

The Aldgate School

A Statement by the Governing Board

Governors are pleased to announce a new name for our school: The Aldgate School. The change will come into effect on 1st September 2020 and is subject to formal legal approval by the City of London Corporation.

Background

In June 2020, the Governing Board decided that the school should be renamed in light of Sir John Cass's involvement in slavery, highlighted by the Black Lives Matter movement following the death of George Floyd. Our school is one in which every child is given full opportunity to flourish, irrespective of their background. Governors felt that to continue to celebrate our founder in the school's name would be incompatible with our vision and values. Our trustee, the Sir John Cass's Foundation, made a similar decision at the time, as did the other institutions that shared their name. Governors further proposed that the new school name should be one which is geographical rather than biographical, should retain a sense of the long history of the school and its links to the Sir John Cass's Foundation and the Church of England, and should celebrate its unique position as the only state-maintained school in the City of London.

Consultation

There followed a four-week consultation period with our stakeholders. Governors would like to thank pupils, former pupils, staff, parents, the Sir John Cass's Foundation, the Parochial Church Council (PCC) of St Botolph's Aldgate, the City Deanery Synod, and the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS) for their involvement in that process. Over 100 people attended virtual consultation meetings and a similar number of written representations were received. Governors reviewed every comment and these informed their final choice of name.

History of Aldgate

Aldgate takes its name from one of the seven gates in the former London Wall, the site of which lies directly outside the school grounds and which dates back to Roman times. The gate gave its name to the twelfth century priory, Christchurch Aldgate, the remains of which lie below the school playground. Aldgate is also one of the 25 ancient wards of the City of London. Due to its location at the entrance to the City, Aldgate has long been a place of great welcome and diversity, both ethnically and culturally. It has also been an area of great change, an aspect that continues to this day. Aldgate is currently undergoing significant redevelopment and a large public space, Aldgate Square, has recently opened alongside the school building. Governors believe that the choice of name conveys a sense of this diverse history while placing the school at the heart of the thriving and fast-changing Aldgate community.

Working together

*Faith, hope and love abide, these three: and the greatest of these is love.
1 Corinthians 13:13*

A key message arising from the consultation was the importance of the school's links to three historic institutions: the Sir John Cass's Foundation, the Church of England, and the City of London. The school derives huge benefit from each of these institutions, financially, culturally, and in terms of the education it delivers. These relationships make the school the special and unique place everyone recognises it to be. Many views were expressed during the consultation period and governors decided that the most appropriate way to address all three institutions was in the strapline to the school's name. This will be used on signs, on letterheads, and on the school website. The wording of the strapline will be decided once the Sir John Cass's Foundation has completed its own renaming process.

Committed to diversity

The Governing Board would also like to thank the members of the Working Group it established in June to consider the school's response to the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement. In addition to the renaming of the school and the removal of all statues relating to Sir John Cass, the Working Group made further recommendations that have been approved by the Board. The way in which the curriculum is delivered in school will be reviewed, helping children gain a greater understanding of all histories. This will build on existing work in this area to ensure that children are aware of the potential bias of Eurocentric interpretations. In addition, the school will ensure that the transition to a new name is recorded in an appropriate manner and that its long history will continue to be celebrated, allowing all members of the community to retain their rightfully held sense of pride in the institution. This includes replacing Founder's Day with a new, more appropriate ceremony held at St Botolph's Aldgate.

Finally, in addition to the above measures, the Governing Board will further its attempts to increase the diversity of its members. As part of the renaming process, governors have requested an amendment to the Instrument of Government of the school, strengthening its commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusivity. When ratified by the City of London Corporation, the new Instrument of Government will make explicit reference to the school's Diversity Statement. This will be reviewed by the Governing Board in the Autumn Term and regularly thereafter. These measures have the approval of the Foundation and the LDBS and will be used to guide governor appointments by all relevant bodies. The lack of diversity of governing boards is a national problem. We are committed to removing barriers that may have discouraged members of certain parts of our society from considering applying to become a school governor, and to ensuring a diverse board that better reflects our school community.

The new school year

The Governing Board would like to take this opportunity to thank Ms Allan and her staff for all their hard work in preparing for the school to reopen on 4th September. The Board welcomes all its families, old and new, to the new academic year at this time of great change and uncertainty. We look forward to building on the long-standing success of the school and celebrating the many and varied achievements of all its pupils in the years to come.