

1. Why was Raine's School an option at the point of application?

At the time when parents were able to apply for places at Secondary transfer (i.e. September 2018) the LA and Diocese was not certain that they would eventually need to consider the closure of Raine's. This became evident in the late spring of 2019, and after the school's application numbers had fallen to a level that only 36 offers could be made for admission to Year 7 for September 2019.

2. How many children were offered a place at Raines for Sep 2019?

36 children were offered a place at Raine's on the 1st March. So far the parents of:

- 19 have received and accepted offers at alternative preference schools
- 8 are awaiting offers at alternative preference schools
- 7 have accepted the LA's offer of a place at Oaklands
- 2 have not yet confirmed whether they will accept the offer a place at Oaklands or would like to apply for a place elsewhere.

The LA and Diocese maintain that Raine's would not be able to provide for efficient and appropriate education for such a small intake of pupils.

Parents can still take up the place in Year 7 at Raine's Foundation School for the 2019/20 academic. However, they have been made aware that there is a significant risk that the year group may be very small. If that proves to be the case, Raine's may exercise its management powers to provide the education for those children at the site of an alternative school, to enable them to receive a full curriculum.

3. Why is the LA instructing parents to seek alternative places now, if a decision has not yet been made?

Parents are not being "instructed" to do anything. The LA has informed parents of the plans for Raine's School to close in August 2020. A substantial number, particularly those parents of children in Year 9, have applied for other schools as they want to be certain that their child will be able to complete their GCSE studies at the same school. Parents of children in Year 10 have been advised to apply for a 6th form place at an alternative school for September 2020, given that the proposal is for Raine's to close at the end their child's Year 11.

4. Will there be a year 10 from September?

There are plans for there to be Year 10 at Raine's for September, but the number of pupils remaining in this year group will very much depend on how many parents decide to apply for places at schools elsewhere.

5. Where are Raine's 6th form pupils going to go?

Pupils in Year 12 will be able to continue at Raine's in Year 13. Pupils currently in Year 11, that were offered a place in the Raine's 6th Form, have been made aware that there is a significant risk that the year group may be very small. If that proves to be the case, Raine's may exercise its management powers to provide the education for those children at the site of an alternative school, to enable them to receive a full curriculum.

6. Why is Oaklands School presented as the only option?

The proposal includes plans for Oaklands School to be expanded to ensure that existing Raine's pupils are able to transfer to an alternative school nearby. However, it is not being presented as the only option. Parents may also apply for places at alternative schools, including nearby faith schools.

7. Why are parents being referred to schools out of the borough?

The consultation document provides information on other Church of England Schools, both in Tower Hamlets and its surrounding boroughs. This is so that parents, both now and in the future, can seek to secure a place at a Church of England School should they consider the options amongst the other Tower Hamlets unsuitable. Depending on where families live, their nearest appropriate alternative school may be outside Tower Hamlets.

8. Why are there no options to send Raine's pupils to a faith school?

There are options for parents to apply for faith schools in Tower Hamlets and in neighbouring boroughs. The London Diocesan Board, the Diocese responsible for Church of England Schools in this area of London, has made special arrangements for Raine's pupils at nearby Urswick School in Hackney. Raine's pupils who meet the Urswick Church admissions requirements will be placed at the top of the school's waiting list.

9. How is the LA increasing parental choice?

The LA is increasing parental choice by providing additional places at Oaklands and other nearby schools that would otherwise be full. Raine's has not been full for a number of years and it is therefore evident that it is no longer a popular choice for parents in Tower Hamlets and surrounding areas.

10. How many students are on roll at Raines?

There were 388 pupils on roll in Years 7 to 11 at the last census in Jan. The current number is 372 (Years 7 to 11).

11. When will the next parents' meeting take place?

Parents who have concerns about their children's education can approach their school or the local authority at any time. If, following this consultation, it is decided to go ahead with these plans a further meeting will be called at the end of the autumn term to hear representations about the "statutory proposals" which will have to be published at that time.

12. Will pupils get special dispensation for examinations due to the unrest?

The circumstances in which students can be given special consideration for exams are limited. Ultimately it is for the examination board to decide whether a dispensation can be given in each individual case. The LA is therefore reviewing whether the situation at Raine's falls within the guidelines agreed by all of the exam boards. Students and their families will be notified as soon as possible.

