

STATUTORY PROPOSAL FOR PRESCRIBED ALTERATION TO PHOENIX SCHOOL

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1. Introduction

Phoenix School (DfE No. 211/7095) is an all-through community special school for pupils with severe language and communication difficulties whose needs lie within the autistic spectrum. The school is located at 49 Bow Road, London E3 2AD. It was rated Outstanding by Ofsted in November 2018.

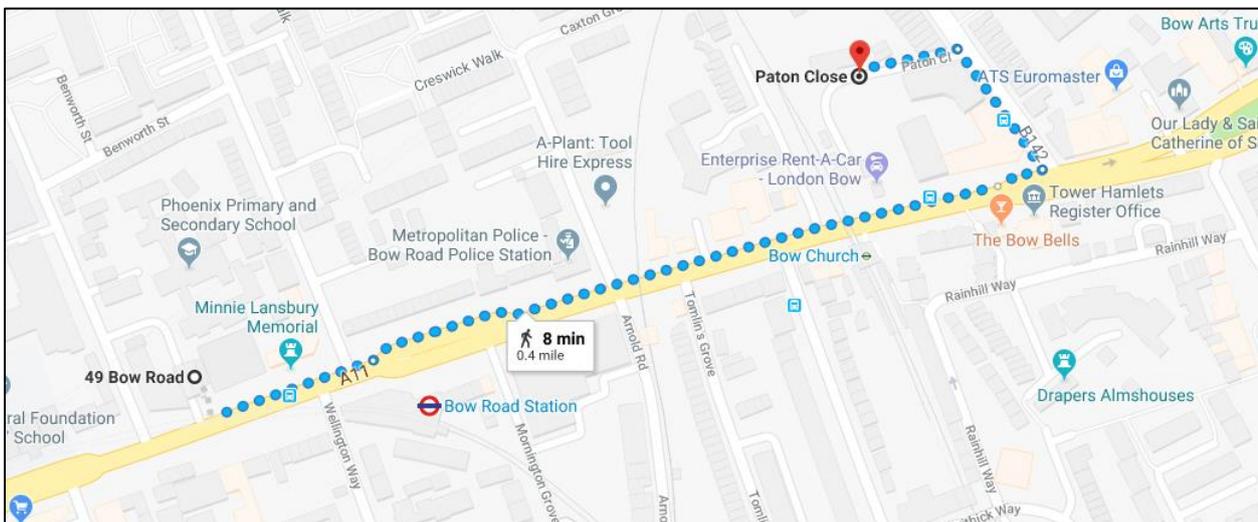
The London Borough of Tower Hamlets (Town Hall, Mulberry Place, 5 Clove Crescent, E14 2BG) is proposing to expand Phoenix School by 160 places to meet the needs of an increasing number of children with Communication and Interaction needs who require specialist provision. The Local Authority (LA) is consulting on this proposal and anyone can submit their comments.

2. Details of the proposal

Phoenix School currently has provision for up to 254 pupils. 209 of these pupils are on its main site at 49 Bow Road and 45 pupils on a temporary site at Paton Close, E3. This proposal is to expand the school by establishing a permanent site at Paton Close, which will provide a total of 360 places across both sites, comprised as follows:

- Phoenix Lower School at Bow Road with capacity up to 200 pupils aged 3-12
- Phoenix Upper School at Paton Close with capacity up to 160 pupils 13 - 19

The new Paton Close site is very close to the existing Phoenix School (less than 600 metres) – see map below. This will enable a high level of integration between the two sites allowing Phoenix to continue to operate as one school with staff working between both sites and other resources and activities shared to ensure its smooth running.



The expansion of the School will allow it to appoint more governors to the existing governing body, which will provide even greater leadership and management capacity to support its continued development. Under the new school organisation, pupils will be able to start at Phoenix Lower School from as early as 3 years of age and when they reach 13 years of age, automatically transfer to Phoenix Upper School where they will continue until the age of 19.

3. Evidence of need for additional places

Tower Hamlets has one of the highest proportions of pupils with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) in the country – 4.4% compared with 3.0% in London. Communication and Interaction (including Autistic Spectrum Disorder) is the most common type of need in the area and has grown faster than any other type of need. Over the past five years, the number of pupils with Communication and Interaction needs rose by 43%. This has placed significant pressure on Phoenix School which is now at full capacity and has expanded into temporary accommodation. This growing demand has meant that, at times, the school has needed to operate a waiting list for admissions.

If current trends continue, Tower Hamlets is projected to require an additional 200 special school places by 2026/27 and the number of pupils with Communication and Interaction needs is expected to grow faster than any other need type. This proposal to permanently expand Phoenix School by 160 places will therefore enable the Local Authority to provide much-needed specialist provision for the growing number of children with Communication and Interaction needs and avoid any significant delays them accessing the most suitable education.

4. Objectives of the proposal

The primary objective of this proposal is to provide much needed specialist provision for children with severe language and communication difficulties whose needs lie within the autistic spectrum. This proposal will also help to achieve:

- **Improvements in educational standards:** The proposals will enable the School to expand its existing offer of a rich and stimulating curriculum, which is individually tailored, reflecting good practice in an environment that supports the pupils' learning. The school will have more capacity to offer a range of sensory and therapeutic interventions along with a multidisciplinary approach to pupil needs. The school will also be able to further develop its partnerships with other agencies, parents and families to ensure that children needs are met.
- **Increased parental choice:** Phoenix is a popular, 'Outstanding'¹ school that is currently at capacity and at times has to operate a waiting list for places. The proposal to provide additional capacity at Phoenix will therefore mean a greater number of parents are able to secure a place for their child.
- **Greater community impact:** The proposal will enable the school to further develop its partnerships with business, industry and the local community to raise the profile of Communication and Interaction needs.

¹ Ofsted Rating (Nov 2018)

5. Effect on other schools in the area

Phoenix is the local authority's only specialist school for children with severe language and communication difficulties whose needs lie within the autistic spectrum, and the school is already at capacity. Other provisions will therefore not be adversely impacted by the school's expansion.

6. Project costs and value for money

The expansion of Phoenix is expected to cost £16m which will be funded through a combination of grants from the Department for Education (Basic Need Grant and Special Provision Fund), as well as contributions from developers (Section 106 and Community Infrastructure Levy).

This proposal will provide value for money for the Local Authority and its residents. If Phoenix did not expand to meet the increasing demand for specialist provision, the Local Authority would need to commission alternative placements at independent or non-maintained special schools. A place at these schools, on average, costs twice more than a place at Phoenix. Transportation for these pupils would also be more costly, as they would have to travel outside of the borough.

7. Implementation

The school's expansion onto the Paton Close site will be managed by the Local Authority. Works will begin in late Spring 2019 and be completed in Spring 2020. The school's new site, Phoenix Upper School, will then be ready to open in September 2020.

8. Informal consultation

The Local Authority has already undertaken informal consultation on the proposal at a meeting with the school's governing body and parents and carers of children at the school in July 2018. The LA has also consulted with other schools leaders in various meetings and forums. Feedback from these informal consultations has been positive.

9. How to respond to this proposal

Any person wishing to submit any comments either in support of, or objecting to, the proposal may do so by emailing lisa.stidle@towerhamlets.gov.uk or by post to:

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All comments must be received by 5pm on Friday, 25th January 2019.