

Report on the first stage consultation on the proposed amalgamation (merger) of Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools

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First Stage Consultation Document

Proposal for the amalgamation (combine) of Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools, creating a 3-11 Primary School from 1 September 2022.

September 17th, 2021



The Proposal

The governing bodies of Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools have asked the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to merge the two schools. This will form a primary school for 3-11 year-olds, with two-form entry (two classes per year) with the Foundation Stage on the Old Church site.

Why are we proposing the change?

We believe this is good for children's education because it makes the most of the expertise of the staff across both schools. By bringing the two schools together at the Foundation Stage, children will be given the benefit of outstanding Early Years practice underpinning a world-class primary experience.

Both schools already work closely together and engage in joint planning. They share resources and expertise and are continually developing their links. They worked particularly closely following the devastating Old Church fire, enabling provision to continue for the benefit of all children.

Changes to the way the Government has funded Early Years has made it very hard for Maintained Nursery Schools to make ends meet, and the governors of Old Church do not believe the school can continue as a standalone nursery school.

How does this affect our Headteachers?

The Headteachers at both schools are skilled, experienced leaders. If the two schools merge and become a single organization, there would only be one Headteacher. The Headteacher at Old Church, after many years successful and dedicated service, will be retiring in 2022, and due to the impending merger, she would not be replaced. The governing bodies of both schools agree that an Executive Headteacher arrangement, with the Headteacher from Marion Richardson serving as Executive Headteacher for both schools, is the best way forward, if the Nursery Headteacher retires before the possible amalgamation is agreed or completed.



A range of leadership structures has been considered by governors in both schools. Following amalgamation, we would become one school, with one Headteacher. We want to make it clear from the start that quality early years provision will continue to be a core value for the amalgamated school, and we will need a skilled, experienced early years leader to fulfill that ambition. We believe that creating a Senior Leadership post for Early Years as part of the amalgamated school leadership team will achieve this.

If the amalgamation progresses, there would be a single governing body to oversee the running of the primary school. A single 3-11 primary school would bring both schools together to become one community, which we believe will be the best for the children. In working towards the amalgamation, the governors have set up a joint steering group and are considering revised staffing structures, using joint posts where possible to maximise value for money.

What are the benefits of becoming a single primary school?

By joining together, we will create further opportunities to enhance the education offer:

- wider access to resources for all our children
- ensure top quality early years provision is embedded at the heart of children's educational experience
- continued access for pupils and their families to extended services and facilities, from entry till they move to secondary school
- greater transition support for all children (especially those who have been identified as having an additional need) across the Early Years phase and into Key Stage 1
- greater opportunity for Early Years, Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 phases to keep improving and moving forward
- greater financial stability to make certain we continue to offer world-class education
- more development opportunities for the staff, such as shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum and gain experience and understanding of all key stages
- continued development of our strong community links

What will it mean for the children?

The whole purpose of the merger is to create an environment that will have a positive impact on the quality of education that children receive.

In the future, there would be the same policies and procedures, and the same dates for staff training days and school holidays.

There will also be increased access to school facilities, including outdoor areas, regardless of school phase.



What will it mean for my child being part of a larger school?

On a day-to-day basis, very little will change. The differing needs of each age group will continue to be met.

The care and importance given to each individual child, which is a strength of both schools, will always remain paramount.

Maintaining great quality early years education will be a core value for the newly established school.

What will it mean for the staff?

Each year, all schools review their staffing and budgets; both Old Church and Marion Richardson schools are reviewing their structures as part of their budget planning activities. There may need to be reductions in staffing due to budgetary constraints before amalgamation.

The amalgamation will probably create some new opportunities and changes for staff. As plans develop, a new budget and staffing structure will be needed. Where posts are duplicated, creative solutions will be sought to retain the excellent staff at both schools. The agreed Tower Hamlets organisational change process will be followed to support staff through these changes.

Job descriptions may change but all staff whose contracts for the new 3-11 primary school are changed would preserve their existing employment rights.

Staff have been briefed about the proposal before this document was sent out.

Would there be any changes to the school building?

In the event of the merger, the school would remain largely the same with all the existing premises being used in the most appropriate and effective way.

There would be an exciting opportunity to bring together integrated nursery and reception provision by creating an Early Years Foundation Stage on the Old Church site. This would protect the special nature of the excellent Nursery provision at Old Church and enhance the reception experience for our children.

The Reception classes may move from their current location to the Old Church site, giving the children in Reception access to an improved outside learning space, and creating more space in the Marion Richardson building.

Procedure to achieve the merger

It is proposed that Marion Richardson Primary School will open on 1 September 2022 catering for pupils from age 3 to 11.

The Old Church building will continue to be used and will preserve and celebrate its name as the Old Church site.

The aim would be to keep the day-to-day running of the nursery as close as possible to its current way of working.

Our two schools have always worked together but from September 2021 we will strengthen the partnership to help us prepare for the possible merger.

