

Consultation on the future of Oldhill Community School

Overview

We are consulting you about proposals either to close Oldhill Community School and amalgamate (merge) it with Harrington Hill Primary School, by offering all Oldhill pupils a place there, or to close it without amalgamating. Under both proposals Oldhill would close on 31 August 2025.

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 merging with Harrington Hill, which would expand to accommodate Oldhill pupils too. Alternatively, they may lead to Oldhill closing without merging 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.

Neither of these proposals affect the Children's Centre at Oldhill Community School. This will continue to operate on the same site. The Council has decided not to proceed with its separate proposals to alter the age range of children who can attend there in future.

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 now have to consider options for the school's closure. We would not be doing so if we thought there could be a better option.

We now want to hear your comments on the two options proposed for the future of Oldhill Community School (Oldhill Street, N16 6LR). These are closure and a merger with Harrington Hill Primary School (Mount Pleasant Lane, E5 9JG) or the closure of Oldhill Community School with no merger. The difference between the two options is described below. We welcome ideas and/or alternative options you may have about the future of the school. The responses received to this consultation and the consultation on the expansion of Harrington Hill Primary School will be considered together as linked proposals.

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.

Oldhill Community School

Oldhill Community School is a two form entry school. The school has a 10 place resource provision for autistic children, and a children's centre. The school is judged 'Good' by Ofsted (2023), but unfortunately due to low numbers, has a large financial deficit which is not likely to reduce in the medium term. This is not sustainable.

If school leaders took action to return the school to a sustainable financial position, this would be likely to undermine the quality of education and standards at the school, and significantly impact children with the highest level of need.

In Reception last year, the school had 20 pupils on roll out of a possible 60 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 |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 60 | 20 | 40 | 67% |

In May 2024, the school had 243 pupils enrolled from Reception to Year 6, out of a possible 420 places as shown below in Table 2.

Table 2 - Whole school roll 2023/24 (May census)

| Planned Admission Number (PAN) (whole school) | No of pupils on roll (whole school) | Surplus places | % surplus of PAN |
|---|-------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 420 | 243 | 177 | 42% |

As of 17/9/2024, there are 29 children enrolled in the Reception class.

The Children’s Centre at Oldhill Community School will remain on the same site and continue under the management of another school or the Council, regardless of the outcome of these proposals. 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.

Option 1. Proposal to close Oldhill Community School and merge it with Harrington Hill Primary School. Harrington Hill would expand from one to two forms of entry.

- Oldhill closes on 31 August 2025, as part of its merger with Harrington Hill Primary School.
- All children from Oldhill would be offered places at Harrington Hill Primary School to start on 1 September 2025.
- On 1 September 2025, Harrington Hill expands from a one form entry (30 places each year), to a two form entry (60 places each year).

Harrington Hill Primary School

There is a separate linked statutory proposal relating to the expansion of Harrington Hill Primary School from one form of entry to two forms of entry on 1 September 2025. You can read about this proposal here - bit.ly/school-proposal-consultation

Why are we proposing this option?

Merging the two schools can bring several benefits. It would allow Oldhill Community School's larger financial deficit to be removed by the Council. Harrington Hill Primary School would have access to more funding with more children attending the school. This could provide more teachers, learning materials, and support extra activities such as school trips, breakfast and afterschool clubs. A two form entry school would be financially stronger with more focus on educating children and less on both these schools currently struggling to meet costs. There would continue to be a school in the local area so that children continue learning in a familiar environment, even if some changes are made.

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.

The children's centre at Oldhill would remain on the current Oldhill site under new leadership.

What would it mean for the children?

All children currently on roll at Oldhill will have a guaranteed place. They would join the children currently at Harrington Hill school. Harrington Hill school will be able to provide two classes for each year group as a two form entry school. If parents/carers prefer, we will assist with finding places at alternative schools.

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 children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

We will work with schools and families to ensure that children with SEND, with or without Education, Health & Care plans (EHCPs), including those at the ARP (more details below) continue to receive high quality, suitable provision that meets their needs. EHCP applications that are in process will continue to be assessed with support from the plan coordinators.

Families with children who have an EHCP will be directly assisted by the Council's Special Educational Needs Service to support them through the transition, along with families with children who receive specialist support.

Families of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and disabilities, but who do not have an EHCP, will receive advice and guidance when considering changes to provision or settings. Specialist local authority staff are available to provide support to schools.

What would it mean for the 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 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 for the merger?

