

Informal Consultation on the proposal to expand Hermitage School to develop a 12 place specialist Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC) provision 22nd February to 19th March 2021



What are we consulting you about?

Tower Hamlets council has been reviewing the provision in the borough for children with special educational needs and has identified that for many children who are on the Autistic spectrum, particularly those who are high functioning, there is a lack of suitable educational provision. Because Hermitage School already has significant expertise in this area, we have been offered the opportunity to further develop a proposal agreed by the Local Authority in the Autumn Term.

The proposal is to expand Hermitage School by half a form of entry to make it a two-form entry school and to include the development of a specialist provision to meet the needs of up to 12 children with Education and Health Care plans. This would ensure that there is a mainstream school in Tower Hamlets with specific expertise in meeting the needs of high functioning Autistic spectrum children.

In addition, there are proposals to close a local school because of a fall in the school roll, and we need to ensure we have space to welcome children in our community who are looking for a place in a good school.

How will this affect my child and the staff at Hermitage?

For our existing Hermitage children there will be no immediate day to day changes. All our children understand that everyone has different needs some of the time, and learning alongside children with additional needs is already part of their everyday school experience. There may be some new children in their classes. They will have access to an even stronger range of specialist SEND staff and new provision will be developed for everyone to use.

For new children, joining us with ASC needs, it will mean they can be part of an inclusive mainstream school community with additional specialist provision. They will be able to access the support needed for high functioning ASC children that has not previously been available within Tower Hamlets. If children with Educational and Health Care plans join the school, it would be the Local Authority, in consultation with their parents and the school, who would make the decision as to whether Hermitage was the most appropriate provision. for a child with specific additional needs.

There would still be a single head teacher and a single governing body would collectively oversee the running of the Primary School, because the specialist resource base will be fully integrated into the school. It is likely that some new staff will be appointed, but Hermitage staff team will have the opportunity to develop new expertise and take on new responsibilities and experiences.

Would there be any changes to the school building?

If we expand to two forms of entry and develop specialist provision, there would be some development. Plans are being drawn up in consultation with the school which will be shared with parents and staff when they are completed.

Why are we consulting you?

As part of the Hermitage school community, your views are important to us. The governing body of the school and the London Borough of Tower Hamlets must consult parents, carers and members of the school community before they decide to make changes to schools. This is part of a legal process and it is important that the governing body and the council hear your views before deciding whether to proceed. School staff will consult with our children on their views in an age appropriate way as part of their on-line teaching.

You can share your views the following ways;

- The school will send a Microsoft forms link to the response form
- There will be zoom consultation meetings attended by the LA consultant and Headteacher on the 18th March 2021 at 11 am, 4pm and 6pm

What happens next?

The informal consultation period runs from 22nd February 2021 to 22nd March 2021. The governors will look at your feedback and decide on whether to recommend to the council to proceed to the next consultation stage for the school expansion proposal.

Taking the school communities view into consideration, the Local Authority will make the decision to proceed with the proposal or not, and let you know their decision in the summer term.

The Council Cabinet will decide whether to post statutory notices and everyone will have four weeks to respond to the proposal. We will notify you when this happens.

The final decision to expand the school will be taken by the Local Authority at its Council Cabinet meeting in Autumn Term 2021.

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

Hermitage Governors