

Parents / Carers
of children at
Tower Hamlets
Primary Schools

18th July 2019

Dear Parent / Carer

Review of Primary School Places

I am writing to inform you of the Tower Hamlets Review of Primary School Places and planned changes that will affect some primary schools in the borough. Full details of the review, including frequently asked questions and other useful resources are on the Tower Hamlets website [here](#).

Despite being one of the fastest growing boroughs, Tower Hamlets has experienced a significant fall in the numbers of children attending primary schools. This has resulted in a large number of unused school places, mainly in the west of the borough.

This fall in the number of children requiring a primary school place is due to a variety of factors, including a reduction in births in the borough, families moving out of the borough and fewer families moving into the borough.

The funding that schools receive from central government is based on the number of children they have registered. Therefore, when a school's number of children is lower than expected it receives less funding and this can often mean that the school finds it difficult to retain and or recruit enough teachers and support staff to maintain high standards of teaching and learning.

The council must make sure that there are the right numbers of places across the borough and that each school has enough pupils to ensure it has the funding to provide high quality education. It is therefore carrying out a review of primary school places to decide how best to reduce the number of unused places. The options include:

- grouping nearby schools in a formal partnership that will enable them to reduce the number of unused places and organise themselves in a way that will help them to make the best use of their funding, teaching and other expertise. This type of partnership is called a school **federation** with a single governing body responsible.
- joining two or more schools together to create a new school on one site. This would also reduce the number of unused places and allow the new school to have enough registered children to receive the levels of funding that would ensure there were no teaching or other staff shortages. This is called a school **amalgamation**.

- where the numbers of children at a school are very low and it is not possible for it to join a federation or be part of an amalgamation with a neighbouring school then the council will need to consider whether the school should close. However, the council will only consider this if it is in the best educational interests of the pupils concerned as keeping the school open would inevitably lead to a fall in teaching standards.

The review is mainly focussed on primary schools with surplus places in the west of the borough, within the Bethnal Green, Stepney and Wapping areas. However, work will need to continue over the coming years across the borough.

How will these changes improve the educational opportunities for pupils?

The planned changes are intended to:

- Reduce the number of surplus places
- Ensure schools have the right level of resources, including specialist staff
- Avoid unhealthy competition between schools for increased pupil numbers
- Create opportunities to build and enhance partnerships between schools
- Minimise the impact on pupils and on parental choice

We are looking to make any agreed changes from as early as September 2020. However, proposals will not be decided on without first consulting with parents, schools and the wider community.

Proposals from the review and timeline for the consultations for individual schools or groups of schools will be communicated to you when schools resume after the holidays in September. Information will also be provided on the Local Authority and school websites. Please be assured that all feedback from the consultations will be carefully considered before any decisions are made.

In the meantime, if you have any concerns or any further questions, please contact us at school.organisation@towerhamlets.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,



Christine McInnes
Divisional Director for Education and Partnerships

Your guide to information and
services for families in Tower Hamlets



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ⁱ https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/education_and_learning/schools/Primary_Review_for_parents.aspx