

# 28 Day Statutory Notice Period - Closure/Merger of Primary Schools

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## **Contents**

<b>Introduction and Background, Consultation &amp; Engagement Approach, Response rate</b>	<b>2 - 4</b>
<b>Executive summary</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Overview of online responses</b>	
• St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School	<b>6 - 8</b>
• St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School	<b>8</b>
• Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School	<b>9 - 12</b>
• Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School	<b>12 - 13</b>
<b>Overview of emails received</b>	<b>14 - 17</b>
<b>Overview of handwritten letters received</b>	<b>18 - 19</b>
<b>About you</b>	<b>20 - 24</b>
<b>Appendix - All comments and emails received</b>	<b>25 - 48</b>

## **Introduction and Background**

On 27 January 2025, Hackney Council's Cabinet decided to proceed to publishing statutory proposals to close / merge a number of schools in the borough. This decision followed an informal consultation on the proposals, which took place from 8 October and 19 November 2024.

The following proposals were published on 6 February 2025, beginning a four-week representation period of statutory consultation:

### **Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposals**

St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School:

- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to discontinue \(close\) St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School](#)

St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School:

- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to discontinue \(close\) St. Mary's Church of England \(CofE\) Primary School](#)

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School:

- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to discontinue \(close\) Sir Thomas Abney School including the Language Resourced Provision \(LRP\) and amalgamate \(merge\) the student body with Holmleigh Primary School](#)
- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to increase Holmleigh Primary School from 1 form of entry \(1FE\) to 2 forms of entry \(2FE\) and to add special educational needs provision for language](#)

Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School:

- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to discontinue \(close\) Oldhill Community School including the Additional Resourced Provision for autistic children and amalgamate \(merge\) the student body with Harrington Hill Primary School](#)
- [Statutory Notice and Full Statutory Proposal to increase Harrington Hill Primary School from 1 form of entry \(1FE\) to 2 forms of entry \(2FE\) and to establish an Additional Resourced Provision for autistic children](#)

The closing date for receipt of responses was 5 March 2025 at 5pm, four weeks from the date of publication of the proposals.

## **Consultation & Engagement Approach**

The statutory notices were made available in the following ways:

- Hackney Education webpage
- Hackney.gov.uk
- Published in the Hackney Gazette
- Posted at school gates of affected schools
- Emails to other statutory audiences
- Paper copies available upon request

During the four week consultation period, any person could object to or make comments on the proposals by using any of the following feedback routes:

- Completing an online form, hosted on Citizen Space, the Council's online survey platform;
- By emailing [school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk](mailto:school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk);
- Or by writing to: School Sufficiency & Estates Team, Hackney Council, Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, London, E8 1DY

A variety of communication channels were used throughout the four week period, including:

- Press release
- Newsletters (internal and external)
- Website and FAQs updates
- Social media posts
- Letters to specific stakeholders

## **Response rate**

At the end of the consultation period, 41 respondents took part in the survey on Citizen Space, with a total of 47 comments made across the four proposals (respondents were able to respond to multiple proposals). In addition, 11 individual emails were received with feedback, and 4 handwritten letters received from the school community.

<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Online Comments</b>	<b>Emails</b>	<b>Letters</b>
<b>Closure of St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Closure of St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Amalgamation of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Amalgamation of Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

There were a total of 1,360 views (the number of times a user loads or reloads a page) on the landing page on Citizen Space, with 1,044 active users (unique users who engaged with the site). The 41 respondents who took part in the survey equates to a 3.9% response rate of active users who landed on the homepage.

## **Executive summary**

Respondents have expressed deep concerns regarding the proposed closures and mergers of St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School, St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School, Sir Thomas Abney Primary School, Holmleigh Primary School, Oldhill Community School, and Harrington Hill Primary School.

The overall sentiment is that these decisions are financially driven, short-sighted, and fail to consider the educational, emotional, and practical impacts on students, staff, and families. The proposed changes are viewed as disruptive to established school communities, particularly affecting children with special educational needs (SEND) and those who rely on the stability and support of their current schools.

For St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School and St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School, respondents emphasise the schools' vital role in providing high-quality, faith-based education and supporting families. They argue that the closures would reduce faith-based education options, disrupt students' education, and place additional pressure on surrounding schools. Respondents call for alternative solutions, such as increased funding and community partnerships, to keep these schools open.

Similarly, for Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School, the merger process is criticised for its perceived lack of fairness, transparency, and genuine consideration of alternative solutions. Respondents highlight the potential emotional and educational impact on students, particularly those with SEND, and the anticipated negative effect of making experienced Sir Thomas Abney staff redundant.

For Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School, respondents raise concerns about the logistical challenges, increased commute times, and potential decline in educational quality at Harrington Hill Primary School. They also emphasise the need for clarity on the future use of Oldhill Community School buildings and the importance of maintaining support for SEND students.

Across all proposed changes, respondents advocate for thoughtful consideration, strategic planning, and transparent communication to ensure the well-being and educational success of all affected students.

# **Overview of online responses**

## **St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School (20 comments)**

### **Overall summary**

Closing St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School has raised significant concerns among respondents, who view it as a cornerstone of the community providing high-quality, faith-based education. The decision is seen as short-sighted and discriminatory against Catholics, with respondents emphasising the school's vital role in supporting families, fostering moral and spiritual development, and offering specialised support for children with special educational needs. The closure would potentially disrupt students' education, emotional well-being, and social bonds, while placing additional pressure on surrounding schools that may not have the capacity to accommodate displaced students.

Respondents argue that alternative solutions should be explored to keep the school open, such as increased funding, community partnerships, and restructuring. They highlight the financial and logistical burdens of relocating to other schools, including travel expenses and the loss of familiar support systems. The closure is viewed as a loss not only to the students but also to the wider community, as the school serves as a vital hub for cultural and spiritual activities. The strong emotional ties to the school and its role in the community underscore the need for thoughtful consideration and strategic planning before making any final decisions.

Regarding the proposal to discontinue St. Dominic's Primary School, **1 respondent agreed** with the proposal (quoted "Agree with proposal"), while **19 respondents disagreed**.

### **Breakdown by themes**

#### **Mismanagement and Debt**

- Council's Mismanagement:
  - Respondents believe the school built up debts due to the council's mismanagement.
- Lack of Support:
  - Respondents argue that pragmatic solutions were not found, and the burden fell on respondents and the local priest.

#### **Discrimination**

- Faith-Based Bias:
  - The decision to close the school is seen as discriminating against Catholics.

- Disproportionate Impact:
  - Concerns about the disproportionate impact on faith-based education, the traveller community, and the difficulty of accommodating students in other Catholic schools due to space constraints.

### **Community and Emotional Impact**

- Heartbreak:
  - Respondents express emotion over the closure, highlighting the school's role as a community cornerstone and second home for many.
- Emotional Ties:
  - Strong emotional connections to the school, with respondents recalling the dedication of teachers and the nurturing environment.

### **Educational Quality and Advocacy**

- High-Quality Education:
  - The school is praised for its high-quality education and supportive staff who are attentive to the children's needs.
- Faith-Based Learning Environment:
  - Respondents value the unique faith-based learning environment that St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School provides.
- Investment in Future:
  - Advocacy for investing in the school's future rather than closing it, emphasising its irreplaceable role in the community.

### **Local Necessity and Impact on Families**

- Essential Role in Community:
  - The school is seen as necessary for the Hackney community, with concerns about where future generations will go for education.
- Disruption and Pressure:
  - Closing the school could disrupt children's education, place additional pressure on surrounding schools, and impact the quality of learning and curriculum continuity.

### **Special Needs and Accessibility**

- Support for Special Needs:
  - Respondents of children with special needs express concern over the impact of the closure on their children's education and well-being.
- Accessibility Concerns:
  - Issues raised about the accessibility of other Catholic schools and the additional financial burden of daily travel expenses.

### **Sustainability and Alternative Solutions**

- Lack of Strategic Planning:



- Concerns about insufficient time given for new leadership to address budget issues and manage deficits.
- Alternative Solutions:
  - Suggestions for increased funding, community partnerships, restructuring, and maintaining the school for social purposes are proposed as alternative solutions.

### **Council's Decision and Process**

- Short-Sighted Decision:
  - The closure is seen as a short-sighted, cost-saving measure that overlooks the long-term benefits of the school.
- Process and Transparency:
  - Frustration over perceptions that the council did not follow procedures correctly and a lack of honesty about the timeline of the closure decision.

### **Catholic Education and Cultural Impact**

- Importance of Catholic Education:
  - respondents emphasise the importance of Catholic education in raising their children and feel that community or other faith schools cannot provide the same environment.
- Cultural and Spiritual Fabric:
  - It is felt that closing the school would diminish the cultural and spiritual fabric of the community.

## **St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School (3 comments)**

### **Overall summary**

Respondents are deeply concerned about the proposed closure of St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School, viewing it as a critical part of their community. They argue that the school provides high-quality, faith-based education and that its closure would be short-sighted and discriminatory against Anglicans. Respondents emphasise the school's importance in supporting families, fostering moral and spiritual development, and offering specialised support for children with special educational needs. They believe that closing the school would disrupt students' education, emotional well-being, and social bonds, while placing additional pressure on surrounding schools that may not have the capacity to accommodate displaced students.

Furthermore, respondents suggest that alternative solutions, such as increased funding, community partnerships, and restructuring, should be explored to keep the school open. They highlight the financial and logistical burdens of relocating to other

schools, including travel expenses and the loss of familiar support systems. The closure is seen as a significant loss not only to the students but also to the wider community, as the school serves as a vital hub for cultural and spiritual activities. The strong emotional ties to the school and its role in the community underscore the need for thoughtful consideration and strategic planning before making any final decisions.

Regarding the proposal to discontinue St. Mary's Primary School, **all 3 respondents disagreed** with the proposal.

There is no breakdown by theme due to the low number of comments received.

## **Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School (19 comments)**

### **Overall Summary**

Respondents have raised significant concerns regarding the proposed merger between Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School, emphasising that they feel the process has been unfair and not inclusive. They criticise Hackney Council for rejecting alternative solutions, such as creating a new school with staff from both schools, and highlight the negative impact on students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEND). The decision to make experienced and dedicated Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff redundant is seen as short-sighted and detrimental to the well-being and development of vulnerable children. Respondents also express disappointment in the council's perceived lack of transparency and clear communication, suggesting that misleading language and a pre-determined consultation process have damaged trust within the community.

Financial and logistical concerns are also prominent, with the merger perceived as driven primarily by financial considerations rather than the well-being of students. Respondents question the long-term viability of increasing capacity in the proposed merged school, given the consistent decline in child numbers and the current economic climate. They argue that proper funding for SEND children would have prevented the large deficit used to justify Sir Thomas Abney Primary School's closure.

Respondents advocate for retaining Sir Thomas Abney Primary School support staff as a reasonable adjustment and call for a fairer merger process that maintains the quality of education and utilises the expertise of the best staff from both schools. Overall, the strong emotional ties to the school and its role in the community underscore the need for thoughtful consideration and strategic planning before making any final decisions.

Regarding the proposal to merge Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School, **all 19 respondents disagreed** with the proposal.

### **Breakdown by themes**

#### **Unfair Process and Lack of Consideration**

- Rejected Alternative Merger Option:
  - Hackney Council is criticised for not seeking approval from the Secretary of State to close both schools and open a new one with staff from both Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School. This option is seen as fairer and in the best interest of the children.
- Misleading Consultation:
  - The consultation process is viewed as pre-determined and non-inclusive, with Hackney Council not genuinely considering or accepting alternative solutions proposed by respondents and governors.
- Lack of Understanding:
  - Decision-makers are seen as having a complete lack of understanding of how school communities operate, leading to damaged trust and security within the community.