Children on roll at Oldhill would automatically transfer to Harrington Hill on 1 September 2025. A dedicated admissions officer will assist you with information and support taking into consideration any issues and concerns you have, including support applying to other schools if this is what you prefer.

If you have children with an EHCP you will be contacted as soon as possible to begin discussion about the transition to Harrington Hill, or to alternative schools you prefer, in case the council decides in April 2025 to close/merge your child's current school. The timeline for achieving a closure is shown in the table below called 'Timeline'.

What would it mean for the staff and Headteacher?

The closure of Oldhill will affect all staff including the Headteacher. The Council will provide all staff with support to have the confidence to apply for new roles. There may be redeployment opportunities available within the Council for staff affected by redundancy. Our priority would be to ensure that staff at risk of redundancy are supported fully throughout this transition, just as we would be supporting our children and families. This will include a programme of support, advice and training activity including access to the Council's employee assistance programme, offering confidential advice and counselling.

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

This option would see part of the Oldhill Community School site become vacant. Alternative options for the vacant part of the site will be reviewed and evaluated by the council.

The Harrington Hill school site is large enough to accommodate all the children from Oldhill 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.

Option 2. Closure of Oldhill Community School without a merger with another school

- Oldhill would close by the end of August 2025 due to low numbers and its large financial deficit which means that the Council cannot continue to provide the funding necessary to ensure a high quality of education for the children.
- Children would be offered a place at another school in Hackney or elsewhere, subject to available spaces.

Why are we proposing closure as an option for Oldhill Community School?

Despite Oldhill being judged by Ofsted to be a 'Good' school, it has experienced falling rolls over recent years. The number of pupils on roll has declined by 18% between October 2021 and 2023 census. The school is on a large site with buildings capable of accommodating two forms of entry but is only able to fill places for one form of entry.

Running a school takes a lot of money - from paying teachers, to looking after the building, and making sure children get the best education. When there aren't enough children, it becomes even more challenging to keep up the quality of education that all children deserve, and puts the school at risk of increasing its debt.

Having reviewed the school's financial position and plans for future sustainability, the Council believes the school can not be maintained without putting the quality of education for the children at risk, and negatively impacting on its children with the highest level of need. It is for these reasons that we are proposing to close the school.

What would it mean for the children?

All children currently on roll at Oldhill will have a guaranteed place at another school in Hackney to continue their education. Children will have access to a wide range of resources and opportunities in a school that is sufficiently filled, even though it may mean attending a different school in the local area. Under this option, we are not able to guarantee that children would move to another school with their Oldhill classmates because this would depend on the number of spaces available at other Hackney schools. If parents/carers prefer, we will also work to find a suitable school outside Hackney that meets your needs.

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.

We know that a school closure 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 as they transition to a new school. We want to hear children's voices in the options being considered so we will ask schools for help in gathering their thoughts and opinions.

What would it mean for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)?

We will work with schools and families to ensure that children with SEND, with or without EHC plans, including those at the ARP (more details below) continue to receive high quality, suitable provision that meets their needs. EHCP applications that are in process will continue to be assessed with support from the plan coordinators.

Families with children who have an EHCPs will be directly assisted by the Council's Special Educational Needs Service to support them through the transition, along with families with children who receive specialist support.

Families of pupils receiving support for special educational needs and disabilities, but who do not have an EHCP, will receive advice and guidance when considering changes to provision or settings. Specialist local authority staff are available to provide support to schools.

What would it mean for the 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 close Oldhill goes ahead, there will be a separate consultation about the ARP.

Our intention would be to move the ARP to another local school and the pupils currently attending would be able to attend the school where the ARP is moved to. The children's transfer would be undertaken as part of a review of their individual EHCPs and under a phased process to minimise disruption and ensure a smooth transition.

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

We know that for some of the children at Oldhill, moving to a different and potentially bigger school might be difficult. 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 closure process and admission to a new school work?

A dedicated admissions officer will assist you with information and support to apply for alternative school places, taking into consideration any issues and concerns you have. You have the right to apply to other schools and move your children at any time.

If you have children with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP) you will be contacted as soon as possible to begin discussion about alternative schools you prefer in case the council decides in April 2025 to close/merge your child's current school. The timeline for achieving a closure is shown in the table below called 'Timeline'.

What would it mean for the staff and Headteacher?