Admissions

If the proposal is agreed the enlarged Primary School would be created on 1 September 2022 and the following would apply:

- All children currently attending Old Church Nursery School or Marion Richardson Primary School, or already offered places at either school, will have a right to join Marion Richardson Primary School from September 2022, unless they are moving into the Reception year group in September 2022, when they will have to apply for a Primary School place, as usual.
- First admissions: Children who have applied for places at Old Church Nursery School or Marion Richardson Primary School for September 2022 will be offered places through the standard admissions process. From September 2023 distance priority will be decided using the Marion Richardson entrance in Senrab Street.
- The current range of day-to-day entrances will continue to be used, depending on coronavirus and other issues. The options for future entrances will be evaluated and agreed by governors.

What will happen if the merger doesn't go ahead?

There would be no change to Marion Richardson. The governors of Old Church have concluded, reluctantly, that the school is not financially viable as a standalone school, so unfortunately Old Church School would have to close.

Why are we consulting you?

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

We have organised the following opportunities for parents and carers to share views. Because of coronavirus these must be social-distancing compliant, but we have tried to ensure that everyone has a full opportunity to feed into the consultation.

The following meetings will be arranged to collect feedback on the proposal.

1. Consultation meeting opportunities for Old Church parents:
 - 2.15 Wednesday 29th September by ZOOM
 - 9.30 Monday 4th October by ZOOM
 - 6.30 Tuesday 5th October – consultation with parents of OC and MR by ZOOM

2. Consultation meeting opportunities for Marion Richardson parents:
 - 2.15 Thursday 30th September by ZOOM
 - 9.30 Tuesday 5th October by Zoom
 - 6.30 Tuesday 5th October – consultation with parents of OC and MR by ZOOM

3. Consultation/briefing meeting opportunities with staff and unions:
 - 3.45 Monday 4th October for Old Church
 - 3.45 Thursday 7th October for Marion Richardson

4. Consultation meeting opportunity for all staff/parents/governors/stakeholders from either school:
 - 6.30 pm 5th October by ZOOM

Links for zoom meetings will be sent closer to the meetings.

Other ways to contribute your views

- 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:

Consultation email address: Old Church

Consultation email address: Marion Richardson

- There is a box in the reception of each school where you can leave your comments, response forms and any questions.

- If you would like someone to phone you so you can discuss your views, please let your school office know and provide some times that would suit you and your phone number.

What happens next?

The informal consultation period starts on 24th September and ends on 22nd October at 3pm. The last page of this document can be used for you to feedback your view to governors. It should be returned to the school office. Following the consultation process, the governors will review your feedback and use it to make a response to the council, on recommending proceeding to the next consultation stage for the school amalgamation proposal, or not.

The decision to amalgamate schools has to be taken by the Local Authority, but they will always take consultation responses, and school governors' recommendations, into account.

In November 2021, the Council Cabinet (or the Mayor's Decision Panel) will decide whether to post statutory notices proposing the amalgamation. Once these notices are posted, at the start of December, everyone has four weeks where they can make representations to the Council if they wish, regarding the proposal.

The final decision to amalgamate the schools will be taken by the Local Authority at its Council Cabinet meeting, probably in February 2022.



How can I get more information on the proposal?

The local authority will publish the feedback from the consultation on the council’s website during the summer 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 both school websites:

<http://www.oldchurch.towerhamlets.sch.uk>

<https://www.marionrichardson.towerhamlets.sch.uk>

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

Proposal to Amalgamate Old Church and Marion Richardson Schools – Response Form

Our proposal is to bring together Old Church and Marion Richardson Schools.

This would create Marion Richardson 3-11 Primary School from 1 September 2022. We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than **22nd October 2021**

1) Do you agree with the proposal to amalgamate our two schools to become one school? Please tick as applicable

Yes		No	
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2) If you like the proposal, please say why you think it is a good idea?

3) If you dislike the proposal, please tell us why you are concerned?

4) Any other comments?

	Old Church Nursery School	Marion Richardson Primary School
I have child/ren attending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a staff member at	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I am a governor at	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe)		

Your Name (Optional) _____

Please return this form to the relevant school by 22nd October 2021. 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.

First Stage consultation feedback report on the proposal to amalgamate (combine) of Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools.

2nd November 2021

Report compiled by Dr Helen Jenner, Independent Consultant, Tower Hamlets Primary Review.

Introduction

This report summarises the planning undertaken to lead to a public consultation, and the responses to that consultation, on the agreement reached by Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary School Governing Bodies at their Nov 1st, 2021 meetings, to ask the Local Authority to move to statutory consultation on a possible amalgamation between their schools from September 2022

Background

The Tower Hamlets Primary Review commissioned an Independent Consultant, Dr Helen Jenner, to work with schools they had identified as being at risk due to demographic change in the Borough. As well as working with the schools, Dr Jenner was asked to produce a public report "Future Ambitions" setting out principles for developing school relationships and partnerships for resilience and excellence. This document was shared with all Headteachers, Unions and Governors in March 2019. Regular updates on the Primary Review have been included in the termly Director's Report for Governors. In May 2021 that work was extended to include all the Nursery Schools.

Old Church and Marion Richardson Schools Governing Bodies are both committed to maintaining quality early years and primary education for their community. They work in close partnership to support their children and families.

