

# **Consultation on the expansion of Holmleigh Primary School from one to two forms of entry, and the amalgamation of the student body (merger) of Holmleigh Primary School with Sir Thomas Abney Primary School**

## **Overview**

We are consulting you about a proposal to expand Holmleigh Primary School to two forms of entry (2 classes per year group). This proposal is linked to another which proposes to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School on 31 August 2025. The two proposals together would mean that the schools can be merged. All pupils at Sir Thomas Abney would be offered a place at the expanded Holmleigh school.

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, this may lead to Sir Thomas Abney closing and Holmleigh expanding, to accommodate Sir Thomas Abney pupils too. If Holmleigh does expand, it would move to the current Sir Thomas Abney site. As this site is very near to the current Holmleigh site and less than two miles, there is no need for us to consult on this. We are also consulting on an alternative proposal for Sir Thomas Abney; that it closes and is not merged with another school. Holmleigh would not move site or expand if this proposal was progressed.

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 Sir Thomas Abney and we are currently consulting on options for the future of the school which could include a merger with Holmleigh Primary School. You can read about this proposal here - [bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation](https://bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation)

We want to hear your comments on the proposal to:

- Expand Holmleigh Primary School (currently located on Dunsmore Road, N16 5PU) from one to two forms of entry and merge the school with Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (Fairholt Road, N16 5ED).

### **What would happen if these proposals go ahead?**

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School would close and all its pupils would be offered a place at Holmleigh Primary School.

Holmleigh 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 and;

Holmleigh would move to the site currently occupied by Sir Thomas Abney.

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.

## Holmleigh Primary School

Holmleigh is a one form entry school, judged to be 'Outstanding' by Ofsted (2015). In Reception last year, the school had 29 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	29	1	3%

### **Why are we proposing an expansion and merger for Holmleigh Primary School?**

Expanding Holmleigh to two forms of entry to accommodate children from Sir Thomas Abney 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.

To accommodate all pupils the school will transfer to the site that currently houses Sir Thomas Abney Primary School. This option would retain the large school site that currently houses Sir Thomas Abney.

### **What would it mean for the children?**

Children currently on roll at Holmleigh would continue their education at the school, which would move to a building nearby (the current Sir Thomas Abney Primary School site which is less than 650 metres away). Children on roll at Sir Thomas Abney would automatically transfer to Holmleigh on 1 September 2025 (unless their parents/carers chose another school for them). All the children at the newly expanded Holmleigh would 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 Sir Thomas Abney children at the language resource provision?**

Sir Thomas Abney has a language resource provision which provides extra support for pupils who have a diagnosis of developmental language disorder or severe speech disorder. If Sir Thomas Abney closes, its language resource provision will also close. If the proposal to merge Sir Thomas Abney with Holmleigh goes ahead, there will be a separate consultation about the language resource provision. Our intention would be to move the language resource provision to Holmleigh, 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 potentially 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. 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 feelings.

### **How would the admissions process work?**

Children on roll at Sir Thomas Abney would automatically transfer to Holmleigh on 1 September 2025. From September 2025, Holmleigh 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 on Holmleigh Primary School will start the 2025/26 academic year at the new site at Fairholt Road (N16 5ED) in September 2025.

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 Holmleigh and move to a new site will not affect the employment of the staff and Headteacher at Holmleigh. In the event of a merger with the children at Sir Thomas Abney school, we would work with the leadership team of Sir Thomas Abney 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 closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and the expansion and move of Holmleigh Primary School to the Sir Thomas Abney site will mean that the Holmleigh school building and site would become vacant. The Council would need to consider alternative options for the Holmleigh site. The Sir Thomas Abney Primary School site has sufficient capacity to accommodate the pupils from both schools, however there may need to be some adaptations to suit the expanded school.

## What happens next?

This paper is part of a six week public consultation on the proposal to expand Holmleigh Primary School. A linked proposal, setting out two options for the future of Sir Thomas Abney Primary 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
<b>8 October - 19 November 2024</b>	Informal consultation  The dates for a parent/carer meeting and an additional engagement opportunity will be confirmed separately by Holmleigh Primary 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.
<b>January 2025</b>	Results of the informal consultation are considered by Hackney Cabinet. A decision is made whether to publish a statutory notice for a merger of Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney primary schools.
<b>February - March 2025</b>	A statutory notice is published for a 4-week representation period.
<b>April 2025</b>	The outcome of the representation period and any objections are considered by the Cabinet and a final decision on the merger proposal is made.
<b>Summer term 2025</b>	School merger arrangements are carried out (subject to Cabinet's decision), if the proposal is approved
<b>31 August 2025</b>	Sir Thomas Abney Primary School officially closes.

Date	Event
1 September 2025	Holmleigh merges with Sir Thomas Abney on 1 September 2025 and transfers to the old Sir Thomas Abney site.

### 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](http://bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation)
- or by visiting [consultation.hackney.gov.uk](http://consultation.hackney.gov.uk)

If you choose to fill in a paper response form, please hand it into the office at Holmleigh 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](mailto: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](mailto: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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- اگر آپ یہ جاننا چاہتے ہیں کہ دستاویز میں کیا لکھا ہے تو ازراہ کرم مناسب باکس میں صحیح کا نشان لگائے اور اپنا نام، پتہ اور فون نمبر اس صفحہ کے نیچے لکھیں اور اسے نیچے دئے گئے پتہ پر واپس بھیج دیجئے۔ (Urdu)
- Nếu bạn muốn biết tài liệu này nói gì hãy đánh dấu vào hộp thích hợp, điền tên, địa chỉ và số điện thoại của bạn vào cuối trang này và gửi lại theo địa chỉ dưới đây. (Vietnamese)
- אויב ווילט איר וויסן וואס דער דאָקומענט זאגט, ביטע טיק די פאסיגע קעסטל, שרייב דיין נאָמען, אַדרעס און טעלעפאָן נומער און שיק עס צוריק צו די אַדרעס אונטן. (Yiddish)

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