

Consultation on the expansion of Harrington Hill Primary School from one to two forms of entry, and the amalgamation of the student body (merger) of Harrington Hill Primary School with Oldhill Community School on the site of Harrington Hill

Overview

We are consulting you about a proposal to expand Harrington Hill Primary School to two forms of entry (2 classes per year group). This proposal is linked to another one to close Oldhill Community School on 31 August 2025. The two proposals together would mean that the schools can be merged. All pupils at Oldhill would be offered a place at the expanded Harrington Hill school. Harrington Hill would remain on its current site.

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law. Depending on the final decisions made by the Council's Cabinet, they may lead to Oldhill closing and Harrington Hill expanding, to accommodate Oldhill pupils too. We are also consulting on an alternative proposal for Oldhill; that it closes and is not merged with another school.

In recent years the number of primary age children in Hackney, and in many parts of London, has fallen. The reasons behind this are thought to include lower birth rates, lack of affordable housing for families, as well as Brexit and the recent pandemic. The fall in the number of children, leading to a high number of surplus school places and reduced funding from central government, has meant that our schools are facing difficult challenges.

In 2014, there were 2846 children starting primary schools in Hackney. By May 2024, this number had fallen to 2203 children on roll in Reception - a decrease of 23%. This left 577 reception places vacant (May 2024) - the equivalent of 19 empty classrooms.

Schools receive money from the government for each child on their roll. The yearly cost for each unfilled school place is approximately £6,000. With the growing number of unfilled places in Hackney primary schools, they are under increasing financial pressure. With funding reducing, many schools are finding it harder to work effectively or provide enrichment activities such as extracurricular trips and visits, after school clubs, and tournaments for children. The Council cannot afford to financially support schools that are not sustainable, and must continue to make difficult decisions to make sure our schools are fit for the future, and to protect the high quality education that Hackney is known for.

In the last academic year (2023/24) we had to make the difficult decision to close four primary schools. They closed in July 2024. We took this decision because there were too few children to keep them open and for the schools to remain financially sustainable. While these decisions are never easy, we made them with the interests of all children in mind with the aim of creating a stronger school system in Hackney. Other London councils are facing similar challenges whilst also making difficult decisions to close and merge schools.

Unfortunately, despite the earlier school closures in Hackney, we still have significantly more school places than we have children to fill them. There were 2125 reception children on roll in Hackney schools (17/9/2024), but we have 2675 places. This means that there were 550 surplus places (21%) this September (2024), causing continuing funding challenges for our schools

Why are we consulting you?

Our goal is to create a stronger school system where every child has access to a broad and enriched educational experience. That is only achievable when schools can admit as many children within their Planned Admission Number (PAN) as possible and maximise the funding they receive. Sadly, for some Hackney primary schools, the number of children attending remains too low and has led to financial deficits in some schools that the Council is unable to maintain.

This has happened at Oldhill Community School and we are currently consulting on options for the school which could include a merger with Harrington Hill Primary School. You can read about this proposal here - bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation

We want to hear your comments on the proposal to:

- Expand Harrington Hill Primary School (Mount Pleasant Lane, E5 9JG) from one to two forms of entry and merge the school with Oldhill Community School (Oldhill Street, N16 6LR).

What would happen if this proposal goes ahead?

Oldhill Community School would close and all its pupils would be offered a place at Harrington Hill Primary School.

Harrington Hill would expand to two forms of entry, that is, two classes in each year group, making a total of up to 60 pupils in each year.

If agreed, these changes would happen on 31 August 2025. Your input, suggestions and feedback are important in helping us to further understand what the school change means to the children, parents/carers, staff and local community, and we welcome ideas and alternative options you may have.

Harrington Hill Primary School

Harrington Hill is a one form entry school. It is a school judged by Ofsted as 'Good' in 2023. In Reception last year, the school had 20 pupils on roll out of a possible 30 places, see Table 1.

Table 1 - Reception roll number 2023/24 (May census)

PAN (Reception)	No of pupils on roll (Reception)	Surplus places	% surplus of PAN
30	20	10	33%

As of 17/9/2024, there were 22 children enrolled in the Reception class.

Why are we proposing an expansion and merger for Harrington Hill Primary School?

Expanding Harrington Hill to two forms of entry, and merging it with Oldhill Community School would create a financially stronger school that is better able to serve its children and the local community. This could provide more teachers, learning materials, and support extra activities such as school trips, breakfast and afterschool clubs. This option would also retain the large school site that currently houses Harrington Hill Primary School.

Harrington Hill and Oldhill schools are close, less than 1000 metres from each other or a 15 minute walk. Using Harrington Hill's site for the merged school would increase the overall number of children on the site and provide places for Oldhill children.

What would it mean for the children?

Children on roll at Harrington Hill would continue their education at the school. Children on roll at Oldhill would automatically transfer to Harrington Hill on 1 September 2025 (unless their parents/carers chose another school for them). All the children will therefore have access to a wide range of resources and opportunities that the new, larger school can offer.