Old Church School Governing Body was prompted by the partnership between the schools to approach Marion Richardson to see if they would consider amalgamation, in order to maintain the top-quality Nursery provision at Old Church Nursery School in the face of falling roles and significantly reduced funding. Marion Richardson Governing Body saw this as an opportunity to cement the work the two schools do to create an outstanding early years provision as part of an excellent 3-11 Primary School.

Both Governing Bodies have reached the conclusion that to amalgamate their two schools is the best solution to optimising early years and 3-11 educational provision in the area.

Governors Planning

A consultation document was prepared and agreed with the Local Authority. This was given to all parents, circulated to Tower Hamlets Headteachers, through the Headteacher's Bulletin; emailed to staff unions and governors, and the Secretary of State has been notified of potential changes.

Information about the consultation was also placed on the school website. Parents and staff have been sent regular updates about the proposal and the zoom meetings they can attend to express their views.

Because of coronavirus open meetings were not held, however a range of ways to feed into the consultation were organized:

1. A response form (any other written format was also encouraged) at the end of the consultation document to record views to be emailed, posted, or handed to the school.
2. A special email address was set up at each school for comments
3. A staff briefing and 7 zoom consultation meetings were set up.
4. Governors agreed responses from the different forms of consultation should be summarised in a report for Governors, a draft was sent to the Steering Group, on 22nd October. A final version was circulated to governors 25th October 2021
5. The two governing bodies met jointly, and then individually, on November 1st 2021, where they reached the conclusion that they would ask the Local Authority to move to statutory consultation on the proposal to amalgamate the two schools.

Consultation response

Zoom meetings

All meetings were attended by at least one of the two Headteachers. The Old Church Chair of Governors attended all Old Church only meetings.

The following meetings were be arranged to collect feedback on the proposal.

1. Consultation meeting opportunities for Old Church parents:
 - 2.15 Wednesday 29th September by ZOOM – 7 parents attended
 - 9.30 Monday 4th October by ZOOM – 5 parents attendedBoth meetings were well attended and positive. Parents showed their strong appreciation for the outstanding Nursery provision, and quality of provision at Marion Richardson. Parents felt that a transition after reception would be better for the children, making the most of the Old Church site. Parents wanted to protect the provision at Old Church.
2. Consultation meeting opportunities for Marion Richardson parents:
 - 2.15 Thursday 30th September by ZOOM – 15 parents attended
 - 9.30 Tuesday 5th October by Zoom – 6 parents attendedBoth meetings were well attended and extremely positive. Parents were strongly supportive of the move and value the high quality education their children receive. The use of Old Church site for reception children was viewed as particularly positive.
3. Consultation/briefing meeting opportunities with staff and unions:
 - 3.45 Monday 4th October for Old Church
 - This meeting was well attended, and staff expressed the view that this was a positive way forward, given that Old Church Nursery School is not sustainable as a standalone Nursery School. – 10 “screens” attended, some with groups. 18 staff in total.
 - 3.45 Thursday 7th October for Marion Richardson
 - This meeting was well attended and extremely positive - 21 “screens” attended, several year groups of staff. 67 staff in total.
4. Consultation meeting opportunity for all staff/parents/governors/stakeholders from either school:
 - 6.30 pm 5th October by ZOOM
 - There were 5 parent attendees at this meeting, and it was also extremely positive

Written Responses

34 written response have been received. (This does not include duplicates and only counts each response once, even if the person replying had 2 roles).

30 responses were positive and viewed the opportunity as being of real benefit for children, and 4 responses felt it was not a positive option. These figures change to 34 positive and 6 not in support if those with 2 roles are counted as 2 responses.

Most parents, and nearly all staff who returned forms, were positive. Old Church parents and staff, understandably, have more anxieties about the potential arrangements. All can see potential positive benefits, particularly given more children more access to wider resources and expertise, protecting outstanding Nursery education and creating a wonderful early years site. Anxieties focus mainly on whether there will be adequate funding for Nursery education and whether the early years voice could be lost in a larger Primary School.

	Positive	Negative	
Old Church Parents	12 (+3)	3(+1)	(4 Old Church parents have other roles in schools)
Marion Richardson Parents	5	(+1)	(1 Marion Richardson parents has another role in schools)
Old Church Staff	10	1	
Marion Richardson Staff	2		
Others Old Church	1(+1)		(1 "other" has another role in schools)
Totals	30 (+4)	4(+2)	

The Frequently Asked Question summary below

includes questions raised as well as anxieties and concerns. Responding to these queries and concerns throughout any agreed consultation process will be essential.

Questions	Responses
Is the proposal a sudden idea?	No, the situation has been developing over several year and early years funding has been declining over time. Governors have considered lots of options before deciding this is the best way forward.
Would like to know more about whole school 3-11 curriculum and what that looks like?	Training and development have already started and there will be more. The schools are working closely to establish the early years curriculum, in the context of the whole school curriculum.
Are the Nursery posts ring fenced or can all Marion Richardson Primary staff apply?	Immediately on amalgamation they will be ring fenced to protect Nursery staff jobs. Moving forward there will be greater flexibility
Please can you explain what amalgamation means	Two schools coming together to become one school. For this to happen one school expands and the other closes.

