

St Patrick's and St Edmund's Catholic Primary Schools

**Proposal to:
Amalgamate two schools
(by discontinuance and
enlargement).**

November 2022



Introduction

Birmingham City Council (the Council), as the Local Authority for Birmingham and the Governing Body is consulting on proposed changes to two Voluntary Aided schools, St Edmund's Catholic Primary School (St Edmunds) and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School (St Patricks). This document describes what is being proposed and why.

School Information:

Type:	Voluntary Aided (VA)		
Name:	St Patrick's Catholic Primary School	DFE:	3303346
Address:	Dudley Road, Ladywood, Birmingham B18 7QW		
Ward:	Ladywood	District:	Edgbaston
Age Range:	4 – 11 years	Net Capacity:	210
Last Ofsted:	December 2018	Ofsted Judgement	Good

Type:	Voluntary Aided (VA)		
Name:	St Edmund's Catholic Primary School	DFE:	3303347
Address:	Rosebery Street, Birmingham B18 7PA		
Ward:	Soho	District:	Ladywood
Age Range:	3-11 years	Net Capacity:	210 (excluding nursery)
Last Ofsted:	July 2019	Ofsted Judgement	Requires improvement

What changes are proposed?

The Council and the Governing Body are proposing to carry out the following changes to amalgamate two schools:

- Discontinue St Edmund's Catholic Primary School;
- Enlarge the amalgamated school
- Alter the age range of St Patrick's Primary School to 3 – 11 year olds (to include nursery age)

If approved, this proposal will result in St Patricks becoming a single primary school across two school sites (Rosebery Street and Dudley Road) with a pupil age range of 3 – 11 years and two form entry (52 full time equivalent pupil admission number).

Why do we want to do this?

Background:

In order for maintained schools to amalgamate in Birmingham, the criteria of the Council's amalgamation policy (October 2004) must be satisfied. The policy states that the only triggers for amalgamation are:

- I. Fallings rolls (unfilled pupil places)
- II. A request from the Governing Body(s) of a pair of schools.

The Federated Governing Body of St Edmund's Catholic Primary and Nursery School and St Patrick's Catholic Primary School, with the support of the Archdiocese of Birmingham, wrote to Birmingham City Council with their request to amalgamate. Following close collaboration with the schools and the Archdiocese of Birmingham, the Council has agreed to make the proposal.

The key reasons for the amalgamation are:

- Falling rolls (a number of pupil places which are unfilled)
- The financial challenges at the schools

The falling roll is described in more detail in the section: evidence of demand.

The financial challenges have existed for some time and more recently impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools have previously implemented staffing restructures and other measures to effectively manage the budgets and reduce the deficit at St Patricks. The Federated Governing Body believe that amalgamation will provide an opportunity for more efficient management of funds.

The amalgamation also provides the opportunity to continue to improve the educational standards as one school.

Why has this school been chosen / identified?

The proposal has been developed for these two schools as they are already governed by a single federated governing body. The schools are located near to one another (they are 0.8 km or 0.5 miles apart). The regulations governing school amalgamation and enlargement state that the school with the lower Ofsted rating at the time of the proposed changes will close. For this reason, it is proposed that St Edmund's is to discontinue as it is currently rated by Ofsted as "requiring improvement" and St Patrick's will continue as the enlarged school, as they are currently rated by Ofsted as a "good" school; the Ofsted rating of St Patrick's would carry forward.

Benefits of the amalgamation:

The following are a range of benefits and opportunities that the governing body believe will be achieved / experienced through amalgamation:

- To secure the future of two small schools as one larger school, in order to continue being able to offer a Catholic education to children in the local area.

- To provide the opportunity for children to be taught in a more specialised setting appropriate for their age.
- Each year group would become 2 form entry, allowing teachers and teaching assistants to work with a year group partner to enhance teaching and learning through shared planning, delivery and evaluation of teaching and moderation of standards in learning.
- To provide greater flexibility in deploying non-class-based staff
- To provide a strengthened pastoral team that could continue to offer Early Help with support to children and families.
- A single school leadership would be shared across both sites, continuing to drive school improvement in all areas.
- To provide economies of scale which would allow the enlarged school to improve and strengthen its financial position, making it more resilient to future challenges.