#### **Impact on Staff and Students**

- Staff Redundancy and Recruitment:
  - Making Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff, who are seen as experienced and dedicated, redundant is seen as a poor decision, likely to deter skilled staff from working for the council in the future.
- Impact on SEND Students:
  - The decision to make Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff redundant, including those who provide essential support for SEND students, is perceived as short-sighted and detrimental to the well-being and development of vulnerable children.
- Strong Community Ties:
  - respondents emphasise the strong relationships and sense of community within Sir Thomas Abney Primary School, with many staff members having long-standing connections with students and families.

#### **Transparency and Communication**

- Lack of Clarity and Transparency:
  - The process has been criticised for its perceived lack of transparency and clear communication, with views that commitments made by council representatives not being put in writing and later changed.
- Misleading Language:

- The council's perceived use of misleading language, such as referring to the process as a "merger" rather than a take-over, has increased mistrust among respondents and staff.
- Non-Inclusive Consultation:
  - The consultation process is felt not to have been inclusive, using confusing and misleading language in the proposals and notices, making it difficult for many respondents, especially those with educational needs, to fully grasp the proposed plans.

### **Financial and Logistical Concerns**

- Financial-Driven Decisions:
  - The closure and merger are perceived as driven primarily by financial considerations, with little attention to the practical organisation and ongoing support for vulnerable students.
- Spending Priorities:
  - Respondents criticise the council for proposing to spend millions on unwanted schemes while neglecting the educational needs of the community.
- Long-Term Plans:
  - The long-term plans for attracting families back to the area and supporting established schools are also questioned.

### **Impact on SEND Pupils**

- High Number of SEND Pupils:
  - Sir Thomas Abney Primary School has one of the highest numbers of SEND pupils, who consider the school their safe place. The specialist SEND staff at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School are familiar with the needs of these children, and making them redundant is seen as detrimental.
- Proper Funding:
  - respondents argue that proper funding for SEND children would have prevented the large deficit used to justify the school's closure.

### **Demographic Data and Forecasting**

- Decline in Child Numbers:
  - There is data regarding the decline in child numbers in Hackney that has been collected for years, yet forecasts have always predicted a future increase.
- Impact of Economic Climate:
  - The current economic climate and unaffordable housing are causing families to move out of Hackney, with statistics showing the accelerating decline in student numbers at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.

## **Viability of Proposed Merger**

- Viability Concerns:
  - Increasing capacity in the proposed merged school is seen as non-viable. The location in Stamford Hill, a community with an increasing birthrate, has not alleviated the decline at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and could jeopardise the new school's future.
- Appropriate Format:
  - The current format of Holmleigh Primary School is considered the most appropriate for the area and economic climate, with concerns that expanding it would jeopardise primary school provision in Hackney.

## **Reasonable Adjustments and Alternatives**

- Staff Retention:
  - Respondents propose retaining Sir Thomas Abney Primary School support staff as a reasonable adjustment that would not be costly and would significantly benefit the children, particularly those with SEND.
- Demand for Explanation:
  - If this adjustment is not made, respondents demand a clear explanation of the rationale, considering the minimal financial cost and potential benefits.
- Fairer Merger Process:
  - Respondents advocate for a fairer merger process that involves all parties, maintains the quality of education, and utilises the expertise of the best staff from both schools.

## **Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School (5 comments)**

### **Overall Summary**

Respondents and community members express significant concerns regarding the proposed closure of Oldhill Community School and its merger with Harrington Hill Primary School. They argue that the decision is short-sighted and financially driven, with little consideration for the educational and practical impact on students, families, and staff. Respondents highlight the potential disruption to children, especially those nearing critical exams like SATs, and emphasise the need for sufficient assistance to minimise the negative effects. Concerns are raised about larger class sizes, resource availability, and maintaining educational quality at Harrington Hill Primary School. Additionally, relocating to Harrington Hill Primary School poses logistical challenges, such as increased commute times, for families who chose Oldhill Community School for its accessibility and strong community ties.

Further concerns are voiced regarding the broader implications of the closure, particularly for children with special educational needs (SEND). While the proposals

include re-establishing Oldhill Community School's ARP at Harrington Hill Primary School, it is felt that there is no clarity on the process for retaining vital SEND support staff. Respondents and community members also question the logic of increasing provision at a time when other faith-based schools are being closed, which reduces educational choice and disrupts established school communities. The fate of the Oldhill Community School buildings, including the children's centre, is also a concern, with a call for them to be used for social purposes rather than left empty or sold for private development. Overall, respondents urge decision-makers to consider the educational, practical, and community impact of the closure and ensure high-quality support for affected students.

Regarding the proposal to merge Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School, **all 5 respondents disagreed** with the proposal.

There is no breakdown by theme due to the low number of comments received.

*(All comments can be viewed in the appendix at the end of this report.)*

# **Overview of emails received**

## **Overall summary and breakdown from 8 emails relating to Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh Primary Schools:**

### **Overall summary**

respondents and governors of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and Holmleigh Primary School have raised significant concerns about the proposed merger. They criticise the plan for being short-sighted and financially driven, given the declining number of children needing state provision due to the growing Orthodox Jewish population. There are calls to maintain Holmleigh Primary School as a separate entity and close STA if necessary, as well as to create a genuinely merged school that includes staff from both schools. The legality and fairness of making Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff redundant while continuing to use Sir Thomas Abney Primary School buildings are questioned.

Concerns are also raised about the negative impact on students, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN), if current support staff are not retained. The consultation process is criticised for being inadequate and non-inclusive, leading to increased mistrust in Hackney Council. Respondents emphasise the need for careful consideration, equitable treatment of both schools, and transparent communication to ensure the well-being of all affected children. Additionally, the long-term viability of the plan is questioned, with calls for a more strategic approach to managing surplus places and maintaining financial stability.

### **Breakdown of emails**

#### **1. Parent of a Year 5 Student at Holmleigh Primary School:**

- Objects to the proposal to expand and relocate Holmleigh Primary School.
- Highlights that the growing Orthodox Jewish population leads to fewer children needing state provision.
- Argues that combining schools will not sustain a 2-class entry in the future, and the solution is short-sighted and costly.
- Recommends closing schools with low enrollment instead of uprooting Holmleigh Primary School, which is popular due to its small size.

#### **2. Governor of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School:**

- Protests the closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School without seeking permission for a full merger with Holmleigh.
- Points out that Sir Thomas Abney Primary School buildings will still be used, and students will continue to attend, questioning the redundancy of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff.

- Requests clarity on the legality of the move and why an equitable merger was not pursued.
- Criticises Hackney Council for not better facilitating coordination between the governors of both schools to reduce distress and friction.

### 3. Parent/Carer of a SEN Student:

- Expresses concern about the transition and integration of students and staff from both schools.
- Strongly believes that SEN support staff should remain for the benefit of the children, as removing them would negatively impact their progress and well-being.
- Highlights their view that decisions so far have favored Holmleigh without considering Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.
- Requests careful consideration of future decisions in the best interests of the children.

### 4. Official Objection Document:

- Contains a detailed objection to the proposed merger between Holmleigh Primary School and Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.
- Outlines perceived procedural, operational, and legal failings of Hackney Council.
- Intends to share the document with other official bodies.

### 5. Chair of the Governing Body:

- Opposes the current closure plan and criticises Hackney Council for not pursuing a genuinely amalgamated school.
- Points out that the enlarged Holmleigh Primary School will require more staff, questioning the legitimacy of making all Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff redundant.
- Highlights their view that the consultation process was inadequate, identifying consultation during half-term school holidays and confusing documentation for non-English speaking respondents.
- Requests detailed responses to the points raised.

### 6. Stamford Hill Resident and Parent:

- Objects to the merger based on perceived erroneous demand figures for school places, noting Stamford Hill's unique demographics and the growing Orthodox Jewish community that does not use the primary schools.
- Criticises the argument for spare capacity as demand for primary school places is falling.
- Supports maintaining Holmleigh Primary School as a separate entity and closing Sir Thomas Abney Primary School if its finances are too stretched.

### 7. Parent Concern Feedback:



- Expressed their view that alternatives to the consultation options were consistently ignored by Hackney Council.
- Highlights the need for a properly merged school with staff from both schools, and accuses Hackney Council of acting in the best interests of Holmleigh Primary School pupils over Sir Thomas Abney Primary School pupils.
- Demands justification for perceived indirect discrimination and suggests retaining current Sir Thomas Abney Primary School support staff for the new school.
- Criticises the council's perceived failure to attract families back to the area and the detrimental treatment of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School staff, signaling a decline in the quality of Hackney Education.

#### 8. Mother of Year 3 Pupil:

- Formally objects to the proposed merger, highlighting concerns about the long-term viability of the plan due to declining primary school enrolment in Hackney.
- Questions the sustainability of increasing Holmleigh Primary School's intake and the financial stability of the merged school.
- Raises concerns about potential future closures or disruptions and the lack of contingency plans.
- Urges the council to reconsider the proposal and provide evidence of how the merged school will maintain a sustainable intake.

### **Overall summary and breakdown from 3 emails relating to St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School, St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School, and Oldhill Community School and Harrington Hill Primary School:**

#### **Overall summary**

Respondents and community members have expressed significant concerns regarding the proposed closures and mergers of St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School, St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School, and Oldhill Community School. Homeowners near St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School are anxious about the future development of the site following its closure, as it could significantly impact their residential block. Respondents of children at Oldhill Community School plead against its closure and merger with Harrington Hill Primary School, highlighting the emotional distress and inconvenience it would cause their children, who have been at Oldhill Community School since reception and have a strong attachment to the school.

A parent and ex-student of St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School criticises the consultation process as rushed and confusing, causing anxiety among respondents. They emphasise the importance of maintaining Catholic education for their children and highlight the difficulties in finding suitable alternative schools. The overall

sentiment is that the consultation process has been poorly managed, resulting in panic and distress for teachers, respondents, and students, with a call for clearer communication and consideration of the community's needs.

### **Breakdown of emails**

1. Homeowner near St. Mary's Church of England (CofE) Primary School:

- Enquires about plans for the school buildings and playground site following the school's closure.
- Expresses concern about the potential impact of any development on the surrounding residential block.

2. Parent of Children at Oldhill Community School:

- Pleads against closing Oldhill Community School and merging it with Harrington Hill Primary School.
- Highlights the potential emotional distress and anxiety caused to their children, who have been at Oldhill Community School since reception and have a strong attachment to the school.
- Emphasises the inconvenience of traveling to Harrington Hill Primary School, which is farther from their home, and the negative impact on their children's well-being.

3. Parent and Ex-Student of St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School:

- Criticises the consultation process as rushed and confusing, causing anxiety among respondents.
- Highlights the financial deficit of the school as a reason for closure, and questions the availability of alternative school places, especially for Catholic education.
- Expresses concern about children being forced to move to new schools, causing anxiety and distress, and supports teachers striking due to the redundancy package offered by the council.
- Emphasises the overall negative impact on teachers, respondents, and students, with the consultation process causing panic and confusion.

*(All emails can be viewed in the appendix at the end of this report.)*

# Overview of handwritten letters received (4)

## Overall summary

The letters express heartfelt pleas from the school community, who are opposed to the proposed closure of Oldhill Community School. They emphasise their deep attachment to the school, highlighting the caring teachers, the enjoyable school environment, and the delicious food. They request that the school remains open and unchanged for several more years, allowing them to graduate from Oldhill Community School. They express their sadness and concern over the potential closure and their preference to stay at Oldhill Community School, which they describe as the best school they have ever attended.

They also voice their opposition to the closure, stating that Harrington Hill Primary School is too far and poses logistical challenges. They emphasise that students enjoy going to Oldhill Community School, waking up happy and excited to attend school each day. They are worried about the negative impact on their well-being if they are forced to move to a new school and urge the authorities to keep Oldhill Community School open to preserve their happiness and continuity in their education.

The following text is transcribed exactly as it appears in the letters, with names redacted:

- "Dear Govener,  
I would like you not to close Oldhill community school or emerge it with any school because it is my favourite school. Can you please leave Oldhill community the way it is? Also can you keep Oldhill community the same as it is for 4 more years. I really want to graduate from Oldhill School.  
All the teachers in the school are very kind and caring. My headteacher (Miss Benjamin) is the best headteacher I ever had. The food there (especially on Fridays) majority of times the food is delicious. The teachers that teaches me are really kind and caring.  
I like Oldhill community school and I want to stay there for a long amount of time until I'm in year 7. So can you please leave Oldhill community school how it is and can you keep the school the same.  
PLEASE DON'T CLOSE THE SCHOOL!"
- "Dear Govener,  
I would not like you to either emerge or close oldhill community school because it is a wonderful. They have nice teacher, staff they also have exceptional food on Friday. I've been there majority of my learning. At least keep oldhill the same way as it is now for two more years.  
If is closes before I leave there will be no school next to me. Me and my parent are finding it hard to find another school because no school is not close to us!

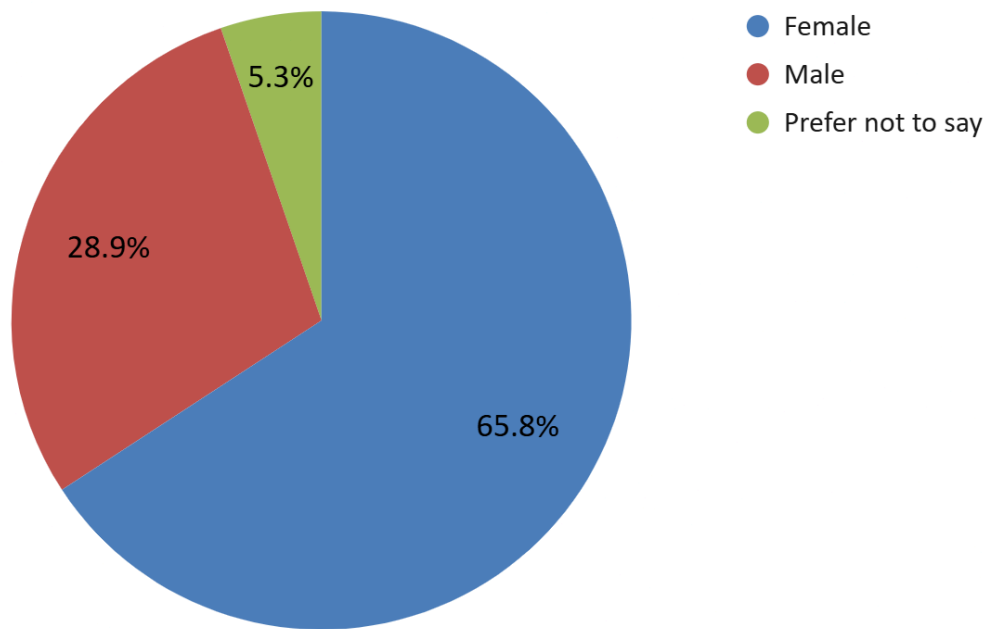
I have lots of friends in oldhill. At oldhill community they have the best food ever!

DO NOT CLOSE OLDHILL!"

- "Dear Govener,  
I would like you not to close oldhill school because it is fun. I also like the teacher's that are teaching me. I do not now all of the teacher's yet. Can you leave oldhill how it is for four more years.  
Can you leave it how it is. I do not want to go any were I want to stay at oldhill school it is the best school I ever been to."
- "Dear sir or madam,  
I write to this letter about the school oldhill community school closing the school is a big lost for our kids as there is no other school near to us. Harrington school is too far from our home and it is hard to my kids to go and come back from school.  
They enjoy go to oldhill school. They wake up every day happy and ready to go to school. Closing the school and go to another school make my kids feel upset and they not want to go to another school.  
Please keep the school open.  
I am a mum of the kids who is worried about them a lot. I don't want to loose their excitement when they go to school. Also my kids write letter to you to read."

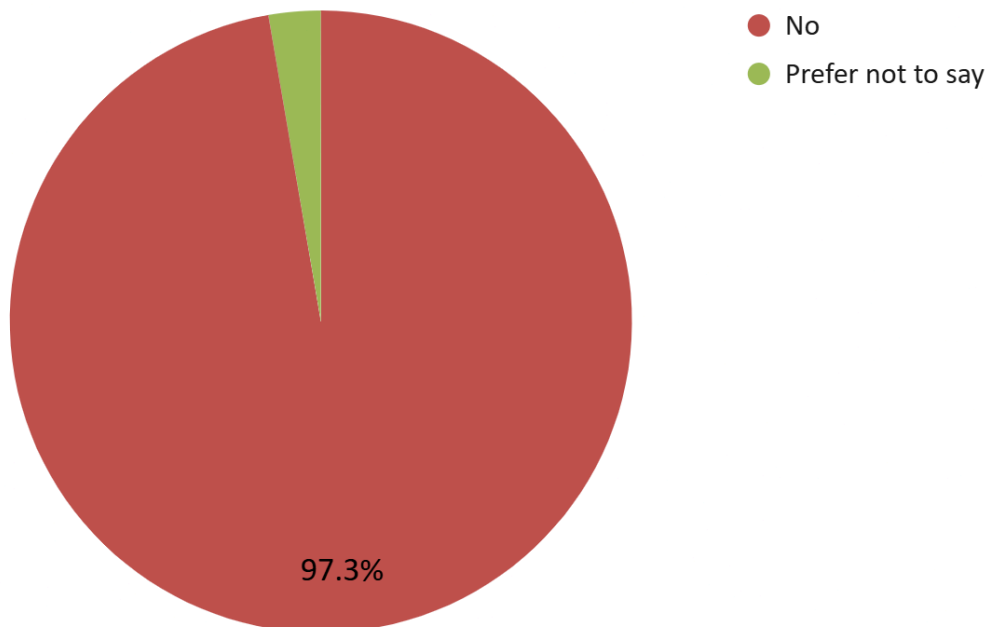
## **About you**

**Gender (Base 38)**



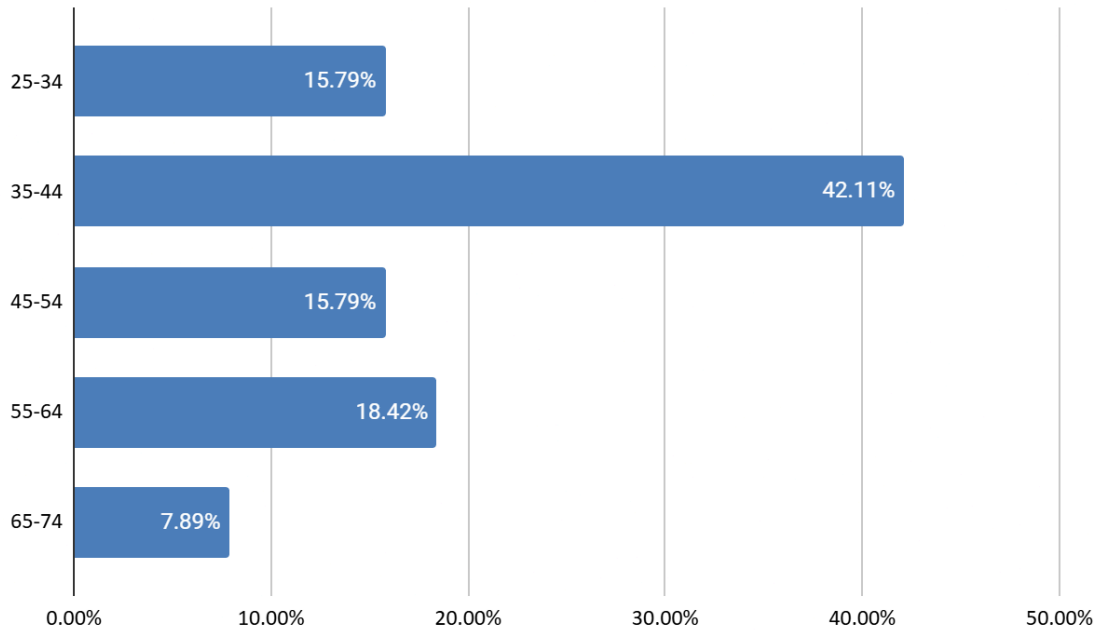
The majority of respondents stated that they were female (25), followed by male (11) and two respondents stating they prefer not to say.

**Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender? (Base 37)**



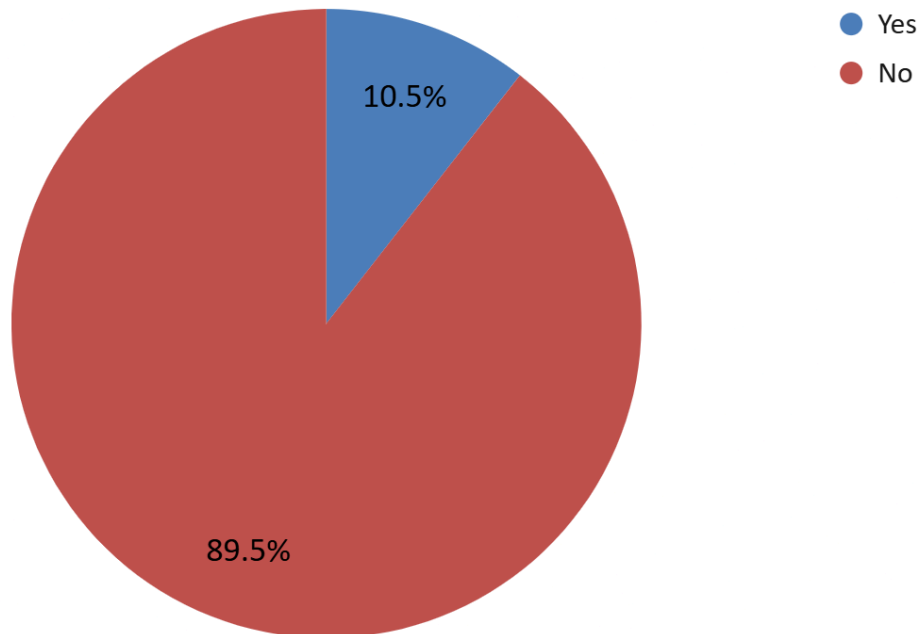
The majority of respondents stated that they are or have a history of being transgender, with one respondent stating they prefer not to say.

