

A summary analysis of the representations received in response to the Statutory Proposal to amalgamate Redlands Primary School and Smithy Street Primary School from 1 September 2020

Consultation Response Analysis

London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) consulted the following stakeholders and interested parties directly to inform them of the publication of this statutory proposal:

- ✓ Secretary of State
- ✓ Parents, Carers and Pupils of Redlands and Smithy Street
- ✓ Staff at Redlands and Smithy Street
- ✓ Governors of all LBTH schools
- ✓ Diocese of Westminster (Roman Catholic)
- ✓ London Diocesan Board for Schools
- ✓ LBTH Admissions Forum
- ✓ Children and Young Peoples Voluntary Sector Forum
- ✓ Headteachers of all LBTH schools
- ✓ Local MPs
- ✓ All LBTH councillors
- ✓ All neighbouring boroughs local authorities
- ✓ Parents Carers Forum
- ✓ Parent Champions
- ✓ Young People Forum
- ✓ Somali Community Association
- ✓ Collective of Bangladeshi Governors
- ✓ East London NEU
- ✓ Council of Mosques
- ✓ Published on LBTH website / social media accounts
- ✓ East London Advertiser

By the formal close of the statutory notice representation period, the following written responses were received:

Total number of responses	Agree with proposal	Do not agree with proposal
2	1	1

Respondents identified themselves as:

- Parents of Redlands pupil
- Local Headteacher

Within the two written responses received, there were four issues raised, within two broad themes:

1. Reason for Amalgamation, Headship and concerns over the Ofsted performance of Smithy Street School

- I think the proposal to amalgamate Smithy and Redlands Primary Schools is the right one in the circumstances the LA finds itself with lower pupil numbers. The community will not be affected too much and there will be consistency in staff and ethos as the two schools work closely anyway.
- The final and most important point, since the parent consultation, Smithy had an Ofsted inspection where it was rated as 'Required Improvement'. This is a huge drop, from its previous 'Outstanding' rating. Redlands is a 'Good' school as rated on their previous inspection. I understand Edith the current head of Smithy will remain the Head for the new Stepney Park School as Ann will be resigning. In light of the new inspection, what measures have been put into place to ensure that the head is working towards maintaining the high standards we have received at Redlands and has the right decision been made to let her carry on. How are we as parent meant to monitor the school progress and not expect a drop of standard from a Good school to joining with one that 'Requires Improvement?'

Council Response

Both Redlands and Smithy Street Schools have not been able to fill reception places in recent years, leading to budgetary challenges. Neither school wishes to reduce by half a form of entry, or to become a one form entry school. The amalgamation will create a 3 form entry school, reducing the intake across the two schools by 30 pupils, a closer match to community needs. The amalgamation of the two schools will bring together the resources and staff expertise across the two schools. There will be fewer vacancies in the school and financial resources will therefore be maximised.

The proposal will bring together the two school communities to become a single community. During the course of consultations the current governors have agreed that the single unity community would be best recognised through changing the name of the newly amalgamated school to Stepney Park Primary School. The Temporary Governing Body and existing governing bodies will consider this name change following appropriate processes if the amalgamation proposal is agreed.

In September 2019, Ofsted introduced a new inspection framework. Smithy Street was the first Tower Hamlets primary school to be inspected under this new framework and was judged to require improvement, having previously been an outstanding school. In fact, 97% of the previously outstanding primary schools inspected in London during the initial period of new framework were given a lower Ofsted rating. Smithy Street was among the 27% whose Ofsted rating was lowered to requiring improvement, despite having performed above both national and the local authority averages in the combined measure (reading, writing and maths) for the past three years at the end of KS2. Smithy Street three year average is 76% compared to LA at 71% and national at 64%.

Since its Ofsted inspection Smithy Street has been working with the Tower Hamlets Education Partnership (THEP) to ensure that the areas identified for improvement are being addressed. The headteacher, and leaders in the school, have made rapid improvements where they were needed. The leaders and staff of both Smithy and Redlands schools are working together to plan for the best outcomes and to ensure that the quality of education will be good for all pupils. THEP and the LA have confidence in the headteacher at Smithy Street and her ability to lead the new school moving forward, ensuring high standards are maintained for all pupils.

2. Impact on the community – Extra Curricular and After School Provision and School Entrances

- During the consultation, I made a proposal that none of the afterschool and extracurricular activities that Redlands currently provides is hindered in relation to times, prices, quantity and quality. We working parents are grateful to Redlands for providing such facilities at the price which they provide it at. There is nothing on any of the papers to say that this will be adhered to. Can you tell us who we will need to speak to or find a guarantee that this will not change?
- I also mentioned in the parental consultation that Redlands parents would still like the main entrance of the school to be at Redlands. The final statutory notice, tell us that the main entrance will be at the Smithy site. Will this be the only entrance or will the current Redlands entrance also be accommodated. Changing the entrance to Smithy Street, will make it difficult for Redlands parents that come from the other side of the area. It will add at least an addition five minutes to our journey, which is quite a lot for those of us who drop our children off before we go to work. Also with the large influx of children, will it be safe to have all the children enter through the one narrow road on Smithy Street?

Council Response

The newly amalgamated school will enable greater opportunity for families to be provided with a range of extra-curricular / after school activities and ensure value for money. There is no plan at this stage for the cost of current activities to increase or for provision to be reduced. Nursery provision will continue to be offered, with places in line with becoming a 3 form entry school.

The admissions arrangements for the amalgamated school has been agreed with the existing school governing bodies. The main entrance to the school will be in Smithy Street, because the majority of children in the schools come from the South. However, an entrance will still be available for families wishing to enter from Redmans Road at the start and end of the school day.

Conclusion

Through analysis of the feedback received during the informal consultation and the statutory consultation period, the Council is able to draw some clear recognition from the consultees that the majority of parents and staff responding at both Redlands and Smithy Street are in favour of the proposals; working together towards a shared future has been a strong theme throughout. No feasible alternatives to the proposals were uncovered during the consultation period. The fall in pupil rolls in the west of the borough is the main driver in these proposals to ensure a financially sustainable future in the combined school and provide the best educational outcomes for Redlands and Smithy Street pupils.

6 March 2020