Will children have to move schools?	Old Church children will automatically become Marion Richardson children. Reception children and Nursery children will be educated on the Old Church site.
Will children need to apply for reception?	Across the country all children have to apply for reception
Will all Old Church staff have new jobs?	Terms and conditions will stay the same because all staff are employed by the Local Authority. Contracts would change to name Marion Richardson. Apart from the role of Headteacher there are no other immediate staffing changes planned. However, as in all schools, there will be staffing changes over time.
What will happen about school dinners?	Change to be confirmed
Will Nursery children still have to pay for school dinners?	Change to be confirmed
Why have numbers decreased?	There are fewer children being born in Tower Hamlets, and the government only funds full time places if both parents are working. More children have part time places now so not as many places are needed.
when will the amalgamation happen?	The amalgamation will be from September 2022 if it goes ahead.
will there be 1 HeadTeachers?	Yes
Do you have to be in Nursery to get into Marion Richardson?	No
Will there sibling priority in the Nursery for Marion Richardson families?	Yes
Will Julia be head of 3 schools	No - it will be 2 schools on 3 sites
Will there be opportunities for the teachers to get to know each other?	Yes - if the Local Authority agrees to move to statutory consultation a programme will be set up.
Will there still be a January intake?	Yes
Will there still be 30 hour places?	Yes
Could there be part-time in the afternoons?	This is something the school reviews each year to see what is affordable.
What will happen to 2 year old provision?	This is something the school review each year to see what is affordable
What will happen to Sarah?	Sarah is taking very well earned retirement in Summer 2022.
How many children will there be?	The school will be 2 form entry throughout, with Nursery figures to reflect that.

Both Headteachers have contributed to the consultation process and have put forward the following summary statements:

Sarah	Amalgamation is a positive and constructive solution to enabling Old Church Nursery to continue to give the children the best education and care that we can. It will build on the existing good working relationship that we have with Marion Richardson School. It is important that we hold on to our excellent early years practice and consolidate this further together. We are delighted that this proposal will bring Reception children together with Nursery children to benefit from our wonderful site.
Julia	Old Church and Marion Richardson have always worked closely together to serve the local community, this work was enhanced when Old Church faced the challenge of a fire and we could support continued Nursery education on the Marion Richardson site. Though the notion of amalgamation has been arrived at as a pragmatic solution in this financial climate we are very excited about the prospect of ensuring the ethos, quality and expertise of the nursery thrives in the context of a 3 – 11 school.

Feedback to stakeholders

It is recommended that this Consultation Summary, the Frequently Asked Questions Summary and the “Extraordinary Governing Body” power point presentation be posted on the school website and be emailed to parents, staff and other stakeholders, including the Local Authority.

Governing Body view

Old Church and Marion Richardson Governing Bodies discussed the feedback from consultation meetings when they met on 1st November 2021 and confirmed that amalgamation remain the right direction of travel.

They agreed they would ask the Local Authority to move to statutory notices for the schools to amalgamate from September 2022. This would be achieved through the formal closure of Old Church Nursery School and the expansion of Marion Richardson Primary School. The two buildings to be known as “Old Church Site” and “Senrab Street site”.

Governors from both schools are positive about the possibilities that this change brings for their community. They also recognize that there will be challenges as the two school communities come together. They expect the school leaders and the established Steering Group to work through these challenges systematically, with the support of independent consultants, to arrive at solutions in the best interests of the children and families at the schools.

They identified for key challenges to ensuring the right conditions to enable an amalgamation to progress and to ensure smooth transition-

1. Transparency regarding current and future financial planning, so that future issues and challenges are recognised and planned for before amalgamation.
2. Development of the Marion Richardson Governing Body to take advantage of expertise from Old Church regarding Nursery education.
3. The need to develop a joint early years (Nursery and Reception) vision for the Old Church site.
4. The need to ensure that the Old Church and Senrab Street sites are seen as an integrated school, ensuring that the Old Church site does not become “the annexe” but is viewed as the outstanding provision at the start of children’s school careers at Marion Richardson Primary School.

They agreed that these issues would be worked on with independent consultants during the Local Authority's Statutory Notice period so that, should the Local Authority decide to progress matters, they would be in the strongest possible position to implement smoothly from September 2022.

Overview of the independent consultant

Both schools' governing bodies have taken their role in ensuring fair and thorough consultation very seriously and have worked hard to ensure all views are heard, and queries answered.

There is a strong positive response to the proposals.

Governors and staff are disappointed that the proposal has come through reductions in funding for Nursery Schools but are delighted that there will be new opportunities for the children and community.

The support for the quality of Nursery provision, and staff dedication, has been very positive. This should be a strong guide to what parents expect if the two schools do amalgamate – they wish to see excellent Nursery provision in the centre of their children's journey through 3-11 provision at Marion Richardson and believe the amalgamation could support this journey to excellence. Governors are equally positive about the opportunity to optimise the superb Old Church site by extending access to reception children. Creating a first class early years provision as part of the 3-11 Marion Richardson School.

Governors have agreed to start preparatory work to address some of the challenges that are inevitable when two schools are coming together in this way, for the benefit of their communities and a programme to address these will be established, work to be led by the Steering Group. In the unlikely event that either school Governing Body or the Local Authority decided that to progress the amalgamation, was not in children's interests, the work undertaken will have created stronger bonds and understanding between the two schools, so will not have been wasted.

