

Al-Hijrah School Interim Executive Board Proposals Frequently Asked Questions

This document will be used to share answers to the questions asked by parents, staff and other stakeholders about the proposals for Al-Hijrah School. Questions have been grouped as below.

Questions can be sent to Birmingham City Council via education@birmingham.gov.uk for response. This document will also be regularly updated.

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General

What are the proposals for Al-Hijrah School?

The Interim Executive Board (IEB) for Al-Hijrah School has put forward proposals that will address the two issues face by the school. These are the Directive Academy Order that was issued in May 2017 and the Court of Appeal judgement that gender segregation in co-educational schools is unlawful. The IEB proposes to change the age range of Al-Hijrah from 4 – 16 to 4 – 11 (from an all-through school to a primary school). An initial consultation on this proposal was launched on 26 September 2018 and will run until 26 October 2018. The proposal is set out in a presentation that is available on the Al-Hijrah School website.

Will the proposals be shared with parents of Al-Hijrah pupils?

Yes. A briefing for parents took place on Tuesday 25 September which was very well attended. We are encouraging parents to take part in the initial consultation that is running until 26 October (www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/alhijrahdraft/). Email addresses have been provided for parents to use if they have any questions and we will be holding further information sessions and briefings at Al-Hijrah for parents.

How do families give their views on the proposals?

The initial consultation runs until 26 October 2018 and families can give their views online at <https://www.birminghambeheard.org.uk/people-1/alhijrahdraft/>. Birmingham City Council staff will be at Al-Hijrah School for a drop in session about the consultation on Thursday 25 October. More information will be shared with parents by Al-Hijrah School.

Why has it taken so long to get to this stage?

The Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) undertook significant work to identify a suitable academy sponsor for the school. Several proposals were worked up and tested but the proposal by Star Academies Trust to run a primary school was considered by the RSC to be the only workable one. This work has been highly complex due to the directive academy order and the Court of Appeal judgement.

What consideration has been given to parents having to drop children off at three different places?

We appreciate that having children at different schools can be a challenge for families. If the proposals went ahead, we would support parents with making applications to schools which would help them to minimise travelling distances

Primary age children (Reception to Year 5)

Where is the site for the proposed new primary school?

A potential new site for the school has been identified on the old Small Heath Lower School site on Waverley Road. This site would be completely refurbished.

Would primary aged children currently at Al-Hijrah School move automatically to the primary school or would an application have to be made?

The proposal is clear that children currently in Reception to Year 5 at Al-Hijrah School would move to the primary school without their families making an application.

Why has Star Academies been chosen as the preferred sponsor for the school when it converts to academy?

This decision was taken by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) so we cannot comment in any detail on their decision making process. We do know that the RSC looked for an academy sponsor who could provide education with an Islamic ethos and decided that Star Academies (formerly Tauheedul Academy Trust) is their preferred sponsor.

Will the new school be called Al-Hijrah or will that name cease to exist?

The name of the school when it has been converted to an academy would be a decision for the academy sponsor (Star Academies).

What would happen to the current Al-Hijrah School site?

The current site is not suitable for the education of primary pupils who are currently housed in temporary classrooms. The proposal is for the primary school to relocate to a new site. The current site is owned by the Al-Hijrah Trust so it would be up to the Trust what happened to the site after the school moved. The site would not be used for the proposed new girls' free school.

What would happen to children on the waiting list for Al-Hijrah?

We would work with the academy sponsor that has been determined by the Regional Schools Commissioner (Star Academies) to support parents of children who are currently of Reception-Year 5 age remaining on the waiting list for the new primary school.

Children who are currently on the Year 6 or secondary age waiting list for Al-Hijrah School would no longer be on that list at the end of August 2019 if the school age range was changed. All children have the right to apply in-year to any school and if the application is refused the right to be added to the schools' waiting lists.

Year 6 pupils (due to move to secondary school in September 2019)

Do families with children in Year 6 at Al-Hijrah who live outside Birmingham apply to Birmingham School Admissions for their child's secondary school place?

For Year 7 admissions for September 2019, families must apply to the local authority in which they live. For families who pay their council tax to Birmingham, applications should be made online via www.birmingham.gov.uk/schooladmissions by 31 October 2018. Families who live outside Birmingham should apply to the local authority in which they live and information will be available on those councils' websites.

How many schools should families apply for?