13. The LA claims it did 'all it could to publicise the school', including the new building, but parents have never seen any evidence of this (i.e. adverts on buses, etc)

The LA has said that it has been supporting Raine's with its efforts to increase its pupil intake over a number of years. This work has included;

- developing scholarship programmes in Modern Foreign Languages and Sports Studies;
- rewriting the school's admissions policy to encourage applications from children from all world faiths;
- enabling the school to adopt the LA's arrangements for pupil banding to support its efforts to achieve a balanced ability intake;
- appointing the Raine's headteacher to the Tower Hamlets School Admissions Forum; and
- reserving places at Raine's for pupils who were unsuccessful in securing places at any of the preferred schools at secondary transfer.

The Raine's school leaders during this period would have had the responsibility to consider how best to publicise and promote the school, alongside the support provided by the LA.

14. Who are the 'other communities' referred to in the consultation document; surely we are all one community?

The phrase 'other communities' is not used in the consultation document. The consultation describes the expansion of Oaklands as being beneficial as it provides all members of the community equal opportunity to access a high quality local school provision. Oaklands GCSE results have consistently been amongst the best in the borough.

15. Why has £17m been spent on renovating Raine's Lower Site, when this could have been spent on promoting the school?

£4m is the figure that has been allocated to be spent on renovating the Raine's Lower Site. This money is limited to 'capital expenditure' and can therefore only be used for renovating the school building and its landscape.

16. Given the money being spent on Raine's School building – why is it now being closed?

Money was invested in all secondary schools in the Borough to ensure that each school could provide great facilities for pupils. Raine's Foundation School envisaged that modern facilities would help with its recruitment of pupils. This has not proven to be the case.

Should Raine's School close the building at Approach Road will cease to operate as a secondary school. However, there will still be the opportunity for the building to be put to use for other education or community provision. This will be a matter for consideration by the Raine's Foundation Charitable Trust, the owner of the Approach Road site.

The LA and Diocese plan to bring the Raine's building at Old Bethnal Green Road back into use as a 6th Form provision for Oakland's School. This will benefit children at Oaklands and also those Raine's students who will be moving to Oaklands.

17. What would happen if Oaklands can't use the Lower Site?

The planned use of the lower school site is separate to the proposal to close Raine's. The LA would want to make the site a sixth form centre for Oaklands School, regardless of whether or not Raine's School closes.

The building has been empty for some considerable time and the opportunity provided by Oaklands is the most viable option for the building to be put to good use at this time.

18. What are the plans if these proposals do not go ahead?

The current proposal is to close Raine's and expand Oaklands. If it does not go ahead the LA would still need to find a way to solve the problem regarding the school's current financial position. Currently there appears to be no reasonable prospect of recovery for this school. A substantial increase in pupil numbers at this stage is unlikely to secure Raine's future as it would still not generate the level of income required to address the school's funding shortfall, repay its increasing licensed deficit and thereby enable it to reach a financially sustainable position. If Oaklands is not expanded the LA would have to consider how the overall need for school places in the borough is to be met.

19. What pastoral support for the wellbeing of pupils affected by this process is in place?

On an individual level the school has highly experienced staff team who are well aware of the sensitivities around the proposals and the effect that might have on students. Where staff feel students are finding it difficult to cope or are exhibiting behaviours that might stem from change anxiety, they are on hand to intervene on

an individual level- that might involve speaking to students, withdrawing them from certain activities, communicating with parents. On a group or cohort level, the school has prioritised the needs of different year groups. The school has held surgery appointments with all families and looked to support them to transitioning to schools of their preference. The school is planning different sets of activities for different groups of students depending on need. For example, many of the families with students in Year 9 have decided that a school move now would be preferable to waiting till next year. Therefore, as many of the year group are leaving in July, a two week transition project called 'New Horizons' has been organised to positively mark their end of time at Raine's and help them move on positively to their next school.

20. Why has the Trust not been approached regarding keeping the name of Henry Raine alive?

The LA is aware of the importance of keeping the name of Henry Raine alive in the borough. A commitment was made to the chair of the Foundation Trust in correspondence on the 7th of May 2019 to discuss further ways in which the legacy and name of Raine's is preserved in the borough of Tower Hamlets.

21. Why was the LA not involving parents at an earlier stage?

It is the responsibility of the governing body to keep parents and carers up to date with developments in the school. The school had kept parents informed of key developments including when the school received the 'Requires Improvement' judgement from Ofsted in 2017 and when an IEB had been appointed. When the IEB took over governance of Raine's in late October 2018, the school was in urgent need of improvement, having suffered from a legacy of weak leadership and governance, poor performance, falling rolls and mounting debt. Two meetings were organised to give parents an opportunity to meet with IEB members and ask questions.