I can see no reason why this proposal would not progress to Statutory Notice.

Dr Helen Jenner
Independent Consultant
Tower Hamlets Primary Review

Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) on the proposal for the amalgamation (combine) of Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools.

Section 1.0: Background Information

Name of Completing Officer:	Ikwi Mkpuru
Date of Initial Screening:	05/10/21
Service Area & Directorate:	Pupil Services and School Sufficiency
Head of Service:	Terry Bryan

Section 2.0: Summary of policy, proposal or activity being screened

Name of policy, proposal or activity:
<p>The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in partnership with the governors of Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools, are proposing to amalgamate (merge) the two schools to form a two-form entry (2FE) 3-11 primary school with the Foundation Stage located on the Old Church site. The amalgamation is proposed to take effect from 1 September 2022 and will create a single primary school called Marion Richardson Primary School.</p> <p>Owing to significant reduction in funding for early years provisions and falling rolls, both Governing Bodies reached the conclusion that to amalgamate their two schools is the best solution to maintaining an outstanding early year and world-class 3-11 primary educational provision in the area.</p> <p>This Equalities Impact Assessment concerns the proposal to amalgamate Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools. It is proposed that the amalgamated school will open on 1 September 2022, catering for pupils from ages 3 to 11. The process to achieve this involves the 'technical closure' of Old Church Nursery School on 31st August 2022 and the expansion of the current nursery provision for Marion Richardson Primary School, to accommodate the displaced Old Church Pupil. It should be noted there will be no actual closure of school buildings.</p>
What are the aims / objectives of the policy, proposal or activity?
<p>The proposal is being put forward as part of the strategy for these two schools to move towards integrated 3 to 11 primary school provision, rather than Old Church remaining a standalone Nursery School. This is beneficial to children's education because it will optimise the expertise of the staff across the nursery and primary age range. Bringing the two schools together will provide the benefit of outstanding nursery practice underpinning top quality primary education, in a single education experience.</p> <p>Tower Hamlets has a great tradition of excellent education and values the important role that schools have in increasing the life chances of our children. The proposed amalgamation forms part of a wider review of primary school places across the borough, initiated to enhance the sustainability of schools and their ability to maintain high standards in the face of significant demographic changes.</p> <p>From 24th September to 22nd October 2021, Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools, consulted their pupils, parents, staff and local communities, on the proposal to amalgamate the schools. The consultation meetings most of which were held remotely, were well attended by parents, staff, the schools' governors and members of the schools' communities and were largely positive. Thirty four written responses were received, thirty of which were in favour of the amalgamation and four objecting. The consultees who objected raised concerns around the lack of adequate funding for nursery education, and the Nursery maintaining its standard and excellence following a merger with a primary school.</p> <p>If the proposal to amalgamate the schools is approved, the running of the school would be overseen by a single Headteacher and governing body. The Headteacher at Old Church Nursery, after many successful and dedicated years of service at the Nursery, will be retiring in 2022 and would not be replaced due to the proposed amalgamation. The governing bodies of both schools have agreed that, should the Nursery</p>

Headteacher retire before the amalgamation is approved, then the Headteacher at Marion Richardson Primary will become the Executive Headteacher for both schools.

The proposed amalgamation would build on and strengthen the joint working already taking place across the two schools, to:

- Provide continued access for pupils and their families to extended services and facilities.
- Develop more opportunities for the staff, such as shared training and the chance to work more closely across the curriculum and gain experience and understanding of all key stages
- Strengthen and continue developing community links which already exist.
- Ensure opportunities to enhance the educational offer, and access to resources for all pupils embedding top quality early years provision at the heart of children's educational experience
- Develop greater financial stability to continue to improve and offer world class education.

Section 3.0: Equality Impact Analysis Test:

<p>Is there a risk that the policy, proposal or activity being screened disproportionately adversely impacts (directly or indirectly) on any of the groups of people listed below? This should include people of different:</p>	<p>Yes ✓</p>	<p>No ✓</p>	<p>Comments:</p>																														
<p>Age</p>		<p>✓</p>	<p><u>Pupils:</u></p> <p>Under the proposed amalgamation, all children will remain at their current school site with the Old Church site being used for early years provision. There will be minimal / no disruption to all children aged 3 – 11 years. No one year group will be adversely affected than others.</p> <p>As the table below shows, pupil numbers are distributed evenly across all year groups and across the schools, As the feeder school to Marion Richardson Primary School, it can be assumed that majority of the current Old Church Nursery pupils would have transitioned to Marion Richardson Primary School, by the proposed amalgamation date.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="519 946 1968 1129"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year Group</th> <th>N1</th> <th>N2</th> <th>R</th> <th>1</th> <th>2</th> <th>3</th> <th>4</th> <th>5</th> <th>6</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Old Church Nursery School</td> <td>56</td> <td>71</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marion Richardson Primary School</td> <td></td> <td>35</td> <td>59</td> <td>60</td> <td>59</td> <td>60</td> <td>60</td> <td>60</td> <td>58</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The proposed amalgamation would further ensure a smooth transition From Nursery to Reception whilst maintaining a very high educational standard.</p> <p>The schools are not directly comparable with regards to educational outcomes, due to one being a Nursery and the other a Primary School. However, an Ofsted inspection in July 2019 determined that Old Church Nursery School was rated as “Outstanding”, a rating the school has maintained since 2012, whilst Marion Richardson Primary School, continued to be rated as “Good” with an outstanding leadership and management.</p>	Year Group	N1	N2	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Old Church Nursery School	56	71								Marion Richardson Primary School		35	59	60	59	60	60	60	58
Year Group	N1	N2	R	1	2	3	4	5	6																								
Old Church Nursery School	56	71																															
Marion Richardson Primary School		35	59	60	59	60	60	60	58																								