### Age: what is your age group? (Base 38)



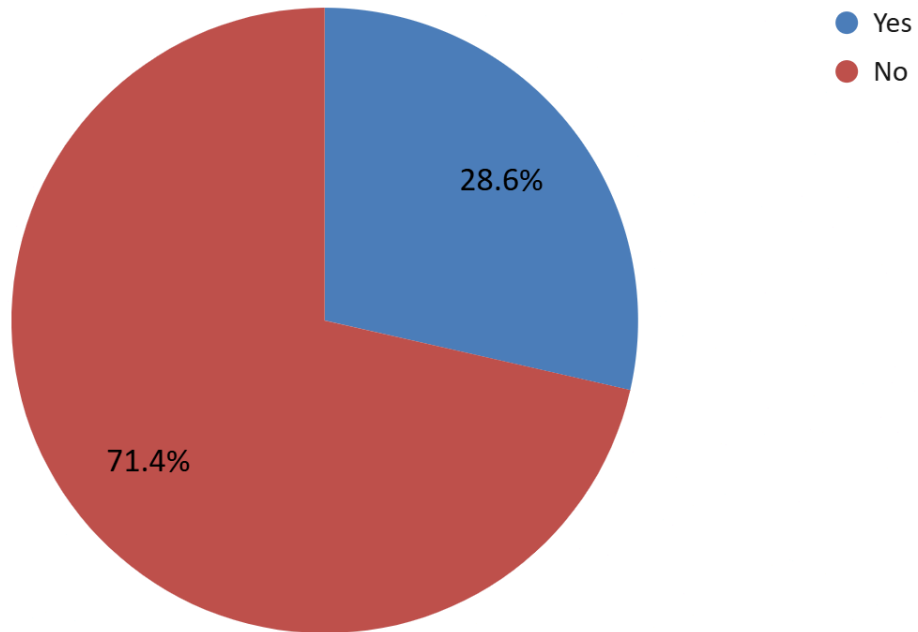
The highest percentage of respondents stated that they were 35-44 (16), followed by 55-64 (7), 45-54 and 25-34 (6 each), and 65-74 (3).

### Disability (Base 38)



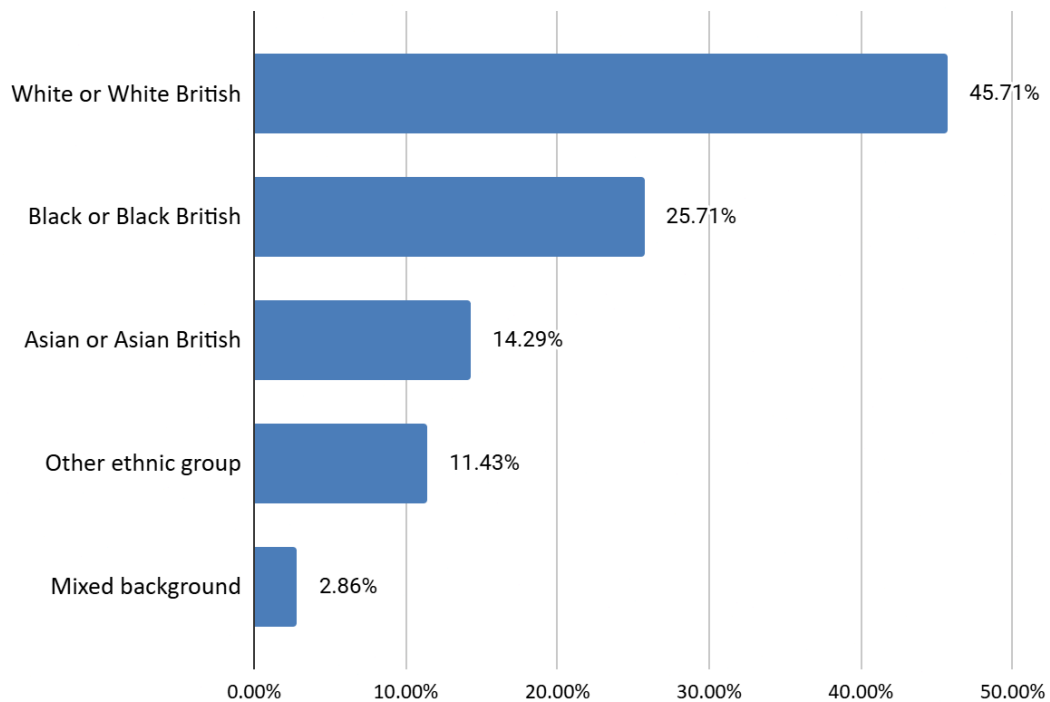
The majority of respondents stated that they did not have a disability (34), with four respondents stating that they do.

### Caring responsibilities (Base 35)



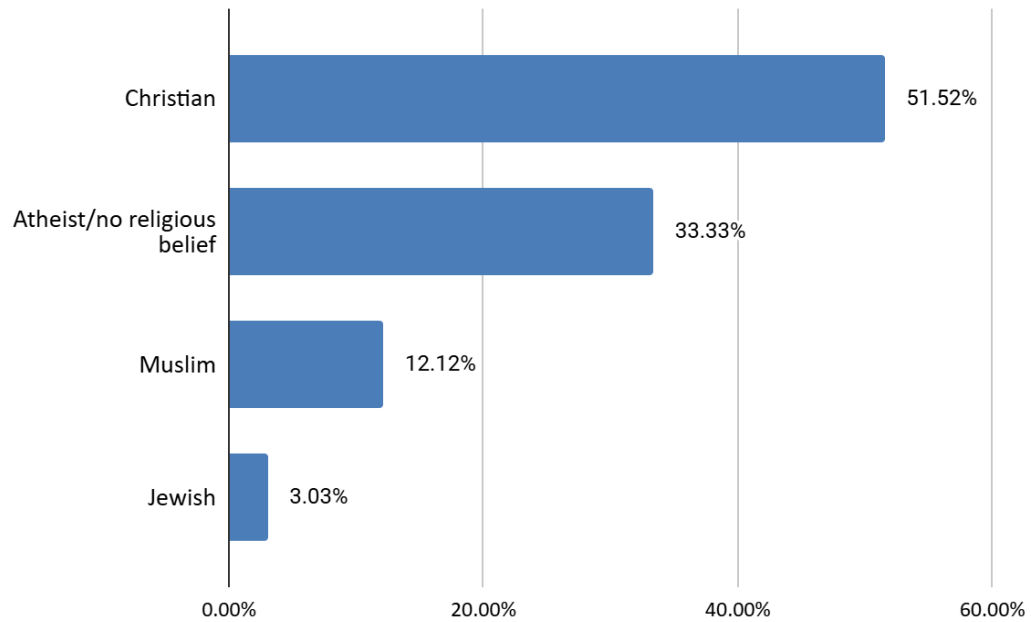
The majority of respondents, at just under three quarters, stated that they did not have caring responsibilities (25), with just over a quarter stating that they did (10).

### Ethnicity (Base 35)



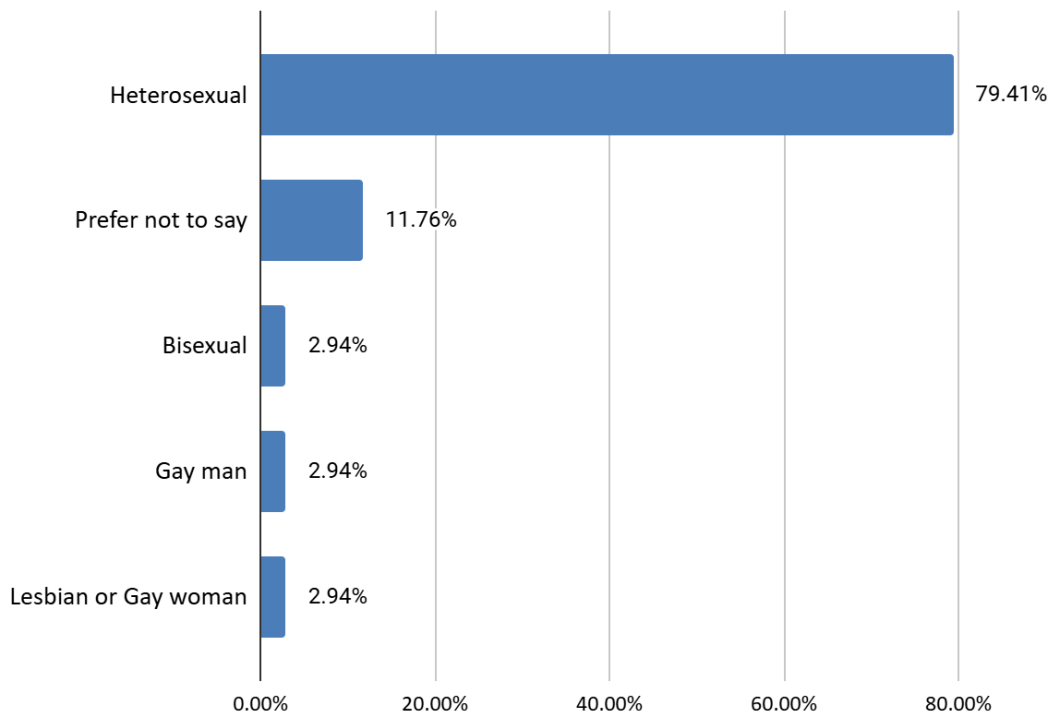
The highest percentage of respondents stated that they were White or White British (16), followed by Black or Black British (9), Asian or Asian British (5), Other ethnic group (4), and Mixed background (1).

### Religion or belief (Base 33)



The majority of respondents stated that they were Christian (17), followed by Atheist/no religious belief (11), Muslim (4) and Jewish (1).

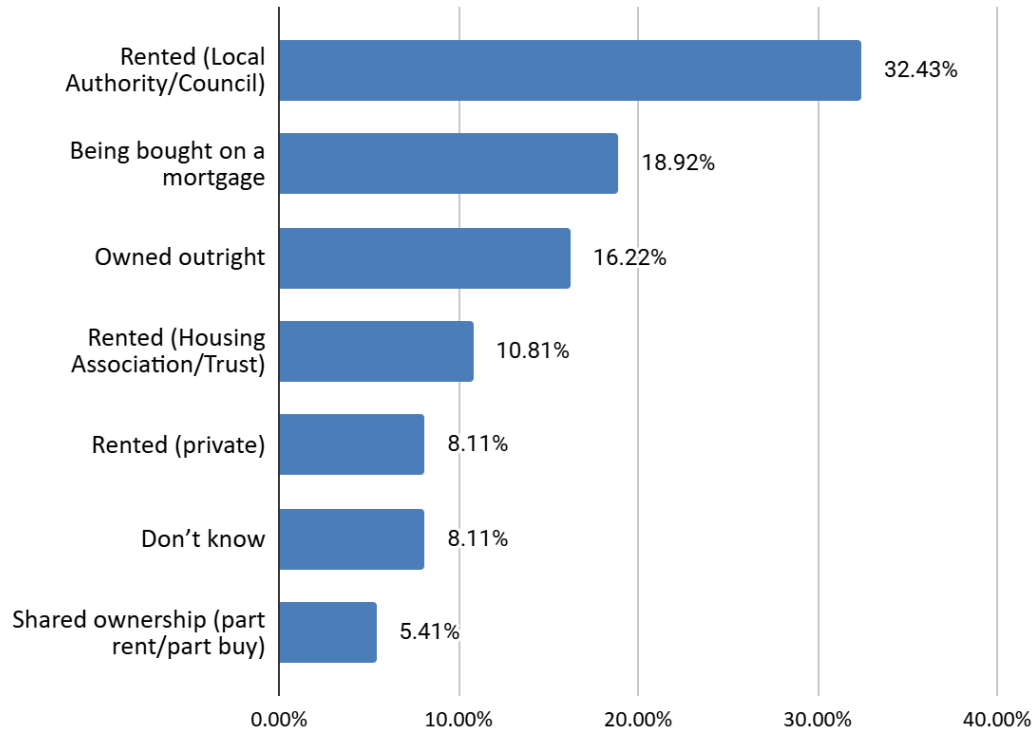
### Sexual orientation (Base 34)



The majority of respondents stated that they were Heterosexual (27), followed by those who prefer not to say (4), Bisexual, Gay man and Lesbian or Gay Woman (1 each).



### Housing tenure (Base 37)



The highest percentage of respondents stated that they rent from a Local Authority/Council (12), followed by those who have a house being bought on a mortgage (7), owned outright (6), rented from a Housing Association/Trust (4), private rented (3), don't know (3) and those who are in shared ownership (2).

# APPENDIX

## All Comments On Consultation Proposals

<p><b>Please provide your comments in the box below on the proposal to discontinue St. Dominic's Primary School under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006: - St Dominics comments</b></p>
<p>Agree with proposal</p>
<p>The school was allowed to build up debts due to the council's incompetence</p>
<p>There has been no pragmatic solutions found other than parents and the local priest</p>
<p>It's a discriminating decision against catholics</p>
<p>"It's truly heartbreaking to hear about the closure of St. Dominic's Primary School. For so many families, students, and staff, this school has been more than just a place of learning—it's been a community, a second home, and a foundation for countless memories and lifelong friendships. The dedication of the teachers and the nurturing environment they created will undoubtedly leave a lasting impact on all who passed through its doors. While this marks the end of an era, the values, education, and sense of belonging that St. Dominic's instilled in its students will continue to shine brightly in their futures. My thoughts are with everyone affected by this difficult decision, and I hope the legacy of St. Dominic's lives on in the hearts of its community."</p>
<p>It's understandable that the closure of St. Dominic's Primary School evokes strong emotions, especially for those who have deep connections to the school. If you're passionate about keeping it open, here's a comment you might consider sharing to advocate for its preservation:</p>
<p>"St. Dominic's Primary School is more than just a building—it's a cornerstone of our community, a place where generations of children have grown, learned, and thrived. Closing it would mean losing not just a school, but a vital part of our identity and heritage. The dedicated staff, the supportive environment, and the sense of belonging it provides are irreplaceable. Instead of closing St. Dominic's, we should be investing in its future, ensuring it continues to serve our children and families for years to come. Let's come together to find solutions that keep this cherished institution alive. Our children, our community, and our future deserve nothing less."</p>
<p>Dear Sir,Madame. We live in Homerton Road. It quite near to St. Dominic primary School. I would like to ask you to keep the school continue to open and operate as it is very necessary for our community in Hackney and around area. As my children had been attended in in this school for 8 years before....And now they are become a family with their children in the near future. That what we worry where will our grandchildren will go for education if this school closed PLEASE KEEP THIS SCHOOL OPEN. THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!</p>
<p>It should not go ahead. Closing the school is very short sighted and a knee jerk reaction just to save money.</p>

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School provides essential provision to this community which will not be able to be met if closed under the present provision. St Dominic's is not being closed because of standards but because of pupil numbers and finance. At the same time Hackney is closing St Mary's. However the other two schools listed for closure result in an increase for the remaining schools to grow to two form entry removing only faith school choice and this is disproportionate. It also has a disproportionate impact on the traveller community. There are insufficient places in Catholic schools in Hackney for the pupils at St Dominic's to be accommodated in faith based schools and those approached have not been able to expand because of physical size restrictions. In years 3/6 this is a 2 form entry school and those numbers cannot be accommodated in existing Hackney schools without significant disruption to the quality of learning, curriculum continuity and family groups. Proposals to mitigate this by the use of the nearest Catholic school in another borough have not been addressed leaving parents without parental choice and children separated from their friendship groups and support processes established over a number of years. Insufficient time has been given for the new EHT to address budget issues which could have been resolved (and which Hackney finance team should have managed as this school should have been supported by Hackney to manage in years deficits and not just recklessly provided with ever increasing loans. If the school is named for closure the process should not commence in September as there has been too little strategic planning to secure this effectively for the number of pupils in the school given the vacancy rate in years 3/6 elsewhere in the borough.

Why is it that the council doesn't recognise the importance and educational impact of a smaller class? All the displaced children will be added to other, already too large, classes in other schools that they might have to commute to. Two miles is not 500 metres from the child's house. Let's add more traffic to the already polluted Kenworthy Road. Where exactly is the benefit for the children? All this while the likes of Diane Abbot sent their children to private schools because of how bad many schools in Hackney are. How about the council closes the worst performing schools and not the ones where the classes have shrunk?

With the falling roll, and with the provision of other Catholic schools in both Hackney and Tower Hamlets it makes complete sense for the closure of St Dominic's. Sadly the poor leadership of a complacent (now retired) headteacher, a lack of robust governance - and the vagueness of the Diocese of Westminster have all contributed to the failure of this school. If only they had joined the Catholic Act Trust.

Whilst we understand the underlying issues which have led to this decision being made by the council, we still feel that the school could have been sustained, albeit with smaller numbers, in order to continue provide the care and support to the community which has been its hallmark work for so many years. The school has been at the centre of the community, providing so much more than just education to its pupils and the hole made by closing it will not be filled by other organisations.

I am writing to formally express my strong disapproval of the proposed closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School. This institution has been an essential part of our community, providing not only high-quality education but also a nurturing environment that upholds strong values and traditions.

St Dominic's is more than just a school; it is a pillar of support for families, offering a sense of belonging and continuity that cannot be easily replaced. Closing it would disrupt the education of current students, force families to seek alternatives that may not meet the same standards, and diminish the cultural and spiritual fabric of our community.

Furthermore, the impact on staff and local employment cannot be ignored. Dedicated teachers and support staff who have contributed years of service face uncertainty, while children risk losing the close-knit educational experience that smaller faith-based schools provide.

Before a decision is made, I urge you to reconsider and explore alternative solutions, such as additional funding, community partnerships, or enrollment initiatives. The closure of St Dominic's would be a significant loss, and I believe there are ways to ensure its sustainability without sacrificing the future of its students.

I kindly ask that you take this objection into serious consideration and allow further consultation with parents, staff, and the wider community.
It's because the teachers and staffs in the school are very helpful with have time for the kids
I am a catholic. And I want my children to go to catholic school. There is no catholic school near me except our st Dominic's catholic primary school.
It is a great school, supporting so many families, the only one Catholic primary school in the homerton area.
<p>I strongly oppose the proposal to discontinue St. Dominic's Primary School under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006. As the only remaining church school in the area, St. Dominic's provides not only high-quality education but also a unique faith-based learning environment that many families value.</p> <p>Closing St. Dominic's would disrupt children's education, place additional pressure on surrounding schools, and remove an essential faith-based institution that fosters moral and spiritual development. Families who specifically chose this school for its religious ethos would lose a vital option for their children's education.</p> <p>Before taking such a drastic step, alternative solutions—such as increased funding or restructuring—should be explored. I urge the decision-makers to reconsider this proposal and prioritize the long-term educational and spiritual needs of the children and families affected.</p> <p>I live in the local area the kids are a credit to the parents and school so many well behaved children and such a tight knit group of families. Also this is the only Catholic school in Homerton that would be shame to take one of the centres of the community away.</p> <p>Think about all the children that are going to lose friendships and trust they've built in school., only to regain that all over again! It's really not fair!</p> <p>My son is special needs and has attended this school for 6years and even the proposal of the school closing down and him losing the teachers with have built years of trust and understanding with has completely destroyed his outlook on school and school life st Dominic's is a pillar of our community and has been for many years this is the only catholic school within walking distance as my child has physical needs</p> <p>I understand that such substantially falling rolls requires action to ensure sustainability. I am concerned that the schools proposed for closure have higher proportions of children with SEND, particularly so at St Dominic's. While the proposals include support for families of children with SEND to make their forced choice of an alternative school, there is no mention of what process there will be for the staff who are such a vital part of providing SEND support. I am concerned that there is no mention of what process there will be for any of the staff involved. I am also concerned that there is no mention of what will happen to the buildings - whether the St Dominic's site belongs to the Diocese or to Hackney I am keen that it continue to be used for social purposes.</p>

I am disgusted with the Council taking the decision to go ahead with the proposal to close St.Dominic's Catholic Primary School!

There IS NOT SUFFICIENT SPACE in the neighbouring schools to accommodate our children!

For me personally my preference is CATHOLIC all my children have been baptised, my older children have had their first holy communion as have myself and my husband and both sides of our families for generations. CATHOLIC EDUCATION is a key part in raising our children in the eyes of the lord that mirrors our home life and values, community schools/other faith schools CANNOT PROVIDE this.

IF you go ahead with the closure i DO NOT appreciate that i will have to incur DAILY TRAVEL EXPENSES(Until July 2031) in order to continue in an alternative CATHOLIC SCHOOL to provide CATHOLIC EDUCATION for my children!

I have recently read that the Council will offer grants to support uniform costs IF the closure goes ahead, i believe £32-£52 per child. Again as i have two older sons in year 7 and year 8 who also attended St.Dominic's Catholic Primary School, i have uniform for my two younger sons currently in year 2 and Reception to see them both through their remaining time in primary school learning. IF you go ahead with the closure I would then be hit with more FINANCIAL BURDEN of purchasing the NEW SCHOOL uniform!

IF the closure goes ahead i feel like HACKNEY COUNCIL have let our COMMUNITY down as they have expressed their joys of the ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN PRESENCE everyday and would NOT like new unaffordable flats taking over the space instead!

You'll be letting our TEACHER'S down who i SUPPORT in their current STRIKE ACTION the Council need to work with the STAFF FAIRLY to end the disruption to the CHILDRENS LEARNING as if the Council hasn't caused enough DISRUPTION to ST.DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL!

Lastly you'll be letting the CHILDREN of ST.DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL down.

The council agreed last July to a 2 year period with a joint headship with St Scholastica's and this has not been upheld. The council also haven't been honest about when staff were told about the proposed closure. This was highlighted at the parents consultation meeting held at the school. Given that the council haven't followed their own procedures correctly they have no right to close our school under these circumstances.

There are lots of community schools in the Homerton area but only one Catholic school so it is discriminatory to remove the choice from catholic families when parents who might have to move schools from a community school (if one were to close) would have plenty of other local similar options. In contrast any other catholic primary school is hard to reasonably get to daily with three young children (getting the single decker bus up Homerton high st in rush hour traffic daily with a buggy for example which is what we would have to do.) we are left with little choice but to home educate to maintain a catholic education for our children if St Dominic's were to close.

**Please provide your comments in the box below on the proposal to discontinue St. Mary's Primary School under Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006: - Comments**

It should not go ahead. Closing the school is very short sighted and a knee jerk reaction just to save money.

The closure of St Mary's School is likely to significantly impact local residents - not only school users, but those who live adjacent to the school.

It's highly likely the site would be developed following the school closure, which would have profound effects on residents of Denman House, the residential block that surrounds St Mary's buildings and playground on three sides.

Development of the site would create significant disturbance, noise and traffic. It would change the nature of the almost 100-year old residential block and could overshadow residents' homes.

As a resident homeowner I am concerned about the effects on my ability to potentially sell my home, as well as the impact on my life there.

I therefore feel that, if the school must close, local residents must be provided with guarantees about how the site will be used in future so that it does not adversely effect their home life and the value of their homes.

I understand that such substantially falling rolls requires action to ensure sustainability. I am concerned that the schools proposed for closure have

higher proportions of children with SEND. While the proposals include support for families with SEND children, there is no mention of what process there

will be for the staff who are such a vital part of providing SEND support. I am concerned that there is no mention of what process there will be for any of

the staff involved. I am also concerned that there is no mention of what will happen to the St Mary's site - whether owned by the church or the council I

am keen that it continues to be used for social purposes, neither left empty nor sold for private development.

**Please provide your comments in the box below on the proposal to discontinue Sir Thomas Abney Primary School, including the Language Resourced Provision (LRP), and merge the student body with Holmleigh Primary School and to increase Holmleigh Primary School from 1 form of entry (1FE) to 2 forms of entry (2FE) and to add special educational needs LRP: - Comments**

I would like to object this proposal. It will cause distress and disruption to the children and staff. Parent select these schools for specific reasons, this takes away the parents and child's freedom to choose.

I would like to object. Leave Holmleigh school with its outstanding ofsted and wonderful grounds.

I would like to object this proposal. As a disabled woman that often takes her grandchildren to school moving the location of Holmleigh school will mean me having to travel further to get to the school. As usual the council are only considering their budget rather than the needs of people and children. Very disappointing!

This is going to be hard for children and parents from Sir Thomas Abney as now they will have to buy new uniform , bags etc. for them this is not a merge it's a takeover as yes they will be on their own site but not the school they have known for their entire life They will have to adapt to different members of staff as none of the staff from STA will be there. It's difficult when children have to move to secondary school as it's part of the process but for us to expect them to do it in their primary school age. We as a society are not thinking of these children for Hackney Council it is all about a business transaction on how best to save money. Parents of Sir Thomas Abney school still do not understand that the staff they have known will not be there in September 2025. Hackney Council need to make this clear in plain English as to what is going on as a lot of the parents may not read and understand English. Yes at the back of the long winded document you have said they can access in their home language but which parent will even get to the end of the document.

The children with SEND and LRS will again have to adapt to new members of staff as Hackney Council need to remember that the staff at STA know the importance of background knowledge about each child especially when they have come from Early years so how is that transition going to take place Hackney council need to be an open book to parents as to what their plans are for the future of these children as please remember this should be about the children not about the deficit only

This is very unsettling for all the students and very forced. If we wanted our children to be in Holmleigh or any other school then we would have put them there in the beginning. You have basically said we don't have a say you will do this anyways. This whole community feels like they are pushing us out and making room for other communities to step in and walk all over us. Feel let down as a tax payer all my life now my child's getting chucked out to make space for other people to buy the building. Almost as if we're not part of this community anymore. This whole area is falling apart.

My understanding is that Holmleigh won't necessarily move site until July 2026. This means there could be two sites being kept open for a whole academic year. This will obviously involve costs which weren't disclosed during the consultation. Why was this not disclosed and how much will it cost?

It should not go ahead. Closing the school is very short sighted and a knee jerk reaction just to save money.

There is no logic in increasing the size of this 1fe school to a 2fe school when the LA is closing two other 1fe schools and creating disruption to the learning for those pupils in two faith based schools where parental choice is being reduced.

Hackney has 5 forms of entry for Catholic education in the last few years. With the proposed closure of St Dominic's Catholic primary school this will be reduced to 3 forms of entry in total, a decrease of 2/5 which is disproportionate compared to the fall in pupil numbers in then borough which is 1/4.

I understand that such substantially falling rolls requires action to ensure sustainability. I am concerned that the schools proposed for closure have higher proportions of children with SEND. While the proposals include re-establishment of Sir Thomas Abney's ARP as part of Holmleigh, and support for families with SEND children, there is no mention of what process there will be for the staff who are such a vital part of providing SEND support. I am concerned that there is no mention of what process there will be for any of the staff involved. I am also concerned that there is no mention of what will happen to the Holmleigh site. I am keen that it continues to be used for social purposes, neither left empty nor sold for private development.



I believe the proposal has had serious failings in its planning and execution.

The representatives from Hackney have ignored repeated requests made by Sir Thomas Abney to explore the option of a true merger which would involve the closure of both Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh, with a new school being created merging both the student bodies and the staff. These requests have been met with the explanation of 'assuming it wouldn't be allowed under legislation' but it has not actually been pursued to any degree. The failure to explore this option has led to both options that were under proposal being extremely unfair to staff at Sir Thomas Abney, and to use the language of 'merger' to describe the proposed plan is misleading and dishonest.

The documentation relating to the proposal has been difficult to understand for many of the school community. Translations to the document were made available after a person would have to read several pages of legal communication. Hackney Education made no effort to ensure that interpreters/translators have been present at the meetings with families to ensure that everyone has understood the messages. This was raised by Sir Thomas Abney but no satisfactory explanation has been given.

The representatives from Hackney education have attended meetings at Sir Thomas Abney. These meetings have been full of vague information and changes to what has been communicated to staff. Hackney Education have made requests that the meetings were to be 'informal', This has led to a situation where the representatives of Hackney Education have been able to make statements about the process that they are not being held to account for. These meetings should have been 'formal' from the very first one, as should all communication with Hackney Education about the process.

The process has been incredibly distressing for the staff at Sir Thomas Abney. The unique circumstances of the closure of Sir Thomas Abney to be renamed as Holmleigh are such that it should have been treated as a unique situation, with implications that are potentially more serious (or at least different) to other school closures in recent past. This has not been the case - no meaningful recognition of these unique circumstances has been communicated other than an occasional apology from representatives of Hackney Education - informal, of course.

The proposal document itself demonstrates that Hackney Education has given a great deal of thought to what it can use as arguments for closing the school. These arguments are largely (if not only) financial. The plan goes into no such detail about how the organisation of a new Holmleigh School opening on September 1st 2025 will practically work. We are in March 2025 and nothing at all has been done or communicated in this regard. The proposal mentions continuing support and provision for the most vulnerable people affected by this proposal (including families of children with SEND and the LRS provision) but again, no meaningful practical information or commitments about the ongoing care of these children has been made available to the school community - only the vaguest of mentions in the proposal document..

There are serious problems with this: Not enough recognition has been communicated of the fact that Sir Thomas Abney remains a good school, judged as outstanding by recent visits from the SIP, and is in no way responsible for the deficit used as an argument in the proposal. In fact, Sir Thomas Abney has made repeated efforts in the last few years to allow solutions to a very predictable financial situation which would have involved discussion between Hackney, Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh at a much earlier date. This would have allowed for a proper plan rather than this proposal which was rushed through at the start of this academic year. There has not been any recognition that circumstances beyond the control of the school, including the mismanagement by Hackney Council and Hackney Education of this issue for several years, have led to the situation being dealt with as it is now.

**Cont.d below.....**

Mismanagement has also been very apparent in the way the proposal has been communicated to staff by Hackney Education. The first meeting was held with Mr Terry Bryan showing up late. The presentation which was used to deliver a sensitive and distressing message to staff had the wrong school's name on it. From the very first stage, the human impact of how Hackney Education has chosen to communicate this message has been disrespectful and ignorant of the standards to which it should hold itself in the way it treats its employees. Subsequent meetings have also led to the feeling that the representatives of Hackney Education have persistently come across as flippant, dismissive and only prepared to do the absolute bare minimum in ensuring that staff who have dedicated many years of their lives to this school felt valued and recognised. In some meetings, it was apparent that the representatives of Hackney Education were avoiding giving some answers and refusing to pursue questions and enquiries proposed by staff. At other times, it has been apparent that the representatives of Hackney Education did not even know which senior members of Sir Thomas Abney Leadership were present at the meeting, and they directed their comments in a way which seriously undermined staff at our school.

I would have serious misgivings about working for Hackney in the future for two main reasons. I believe that the process has demonstrated the short term nature of any plans that Hackney has for its schools and I would have little confidence that any job in any Hackney school would be safe in the current climate, where Hackney has a list of schools it intends to close but will not share which ones or why. The plans for the 'new school' are vague, impractical and completely ignorant of the fact that Sir Thomas Abney is still educating its children , full time, for the duration of the academic year. Secondly, I have been stunned and appalled at the manner in which Hackney has placed so little emphasis on the skills required to liaise with a school like Sir Thomas Abney in the unique situation it finds itself in. It has been distressing enough to receive the proposal, but staff are aware of the financial context. What has added a great deal of distress is the professionalism and manner of the representatives of Hackney Education. Staff have felt patronised, not listened to, sidelined, lied to, dismissed and simply insulted by the way the representatives have carried out their task of communicating with staff and the school community. For me, and many other staff here, a council and educational body that allows their representatives to conduct a hugely significant and uniquely challenging change like this one with so little regard for the human impact of the delivery of its messages is not one where I would have any confidence working for,

I do not think is a good idea as I am already tight with times and will not be able to waste 20 more minutes to drop my son to school.

If the schools will merge I will bring my son to another school.

I am extremely unhappy with the way the merger between STA and Holmleigh is being done. I simply don't understand why the children from STA have to be so disadvantaged by losing all their teachers and support staff in one fell swoop.

From the very beginning this consultation was a done deal, with Hackney council not listening to anything we said, nor considering any other option at all. The original consultation was a load of rubbish, with only the options that Hackney council thought were acceptable on the table. There was no willingness to listen to alternatives.

I do not agree that it would not be possible to merge the staff groups. At a council meeting that I attended, another borough presented how they had merged two schools, without dismissing all the staff from one school. Hackney's refusal to even consider this option makes me feel I can't trust them – why is it possible in South London, but not in Hackney?

My daughter has attended Sir Thomas Abney since her 3rd birthday, she was allowed to start early during lockdown, due to her mother being a single parent, and needing to work in the hospital with covid patients. She started in a small group of children, and built very strong relationships with the teachers and support staff of Sir Thomas Abney who looked after them on a rota. I had been worried about her starting school, as she was shy and sensitive prior to her starting, and being in such a small group has allowed her to blossom at school, and become outgoing and chatty.

In her class is a little boy who is autistic. We have all seen him develop from a boy who would fight to not be left at school initially, into a happy boy who enjoys being at school, and interacts in the school in his own way. He was non verbal before and has started to speak. This is in no small part due to the 1:1 teaching assistant that he has, Ginny. She has invested so much time in him, and to lose her would be so disruptive to him, but also to my daughter. It would be detrimental to their emotional well being to lose much loved staff, and to their development. He has now been able to develop to have special roles in class like reading out the register, and even having a part in the school shows. All the children are so proud of him, and they are aware of autism and how to interact with him. It would be really detrimental to him to lose her. It would be detrimental to the other children to witness that loss, and would aggravate their own upset. This must not be allowed to happen.

For example, also Jamie, who is a TA who runs the after school club. Jamie went to the school himself and is so committed to the school and the children. My daughter attends after school club with him 3 times per week and is really connected with him. He is another who has encouraged her to be more extroverted and confident. It would be awful to lose that.

And there are many other relationships like that which shouldn't be lost. Rosie is a TA and a parent at the school, she has known my daughter since she was a baby, my daughter is distraught thinking that Rosie will lose her job. Rehanna from reception has also known Rae since she was a baby, due to my daughter coming into class in her buggy when my son was a pupil at the school. Please do not throw this away.

I really think Hackney could make a reasonable adjustment to the plan, and allow the support staff to stay. This would not be a huge cost, and would make such a difference to the children. I also just don't understand why Holmleigh can have enough staff to run the new school. It would be immoral to make STA staff redundant, whilst recruiting new staff with no connection to the school. It seems to be done in the way that will make the largest amount of upset.

