

Closure of Westfield Nursery

We have taken the difficult decision to close Westfield Nursery in August 2024. We recognise the value of the Nursery to the staff, students and local residents who have used it in the past and who are currently using it. In reaching our decision, we have taken this into account along with several other competing factors.

Since the pandemic, the work patterns of our parents and carers have changed significantly. This has led to substantial changes in what is required of the service, including fewer days' care per week and longer opening hours per day than we are able to provide. This has led to a considerable drop in the number of hours of care required for the children attending the Nursery, meaning the service is underutilised and consequently has been operating at a significant financial loss for two years.

Continuously operating at such a loss has created a challenge to Queen Mary's obligations, as a registered charity, to use our assets and resources to undertake and support our core charitable activities of teaching and research.

We have tried several things to try to ensure the facility's future viability, including:

- We increased the fees in 2022 which resulted in some parents and carers removing their children from the nursery. We explored increasing prices further in 2023 but at the time, for local residents, we were already one of the most expensive service providers in Tower Hamlets. (We provide discounts on the service for Queen Mary staff and students, which has made the cost more competitive for these users.)
- We have explored extending our start and finish times but there was no evidence to suggest this would help to match demand or improve current occupancy levels.

We are very sensitive to the impact of the decision to close our Nursery is having on the parents and carers of all our registered children and are doing all we can to help them find alternative arrangements.

We are engaged with QM's parents and carers networks. We will listen to alternative ideas and where we can, we will seek to mitigate the impact of the closure.