Marion Richardson Primary School: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/21/100911>

Old Church Nursery School: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/20/100885>

The differing needs of each age group will continue to be met. The care and importance given to each individual child, which is a strength of both schools, will always remain paramount. Maintaining great quality early years education will be a core value for the amalgamated school.

Staff:

The table below shows a similar split in age ranges for each school. The majority at staff in both schools are in the 25 – 54 age range.

Old Church Nursery School	Staff age range	Total
	15 - 24	
	25 - 34	15
	35 - 44	8
	45 - 54	9
	55 - 64	3
	65 - 74	4
	75 - 84	
Marion Richardson Primary School	15 - 24	1
	25 - 34	21
	35 - 44	22
	45 - 54	14
	55 - 64	10
	65 - 74	1
	75 - 84	

The impact on staff, who will merge to form one staffing structure, is expected to be minimal given that all staff employed at Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school, and their rights would be preserved under TUPE. No redundancies are expected to occur under the proposal. Where there are duplicates of posts, creative solutions will be sought to retain staff. Because of this, no particular age group will be disadvantaged over another.

Should the merger be approved in the council's Cabinet, there will be a full formal HR consultation, following processes agreed with the trade unions, to maximise staff strengths and build on their expertise and good will. In addition, staff across the schools would benefit from continuity of staff policies and procedures, and the same dates for staff training days and school

holidays.

Sex



Pupils:

The breakdown of boys versus girls is similar in both schools, although both rolls are slightly weighted more towards boys than girls. Irrespective of gender, all pupils will benefit from the increased long-term educational and financial sustainability that the proposed amalgamation would bring; therefore, no adverse impact is identified regarding this protected characteristic.

	Girls	Boys	Total
Old Church Nursery School	51	76	127
Marion Richardson Primary School	214	237	451

Staff:

The staff gender breakdown is weighted heavily towards women at both schools (see table below), as is the case across most primary school provision in the borough and elsewhere. However, as no redundancies are proposed no disproportionate impact on either gender is anticipated.

	Female	Male	Total
Old Church Nursery School	37	2	39
Marion Richardson Primary School	66	3	69

Race



Pupils:

Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools have a similar pupil demographic in terms of ethnicity, as evidenced below:

Ethnicity	Old Church Nursery School	Marion Richardson Primary School
Any Other Asian Background	1	1
Any Other Black Background		
Any Other Ethnic Group	2	15
Any Other Mixed Background	11	9
Any Other White Background	13	11
Bangladeshi	66	369
Black - Any Other Black African Background	4	5
Black - Somali	2	11

Black Caribbean	3	2
Indian		3
Chinese		1
Pakistani	1	10
White - British	17	7
White and Asian	4	3
White and Black African	1	
White and Black Caribbean	2	3
Vietnamese		
Information Not Yet Obtained		1
Total	127	451

Pupils:

	EAL	Not EAL	Total
Old Church Nursery School	48	79	127
Marion Richardson Primary School	380	71	451

Merging the schools will not cause any significant changes to the pupil demographic of the new School, with Bangladeshi children still the main ethnicity. Both schools have pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) so will be able to share best practice on how to support children who are bi/multi-lingual. All pupils, irrespective of ethnicity, will also benefit from the long-term stability that should be achieved through the merger.

Staff:

Both schools have a similar staff demographic in terms of ethnicity (as evidenced below), with Bangladeshi staff in the majority. This also reflects the pupils' ethnic demography in both schools. Under the proposed amalgamation very little change is anticipated for staff on a day-to-day basis and staff conditions of service will not be affected. Because of this, no particular ethnic group will be disadvantaged over another and children of all ethnicities will therefore benefit from the continuity of having the same known staff at the school.

Ethnicity	Old Church Nursery School	Marion Richardson Primary School
Any Other Asian Background		
Any Other Black Background		
Any Other Ethnic Group		4
Any Other Mixed Background	1	
Any Other White Background	3	3

