrease in Reception pupils compared to 2018.

For Reception entry in September 2026, the school has offered to 23 pupils. Long term pupil projections for the area suggest that, based on current trends, there will consistently be more places available at schools in this area than the number of children requiring a place, which creates a level of surplus places and a subsequent funding gap which is unsustainable.

## Merrow Junior School

Merrow Junior School is a one form entry junior school, with a PAN of 30. The overall capacity of the school is 240 with a PAN of 60, but the school has recently reduced its PAN to 30 because of decreased pupil demand. It was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2022.

Historically, pupil numbers at Merrow Junior School have fluctuated and the number of pupils joining Year 3 at the school changes year on year. Over the past 5 years, the number of pupils joining Year 3 has significantly decreased from 59 in 2021 to 31 in 2025, or by around 47%.

For entry to Year 3 in September 2026, the school has offered 32 children a place. However, the number of pupils applying for a place at the junior school is expected to fall year on year, as the smaller cohorts currently entering the infant school move through to the junior phase.

## What does an amalgamation mean?

An amalgamation is where two or more schools join to form one school. In legal terms, this would mean the closure of one or more of the schools and a change in capacity at the remaining school to accommodate the displaced pupils.

In this consultation the following would apply to the two options outlined:

**Option 1** – the junior school would close, and the age range would be extended at the infant school. The infant school would be renamed Merrow C of E Primary School, and it would be relocated to the current junior school site. All pupils currently on roll at the junior school would be transferred to the roll of the primary school.

**Option 2** – the infant school would close, and the age range would be extended at the junior school. The junior school would be renamed Merrow Primary School and would remain on its current site. All pupils currently on roll at the infant school would be transferred to the roll of the primary school.

In proposing a closure, even if part of an amalgamation in either scenario outlined above, Sections 15 and 16 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that the local authority or governing body must consult certain persons, including parents, dioceses and, where the local authority is a county council, any district and parish councils.

## Why propose an amalgamation?

The council, the Diocese of Guildford, school leaders and the governing body of the schools have been working together to try and secure the future of both schools, recognising that they are good schools with dedicated staff and committed school communities.

In 2022, the two schools federated to form the Merrow Schools Federation. The Federation enables the schools to operate under a single governing body, share leadership, and benefit from economies of scale through shared business and educational resources. In response to declining pupil numbers, both schools have also reduced their PAN from 60 to 30 to help maintain viability and educational quality. Despite these measures, pupil numbers across the federation remain significantly below capacity, and it is no longer financially sustainable to continue operating two separate 2FE capacity schools on two separate sites with only enough pupils to sustain a single 1FE school.

As the two schools already operate within a Federation, sharing a common ethos and resources, amalgamating into a single school would simply build on this partnership, whilst helping to stabilise pupil numbers, and supporting the continued delivery of high-quality education by consolidating funding. This would result in the dissolution of the existing Federation and the schools amalgamating into one unified single entity school.

## What would the two options mean?

### **Option 1 – amalgamation to a Church of England Primary School**

In Option 1, Merrow CE Infant and Merrow Junior would amalgamate into a single Church of England primary school. This would require the formal closure of Merrow Junior School and the extension of the age range at Merrow CE Infant so that it can operate as a primary school on the current junior school site.

As the infant school already has a Church of England designation and the Christian values of the infant school are already closely aligned with the ethos of the junior school because of the existing Federation, no changes are expected in how the new primary school would operate.

It is important to note that Church of England schools are not faith schools which are exclusive to members of that faith only - they are established to serve the whole community, welcoming

children of all faiths and none. If the schools were to amalgamate with a Church of England designation, collective worship would continue to be invitational and inclusive as it is now at the infant school.

Within a school with a Church of England designation, the Diocese has a statutory role in supporting the Christian character and ethos of the school. The proposed new primary school would have a Voluntary Controlled (VC) status in the same way that the existing infant school does now. This means that the school would follow the Religious Education (RE) syllabus provided by the Local Authority's RE committee (known as SACRE). The Diocese would continue to provide support and advice on the delivery of collective worship, such as assemblies, as it does now at the infant school. The Diocese also offers wider support to school leaders and staff through access to resources and training. Day-to-day management, however, would remain the responsibility of the Headteacher and Governing Body.

### **Option 2 – amalgamation to a foundation Primary School**

In Option 2, Merrow CE Infant and Merrow Junior would amalgamate into a single foundation primary school. This would require the formal closure of Merrow CE Infant and the extension of the age range at Merrow Junior so that it can operate as a primary school on its current site.

Foundation schools are not associated with a specific faith. They are a type of state-funded, maintained school where the governing body is responsible for employment, admissions, and has ownership of land and buildings rather than the local authority or diocese.

The Diocese of Guildford would not have a statutory role within the primary school in the same way that they do not currently have this role in the junior school. However, it is anticipated that the school's relationship with the local church would continue and it is hoped that the church's involvement with the primary school would remain as it currently is at the junior school and with other non-faith schools locally.

## **What would an amalgamation mean for the children?**

### **Location of the amalgamated school**

In both options, the amalgamated primary school would be located on the current junior school site. This is because the infant school site and buildings are too small to accommodate a 1FE primary school. Therefore, in either option, any child currently attending the infant school would have to attend school on a new site and any child attending the junior school would continue to receive education on that site.

