

Stage One Consultation on the proposal to close Cherry Trees School

14th September 2020

The Proposal

Following advice from Tower Hamlets Local Authority, the governors of Cherry Trees School, wish to consult on a proposal to close Cherry Trees School, from September 2021.

Why are we proposing this change?

A review of the Local Authority Special Educational Needs Strategy recommends moving to a different model of provision, which better supports academic attainment, and the inclusion of children in mainstream provision, whenever possible.

Cherry Trees School is a special school, catering for primary age boys with social, emotional and mental health needs aged 3 to 11 and is part of the educational provision of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets. The school is located at 68, Campbell Road, London E3 4EA. Cherry Trees

In September 2019 OFSTED considered the school to be inadequate in its provision of suitable education. The school is also in financial difficulty, despite receiving an income (2018/19) of £54,000 per pupil.

The families of children attending Cherry Trees School have received individual support to consider how best to improve educational provision for their children, and to support their children's transition to better provision, through reviews of Education, Health and Care Plans.

Cherry Trees Governing Board, in consultation with Tower Hamlets Children's Services, have agreed to commence the statutory process for proposed closure of the school in August 2021.

In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance *Opening and Closing Maintained Schools* (2018), the council will support us with a pre-publication consultation. The Council may proceed to a formal consultation. After formal consultation, a decision will be made by the Council with regards to closure.

What would happen to our Headteachers?

The Interim Headteachers were employed on fixed term contracts and were not expecting to remain at the school long term.

Why close Cherry Trees?

Unfortunately, the provision at Cherry Trees is no longer effective or fit for purpose. It is extremely expensive and even with high staff levels (which are not affordable now, or in the future) it is falling to deliver quality education. The Tower Hamlets SEN Strategy outlines alternative provisions which would be better for children, and would cost less, allowing more funds to be used in other ways through the High Needs Funding block.

What will it mean for the children?

Support for families and the children to consider transition is already in place, because we are concerned about whether Cherry Trees is an adequate placement for them. At most, there will be 11 children in the school this year. The solutions to what would be a better provision are being considered individually for each child, linked to their Education, Health and Care Plans, and include transition planning.

How will transition for the children be managed?

Children will continue to be able to go to Cherry Trees School until better provision is found for them, up to the end of the Summer Term 2021. During the year individual transition plans will determine when each child moves to their new provision.

What will it mean for the staff?

Staff at Cherry Trees will be supported to find redeployment opportunities at other local schools, they will also have the opportunity to consider voluntary redundancy. Wherever possible Tower Hamlets tries to avoid compulsory redundancy. If the proposal does go ahead staff, and their unions, will be involved in a School Re-organisation staffing process consultation. Unfortunately, because numbers have fallen, there will need to be significant reductions in staffing, whether or not the school closes, because the current structures are not affordable with so few children.

What will happen to the school building?

At this stage of the proposal there are no specific plans for the building. These will be considered if the proposal progresses to statutory notice later this year.

Procedure to achieve the closure

There will be no further admissions to Cherry Trees School. Once a special school provision is judged to be inadequate it is no longer appropriate for EHC Plans to name the school as a suitable provision for meeting a child's needs.

What is the point of consultation?

We are consulting with you to make sure we put in place the right things to make a transition as smooth as possible. We also need to make sure that people understand how these fits with the Tower Hamlets SEN Strategy, and why the Council and governors are considering this very difficult decision.

All responses to this consultation will be put together in a report to governors and the Local Authority. The Local Authority will then decide, at its November 2020 meeting,

whether to move to statutory notice - a formal publication of a document explaining the closure and its impact. Stakeholders are then able to make representations to the Local Authority before a final decision is reached early in March 2021.

If the proposal goes ahead and the Local Authority Cabinet does decide to close the school all the children at Cherry Trees will transition to new schools by September 2021, when Cherry Trees will formally close.

We want to consult you to gather your views because you are part of the school community. The governing body of the school and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets cannot simply decide to make changes to schools without first seeking the views of parents, staff and others. There is a legal process which must be followed before changes can be made, and it is important that the Governing Body and the Council hear your views before deciding whether to proceed.

How do we feed in our ideas and views?

We have organised the following opportunities for staff, parents and carers to share their views.

1. You can use the response form (or any other written format) at the end of this document to record your views. It can be posted to the schools, or emailed to

office@cherrytrees.org

2. There is a box in the reception of Cherry Trees School where you can leave your comments, response forms and any questions.

3. Individual meetings have been held with parents. You will also be contacted by Caz who will check whether you would like to meet with her to discuss the consultation document.

4. A meeting for staff will be held on September 30th at 3.30, there will be zoom access if staff cannot attend. There will also be the opportunity to feed back to Helen Jenner via zoom, on October 1st at 4pm

5. Two open zoom sessions will be available for any stakeholder (parents, staff community, other schools etc.) on October 1st at 3pm and 6pm.

6. School staff will create appropriate ways of consulting with our children on their views as part of their ongoing teaching.

What happens next?

The consultation period starts on 14th September and ends on 21st October 2020 – the last page of this document can be used for you to feedback your view to governors and the Local Authority. It should be returned to the school office. Following the consultation process, the Governors' Steering Group will review your feedback and use it to make a response to the council, on whether or not to recommend proceeding with the school closure proposal.

The Governing Body and) will consider your feedback in their representations following the publication of the formal statutory notice, if the Council decide to move to this stage, at their Cabinet meeting in November 2020.

If the Council decides to proceed, a public notice (the statutory notice) will specify details of the final proposal and there will be a period of at least four weeks when representations can be made. This will be the final opportunity to make any comments on the proposal. It is then anticipated that a final decision on whether to close the schools will be made by the council on March 3rd, 2020.

How can I get more information on the proposal?

The LA will publish the feedback from this pre-publication consultation on the council's website during the Autumn Term.

If permission is granted to publish a public notice, further details of this proposal will also be available in the Consultation sections of the Council's website

This document is also available on the school website

Thank you for taking the time to consider our proposal, we look forward to hearing your views.

Cherry Trees Chair of Governors

Proposal to close Cherry Trees School – Response Form

Our proposal is to close Cherry Trees School, from August 31st 2021 and to support all Cherry Trees children to relocate to other schools.

We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than 21st October 3.30pm.

- 1) Do you accept the need for the proposal to close Cherry Trees School, and relocate children to schools that will better meet their needs?

Please tick as applicable

Yes		No	
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- 2) Have you heard of the Tower Hamlets SEND Strategy? Do you think it will help better meet children's needs?

- 3) Do you have any ideas/worries about how we can best help children, staff and families to move to possible new arrangements?

- 4) Any other comments? Please feel free to use the other side of this paper for your comments.

- 5) Please indicate which of these best describes your link to Cherry Trees School

Parent		Staff Member		Governor		Other – please specify
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(Children's views will be ascertained through age appropriate methods)

Your Name (Optional) _____

Please return this form to Cherry Trees School by 21st October 2020. Feedback from question one will be summarised numerically. Comments will be typed-up and anonymised. This information will be made available to the public (via the school website), but all respondents' comments and information will be anonymised.

If you would like the opportunity to have a telephone conversation about your concerns, please add your phone number and dates and times that would suit you to this form. You will then be contacted by someone from the Local Authority consultation support teams.