

Stage One Public Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Harry Roberts Nursery and Ben Jonson Primary Schools from 1st January 2022

8th February 2021

The Proposal

The London Borough of Tower Hamlets, in partnership with the governors of Harry Roberts Nursery and Ben Jonson Primary Schools, are proposing to merge the two schools to form a three form entry 3-11 primary school, with 60 FTE Nursery equivalent, and a Primary Age Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) provision. This will create a single primary school, with a nursery and a special educational needs resource base, from the start of the Spring Term in 2022.

Why are we proposing the change?

Tower Hamlets Education Policy is to move towards integrated 3-11 primary school provision, rather than maintain separate Nursery and Primary Schools. We believe 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.

Both schools already work closely together and engage in joint planning, they share resources and expertise and are continually developing their links. A review of resourcing requirements, and the potential to redesign the sites to accommodate an SEMH provision, creates an opportunity to establish new governance arrangements that will unite both schools' common goals and values.

How does this affect our Headteachers?

The Headteachers at both schools are skilled, experienced leaders. For the two schools to merge to become a single primary schools one of them has to expand its age range. It would be difficult for Harry Roberts Nursery School to expand in this way because staff and governors have been focused on the youngest children, and the size of expansion beyond the early years stage would be more difficult to manage. The Senior Leadership of Ben Jonson is already very experienced in leading Early Years provision and therefore better placed to manage the addition of a nursery provision.

The Governing Bodies from Harry Roberts and Ben Jonson Schools have discussed this and agree that the headteacher post for the new Primary School would not, in effect, be vacant and therefore not subject to advertising or selection requirements.

A range of leadership structures has been considered by governors in both schools. They believe that embedding a role for the Head of Early Years, as part of the Ben Jonson leadership team would protect the pay and comparative seniority of the Head of the Nursery School, and establish a clear view that quality early years provision is a core value for the new school. This post would be ring fenced to the current Nursery Headteacher. Both schools have been working towards this model through establishing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to help them move towards integrated school leadership.

If, following this and further consultation, an amalgamation is decided the running of the school would be overseen by a single headteacher and governing body. The primary school would bring both schools together to become one community, that we consider will be the best for the children. In working towards the amalgamation, the governors have set up a joint steering group and established a revised staffing structures to ensure that the school can operate efficiently and effectively.

What are the benefits of becoming a single primary school?

Further opportunities to enhance the educational offer, and access to resources for all our children; embedding top quality early years provision at the heart of children's educational experience.

Continued access for pupils and their families to extended services and facilities.

The opportunity for Foundation Stage, Infant and Junior phases to keep improving and moving forward.

Greater financial stability to make certain we continue to improve and 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. The strengthening and continued developing of community links which already exist.

Increased capacity to offer a quality integrated SEMH provision for those children across Tower Hamlets who have additional SEND needs.

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.

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?

Again, very little will change on a day-to-day basis. Staff conditions of service will not be affected. Both Harry Roberts Nursery and Ben Jonson Primary School have needed to review staffing structures because of financial constraints.

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.

Each year, all schools review their staffing and budgets; both Harry Roberts and Ben Jonson schools have reviewed their structures as part of their budget planning activities. The amalgamation will probably require some further changes and create new opportunities for staff. 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.

The amalgamation is not expected to require compulsory redundancies, but there will be a need to avoid a duplication of job roles. Creative solutions will be found to retain the excellent staff at both schools.

Would there be any changes to the school building?

In the event of amalgamation, the school would remain largely the same with all the existing premises being used in the most appropriate and effective way. However, it does provide an exciting opportunity to bring together early years play space and integrated nursery and reception provision. Plans are also being developed to ensure a single entrance to the school, and other possible minor adaptations.

As we settle in as one school there may be other changes which need to be made to ensure we use all the school space effectively.

Because the school will also have an SEMH specialist provision, and Bowden House Primary School will also operate on the school site there will need to be some changes to the current building arrangements. These would have to take place whether or not the schools amalgamate.

