

## **Informal Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Harry Roberts Nursery and Ben Jonson Primary Schools, creating a 3-11 Primary School from 1 January 2022.**

Monday 8 February

### **The Proposal**

Following requests from both governing bodies, 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 FTE Nursery.

### **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 the nursery and primary age range. By bringing the two schools together, children will be given the benefit of outstanding nursery 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.

### **How does this affect our Headteachers?**

The Headteachers at both schools are skilled, experienced leaders. For two schools to merge to become a single organization, 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 would be very difficult to manage.

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.

A range of leadership structures has been considered by governors in both schools. We believe that creating an Assistant Headteacher for Early Years role as part of the Ben Jonson leadership team will ensure we protect the pay and seniority of the Head of the Nursery School. We want to establish a clear view that quality early years provision is a core value for the new school. Whilst the current Nursery Headteacher, remains in that post, she will be known as Head of Early Years. Both schools have been working towards this model through a signed agreement to help them move towards the agreed 3-11 school leadership model.

If the amalgamation progresses, there would be a single headteacher and a single governing body would collectively oversee the running of the primary school. A single 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 established revised staffing structures that reflect their financial viability, using joint posts 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;
- 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; and
- 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 Harry Roberts and Ben Jonson 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 employment rights under TUPE.

### **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 early years play space and integrated nursery and reception provision.

The Reception classes will move from their current location to be closer to the Nursery classes, giving the children in Reception access to the outside learning space.



This close proximity will support a more cohesive Early Years environment for all the staff and children.

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

Because the school will also have a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (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 merger**

It is proposed that Ben Jonson Primary School will open on 1 January 2022 catering for pupils from age 3 to 11. The Harry Roberts building will preserve and celebrate the name as the Harry Roberts Building.

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 start to work as one school to prepare for the merger in January without any disruption to provision for the children mid-year.



### **Admissions**

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

- All children currently attending Harry Roberts Nursery School or Ben Jonson Primary School will automatically join Ben Jonson Primary School.
- First admissions: Children who have applied for places at Harry Roberts Nursery School or Ben Jonson Primary school for September 2021 would be offered places through the standard admissions process, using the gates on Harford Street to measure distances from children's homes.
- A range of day-to-day entrances will continue to be used, depending on coronavirus and other issues. The options will be evaluated and agreed by governors.

### **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 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, but we have tried to ensure that everyone has a full opportunity to feed into the 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;

Consultation email address: [admin@harryroberts.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto:admin@harryroberts.towerhamlets.sch.uk)

Consultation email address: [consult2@benjonson.towerhamlets.sch.uk](mailto: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-to-1 socially distanced questions/feedback on Thursday 4 March from 9 - 2.30. You can contact your school to book a 15-minute slot. (Harry Roberts Nursery School 9 - 11.30, Ben Jonson Primary School 11.45 - 2.15)

4. If it is possible, socially distanced playground meetings will be set up

Tues 2 March	Harry Roberts	Parents 9.15 and 2.30	Staff 3.30
Weds 3 March	Ben Jonson	Parents 9.15 and 2.30	Staff 3.30
Thurs 4 March		Open meetings 8.15 am, 12.30, 6pm	

We are proposing an additional joint session for Sylheti/Bengali speakers (date to follow)

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

5. 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.

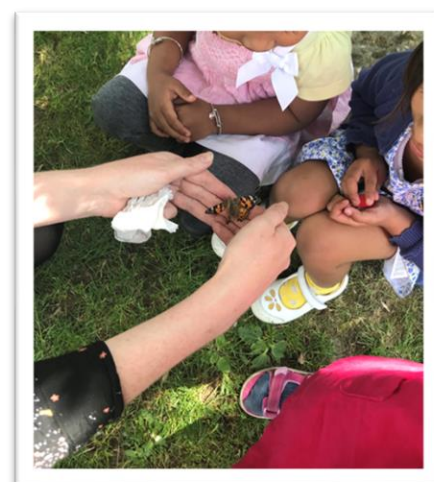
6. School staff will create age appropriate ways of consulting with our children on their views as part of their online teaching.

### **What happens next?**

The informal consultation period starts on 8 February 2021 and ends on 19 March 2021 – 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 whether or not to recommend proceeding to the next consultation stage for the school amalgamation proposal.

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 the first half of the summer term, the Local Authority will feedback to you on the



consultation. In May 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, everyone has four weeks where they can make representations to the Council if they wish, regarding the proposal. Notices will then be posted [we will confirm this date once known] and will explain how to make representations.



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

### **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:

Harry Roberts website: <https://www.harryroberts.towerhamlets.sch.uk/>

Ben Jonson website: <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, Pam Holland

Ben Jonson Primary Chair of Governors, Dharmendra Nair

## 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 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 **19 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?

	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"/>
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 19 March 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.