Subsequently, the LA carried out a feasibility study and following the recommendations from this study it was agreed to move forward with the consultation to close Raine's. Parents were involved at the earliest opportunity. A letter was sent to parents on the 1st May 2019 and a parents meeting was subsequently held, followed by surgeries which are taking place every week so that parents can discuss their own circumstances with representatives from the LA.

22. Abuse (racial and religious) was received by Raine's students during a recent visit to Oaklands from Oaklands students, how will this be managed moving forwards?

First and foremost, the Senior Leadership Team, IEB and the Governing Body at both schools will not tolerate any type of abusive behaviour in their schools whatsoever. Very clear and robust action was taken against the poor behaviour during the recent visit, and sanctions were put in place to manage this. Every single family involved came in to meet senior staff and the Executive Headteacher and every single family was apologetic on behalf of their child and supportive of the school's actions.

Although the behaviour emanated from a group of Year 9 boys, strong and clear messages were communicated to the entire school community. Both schools are well aware of the different demographics of the two school communities. Therefore, we are all united and absolutely clear that the underlying principles in any potential joint venture or activity moving forward, should be tolerance, respect and cooperation. An organisation called a 'New Direction' who have worked in Tower Hamlets Schools previously are developing a programme of activities for pupils to help build relationships between the two schools. Raine's and Oaklands Schools have set up a joint group to oversee the progress and arrange for any further transition support if required.

23. It is the job of the LA to ensure that schools do not fail – why did the support provided not work at Raine's?

The LA was working with the school and various methods of support were provided. Below is a list of the key support:

- External support from Teaching Schools and specialist consultants
- External review of key aspects of the school i.e. Maths and Behaviour management
- Peer to Peer Support
- Support from Pupil Admissions
- Support with developing the school building to attract more pupils

Legally, the running of the school is the responsibility of the governing body. In 2017-18 a 'collegiate' package of support was agreed for Raine's school, however the school leadership did not fully engage with the support and this did not have the desired outcome. For the academic year 2018-19, the LA agreed with the Diocese there needed to be an executive headteacher in the school who would make full use of the support available. As the governing body had not taken the steps they needed to in order to improve the school in previous years, the LA identified that formal intervention was required and an Interim Executive Board (IEB) was put in place to ensure the governance also improved.

The IEB and school leaders have invested significant time, effort and determination to improve the performance at Raine's. The changes brought about in the school were noted as positive in the Ofsted monitoring visit undertaken in December 2018. However, at this time parents had already made their choice of secondary school place. Only 29 pupils applied to Raine's as their first preference for entry to Year 7 in September 2019.

24. What happened to HT Paul Woods?

It was initially agreed for Paul Woods to support the school on an interim basis. Paul Woods had approached the LA in December 2018 about returning to lead his own school, Sir John Cass, on a full time basis and confirmed to the LA that he would not be staying beyond Easter 2019. The LA would have preferred him to continue, but we are mindful that Mr Woods' first responsibility is to his own school. The LA then considered other local schools with leadership capacity to support a school which required improvement and subsequently approached Oaklands.

25. Parents are disappointed with mixed messages received, Paul Wood communicated that the school was doing well – what happened?

Rapid progress was made in the autumn term. Behaviour had improved notably and teaching became more effective. This was recognised by Ofsted at a monitoring visit in December and further improvements have been made since. However, from the start the IEB was clear that even if the school improved significantly, its future would still be at risk. This is because the school's long-term decline had resulted in a continually decreasing number of pupils on roll. (Currently there are 372 students in Years 7 to 11, making the school less than half full). This in turn had led to the school being in considerable and increasing debt.

26. Has the Executive Headteacher been brought in to close the school?

No. The LA approached the leadership team at Oaklands after Mr Paul Woods indicated he wanted to return to Sir John Cass to provide the required leadership for the school. Raine's needed a school improvement partner and as a high performing local school, Oaklands was well placed to support. Mr Paul Woods left in Easter and Patrice Canavan became Executive from the 1st day of the summer term as a direct replacement with same brief.

27. Who put the IEB in place?

The LA applied to the Secretary of State to put an IEB in place to improve the governance of the school following the correct statutory procedure. The DfE agreed

the members suggested by the LA, but not the nomination made by the Foundation Trust. The IEB was established on 29th October 2018.

28. What has the school done to prevent the school's closure?

See question 13 and question 23.