If Hackney Council won't make this reasonable adjustment, I want to know why not. I want to know why, given it is not an expensive option, and that it would make a huge difference to the children. I want the reasons to be explained to us, in writing, if they won't make this small change, for the benefit of our children, and particularly the SEN and the sensitive children. Why when it is not expensive? Why, when it will benefit our children so much? It is really not an unreasonable request from us. Please consider it, and if not, put the reasons in writing to us.

I am writing to formally object to the Council's proposal to merge Holmleigh and St Thomas Abney schools. The Council has entirely disregarded the many legitimate concerns raised by parents and governing bodies at both schools in the public consultation they organised. The consultation showed that parents at both schools are firmly against the move and provided many valid reasons based on demographic and financial data as well as a commitment to their respective school communities. Hackney have provided no evidence that the views put forward in the public consultation have been taken into account and listened to. It feels quite clear that the decision had already been made and the consultation was in bad faith.

The Council have also disregarded and failed to engage adequately with public questions raised at the Cabinet meeting on 27 January 2025 regarding the unrealistically short timeframe in which the merger is due to take place. At the same meeting, the deputy mayor failed to provide a satisfactory response to the question of what lessons had been learnt from the many challenges of the Baden Powell/Nightingale School merger last year.

Hackney has stated that no viable alternatives have been put forwards by parents but in fact many Holmleigh parents have suggested that St Thomas Abney could close rather than pushing forwards with a move that is clearly going to damage both school communities.

Finally, I would like to object to Hackney's use of demographic data to suggest that there is little risk in moving Holmleigh to a larger site in the face of falling pupil numbers. The data they have drawn on is Hackney-wide and fails to take any account of the specific demographics of the surrounding area of St Thomas Abney, which has a majority population of Orthodox Jewish families who will never attend the school.

I would ask that Hackney reconsiders the decision to press ahead with this destructive merger that will irrevocably damage two thriving school communities.

There has been no clear response to why the council felt that it was not WORTH applying to the Secretary of State to pursue opening a new school in order to merge these two schools under a new name with job opportunities for staff from both schools. This would have been a fairer process and in the best interest of the children.

It is very clear from the way this so called 'merger' is being conducted that those making the decisions have a complete lack of understanding of how school communities operate. Parents, children and staff work together to build positive relationships which in turn support and improve the social and academic progress of children. When you remove this suddenly it has a very damaging effect on the community. It creates a lack of trust and security.

Moreover, a council who struggled to attract skilled and experience staff over 30 years ago and paid extra to do so, seem to be quite willing to go back to that sorry state. Making experienced, dedicated staff redundant does not seem like a good business plan. Staff will not consider working for a council who have no regard for their employees. I appreciate that redundancies are sometimes necessary, however, there needs to be more thought put into the fair way of applying these.

Finally, the consultation has not been inclusive in any way or form for our diverse community. The language used in the proposals and notice have been confusing and misleading for most parents. Offers of translations have been put at the end of very long documents in English which was not helpful at all. Parents have approached staff with little to no understanding of the proposed plans and have clearly indicated that they did not fully grasp what was about to happen. This has been terrifying for a lot of parents, especially those with educational needs and who rely on the current staff to support them.

The whole proposal has been handled with an indelicacy and lack of consideration for the community.

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STA have never doubted the difficult financial situation Hackney Education is in, and the falling pupil role, we maintain that there were alternatives to the consultation options you put forward, and that you consistently chose not to accept these. Despite telling us different reasons throughout the consultations and scrutiny proceeding (a true merger will trigger academisation, Hackney's HR regulations). Your actual rationale set out in appendix 2: 1.19. is simply not true.

Considering the amount of responses to the consultation objecting to the outright closure of Sir Thomas Abney, as a parent who has had their child on the waiting list of 3 local schools since the first consultation, there are not the school places available to cope with the outright closure of STA. An expanded Homleigh on a new site is a new school, but by not calling it a new school, you have satisfied the council's needs to 'cancel' a deficit at the expense of the STA school community and staff.

Hackney Council's clumsy handling of this and disrespect to the communities involved has been noted.

I for one am deeply disturbed by the council's sidelining of Sir Thomas Abney's staff and pupils in the process of both consultations, the lack of care you have taken in your communications are nothing short of hurtful.

We feel we have been misled, ignored, and the wellbeing of our children have been considered second to the wellbeing of the children of Homleigh.

I understand that this is a consequence of your actions to date over this matter, and can only be seen as indirect discrimination, however, we still demand that it is justified.

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There is clearly going to be a negative impact on the children of STA, it would be a reasonable adjustment in these circumstances to ensure that the current Teaching Assistants move across with the student body, and secure contracts offered.

If this is not made possible, Hackney Council needs to explain their rationale, responding both to the positive impact of the Teaching Assistants moving with the student body, and the minimal negative impact of the financial cost of this.

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Despite telling STA parents that the staff and governors from both Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney are working together to plan events and activities. (Update on the proposal to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and merge the student body with Holmleigh - 3rd march). The tension you have manufactured between the two schools and the negligent treatment of the STA staff in particular has made any such working together extremely sensitive and stressful.

I am not aware of any such work done 'together' to date.

Homleigh and STA parents have worked hard to maintain friendships at this stage, but this is more despite, rather than through the actions of the council.

Please stop using this kind of misleading language. It is not helpful. It will only increase the level of mistrust in Hackney Council that is already prevalent.

(A request to change the wording of the original consultation was submitted by parents to a council officer at the second meeting for parents at STA, and was noted in the consultation report. This was not responded to by Hackney Council.)

Sir Thomas Abney Parent Governor

I am absolutely dismayed at the dreadful way that this process has been carried out and appalled at the refusal of the council to seek a fair and just way to bring about the merger of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School. The governors and parents requested that the council seek the approval of the Secretary of State, Bridget Phillipson, to close both schools and open a 'new' school on the beautiful existing site of Sir Thomas Abney with a fresh name and a mixture of existing staff and Holmleigh staff.

As there is clearly the need for a school in this area I do not believe the DfE/Secretary of State would not approve a far better, fairer way to deal with this current shortage of pupils - and consider that a proper merger, rather than a take-over from Holmleigh school, would be much fairer and effective. A new school with two sets of pupils in one building. Have any of you thought about how unsettling will it be for Sir Thomas Abney pupils to return in September to NO familiar faces and with a new set of peers that DO have their familiar teachers/staff. Clearly not.

Rather than consider this option, the council have made all Sir Thomas Abney staff (a very talented group of educational experts) redundant. These teachers and support staff are valuable and make a huge difference to the lives of children in Hackney (especially for those with SEND). It seems a very stupid and short-sighted decision from the council. It is a decision that they have made because it fits their own agenda (they are worried about potential acadamisisation and MATs). Why else are the council so opposed to approaching the DfE with a much better option.

Why would any educator want to work in this borough knowing how poorly they treat staff who have been loyal, committed and truly inspirational in their work for local families. Not a word of thanks or acknowledgement - not an ounce of consideration.

I just can't believe, nor trust, that any decision made by Hackney council has the children of Hackney at heart. Their destruction of education in this borough and the closure of such an excellent school, is being done from a purely financial perspective. The deficit that Sir Thomas Abney has is completely the doing of Hackney Council and it is not nearly as high as some Hackney primary schools - and of course it is higher than Holmleigh's deficit (who are on a very much smaller site with less outgoings and who receive extra support/funding). Why can you not close both schools and open a new one - the deficit will be written off anyway.

Furthermore, the council is proposing to spend millions on unwanted and unnecessary schemes to give their HQ a facelift and to close Amhurst Road/Chatsworth road etc. Where are your commitments to increased housing that would help families to remain in the borough thus negating the need to close all your long established, successful schools. Education is paramount to a successful society - you need to get your priorities in order!

To conclude, what I would like to happen as a result of this consultation is:

1. Ask the Secretary of State if it is possible to close both schools and then merge both schools on the site of Sir Thomas Abney (if necessary retaining the school number of Holmleigh) with teachers and support staff from both schools - the best people from each.
2. Keep the process open, transparent and clear - Terry Bryant etc. have conducted meetings and made commitments that have never been put in writing, only later to be changed. The school community need better clarity and more time to try to find a better solution.
3. The council must themselves give proper consideration to making this a proper, fairer merger rather than one school taking over another. Involve all parties, close both schools and open a new school that maintains the quality of education for both sets of children/families utilising the expertise of the best staff from each school (not settling for less).
4. Provide the very best care for children with SEND to the standard that is provided by Sir Thomas Abney - as well as the best care and education for all the children.

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Myself and other parents maintain that there were alternatives to the consultation options Hackney Council put forward, and that Hackney Council consistently chose not to accept these. Staff and Governors have asked quite a few times for Hackney Education and the Hackney Council Cabinet member for Education to appeal to the Secretary of State for permission to create a 'properly merged' school, with as many staff as possible from both schools merging with the two pupil rolls. As far as we are aware, Hackney Council have made only minimal effort to appeal, or to fight for any kind of special permission in light of the high number of pupils at Sir Thomas Abney who particularly need stability in their environment.

To the contrary,

Hackney Council appear to have acted with the best interests of Homleigh pupils, in spite of the needs of Sir Thomas Abney's pupils. There is clearly going to be a negative impact on the children of STA, this has not been addressed adequately to date.

I understand that this is a consequence of your actions to date over this matter, but it can be seen as indirect discrimination, and we demand that it is properly justified.

It would be a reasonable adjustment in these circumstances to ensure (by offering timely secure contracts) that the current TA staff and support staff in general, who face a more volatile job market are encouraged to transition to the new Homleigh school with the STA student body.

If this is not made possible, Hackney Council needs to explain their rationale, responding both to the positive impact of the teaching assistants and support staff moving with the student body, and the minimal negative impact of the financial cost of this.

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Due to their treatment, many of the staff at STA would be quite justified to no longer feel they can securely commit their time and skills working for Hackney Council. As a Hackney resident, I am ashamed of this, it signals the demise of the quality and reputation of Hackney Education. We have been shown your prediction graphs of the falling pupil rolls, in a lazy attempt to justify the closure of our school. But we were not shown any plans of what our council is doing to attract families back to the area.

We can only assume that families are not the demographic that Hackney Council is prioritising in the future.

Sir Thomas Abney Parent

Please see response email from the Sir Thomas Abney Primary School Governing Body. In addition I would like to add the following:

Sir Thomas Abney has one of the highest number of SEND pupils, with and without EHCPs. We also get pupil premium for a large percentage of our pupils. These children are having their world turned upside down. For many SEND pupils their schools are their safe place. STA is one of those schools. Both the specialist SEND staff that work with the children in the LRP and the staff for the school as a whole know what these children need. They know how to teach them so that they learn, grow and mature. Making all the staff at STA redundant is wrong. If you had tried for a true amalgamation with voluntary redundancies from both schools then the most experienced staff would have kept their jobs. The reason given for closing STA is purely a financial one. If the school was properly funded for all of the SEND children it would not have such a large deficit.