Families can list up to six preferences in their online application for their child's secondary school place. We would encourage parents to list as many preferences as possible and to list the schools in order of preference. Advice on making applications is available on the School Admissions website

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20119/school_admissions/1778/apply_for_secondary_school_year_7_place.

Would children in Year 6 at Al-Hijrah who are due to start secondary school in September 2019 have priority when applying to schools in the local area?

All applications, including those for children currently at Al-Hijrah, will be assessed against the schools' determined published admission arrangements. The admission arrangements for the 2019/20 academic year were determined on 28 February 2018 so no changes can now be made. [These arrangements are published on the Birmingham City Council website](#). School Admissions staff will support the parents of Al-Hijrah children with their applications.

How will families be able to apply for a Year 7 place for their daughter at the new girls' free school?

Families should apply online for a Year 7 place for their daughter before the deadline of 31 October 2018. School Admissions staff will contact all families when more information about the new girls' free school is known. Families will then be able to make an application for that school.

Would the Year 6 girls currently attending Al-Hijrah School have priority for the new girls' free school?

It is our intention to work with the new sponsor when appointed so that Year 6 girls currently attending Al-Hijrah School will have priority for places in Year 7 at the new girls' school for September 2019 and more information about this will be shared with families as soon as it is available.

Secondary aged pupils (Years 7 to 10)

Why can't the school remain an all-through school even if it is converted to academy?

The Court of Appeal judgement ruled that gender segregation in co-educational schools is unlawful so Al-Hijrah School cannot be converted to academy status with its current arrangements. There are secondary schools with an Islamic ethos that parents of boys can apply for and there are plans for a new secondary girls' free school with an Islamic ethos to open in September 2019.

Should parents apply for places at other schools now?

Al-Hijrah School will be open as normal for all of the 2018/19 academic year for all the pupils and staff. Birmingham City Council's School Admissions team will be holding a mini school admissions round during the spring term and will ensure families have all the information and support they need to apply for school places to start in September 2019. There would also be transition plans put in place for each pupil to ensure they could move to their new school as smoothly as possible. Applications for school places outside of this process (In-Year admissions) can be made direct to schools and [information is available on the Birmingham City Council website](#).

What if families decide to move their child(ren) from Al-Hijrah to another school before the end of the academic year? Would they still be part of the mini admissions round?

Only pupils on roll at Al-Hijrah at the time of the mini admissions round (spring 2019) would be part of this process. Children who have left Al-Hijrah School by then would not be included.

Would families who live outside Birmingham have to apply to the local authority in which they live for a new secondary school for their child?

Our proposal is to include all Al-Hijrah School pupils currently in Years 7 – 10 in the mini admissions round. This would be all pupils who are on roll in those year groups in spring 2019, including those who live outside of Birmingham.

Would there be places for all of the secondary boys at Islamic ethos schools in Birmingham?

There is increased capacity for secondary boys' education in Birmingham that was not there a few years ago and parents would be able to apply for places for their sons at those schools and other schools. Once parents had expressed preferences for their sons, discussions could take place with schools about potentially making changes to their published admission numbers to ensure places could be offered to Al-Hijrah pupils.

Would the boys currently attending Al-Hijrah get priority when applying for school places?

Applications for school places will be processed in accordance with schools' admission criteria as these set out how places are offered. Advice on this would be provided to families when they were applying for school places for their children.

There are plans to open a new secondary school for girls, why not one for boys too?

There are already schools in Birmingham that provide secondary education for boys with an Islamic ethos but there is no equivalent provision for girls. This is why a girls' free school is being planned.

Would the planned new girls' free school have places for all the girls currently at Al-Hijrah and would the girls have priority when applying?

It is our intention to work with the new sponsor when appointed so that girls currently on roll at Al-Hijrah School in Years 7 – 10 would have priority for places at the new girls' school and more information will be shared with families when it is available.

How would a change in school affect the continuity of curriculum offered and potential impact on exam results? What extra support would be given to pupils currently in Year 10 to ensure their studies were not disrupted for Year 11?

There would be transition plans for all pupils with a particular focus on children currently in Year 10.

How would the mini admissions round work?

One mini round for both boys and girls in the spring term of 2019. Parents would be invited to express preferences for secondary schools and support would be provided by School Admissions staff. More information about this process will be shared with parents in due course.

Who can I contact if I have any further queries?

Please contact Birmingham City Council via email to education@birmingham.gov.uk. Responses will be either by email or telephone. We will also be holding meetings with parents at Al-Hijrah School and this FAQ document will be regularly updated.