### **Pupils on roll**

In both options, children from the school that is proposed to close would be transferred to the roll of the remaining school, where the age range would be extended to become a primary school.

In Option 1, children currently on roll at Merrow Junior would transfer to the roll of Merrow CE Infant.

In Option 2, children currently on roll at Merrow CE Infant would transfer to the roll of Merrow Junior.

### **Applications to transfer school at Year 3**

In both options, amalgamating to become a primary school would remove the requirement for families to make a separate junior application as children could remain at the school from Reception through to Year 6. This means that any child on roll in Year 2 at the infant school in

July 2027 would automatically transfer to Year 3 in the primary school and families will not need to make a junior application in the usual way, unless they prefer to apply for an alternative school. All pupils in Year 6 would need to apply for secondary provision in the usual way.

### **Applications for in year places at other schools**

In both options, should any family wish to apply for a place for their child at a school other than the primary school, they are able to submit an in-year application. Submitting an in-year application for another school would not prevent your child from automatically gaining a place at the primary school, unless you chose to accept the offer of a place elsewhere. Any child who is removed from the roll of Merrow CE Infant or Merrow Junior before the end of the summer term in July 2027 would not be eligible for an automatic transfer of their place to the primary school for September 2027.

### **Applications for Reception places in September 2027**

The admissions round for Reception places in September 2027 opens in November 2026 and closes in January 2027. It is anticipated that a decision on this consultation would be made before the closure of the admissions application round and therefore, any applications submitted would be able to express a preference for the newly amalgamated primary school if an amalgamation was agreed.

## **What would an amalgamation mean for the staff?**

Staff at Merrow Junior are currently employed by the Governing Body of the Federation.

Staff at Merrow CE Infant are currently employed by Surrey County Council but will transfer under TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006) to the new West Surrey unitary council on 1 April 2027, regardless of the outcome of this consultation.

### **Option 1**

Staff at Merrow Junior would transfer under TUPE regulations to the new unitary authority in West Surrey. There would be no change to the location of their employment. Staff currently employed at Merrow CE Infant would have no change of employer, but their work location would move to the current junior school site, which is 0.4 miles from the infant school site. As a Voluntary Controlled (VC) school, the governing body cannot use religious faith as part of the criteria for the selection and recruitment of staff.

### **Option 2**

Staff at Merrow Junior would remain employed by the Governing Body with no change of employer and would continue to work at their current site. Staff at Merrow CE Infant would transfer under TUPE regulations from the unitary authority in West Surrey to the employment of the Governing Body of the amalgamated primary school, and their work location would move to the current junior school site.

## **If an amalgamation was agreed, would there be any changes to the school buildings?**

In either option, adaptations would need to be made to the Merrow Junior School buildings and site to provide accommodation that is suitable for infant pupils, such as providing smaller sized infant toilets and separate outdoor play space for early years and Key Stage 1 pupils. There would not be any requirement to extend the current junior building as there are already an adequate number of classrooms to accommodate a 1FE primary school.

If the proposal in Option 1 was agreed, the infant school site would be transferred to the Council, and the Council would endeavour to retain an educational use for the site.

If the proposal in Option 2 was agreed, majority of the site would be in Council ownership, with the remainder owned by the Diocesan Trustees. It would remain the Council's intention to endeavour to retain an educational use for the site.

## What happens next?

This paper is part of a four-week public consultation on the future of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School and Merrow Junior School. This further consultation on a broader set of options for the future of the schools has been launched in response to the feedback received in the initial consultation.

**It is important to note that responses to the previous consultation will not form part of this consultation, so anyone who wishes to have their voice heard on this matter must respond separately to this current consultation.**

The consultation begins on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> June and closes on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June .

The ways in which you can respond to the consultation are set out below. Alongside this consultation we are also publishing again the questions and answers from the public meetings held already during the first consultation period. You may also direct any further questions to [schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk).

The council will consider all the views put forward during this consultation period before the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning will decide on whether to publish a formal proposal on either option. These formal proposals may be altered, amended or different from this consultation. If proposals are published there will be a further period for comments, called the representation period in which the council will publish 'Statutory Notices'. This would last for 28 days, and a final decision would then be taken by Surrey County Council's Leader as to the future of Merrow C of E Controlled Infant School and Merrow Junior School. The timeline for this proposal is shown in the table below (dates may be subject to change).

### Timeline

Date	Event
15 <sup>th</sup> June – 10 <sup>th</sup> July	Consultation
July - September 2026	Review of consultation responses and decision whether to proceed to representations by the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning.
September – October 2026	A statutory notice is published for a 4-week representation period
November 2026	The proposals and responses are considered by Leader of the Council and a final decision on the proposals is made

## How do I respond to this consultation?

You can respond:

online using the following link: [Consultation on the Future of Merrow Infant and Junior School](#)

or

- by completing the consultation response form that is available alongside this document.

You can either:

- email the form to [schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk)
- print it, complete it and send it back to:

Merrow future - EPP  
Woodhatch Place  
11 Cockshot Hill  
Reigate  
RH2 8EF

**All responses must be received by 5pm on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> July.**

If you have any questions about this proposal, please email [schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk](mailto:schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk)