

Consultation information:

Statutory notice on the proposal to amalgamate (combine) Cubitt Town Infants and Cubitt Town Junior Schools

16 November 2020



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Introduction

On Wednesday 21 October 2020 Tower Hamlets Cabinet approved the recommendation to publish a statutory notice on the proposal to combine (amalgamate) Cubitt Town Infants and Cubitt Town Junior Schools.

Notice is given in accordance with The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 that Tower Hamlets local authority intends to discontinue Cubitt Town Infants School by 31 March 2022. This notice includes the local authority's proposal to make a prescribed alteration to Cubitt Town Junior School, to change the lower age limit to create an all-through primary school, 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:

Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools, Manchester Rd, Isle of Dogs, London E14 3NE.

Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to amalgamate the schools:

Further to the initial proposed implementation date of 1 September 2021, the governors and executive headteacher of both schools requested for the implementation date to be changed to 1 April 2022. This is to allow more time to prepare the schools' financial, staffing and curriculum models, and to ensure that they are better aligned before the amalgamation.

It is proposed to implement the amalgamation as follows:

Cubitt Town Infants School will close from Wednesday 31 March 2022.

Cubitt Town Junior School will alter its age range and convert to a three form entry all through Primary School (90 Places in each year group) from 1 April 2022.

All children attending Cubitt Town Infants School will transfer to the new Cubitt Town Primary School from 1 April 2022. Children currently attending Cubitt Town Junior School will continue in the new primary school.

Reason for amalgamation

The council, in partnership with the governing bodies of Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools, is proposing that the two schools amalgamate to become one primary school from the 1 April 2022, admitting pupils from three to eleven years of age. This will include the current nursery provision at Cubitt Town Infants.

The council's education policy is to move towards integrated three to eleven primary school provision, rather than maintain separate Infant and Junior Schools. This is beneficial to children's education because it reduces the stress caused by transition and optimises the expertise of the staff across the primary age range.

Both Cubitt Town Infant and Junior Schools already work closely together and engage in joint planning. Following the recent retirement of the Infant School Headteacher, the governing bodies and the local authority have reviewed the future for both schools and consider that now is the right time for both schools to combine to become a single Primary School (see **Appendix 1** for the stage one consultation).

Pupil numbers and admissions

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

Cubitt Town Infants is a co-educational mainstream school for pupils aged four to seven with a nursery provision for children from three-year-old. The School has a published admission number (PAN) of 90 for each year group. As at 1 September 2020 the School had 359 pupils on roll.

Cubitt Town Junior School is a co-educational mainstream school for pupils aged seven to eleven. The School currently has a PAN of 90 for each year group. As at 1 September 2020 the School had 354 pupils on roll.

The PAN for each year group of the new three to eleven-years-old primary school will be 90.

Displaced pupils

This proposal forms part of an amalgamation, and therefore no pupils will be displaced. From 1 April 2022, pupils currently at Cubitt Town Infants School will have places at Cubitt Town Primary School. The current Year 3 PAN at Cubitt Town Junior School will be removed, and pupils in Year 2 will automatically transition to Year 3 in the primary school.

Impact on the community

Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools serve the same geographic area and are adjacent to each other. The proposal will provide certainty of progression to the junior phase and offer an all-through primary education. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be any adverse impact on the community.

Rural primary schools

Not applicable.

Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable.

Nursery provision

It is intended that the current nursery at Cubitt Town Infants will continue to operate under Cubitt Town Junior School 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

The schools do not provide educational provision recognised by the local authority as being reserved for children with special educational needs.

There are 38 pupils on roll at Cubitt Town Infants School who have been identified as having special educational needs, of whom there are six pupils with an education health and care plan (EHCP).

There are 32 pupils on roll at Cubitt Town Junior who have been identified as having special educational needs, of which there are 13 pupils with an EHCP. Both schools have fully accessible buildings and currently share the same site. Special educational needs children will continue to receive the same high levels of support in the primary school.

Travel

There will be no change to the travel distance for the children currently attending Cubitt Town Infants School as they will continue to attend the same site at Manchester Rd, Isle of Dogs, London E14 3NE.

Finances

The Cubitt Town Infants and Junior schools financial balances will be transferred by 31 March 2022 to the new Cubitt Town Primary School, as part of the school's budget from 1 April 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 5pm, Wednesday 16 December 2020

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 16 December 2020.

All responses received during the representation period will be published on the Council's website in early January 2021.