Evidence of Demand:

Birmingham has experienced falling demand for primary school places in recent years because of falling birth rates. There is an increase in local housing being built around the two schools which may increase demand for school places in the future. The city is also seeing potential growth because of international resettlement programmes. This proposal does not reduce the number of pupil places that would be offered as a result of the amalgamation. The school would offer a combined total of 60 places in reception. The admission number would continue to be monitored to ensure the school remains viable, which is the same for any school where there has been falling demand for pupil places. The amalgamation would offer more flexibility in managing admission numbers in the future, if required.

When will these changes happen?

Following full consultation, if the proposal is approved by the decision maker the changes will be implemented from **1st September 2023**.

Part 1: Consultation ('pre-publication' period):

Part 1 was completed between 20th September and 18th October 2022. All comments received during the pre-publication period have been considered when deciding to continue to the formal consultation. (Please note: Comments received during part 1 were for Local Authority and Governing Board to consider; and are not intended for the final decision maker*.)

A 'Question and Answer' document was produced for stakeholders as a result of the comments received during part 1. This is available from the school and the BeHeard consultation webpage (see **Appendix 1**)

Part 2: Formal Consultation ('representation period'): Current.

The current part is the representation period, a formal consultation (statutory: required by law). A public notice and this proposal document have been published Friday 18th November 2022 and allows four weeks for anyone to comment in writing

(see the section below: “How can I make my views known?”). Representation period is from Friday 18th November 2022 until Friday 16th December 2022.

(*Please note: Only comments received during part 2 will be forwarded to the decision maker for their consideration.)

Will there be any effect on other schools, Academies and educational institutions within the area?

There are no anticipated or identified impacts on other schools and education providers. The overall number of pupil places for primary age pupils would not change as a result of the amalgamation (60 per year group Reception to Year 6).

How will the proposal increase educational standards and parental choice?

The anticipated benefits of amalgamation that are listed earlier in this document would provide the school with both flexibility and stability to focus on the outcomes for pupils and continuous improvement to the quality of the education provided. The school will continue to offer good quality Catholic education to pupils in the local area.

How will this affect pupils at the school?

The Governing Body intend for the site at Rosebery Street (current St Edmund’s school site) to become the “lower-school” and be the location for the nursery provision and all Key-Stage 1 classes. There will be no changes to the capacity of the nursery class which currently has 26 full time equivalent pupils. This change would provide these pupils with a larger out-door space and increase the opportunity for outdoor learning.

The Governing Body intend for the site at Dudley Road (current St Patrick’s school site) to become the “upper-school” and be the location for all Key-Stage 2 classes and pupils (Year 3 to Year 6). This would provide the older pupils with larger classroom spaces and with convenient access to the neighbouring St Patrick’s Church for regular masses and preparation for their first communion and confirmation.

As one school across two sites, pupils would come together for whole school activities and pupils would benefit from the continuity of staff and leadership during transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

The Governing Body intend that the amalgamated school would be renamed and this is likely to be “St Edmunds and St Patricks Catholic Primary School”. There would be a new uniform for pupils to wear to school. The school is considering options for how it may reduce the financial impact of a new uniform on families.

If this amalgamation is approved, the school would consider increasing the number of nursery places offered in the future (up to 52 full time equivalent pupil), if there is sufficient demand. The Schools believe this would enhance the overall education offer and encourage applications for primary places.

Admission Arrangements

The existing admission arrangements for each school would need to be updated by the admission authority (which is the Governing Body for Voluntary Aided schools). An In-Year variation would need to be submitted to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator for approval to change the arrangements for 2023 / 2024 and 2024 / 2025 to:

- Change the current admission point for distance measurements to be a single point.

The Governing Body, with the Archdiocese of Birmingham, are considering the most sensible options for the admission point for distance measurements.

All pupils on roll at St Edmund's or with an offer of a place there at the time of closure and amalgamation will automatically be placed at the enlarged St Patrick's school. Existing pupils of both St Edmunds and St Patricks schools would become pupils of the larger amalgamated primary school and there will be no action required by parents / carers of pupils on roll. Pupils in Year 2 would automatically continue into Year 3 and would then move to the upper-school on the Dudley Road site.

Notice about the proposed amalgamation was included in the online primary composite prospectus for any parents applying for admission in 2023 when the admissions round opened on 1st October 2022, so they will be aware of the potential changes.