The closure of Oldhill will affect all staff including the Headteacher. The Council will provide all staff with support to have the confidence to apply for new roles. There may be redeployment opportunities available within the Council for staff affected by redundancy. Our priority would be to ensure that staff at risk of redundancy are supported fully throughout this transition, just as we would be supporting our children and families. This will include a programme of support, advice and training activity including access to the Council's employee assistance programme, offering confidential advice and counselling.

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

This option would see part of the Oldhill Community School site become vacant. Alternative options for the vacant part of the site will be reviewed and evaluated by the council.

What happens next?

This paper is part of a six week public consultation, setting out two options for the future of Oldhill Community School. The expansion of Harrington Hill 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 |
|---|--|
| 8 October - 19 November 2024 | Informal consultation The dates for a parent/carer meeting and an additional engagement opportunity will be confirmed separately by Oldhill 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 the closure of Oldhill or a merger of Harrington Hill and Oldhill 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 closure or merger proposal is made. |
| Summer term 2025 | School closure/merger arrangements are carried out (subject to Cabinet's decision), if the proposals are approved |

| Date | Event |
|------------------|---|
| 31 August 2025 | Oldhill Community School officially closes. |
| 1 September 2025 | In the case that a merger is progressed, Harrington Hill Primary School expands from one form of entry to two forms of entry. |

How can I get more information?

You can find out more about the options from the Hackney Education website at 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 Oldhill Community School or 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.

If you would like to find out what this document says please tick the appropriate box, put your name, address and phone number at the bottom of this page and return it to the address below.

- এই দলিলে কি লেখা আছে সে সম্পর্কে যদি আপনি জানতে চান তাহলে অনুগ্রহ করে উপযুক্ত বাক্সে টিক দিন, এই পাতার নীচে আপনার নাম, ঠিকানা ও ফোন নম্বর লিখুন এবং এটি নীচের ঠিকানায় ফেরত পাঠান। (Bengali)
- 如果你想知道這分文件的詳細內容，請在方框內打鉤，在本頁下面寫下你的名字、地址和電話號碼並寄到下面的地址。 (Chinese)
- Si vous désirez connaître le contenu de ce document, veuillez cocher la case appropriée et indiquer votre nom, adresse et numéro de téléphone au bas de cette page et la renvoyer à l'adresse indiquée ci-dessous. (French)
- Ger hun dixwazin bizanibin ku ev dokument çî dibêje, ji kerema xwe qutîka minasib îşaret bikin, nav, navnîşan û hejmara telefona xwe li jêrê rûpel binivîsin û wê ji navnîşana jêrîn re bişînin. (Kurdish)
- Jeżeli chcesz dowiedzieć się, jaka jest treść tego dokumentu, zaznacz odpowiednie pole, wpisz swoje nazwisko, adres i nr telefonu w dolnej części niniejszej strony i przeslij na poniższy adres. (Polish)
- Haddii aad jeclaan lahayd in aad ogaato waxa dokuumeentigani sheegayo fadlan calaamadi godka ku haboon, ku qor magacaaga, cinwaanka iyo telefoon lambarkaaga boggan dhankiisa hoose ka dibna ku celi cinwaanka hoose. (Somali)
- Si desea saber de lo que trata este documento, marque la casilla correspondiente, escriba su nombre, dirección y número de teléfono al final de esta página y envíela a la siguiente dirección. (Spanish)
- Bu dökümanda ne anlatıldığını öğrenmek istiyorsanız, lütfen uygun kutuyu işaretleyerek, adınızı, adresinizi ve telefon numaranızı bu sayfanın alt kısmına yazıp, aşağıdaki adrese gönderin. (Turkish)
- اگر آپ یہ جاننا چاہتے ہیں کہ دستاویز میں کیا لکھا ہے تو ازراہ کرم مناسب باکس میں صحیح کا نشان لگائیے اور اپنا نام، پتہ اور فون نمبر اس صفحہ کے نیچے لکھیے اور اسے نیچے دیئے 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 דער דאָקומענט זאגט, ביטע טיק די פאסיגע קעסטל, שרייב דיין נאָמען, אַדרעס און טעלעפאָן נומער און שיק עס צוריק צו די אַדרעס אונטן. (Yiddish)

If you would like this document in any of the following formats or in another language not listed above, please complete and send the form to the address below. In large print In Braille On disk On audio tape

In another language, please state: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Return to: **Freepost, LBH
Consultation Team, Hackney Town
Hall, Mare Street, London, E8 1EA**