The website address is: talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/statutory-notice-cubitt-town

Appendix 1

Consultation information:

First Stage consultation feedback report on the proposal for the amalgamation (combine) of Cubitt Town Infants and Junior Schools

1 September 2020

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 whether Cubitt Town Infant and Junior Schools should support the local authority to formally consult on the amalgamation of the two schools from 1 September 2021.

The report aims to support the school governors to reach an informed decision on the proposal.

Background

Cubitt Town Infant and Junior Schools' Governing Bodies were both prompted, by the prospective retirement of the Infant School Headteacher, to consider how to make the schools' long-term future and quality of education even stronger, ensuring a reduction in the impact of transition between the schools.

The Tower Hamlets Primary Review commissioned an independent consultant, Dr Helen Jenner, to work with schools facing significant change in the borough. As well as working with the schools, Dr Jenner was asked to produce a public report "Future Ambitions"¹ setting out principles for developing school relationships 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. It included the principle of amalgamating Infant and Junior Schools.

Governors planning

A small Steering Group consisting of the Headteachers from both schools, supported by the Independent Consultant, and their Tower Hamlets Education Partnership

¹ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/Documents/Children-and-families-services/Schools/Primary_Review/Future_Ambitions_report_from_the_independent_consultant_Feb_2019.pdf

(THEP) school improvement partner, has led work on considering the implications of enhanced partnership for the two schools, including the development of draft papers for governing bodies to consider. This included consultation papers circulated to staff, parents and other stakeholders.

Governing Body meetings were set up in the Spring Term 2020 at both schools to discuss partnership working, and the possibility of moving towards amalgamation.

Staff Meetings were also held in the Spring Term to ensure all staff were clear and had opportunities to ask any questions. Unions were advised of the possibility of amalgamation in March 2020.

Governing bodies considered draft consultation documents in late May/early June, and agreed that this should be circulated to staff and parents on 5 June 2020, with the consultation to run from 8 June to 17 July 2020

Information about the consultation was also placed on the schools' websites.

www.cubittown-jun.towerhamlets.sch.uk/viewer/454

www.cubittowninf.co.uk/school-letters/

Due to Coronavirus it was not possible to hold public meetings regarding the consultation, however, the following options were offered (in line with the Tower Hamlets consultation processes during coronavirus guidance for schools' consultations):

1. A response form (or any other written format) inserted at the end of the consultation document to record stakeholder views. To be posted or emailed to the schools.
2. A box was located at the reception of each school where stakeholders could leave comments, response forms, or ask any questions.
3. The local authority consultant, who is supporting the schools with the consultation process was available for 1-to-1 socially distanced questions/feedback on Monday 6 July from 9am to 2.30pm
4. Virtual meetings were set up on 6 July for staff (4pm) and parents (2.30pm and 6pm).
5. One-to-one phone calls were offered.
6. School staff created age appropriate ways of consulting with our children on their views as part of their online teaching.
7. Staff meetings were held to regularly update staff
8. Trade Unions were briefed on the consultation.

Consultation response

There was very little formal response to the consultation.

One parent requested a phone call, and three staff members attended a Zoom meeting. Informal feedback was very positive. Staff, children and parents see the amalgamation as a natural next step for two successful schools.

Staff fed back positive reasons to support the amalgamation. The increased opportunities for staff, greater range of expertise, potential to share resources and reduction in transition anxiety were all seen as possible positive outcomes.

Staff wanted to be clear on whether there may be staffing reductions and, if that is the case, how would they be addressed. They were advised that it was too early to know what staffing structures there might be, but that the amalgamation is not being seen as a cost saving exercise, so there are no immediate staff reductions proposed, and compulsory redundancy is unlikely. If staffing changes are made the agreed school re-organisation process would be followed.

Professional discussion, and strong engagement from staff, parents and children with the process, puts governors in a strong position to recommend to the local authority that they progress to publish a statutory notice proposing the amalgamation of Cubitt Town Infant and Junior Schools from September 2021.

Trade Unions have confirmed that they have received no queries or concerns regarding the proposal.

Governors should consider this report during the first half of the Autumn Term, so that the Council Cabinet can be notified of their response before they consider the possible statutory notices in October or November 2020. A final decision on the proposal would be taken by the Council Cabinet at their meeting on 3 March 2021.

There is general agreement that amalgamation to become a three to eleven primary school will support children's education and enhance the offer for local families and community.

Based on the informal feedback about the proposal, the positive opportunities it brings, and the very low level of concerns raised, I would recommend that the local authority move to issue statutory notices, with the support of both Governing Bodies.

[ENDS]