29. Why are there no options to send Raine's Pupils to faith schools

There are several other faith schools in LBTH and neighbouring boroughs and parents are at liberty to seek a place at any of these schools. If a place is initially refused they have a statutory right to ask an independent appeal committee to grant a place on the grounds that it is justified by the special circumstances even if the school is technically full. The LDBS has made arrangements with The Urswick School in Hackney that any pupil at Raine's who meets the Church admissions requirements for the Urswick School will go to the top of the waiting list.

30. Why was the option of Academisation of Raines initially explored in 2015 not taken forwards?

The previous Governing Body had considered Academisation however this was not taken forward. An application to convert to an academy must be made by a school's Governing Body; but the final decision is in the hands of the DfE

31. Parents are very concerned about the approach of the LA in terms of communicating plans to parents i.e. parents found out about the plans leaked on social media – can you explain this?

This was unfortunate. LA officers did work on carefully managing the communications so that the school community would be the first to be informed of proposals. The Council's Cabinet decision making process and work plan is agreed well in advance. Following on from the feasibility study and proposed recommendation the Cabinet's work plan had to be updated to include a possible decision on Raine's closure in the future. This was an administrative process. The work plan was available on Tower Hamlet's website and was subsequently leaked on social media.

32. Why is the Trust not involved in the IEB?

The IEB is established in conjunction with the Regional Schools Commissioner and with the permission of the Secretary of State for Education. Members of the IEB have to be approved by the Secretary of State. The LA had asked the Raine's Foundation Trust to nominate a Trustee to join the IEB, however the nomination provided was rejected by the Secretary of State. The letter from the Regional Schools Commissioner rejecting the nomination was forwarded to the Foundation Trust. There was no further nomination received from the Trust.

33. Why is the Trust not involved in the Joint Steering Group?

The Steering Group is a joint steering group with representatives from both schools including parents, governors and staff. The Steering Group is not a decision making body and is a useful forum to have open discussion affecting pupils, parents and staff.

The Trust has been kept informed directly.

34. Why have 3 different Headteachers been in place over a period of 3 years?

There was a need to strengthen the leadership of the school following the outcome of the Ofsted Inspection (second 'Requires Improvement' Judgement).

Paul Woods was brought in on an interim basis as an Executive Headteacher to increase the leadership capacity.

Rob Hullet (Headteacher) left the school in December 2018.

Paul Woods left the school at the end of the spring term (Easter) and Patrice

Canavan was then brought in by the LA as the Executive Headteacher to continue

to provide the leadership the school required.

35. When did the Interim Head join the school?

The Interim Headteacher worked alongside the school in March 2019 as part of the handover from Paul Woods and formally took up the Headship (on an interim basis) from April 2019.

36. Why were there no parent governors on Raines GB since 2016?

The Governing Body at the time attempted to recruit parent governors on a number of occasions without success.

37. Did the LA put the second GB in place?

The second Governing Body was put in place by the Diocese as the school is a faith school. The Chair of Governors nominated by the Diocese, Ms Liz Wolverson, is Chief Executive of the LBDS Academies Trust.

38. What can parents do to stop the school from closing? Parents want to be involved.

In reaching this stage the LA, along with the IEB and Diocese, have explored a number of alternative options to maintain the school, but none have proven to be feasible. The consultation document provides details of the alternative options explored and the reasons why these are not considered to be possible and all interested parties are encouraged to read this document.

The LA welcomes views and opinions from parents on other potential options to secure the future of Raine's and/or its pupils and all interested parties are invited to submit responses via the online feedback form, by post or by email.

39. Where has the consultation been publicised?

The consultation has been publicised on:

LA consultations website
Raines Foundation School website
Oaklands Secondary School website
LA social media accounts

And with the following agencies:

Local MPs
Tower Hamlets Cabinet Members
Raines Foundation Trustees
Local School Governors
Tower Hamlets Admissions Forum Members
Tower Hamlets Head Teachers
Neighbouring Local Authorities
Tower Hamlets Parents & Carers Forum
Tower Hamlets Young Peoples Forum
Church of England Diocese
Roman Catholic Diocese
Somali Community Association
Collective of Bangladeshi Governors
East London National Education Union
Tower Hamlets Council of Mosques

40. Shouldn't all parents receive funding for new school uniforms?

Yes, uniform grants will be provided for parents to purchase a new school uniform when this is required.