We know that a merger might be difficult for some children to understand and come to terms with, so we will work closely with parents/carers and school staff to find the best ways to support them if these changes are progressed. We want to hear children's voices in the options being considered so we will ask the school for help in gathering their thoughts and opinions.

The Council plans to work closely with school leaders to ensure that each child's feelings are properly considered, making the change of school as smooth and positive as possible, where the opportunities for making new friends and trying

different activities are the focus. Our goal is to create a strong and vibrant school where all children feel supported and welcomed.

What would it mean for the Oldhill children at the Alternative Resource Provision (ARP)?

Oldhill Community School has an ARP, a specialist provision for 10 pupils with Autistic Spectrum Condition (ASC). If Oldhill closes, its ARP will also close. If the proposal to merge Oldhill with Harrington Hill goes ahead, there will be a separate consultation about the ARP. Our intention would be to move the ARP to Harrington Hill, so that the children who currently attend it could move over with it.

What would it mean for my child being part of a larger school?

We know that moving to a different and bigger school might be difficult, especially for the children who are used to a smaller environment. Even though the new school will feel different to your child(ren), we will make sure they get the right support to settle quickly.

How would the admissions process work?

From September 2025, Harrington Hill Primary School would admit 60 children each year at Reception. All other year groups (Year 1 to Year 6) will also have 60 places in each year group.

Children on roll at Oldhill would automatically transfer to Harrington Hill on 1 September 2025 and start the 2025/26 academic year at the Harrington Hill site on Mount Pleasant Lane (E5 9JG). The timeline for achieving a school merger is shown in the table below called 'Timeline'.

What would it mean for the staff and Headteacher?

The expansion of Harrington Hill will not affect the employment of the staff and Head of School at Harrington Hill. In the event of a merger with the children at Oldhill school, we will work with the leadership team of Harrington Hill to assess the full impact on staffing. Staff and all other relevant parties including trade unions would be consulted about any potential changes.

Would there be any changes to the school building(s)?

The Harrington Hill school site is large enough to accommodate all the children from Oldhill Community School including those attending the ARP. If the merger with Oldhill is pursued then the Council will assess the Harrington Hill site to identify any adaptations required to suit the expanded school.

If Oldhill Community School closes, the Children's Centre at Oldhill will remain on the same site and continue under the management of Harrington Hill, another school or the Council. The proposals for Oldhill Children's Centre subject to consultation earlier in the year to phase out places for 4 year olds will not proceed. This means that Oldhill Children's Centre will continue to offer places for children 0-5 years.

What happens next?

This paper is part of a six week public consultation on the proposal to expand Harrington Hill Primary School. A linked proposal, setting out two options for the future of Oldhill Community School is being consulted on separately. The consultation began on 8 October and will end on 19 November 2024 at 5pm.

There are a number of ways you can respond to the consultation and these are set out at the end of this paper.

The Council will consider all the views put forward during this consultation period before making a decision on whether to publish proposals required by law. If proposals are published, there will be a further period for comments, called the representation period. This would last for 28 days. A final decision would be taken by Hackney's Cabinet at a later date. The timeline for this proposal is shown in the table below (dates may be subject to change).

Timeline

Date	Event
8 October - 19 November 2024	Informal consultation The dates for a parent/carer meeting and an additional engagement opportunity will be confirmed separately by Harrington Hill school. Your input, suggestions and feedback are important in helping us to further understand what the school means to the children, parents/carers, staff and local community.
January 2025	Results of the informal consultation are considered by Hackney Cabinet. A decision is made whether to publish a statutory notice for a merger of Harrington Hill and Oldhill primary schools.
February - March 2025	A statutory notice is published for a 4-week representation period.
April 2025	The outcome of the representation period and any objections are considered by the Cabinet and a final decision on the merger proposal is made.
Summer term 2025	School merger arrangements are carried out (subject to Cabinet's decision), if the proposal is approved

Date	Event
31 August 2025	Oldhill Community School officially closes.
1 September 2025	Harrington Hill merges with Oldhill on 1 September 2025.

How can I get more information?

You can find out more about the proposals on the Hackney Education website at <http://bit.ly/school-proposals>

How do I respond to this consultation?

You can give your views on this proposal by:

- completing the response form attached to this consultation document, or
- online by clicking on the following link: bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation
- or by visiting consultation.hackney.gov.uk

If you choose to fill in a paper response form, please hand it into the office at Harrington Hill Primary School, or post it to:

Hackney Council
 Education Services
 School Place Planning
 Hackney Service Centre, 3rd Floor
 1 Hillman Street
 London, E8 1DY

The closing date for comments and suggestions is **Tuesday, 19 November 2024 at 5pm.**

If you have any questions about this proposal, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk

If you require this document in a different format please contact us and we will get back to you in the next five working days.

Accessibility statement: If you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk

We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

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