			Bangladeshi	18	36																
			Black – Any Other Black African Background		1																
			Black – Somali																		
			Black Caribbean		2																
			Chinese																		
			Indian	1	1																
			Pakistani	0	2																
			White – British	10	18																
			White – Irish	1																	
			White and Asian	2																	
			White and Black African		1																
			White and Black Caribbean		1																
			Refused																		
			Information Not Yet Obtained	3																	
			Vietnamese																		
			Total	39	69																
Religion or Philosophical belief		✓	No impact identified – no data collected and neither school is a faith school.																		
Sexual Orientation		✓	No impact identified – no data collected																		
Gender re-assignment		✓	No impact identified – no data collected																		
People who have a Disability (Physical, learning difficulties, mental health and medical conditions)		✓	<p>The table below shows that 2% of pupils in the Nursery School have Education, Health & Care (EHC) Plans, whilst 3% of pupils in the Primary School have EHC Plans. Though the percentage of pupils on SEN support is slightly higher in the Nursery School. Pupils at both schools will continue to receive the quality support they currently get. Merging the two schools will ensure that a child’s transition from Nursery to Primary will be seamless, and embed a robust, inclusive approach to supporting children with SEND from age 3 through to age 11.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="517 1203 1946 1353"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>SEN Support</th> <th>EHC Plan</th> <th>None</th> <th>Grand Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Old Church Nursery School</td> <td>23</td> <td>2</td> <td>102</td> <td>127</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marion Richardson Primary School</td> <td>53</td> <td>13</td> <td>385</td> <td>451</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					SEN Support	EHC Plan	None	Grand Total	Old Church Nursery School	23	2	102	127	Marion Richardson Primary School	53	13	385	451
	SEN Support	EHC Plan	None	Grand Total																	
Old Church Nursery School	23	2	102	127																	
Marion Richardson Primary School	53	13	385	451																	
Marriage and Civil Partnerships status		✓	No impact identified – no data collected																		
People who are Pregnant		✓	No impact identified – no data collected																		

and Maternity																		
Parents and Carers		✓	<p><u>Parents:</u> Many parents who attended the virtual meetings and provided written responses felt that amalgamating the schools is in the best interest of the children at both schools, and a positive means to safeguard the quality Nursery education when considering the current Nursery funding constrains.</p> <p>Ofsted commended an innovative approach developed by Marion Richardson Primary School, in supporting families who are new in the country, and for whom English is not their first language, to help them settle into their community. Thereports for both schools outlines that parental engagement and support is overwhelmingly positive. Merging the two schools will allow for this support to be further developed, with the continued strengthening of existing community links.</p>															
Socio and Economic		✓	<p><u>Pupils:</u></p> <p>Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools share a very similar socio-economic background, with the proportion of pupils receiving Free School Meals (FSM) in the Primary School much higher than in the Nursery School.</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>FSM Eligible</th> <th>No FSM</th> <th>%</th> <th>Grand Total</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Old Church Nursery School</td> <td>14</td> <td>113</td> <td>11</td> <td>127</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Marion Richardson Primary School</td> <td>169</td> <td>282</td> <td>37</td> <td>451</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Merging both schools should benefit children of all backgrounds via the sharing of existing good practice. “Additional funding to support disadvantage pupils is managed very well. By the end of Key Stage 2, disadvantage pupils achieve as well as other pupils in the school”. Marion Richardson Primary School Ofsted 2017</p>		FSM Eligible	No FSM	%	Grand Total	Old Church Nursery School	14	113	11	127	Marion Richardson Primary School	169	282	37	451
	FSM Eligible	No FSM	%	Grand Total														
Old Church Nursery School	14	113	11	127														
Marion Richardson Primary School	169	282	37	451														
People with different Gender Identities		✓	No impact identified – no data collected															

If you have answered **Yes** to one or more of the groups of people listed above, **a full Equality Impact Assessment is required.**
The only exceptions to this are listed in sections 5.1 and 5.2 of this document.

Section 4.0: Justifying Discrimination:

Are all risks of inequalities identified capable of being justified because there is a:

- (i) *Genuine Reason* for implementation
- (ii) The activity represents a *Proportionate Means* of achieving a *Legitimate Council Aim*
- (iii) There is a *Genuine Occupational Requirement* for the council to implement this activity

✓

✓
✓

Section 5.0: Conclusion

Before answering the next question, please note that there are generally only two reasons a full Equality Impact Analysis is not required. These are:

5.1 The policy, activity or proposal is likely to have **no or minimal impact** on the groups listed in section three of this document.

5.2 Any discrimination or disadvantage identified is **capable of being justified** for one or more of the reasons detailed in the previous section of this document.

5.3 Conclusion Details:

5.4 Do you recommend a fully Equality Impact Analysis is performed ?

Yes

No

If you have answered **YES** to this question, please proceed to section 6.0 Sign Off.

If you have answered **NO** to this question, please detail your reasons in section 5.5 (across) before proceeding to section 6.0 Sign Off.

5.5 Reasons a full Equality Impact Analysis is not required:

On a day-to-day basis, very little will change for children at both schools as there will be no need for any pupils to move to another school under this proposal. The care and importance given to each individual child, which is a strength of both schools, will always remain paramount. As a result, the impact on pupils with protected characteristics will not be significant, with no one group more adversely affected than others.

In the exception of the planned retirement of the Old Church Nursery Headteacher and the proposed executive headship for the Primary Headteacher, should the Nursery Headteacher retire before the anticipated merger, very little change is expected for staff on a day-to-day basis under the proposal. All staff employed at the Nursery and Primary Schools (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in the new primary school, and their rights would be preserved under TUPE.

If the amalgamation progresses, there will be a full HR consultation following processes agreed with the unions, to maximise staff strengths and build on their expertise and good will. Where there are duplicates of posts, creative solutions will be sought to retain staff. As a result, the impact on staff with protected characteristics will not be significant, with no one group more adversely affected than others.

