

# Consultation on the proposal to amalgamate

Odessa Infant School and St. James' CofE Junior School

Frequently Asked Questions

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### 1. What is this consultation about?

London borough of Newham and the Diocese of Chelmsford is proposing to amalgamate Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School to become a primary school

The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of staff, governors, parents and carers of pupils of Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School and other interested parties before a decision can be taken on whether or not to amalgamate both schools.

### 2. 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.

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 tables below show the current provision primary phase with a PAN of 90 in both schools.

Current Provision	Y Rec.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Odessa Infant School	90	90	90	-	-	-	-
of St James' CofE Junior School	-	-	-	90	90	90	90

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 capacity of 664 including the nursery provision. However, due to the impact of falling pupil numbers across the primary phase, both schools have surplus places and have temporarily 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 from 2026.

It is important to note that the net capacity of the new school will remain as the combined net capacities of both existing schools.

Therefore, if the amalgamation is agreed the proposed primary provision will be implemented from 2026 as follows.

Proposed Provision	Y Rec.	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Proposed Primary School	60	60	60	60	60	60	60

All the children currently in Odessa Infant School and St James' CofE Junior School will automatically become pupils in the new primary school from September 2026.

### 3. Why are we proposing to amalgamate both schools to form a primary school?

Odessa Infant School is 1 of the 8 Newham maintained schools whose budget deficit has grown despite having stable pupil numbers. This is in part due to increase in pupil numbers with SEND and insufficient funding.

Following a review of all options, to help sustain and maintain the school's financial stability, the only viable solution is an amalgamation 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.

### 4. What alternative options were considered before the amalgamation was proposed?

An alternative option of the school joining a multi-academy trust (MAT) was explored by the leadership of the school, however this was not a realistic prospect due to the school's existing budget deficit, which any MAT would have to absorb.

It was also established that allowing the school to continue as is, was not an option as it would likely result in a growing budget deficit, estimated to grow by around £0.2m per annum. This is not educationally or financially viable and does not provide best value when dealing with budget pressures.

### 5. What happens to the children currently in both schools before the proposed amalgamation date?

Odessa infant and St. James' junior schools will remain in operation and will continue to educate children throughout this academic year.

if the amalgamation is agreed the proposed primary school will open in 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.

## **6. How would this proposal benefit children?**

The amalgamation of both schools will provide clear benefits for pupils' learning including the following:

- the newly amalgamated school would only be required to appoint a single headteacher with significant saving being made available to the governors to support teaching and learning, offer better continuity and a smoother transition between KS1 and KS2;
- will build on best practice within both the Infant and Junior School, and continue improving standards of pupils' achievement and attainment;
- allows parents to only apply once for the school (Reception) without having to reapply at the end of Key Stage 1;
- enables more of the budget to be spent on front-line teaching and learning allowing the school to be more financially efficient; being able to buy supplies and services as a single school
- the relationship between parents and the school can build over a longer period of time; staff will know children early and for a longer period of time thus allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil.

## **7. How would this proposal benefit staff?**

A primary school offers greater career opportunities across the key stages and a wider age range. It provides the opportunity for more specialist staffing and range of expertise across a wider age range which aids staff development opportunities. It also enables greater flexibility in the deployment of staff to support the individual needs of pupils and allows teachers to progressively monitor pupils' learning.

## **8. What would be the admission arrangements in the proposed primary school?**

London Borough of Newham is the admissions authority for community and voluntary controlled infant, junior and primary schools. The proposed primary school will adopt the current admission arrangements in place including the oversubscription criteria in accordance with the School Admissions Code. The amalgamation would lead to a single admission with no application required between infants and juniors. This would remove a level of uncertainty for parents.

The primary school would have a total of 420 places and will admit 60 pupils into Reception each year, as the new PAN will come into effect in September 2026.

Our admission data over a five-year period between 2020/21 – 2024/25 academic years shows that at the point of infant to junior transition; on average 93% of Odessa Infant pupils move into St. James' Junior school to continue their primary education. So proposed amalgamation will further strengthen the transition between key stages 1 and 2.

