

Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate

Odessa Infant School and St. James' CofE Junior School

Consultation on the amalgamation proposal of Odessa Infant and St James' CofE Junior schools from 1 September 2026

This document is intended to:

- Notify you of London Borough of Newham and the Diocese of Chelmsford's proposal to amalgamate Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School. This will result in a single primary school.
- Explain why this change is being proposed and provide a summary of the impact of the proposal.
- Invite your comments on the proposal
- Inform you of and invite you to a consultation meeting as detailed in the 'How do I respond to this consultation?' section of this document below.

The statutory process

The Department for Education (DFE) has set out the requirements and processes for amalgamating and making changes to maintained schools in the guidance 'Opening and closing maintained schools' and Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools.'

The purpose of the guidance is to ensure that in making final decisions on proposals all required consultations are properly undertaken in accordance with relevant law and guidance. and that changes can be implemented quickly and effectively where there is a strong case for doing so.

The guidance also sets out the processes required to implement this amalgamation proposal, and this consultation period is the first stage in that process.

What does "amalgamation" mean?

Amalgamation is the merging of both Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School to create one single primary school, located on the same site and under the same leadership and governance arrangements. This process would mean that Odessa Infant School would technically close, and a primary school would be established by altering the lower age range of St James' CofE Junior School from 7-11 to 3-11.

Why is this amalgamation being proposed?

Odessa Infant School is 1 of 8 Newham maintained schools in budget deficit, despite the school having stable pupil numbers. This is in part due to increase in pupil numbers with special educational needs & disability (SEND) and insufficient funding. Following a review of all options, to help sustain and maintain the school's financial stability, the only viable solution was an amalgamation

The rationale behind this proposal is to help sustain and maintain Odessa's financial stability and avoid substantial financial implications for the local authority by merging it with the neighbouring St. James' Junior School, which is not forecasting a deficit.

This amalgamation would help clear the Odessa deficit over a reasonable time (no more than three years), to ensure that the proposed single primary school would be financially sustainable and continue to provide high quality education with strong educational outcomes currently seen at both schools.

What is the proposal?

Odessa Infant School currently caters for pupils aged between 3 and 7 with a capacity of 304 including the nursery provision. St James' CofE Junior School on the other hand, caters for pupils aged between 7 and 11 and has a capacity of 360.

The proposal is to amalgamate both schools to form a single primary school on the existing sites to cater for children aged 3 to 11 with a net capacity of 664 including the nursery provision. The net capacity of the proposed new school will remain as the combined net capacity of both existing schools.

Due to the impact of falling pupil numbers across the primary phase, both schools have surplus places and have temporary capped their numbers at 60 per year group, so are already organised around two forms of entry. Subsequently, they have successfully consulted on a published admission number (PAN) reduction from 90 to 60 places to be implemented from September 2026.

All the children currently in Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School will automatically become pupils in the single primary school.

The proposed implementation date and opening of the proposed primary school would be September 2026 if agreed.

What is the impact of this proposal on both schools and the school community if agreed?

Overall, there is no detrimental impact on the school community. There may be concerns regarding school reorganisation especially when dealing with budget pressures, as local communities see a school as being at the heart of the community and sometimes any proposed change may be contentious.

Taking this into account, the council will support the continuous delivery of high-quality education, whilst ensuring its vision to give all children the best start in life, enabling all our children and young people to reach their potential, be safe, happy and healthy regardless of their background.

As no pupils are being displaced, it is not expected that the proposal will have a negative impact on local schools.

Impact of the proposal on Pupils

- All pupils attending Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School would automatically transfer to the proposed primary school.
- A unified leadership & governance would mean that assessment of pupils including those with special educational needs and disabilities will be consistent and transition from KS1 to KS2 will be smoother and cause less anxiety for pupils.

Impact of the proposal on Parents/Carers

- As a single primary school, the requirement for parents to apply for a place in the Junior School would be removed, enabling children to progress automatically from Year 2 to Year 3
- If the proposal is agreed, parents would only have to apply for a place in Reception and will not need to apply for a Year 3 place. This will enable consistent engagement with parents across the primary phase, with no need to transfer information at the end of Key Stage 1.

Impact of the proposal on Staff

- All the teachers and support staff employed under a permanent contract at the Infant and Junior Schools (at the time of the proposed amalgamation) would automatically continue their employment in the single primary school, subject to any restructuring which takes place before the date of amalgamation based on a sustainable staffing structure.
- Leadership staff, however, will be affected as the proposed primary school would be required to appoint a single headteacher with one leadership team.

Impact of the proposal on Governors

- The Governing Board of Odessa Infant School would cease to exist with effect from 31 August 2026. The existing Governing Board of St James' CofE Junior School would become the Governing Board of the primary school if established.
- The Local Authority would encourage St James' CofE Junior School Governing Board to consider all opportunities whereby Governors of the infant school could join the primary school Governing Board. This could be through reconstitution, not filling current vacancies, or appointment of Associate Members. This would help ensure a good balance and complementary skills set.

What is the timescale for the process?

Process timescale	Description
28 July 2025	Newham Council made a key decision to undertake a pre-statutory consultation on the amalgamation proposal.
Opens: 22 September Ends: 20 October 2025	Stage 1: Pre-statutory consultation 'Informal' consultation of stakeholders and interested parties prior to publication
October 2025	Feedback and views expressed by all interested parties during this informal consultation will be considered and included in a report for the council to consider and decide whether to take the proposal forward to the statutory stage of the process.
November 2025	Stage 2: Publication (Statutory proposal/Notice) If the council decides to proceed with the statutory stage of the process, then a statutory notice and proposal will be published.
November/December 2025 (4-week period)	Stage 3: Representation (Formal consultation) This publication of the notice would provide a final opportunity for any person to object or make comments on the proposal.
December 2025/ January 2026	Stage 4: Decision Cabinet would consider all the views received during the statutory representation period and make the final decision on whether or not to agree the amalgamation proposal.
From February 2026	If the decision is to proceed, arrangements are made to implement the Cabinet's decision.
September 2026	Stage 5: Implementation If the decision is to proceed with the amalgamation; the single primary school opens.

How do I respond to this consultation?

You can make your views on the amalgamation proposal known via the online consultation response questionnaire by clicking

https://newham-self.achieveservice.com/service/Consultation_on_the_proposal_to_amalgamate_Odessa_Infant_school_and_St_James_CofE_Junior_school

We have included a comprehensive **frequently asked questions (FAQ)** document which will help answer any other questions you may have.

Representatives of the governing boards and Newham Council officers will discuss the proposal with the staff of both schools as detailed below.

Date: 14 October 2025

Time: 3.45pm

Location: St James' CofE Junior School

A meeting has been arranged for parents/carers of both schools with representatives of the governing boards and Newham Council officers on.

Date: 15 October 2025

Time: 3.30pm

Location: Odessa Infant School

These meetings will be an opportunity to seek any further clarifications on the proposal. If you have any other questions regarding this proposal or you require this document in a different format, please email; schoolplaceplanning@newham.gov.uk

This e-consultation document and the FAQ is being sent electronically to all parents/carers, governors, teachers and support staff of Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School.

Electronic copies will also be sent to all the Newham schools/academies including special schools, teaching and support staff trade unions representing teachers and other staff at both schools, Councillors, MPs, the Dioceses of Chelmsford and Brentwood, all primary schools governing boards/academy trusts, all early years' providers, community groups, neighbouring local authorities, and other trade unions.

All views received during this pre-statutory consultation will be considered before we can proceed to the next stage of the process.

The deadline for consultation response is Monday 20 October 2025.