On 5th July 2019 the LA's School Admissions Team will write to every Raine's parent who has applied for a transfer to another school for this September, to confirm the offer of a school place. The letter will include a section about how they can claim financial support with buying the new school's uniform.

The uniform grant will be in line with the current school clothing grant that is provided for children when they transfer from primary to secondary school, which is currently £110. The grant will only be redeemable at Khalsa Schoolwear (388 Bethnal Green Road, E2 0AH) Parents will need to present the letter when they visit the store, along with identification, to claim the grant.

More information can be obtained from the LA's School Admissions Team.

41. How will this proposal affect Oaklands School? There will be more students – will there be more staff?

There will be a need to increase staffing at Oaklands School. A larger school will offer more opportunities for their professional development.

42. How are you going to ensure faith / Christianity at Oaklands?

All schools must by law provide Religious Education (RE) as part of the curriculum and make provision for collective worship. If Raine's closes LDBS will work closely with Oaklands to ensure that transferring students receive high quality RE and are supported in their spiritual development. Detailed discussions with Oaklands School won't begin until a decision is taken that Raine's is going to close as the LDBS is not pre-judging the outcome of the consultation.

43. Why is LDBS not fighting to keep a faith school open?

LDBS has spent the past five years trying to help the school to recruit pupils but that has been unsuccessful. Unless sufficient pupils are on roll for the school to break even financially, the decision on whether a school stays open or closes is taken by those providing the funding.

44. Why have pupil numbers declined?

The school was inspected in 2015 and then re-inspected in 2017 and was judged to 'Require Improvement' as a result of both visits. Pupil numbers, which were already declining in 2016, were further affected by poor GCSE results that year, as well as attendance and behaviour issues in the school.

The school's current roll and projected numbers demonstrate that it is highly unlikely to recruit the pupil numbers necessary to address its current funding shortfall, repay the loans it has already been given and move onto a financially sustainable footing.

45. Information received by parents was not consistent – i.e. some did not receive the text message about the meeting.

A link to the council's consultation web page was published on the websites of Raine's and Oakland's Schools and both schools sent out a text message to parents by 17th June directing them to the link, which clearly states information about the public meeting at Oaklands on 19th June and at Raine's on the 26th June. It is possible that technical issues (either on sending or receipt) could have prevented messages getting through in individual cases; but the intention was to inform everyone at the same time.

46. Why is Raines being closed?

At this stage no decision on the closure of Raine's has been made, and all the views received, either at the meetings or separately in writing, will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

47. Has the amalgamation already been agreed?

Please see answer above. Technically a complete amalgamation of the two schools is not being proposed. There is a proposal to enlarge Oaklands so that it can accommodate any pupils displaced as a result of the possible closure of Raine's who wish to transfer. This is designed to help children to transfer together and to minimise disruption to their education by ensuring as much continuity of curriculum

and teaching as possible. However parents can exercise their right to seek a place in a different school if they prefer, and will be given every assistance.

48. What is the purpose of this meeting?

Two public meetings have been arranged to provide an opportunity for parents, staff, pupils and members of the local community to ask questions and express their views on the proposals outlined in the consultation document. Another aim of these meetings is to publicise the consultation document, which provides detailed background information on the context and background to the proposal, including options already explored.

49. What will this forum achieve?

Please see answer above.

50. Is this whole process being recorded

Minutes will be produced at each public meeting which will give an overview of discussions and topics covered. A list of all questions raised at both meetings will be produced with answers. This will be published as a list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on the LA's consultation web page. The slides used at each of the public meetings will also be available to view online at the same location.

51. Will there be an opportunity to discuss these issues further?

A further public meeting will take place at Raines Foundation School on Wednesday 26th June at 6pm.

Parents who have concerns about their children's education can approach their school or the local authority at any time. If, following this consultation, it is decided to go ahead with these plans a further meeting will be called at the end of the autumn term to hear representations about the "statutory proposals" which will have to be published at that time.

52. Is this meeting a 'tick box' exercise?

No, at this stage no decisions on the closure of Raine's or the expansion of Oaklands School has been made and the public meetings provide an opportunity for parents, staff, the Raines Foundation Trust, pupils and members of the local community to ask questions and express their views on the proposals outlined in the consultation document. All the views received, either at the meetings or separately in writing, will be considered prior to a decision being taken as to whether to go ahead with the proposal.

53. Should staff be involved in keeping the school open?

Raine's staff and school leaders would have had the responsibility to work alongside the LA as part of the support package being delivered in order to raise standards at the school. Please see question 13 for further details on the support that was provided by the LA.