How will this affect staff?

Generally, staff would be unaffected but may experience some change due to the proposed split of lower and upper school across the two sites. The change may also provide further opportunities for professional development. The configuration of the school and staffing structure is a matter for the school governing body to determine in due course. If this proposal is approved, any impact on terms and conditions would be with full consultation with Trade Unions / Professional Associations.

Travel and Transport:

The Schools are located near to one another (0.8 km / 0.5 miles). The leadership and Governing Body of the schools have considered how the proposed lower and upper school configuration may impact on families with pupils in both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Consideration is being given to opening and closing - start and finish times being staggered for each site so that families do not experience significant inconvenience. This would be done in line with any relevant government guidance and regulations.

Will there be changes to the school building?

The main change would be how the sites may be used as a lower and upper school. There would be some internal refurbishment and reconfiguration works to provide sufficient classroom space at St Patricks and adjustments to pupil toilet facilities at both school sites.

What are the project costs for this proposal and how will it be funded?

The cost of any internal alterations to the buildings will be met by the school. The cost of items such as new school signs for the school and ICT systems would be met from the school's revenue budget.

What are the financial impacts of this proposal?

As noted previously in this proposal, there would be some costs required to implement this proposal. The Governing Body believe that, as a single school, there would be benefits to flexibility and stability of the finances as a single primary school.

Will this definitely happen?

There is a statutory process we must follow to make these sorts of changes to schools. It is only after a decision that we will be able to say with certainty whether the proposal will be implemented.

What will happen if this proposal is rejected?

St Edmunds and St Patricks would continue to operate as two separate schools under the federated governing body. The schools may not achieve the benefits of being one primary school. The federated governing body would need to consider other options to optimise funding and quality of education within the two schools.

What happens next?

Part-2: The “representation period” consultation: this is the current part of the process. The statutory publication and consultation, known as the “representation period”: This will be the next part of the process which lasts four weeks and allows stakeholders to submit comments (again) which can be reviewed by the decision maker.

Part-3 The decision period: The comments from Part-2 will be anonymised and presented with a report to the decision maker. The decision maker for this type of proposal is the Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Families.

The dates set out below meet the government requirements for us to consult fully with the people affected by the proposal.

Key dates

Action	Date
Part-1 Pre-publication period starts	20th September 2022 – Completed
Part-1 Pre-publication period ends	18th October 2022 – Completed
Part-2 Representation period starts	18th November 2022
Part-2 Representation period ends	16th December 2022*
Part-3 Final decision deadline window	16th December – 16th February 2023
Changes implemented	1st September 2023

How do I comment on this proposal?

We invite all interested parties to give us their comment on this proposal.

Any comments for Part-2 must be received no later than 16th December 2022

You can comment online via:

<https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/schoolorganisationsot10177-sot10178statpub>

You can write to us at:

By email: eds.enquiries@birmingham.gov.uk

By letter to or by completing and sending the attached comments form to:

Birmingham City Council,
 School Organisation Team,
 PO Box 15843,
 Birmingham, B2 2RT.

Groups consulted:

- Parents and Pupils of St Edmund’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School & St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School
- Staff and Governors of St Edmund’s Catholic Primary and Nursery School & St Patrick’s Catholic Primary School
- Birmingham City Councillors
- Member of Parliament for the constituency
- NHS partners
- Birmingham Diocese and Archdiocesan
- Birmingham Schools
- Neighbouring Local Authorities
- Trade unions / professional associations
- Birmingham City Council Officers and departments
- The Department for Education – School Organisation
- Office of the Schools Adjudicator
- Public notice in Birmingham Post Newspaper

**St Edmunds & St Patricks... (Part-2):
Amalgamation to become one school.**

Thank you for taking the time to send us your thoughts on this proposal.

Consultation Response Form

Please help us to analyse your response by completing the following:

Your name (optional): _____

Your contact details (optional):

Are you in favour of the proposal (please select one answer)?

Yes	No	Neither / Don't know
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What type of stakeholder are you (please select one answer)?

Pupil of the Schools	
Parent / Carer of pupil at the Schools	
Governor of the Schools	
Staff of the Schools	
Local Resident	
Birmingham Councillor	
Member of Parliament	
Other (please describe)	

Please provide your comments on the proposal.
(Continue on additional page, as required.)