Based on the findings of this EA, the proposal is robust, it ensures increased equality of opportunity in regard to improved educational outcomes for all pupils at both schools. This would also guarantee a smooth transition from nursery to primary phase, and pupils will leave primary education with a robust education having had the opportunity to participate in enriching extra-curricular activities. It is anticipated that an amalgamation will further enhance community links, with shared resources, and outreach strategies helping to build upon existing successful programme of activities. Nursery provision will continue to provide the universal 15 funded hours for all 3- and 4-year-olds as well as 30 funded hours for 3 and 4 year olds with working parents.

Consultation Information:

Statutory notice on the proposal to amalgamate (combine) Old Church Nursery and Marion Richardson Primary Schools.

XX MONTH 2021



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Introduction

Notice is thereby given, in accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, that Tower Hamlets Local Authority intends to discontinue Old Church Nursery by 31 August 2022. This notice includes the Local Authority's proposal to make a prescribed alteration to Marion Richardson Primary, to expand its lower age limit and continue as an all-through (3 to 11 years) primary school from the 1 September 2022, in accordance with The School Organisation (Prescribed Alternations to Maintained Schools) (England) Regulations 2013.

Contact details

Name and address of local authority publishing the proposal:

Tower Hamlets Council, Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, London E14 2BG.

Name, address and category of schools proposed to be amalgamated:

Marion Richardson Primary School, Senrab St, Ratcliff, London E1 0QF

Old Church Nursery School, Off Walter Terrace, Bromley St, Stepney Green, London E1 0RJ

Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to amalgamate the schools:

1 September 2022

It is proposed to implement the amalgamation as follows:

Old Church Nursery School will close from Friday 31 August 2022.

Marion Richardson Primary School will expand its current nursery provision and continue as an all-through (3 to 11 years) Primary School from 1 September 2022.

All children attending Old Church Nursery will transfer to Marion Richardson Primary School from 1 September 2022. Children currently attending Marion Richardson Primary School will continue in the amalgamated school.

Reason for amalgamation

The council, in partnership with the governing bodies of Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools, is intending for the two schools to amalgamate and become one primary school from the 1 September 2022, admitting pupils from 3 to 11 years of age.

The proposal is being put forward as part of the strategy for these two schools to provide integrated nursery and primary provision, rather than Old Church remaining a standalone Nursery School. This is beneficial to children's education because it reduces the stress caused by transition and optimises the expertise of the staff across both the nursery and primary age range.

Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools already work closely together and engage in joint planning, they share resources and expertise and are continually developing their links.

The governing bodies of Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools reviewed the future for both schools and consider that now is the right time for both schools to combine to become a single all-through provision (see **Appendix 1** for the first stage consultation feedback report).

Pupil numbers and admissions

The numbers for whom provision is currently made at the school:

Marion Richardson Primary School is a co-educational mainstream school for pupils aged four to eleven. The School has a published admission number (PAN) of 60 for each year group. As of 1 September 2021, the School had 451 pupils on roll.

Old Church Nursery School is a co-educational mainstream nursery school for pupils aged 3 to 4 years of age. The School currently has a PAN of 120. As of 1 September 2021, the School had 25 pupils on roll.

The Published Admission Number for each year group of the new 3 to 11-year-old primary school will be 60, providing up to 480 places in total.

Displaced pupils

This proposal forms part of an amalgamation, and therefore no pupils will be displaced. From 1 September 2022, pupils currently at Old Church Nursery School will have places at Marion Richardson Primary School.

Impact on the community

Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery Schools serve the same geographic area. The proposal will provide certainty of progression from nursery to primary phase and offer an all-through primary education. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact on the community.

Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable.

Nursery provision

It is intended that the current nursery at Old Church Nursery will continue to operate under Marion Richardson Primary through the proposal to alter its lower age limit.

There will be no change for children in the current setting, the location and staff will remain the same. Therefore, the provision will continue to be accessible and convenient for local families.

Sixth Form provision

Not applicable.

Special educational needs provision

There are 25 pupils on roll at Old Church Nursery School, however, only two have an education health and care plan (EHCP).

There are 66 pupils at Marion Richardson Primary School who have been identified as having special educational needs, of which there are 13 pupils with an EHCP.

Both schools have fully accessible buildings site. Pupils with special educational needs will continue to receive the same high levels of support in the amalgamated primary school.

Travel

There will be no change to the travel distance for the children currently attending Old Church Nursery School as they will remain at their current site.

Finances

Marion Richardson Primary and Old Church Nursery schools' financial balances will be transferred by 31 August 2022 to the new Marion Richardson Primary School, as part of the school's budget from 1 September 2022.

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this statutory notice, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by email or by post.

Closing date for responses is TBA

By email: school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk

By post: School Organisation and Place Planning Manager
Pupil Services and School Sufficiency
Tower Hamlets Children and Culture
Town Hall
Mulberry Place
5 Clove Crescent
E14 5BG

We will not be able to consider any responses received after **TBA**

All responses received during the representation period will be published on the Council's website mid-February 2022, and prior to a final decision on the amalgamation of the schools.

The website address is: **TBA**