As both schools are involved in PFI contracts, these would remain in place for the new school. Some minor alterations may be necessary.

Procedure to achieve the amalgamation (merger)

It is proposed that the amalgamated school will open on 1 January 2022 catering for pupils from ages 3 to 11. The process to achieve this involves the 'technical closure' of Harry Roberts School on 31st December 2021 and the expansion of Ben Jonson School, to include nursery provision. It should be noted there will be no actual closure of school buildings.

Admissions

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

- September 2021 - Children who apply for nursery places at Harry Roberts and those applying for reception at Ben Jonson, will be offered places through the standard admissions process - using the agreed New School entrance for measuring distance.
- All children currently attending Harry Roberts Nursery School or Ben Jonson Primary will automatically join the amalgamated School in January 2022.

Why are we consulting you?

We want to consult you to gather your views because you are part of the school community. The governing body 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 body 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. However, we have tried to ensure that everyone has a full opportunity to respond to this consultation.

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

Consultationemailaddress:admin@harryroberts.towerhamlets.sch.uk

Consultationemailaddress:consult2@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk

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

3. The Local Authority consultant, who is supporting the schools with the consultation process will be available for 1 to1 socially distanced questions/feedback

4. If it is possible socially distanced playground meetings will be set up as per schedule below:

Tuesday 2nd March, Harry Roberts - Parents 9.15am and 2.30pm, Staff 3.30pm

Wednesday 3rd March, Ben Jonson - Parents 9.15am and 2.30pm, Staff 3.30pm

Thursday 4th March - Open meetings 8.15 am, 12.30, 6pm

If this is not possible due to Coronavirus, virtual “zoom” meetings will be set up. Meeting links will be sent closer to the time.

5. If you would like someone to phone you to answer question and discuss your views, please let your school office know and provide a contact number and a time that would suit

you.

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

What happens next?

The informal consultation period starts from 8th February to 19th March 2021. The last page of this document can be used to feedback your view to governors, so please return it to the schools' office. Following the consultation process, the governors will consider your views and decide whether or not to recommend to the council to proceed with the next stage of consultation for the schools' amalgamation.

The decision to amalgamate the schools has to be taken by the council, but it must take consultation responses, and school governors' recommendations into account.

In the first half of the Summer Term the council will feedback to you on the consultation. In April, the council's cabinet (or the Mayor's Decision Panel) will decide whether to publish statutory notices proposing the amalgamation. Once the statutory notices are published, everyone has four weeks where they can respond to the council regarding the proposal. The notices will be posted early in May 2021 and will explain how to make responses.

The final decision to amalgamate the schools will be taken by the Local Authority at its Council Cabinet meeting in September 2021.

How can I get more information on the proposal?

The council will publish the feedback from the consultation on its website during the Summer Term.

If permission is granted to publish a statutory notice, further details of this proposal will also be available in the Consultation hub of the Tower Hamlets Council website. This document will also be available on both schools' websites, along with the papers that the governors have considered before consulting with you:

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

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

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

Harry Roberts Chair of Governors. Ben Jonson Primary Chair of Governors

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|----------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------|
| | Harry Roberts Nursery School | Ben Jonson 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"/> |

Proposal to Amalgamate Harry Roberts and Ben Jonson Schools – Response Form

Our proposal is to bring together Harry Roberts and Ben Jonson Schools.

This would create an all-through 3-11 Ben Jonson Primary School from 1 January 2022. We welcome your views on this proposal. Please fill in this response form and return it to the address below no later than 5pm, 19th March 2021

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

| | | | |
|-----|--|----|--|
| Yes | | No | |
|-----|--|----|--|

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?

| | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| I am a governor at | <input type="text"/> | <input type="text"/> |
| Other (please describe) | | |

Your Name (Optional) _____

Please return this form to the relevant school by 23rd July 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.