### **9. What would be the impact of this amalgamation on education quality and standards?**

Odessa infant and St. James' junior schools were inspected and judged to be 'Good' by Ofsted following their last graded inspections.

The amalgamation will build on the positives already identified and would provide a base for a more collaborative approach towards delivering an outstanding standard of education for all children.

The arrangements that amalgamation brings will enable the school to operate under a single staffing structure which will allow for the sharing of resources, expertise, knowledge and support across the key stages that would continue to improve the quality of education on offer, drive up progress and attainment for all children who attend the current schools.

### **10. Would there be any changes to the size and accommodation of the new school?**

The proposed primary school would be located on the existing site of the Infant and Junior schools. The primary school would need as many classes as there are currently in the Infant and Junior schools. If the amalgamation is agreed, the school would remain largely the same with all the existing premises being used by the primary school in the most appropriate, flexible and efficient way.

The Odessa infant site and any buildings which form part of the school's premises would be transferred to the trustees of the school (which is the Chelmsford Diocese) to be held by them on trust for the purposes of the primary school.

### **11. What will be the name of the school?**

The proposed new school would require a name change and this will need to be considered prior to the opening of the proposed new primary school. If the amalgamation is taken forward and agreed.

### **12. If it becomes a primary, will there be the same opening and closing times?**

At this present time, there hasn't been any discussion in relation to changing the school opening and closing times. Any change to the times will be the decision of the school's leadership team and the governing board of the primary school if the amalgamation proposal is agreed.

### **13. Will there be a new school uniform for the newly established primary school?**

Existing uniforms will remain, however for branded items, sew on badges will be issued to reflect the name of the new school if the proposal is agreed.

Any further decisions on a uniform change will be made by the Governing board of the new primary school.

**14. Both schools have a Headteacher who is accessible to pupils and staff, how will this be managed in a primary school?**

There will be only one headteacher and a single leadership team in the primary school. The relationship between pupils, staff and the new headteacher will build over time. Staff and the headteacher will know children for a longer period of time thus allowing the school to better understand the needs of each pupil.

In practical terms, depending on how the new school decides to integrate, it could benefit from a joint staff room, single designated reception/administrative area together with a single main entrance for visitors to the school.

**15. Will there be changes to staffing as a result of changes to the head teacher and amalgamation?**

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 new 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 there be a new structure drawn up by the Governing Body for the new school. The proposed primary school would be required to appoint a single headteacher with one leadership team.

The post of the headteacher is a new post and would be advertised internally in the first instance (which will only be open to both the infant and the junior school staff), once a decision is taken to amalgamate and establish the new primary school.

**16. What happens if you can't recruit a new head teacher for the primary school?**

The Governing Body and Diocese with the support of the Council will aim to appoint the most suitable candidate for the role. With clear understanding of the school's vision, ethos and needs from the outset, the recruitment process should be successful.

**17. If a significant number of stakeholders are opposed to this proposal, how will the Council take their views into account?**

The Council will seek and consider views from all interested parties before making any final decisions and will balance this against its responsibility to safeguard Odessa infant school from becoming unsustainable or risk closure.

Please make your views known on the amalgamation proposal 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](https://newham-self.achieveservice.com/service/Consultation_on_the_proposal_to_amalgamate_Odessa_Infant_school_and_St_James_CofE_Junior_school)

### 18. What happens next?

At the end of this pre-statutory (Informal) consultation period, the Council will consider the feedback and views expressed by all interested parties during the consultation and decide whether to proceed to the statutory stage of the process.

If the Council decides to proceed to the statutory stage, it will publish a statutory notice and a proposal in November 2025. The publication of this statutory notice triggers the statutory (formal) consultation.

This statutory consultation is a four week 'representation period' and provides the final opportunity for stakeholders and interested parties to comment on or submit objections to the proposal.

All comments and objections received during this representation period will be considered before, the Council's cabinet makes a final decision on the amalgamation proposal on or before February 2026.

**Thank you for your continued support and engagement. We remain committed to keeping you updated throughout this process.**