Data on the decline in child numbers in primary schools in Hackney has been collected for a very long time, more than a decade. However, given this consistent downward trend those in-charge of forecasting child numbers in the borough have always forecast a future increase in numbers and that eventually they would rise. This is why Benthall Primary School, around 2016-17, was earmarked for demolition to make way for a new secondary school on its site. The thinking being that when this increase of children arrived they would be ready with a greater capacity of secondary schools places to cope with influx of children. This never happened. And the numbers continue to decrease. During this decrease even new primary schools were opening to cope with the predicted increase, Halley House in 2015 being one example. Given the current economic climate with homes in Hackney becoming more and more unaffordable, families are moving out of the borough for more space when planning or having families of school age children, to live further out from the centre or to other counties altogether. However, given Holmleigh and STA primary's location, in the heart of the Jewish community of Stamford Hill which has an increasing birthrate has exacerbated this decline as such has aided in the decline in numbers at STA Primary school. Increasing capacity again, especially in this area, is likely to only have this effect putting the new school in the same danger that STA is currently in. It is not possible, in good faith, to believe that the increase in capacity of the proposed merged new school is still a viable option. At present the format that Holmleigh runs is the most appropriate offering for this area for this economic climate and time of dwindling number of children. Having anything larger would indeed jeopardise both schools and leave an enormous part of Hackney with no primary school provision at all.

**Please provide your comments in the box below on the proposal to discontinue Oldhill Primary School, including the additional resourced provision for autistic children and merge the student body with Harrington Hill Primary School, and to increase Harrington Hill Primary School from 1 form of entry (1FE) to 2 forms of entry (2FE) and to establish an Additional Resourced Provision for autistic children: - comments**

It should not go ahead. Closing the school is very short sighted and a knee jerk reaction just to save money.

As a parent of a student enrolled at Oldhill Primary School, I have significant concerns about the plan to close the school and combine its student body with Harrington Hill Primary School. Although efficiency is important, this choice could have significant effect on students, employees, and the community itself.

Children may find the change upsetting, especially for those like my child who only have a year left in their school and soon to sit their SATS in year 6, the sudden change can affect them and their education, so it's critical to have sufficient assistance on place to reduce any interruption. Concerns over bigger class numbers, resource availability, and maintaining educational quality is a significant concern being raised for Harrington Hill.

Closing of Oldhill Primary has a broader effect on families, relocating to Harrington Hill creates problems, such as increased commute time and logistical difficulties for families, as many parents like me selected Oldhill for its accessibility and strong community.

I request those in charge to take into account how this idea will affect kids and families on an educational, practical level. To solve these issues a guarantee that students keep getting high-quality education and support they need.

There is a logic to increasing specialist provision but no logic on increasing provision of a 1FE to 2FE school at the same time as there are proposals for closure of St Dominic's Catholic School, which disrupts the education of the pupils in this established school community and restricts faith based provision. This does not secure the alleged strategic intent of numerically reducing provision of places at primary level, it simply reduces choice for one faith community but retains capacity that it claims elsewhere is not needed.



I understand that such substantially falling rolls requires action to ensure sustainability. I am concerned that the schools proposed for closure have higher proportions of children with SEND. While the proposals include re-establishment of Oldhill's ARP at Harrington Hill, and support for families with SEND children, there is no mention of what process there will be for the staff who are such a vital part of providing SEND support. I am concerned that there is no mention of what process there will be for any of the staff involved. I am also concerned that there is no mention of what will happen to the buildings other than those that will continue to be used for the Oldhill Children's centre. I am keen that they continue to be used for social purposes, neither left empty nor sold for private development.

Hello we are neighbours of the school and sad to hear that the school is closing. Our concerns are now what will happen to the premises. We would like to get in touch with the council to hear about the possible changes. Many thanks!

## All Emails Received on Proposals

24th February 2025	<p>School Sufficiency</p> <p>I am writing as a Governor of Sir Thomas Abney School to protest at the plans for closing STA school without any attempt being made to appeal to the Secretary of State for permission to organise a full merger with Holmleigh School. Officers of Hackney Education have been asked on a number of occasions to make such an appeal because of the very peculiar situation that STA finds itself in and because of the changed advice to schools provided by the DfE in October.</p> <p>Unlike other school closures the school buildings or STA are not in fact being closed. They are instead being given to another school (Holmleigh) which will be doubled in size - on the STA site and with the STA students.</p> <p>If the school continues to exist (albeit under a different name) and the students continue to attend, it is hard to see what grounds there are for making STA staff redundant and giving their jobs to staff from Holmleigh or indeed recruiting other staff to fill these jobs.</p> <p>I would like a clear response as to the legality of this move given the way in which it will impact both the staff and the students of STA.</p> <p>I would also like a proper explanation as to why, in spite of many requests via a number of different avenues, Hackney Council has refused to make representations to the Secretary of State to allow for an equitable merger in which both schools could be appropriately represented.</p> <p>It is clearly NOT the case that there is no demand for a school. Indeed Holmleigh is to be doubled in size to cater for the demand that is known to exist. To suggest otherwise is merely a means of obfuscating.</p> <p>Given the fact that Hackney has decided to take this possibly illegal route to catering for reduced rolls I would also like to know why, to date, no meetings have been organised to bring the Governors of both schools together and try at the very least to smooth the path of the reorganisation and therefore reduce the level of distress and inevitable friction that the actions, so far, have caused.</p> <p>I would like to protest once again, most strongly, at the failure of Hackney Council to make the simple effort to ask for clearer advice in the case of a school "merger" which is clearly anomalous and needs to be treated accordingly.</p> <p>Governor Sir Thomas Abney School</p>
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<p>3rd March 2025</p>	<p>Dear Sir/ Madam,</p> <p>I have registered my concerns at the last invitation to do so and am writing again to register, as a parent of a child in year 5 at Holmleigh, my objection to the proposal to expand and relocate Holmleigh Primary School.</p> <p>As stated in your Statutory notice, 'Borough position: The reception numbers are predicted to continue falling over the coming years...'</p> <p>The plain facts (curiously omitted from any report on the area I've seen) are that with the growing orthodox jewish population serving their own community with independent schools, the population of primary children in this area needing state provision, will have an even greater dip in numbers than that predicted by you for the borough over all.</p> <p>I moved to the area only 14 months ago so am not sentimentally attached to the school as some may be - however I also had looked around Thomas Abney and was shocked to see not even full single classes in a 2 class entry school. In a building that size it therefore felt empty, sad and demoralised. There is simply no way according to your own predictions, that there will be enough children in the future to sustain a 2 class entry school, even with the schools combined.</p> <p>The solution is therefore short sighted and likely to cost the Borough more in the long run.</p> <p>I beg you to see sense - look All the facts in the face and make the hard decision to close those schools that are emptying but not up root Holmleigh, that is popular DUE TO ITS SMALL SIZE. Despite falling populations of non jewish kids, Holmleigh on its current site could be a success story for you as a Borough - rather than moving/ merging it with Thomas Abney, in a move that in the long run is destined to be a very expensive fail.</p> <p>Many thanks</p>
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<p>4th March 2025</p>	<p>To whom it may concern,</p> <p>I am a parent/carer of a SEN student at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School which will close down and merge with Holmleigh Primary School. I am aware Holmleigh's staff team will transfer with their school and employ new staff, leaving STA's staff redundant.</p> <p>However, I do not believe enough consideration has been given to the transition from the two schools and the integration of both new systems between the students from Homleigh, STA, and their staff. I understand they may not be able to keep staff, but I strongly believe the SEN support staff should stay for the benefit of our children. These are children who have worked with them for years, since before their diagnoses. Removing these staff especially will diminish their progress and impact their education negatively, not to mention their mental and emotional well-being.</p> <p>UNCRC Article 29 states every child has the right to the best education that can develop their personality, talents and abilities. The support staff that our children have been working with are the key to this. It is unnecessary to put our children through such change, while what they have has proven to be exceptionally beneficial to them.</p> <p>We kindly request that the SEN staff remain at the school because it is our strong belief that it is to the uttermost benefit of our children, preventing traumas and difficulties in an already challenging transition period. These staff are more than educators to them, we work in partnership with them to foster our children's needs, abilities, and educational capabilities.</p> <p>We feel that every decision made so far has been beneficial to Holmleigh's student, staff and parent body, without ANY consideration for STA.</p> <p>I truly hope any decisions made moving forward are in extremely careful consideration and final protocols will be in the best interests and care of our children.</p> <p>Do not hesitate to contact me for further discussion via email. Feel free to ask me for other contact methods.</p> <p>Yours sincerely</p>
<p>4th March 2025</p>	<p>Good afternoon,</p> <p>Please find a copy of my official objection to the proposed merger between Holmleigh and St Thomas. This document outlines the procedural, operational, and in some cases, legal, failings of Hackney Council in their handling of this matter. I intend on sharing this document with other official bodies in due course.</p> <p>Many Thanks</p>

<p>5th March 2025</p>	<p>Governors oppose the current closure plan on the following grounds:</p> <p>We have asked a number of times for Hackney Education and the Hackney Council Cabinet member for Education to appeal to the Secretary of State for permission to create a genuinely amalgamated school in which both schools are closed and a single school established on the STA site, with a new governing body representing both schools. As far as we are aware, Hackney Council have made no effort at all to pursue this, much fairer, route which would have satisfied both schools. We were told that Hackney Education was under the impression that this request would be denied so they didn't try. That said, we are aware that schools in other boroughs have been able to find a more equitable route to amalgamation, for example, allowing staff from two schools to compete fairly for jobs in the new amalgamated school.</p> <p>At council meetings, Hackney Education was using the old guidance about the 'free school presumption'. In new guidance issued by the DfE in October 2024 there is amended guidance on the this on pages 16 and 17:</p> <p>Proposing a maintained school outside competitive arrangements</p> <p>It is possible to publish proposals for a new maintained school outside of the competitive arrangements at any time. Sections 10 and 11 of EIA 2006 permit proposals to establish new schools under certain conditions either with the Secretary of State's consent (section 10 cases) or without (section 11 cases). In all cases, proposers must follow the required statutory process.</p> <p>Section 10 proposals</p> <p>It is possible to apply to the Secretary of State for 'consent to publish' proposals to establish a new school under section 10 of EIA 2006. With Secretary of State consent, local authorities may publish proposals under section 10 for a community, community special, foundation or foundation special school to replace one or more existing maintained schools.</p> <p>Given that the enlarged Holmleigh school will require more staff in what sense is it legitimate to make all the STA staff redundant? Furthermore, as a school will remain open on the STA site, we would be glad of a response as to the legality of making all the staff redundant in light of the terms of their existing employment contracts.</p> <p>Both the first and this consultation included half-term school holidays. In reality, this means school families and staff had a week less than the required time. The first consultation was confusing to parents. For parents who don't speak or read English they would have had to turn toward the end of the document to see it was translated into other languages. The paper copies delivered to school came late with the translated ones coming after the English language ones. Governor, staff and parental meetings with Hackney Education were arranged at the last minute. This meant that some of members of the Sir Thomas Abney community couldn't attend them.</p> <p>We would appreciate a detailed response to the points raised herein.</p> <p>Chair Governing Body</p>
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<p>5th March 2025</p>	<p>Hello all</p> <p>In response to the consultation on the proposed merger of Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh as a Stamford Hill resident and parent of a child who attended Holmleigh I would like to make the following points.</p> <p>Firstly, the figures for demand for school places that you have supplied in your documents are based on Hackney borough trends.</p> <p>Clearly, this is erroneous. Stamford Hill has unique demographics. It is home to a burgeoning Orthodox community which does not use either of the two primary schools. You are, therefore, heavily overstating likely demand.</p> <p>Secondly, Hackney councillors have said they want spare capacity ... a strange argument as demand for primary school places is falling.</p> <p>Thirdly, as others have pointed out you have failed to respond to the arguments put forward in favour of maintaining Holmleigh, an outstanding school, as a separate entity and closing STA if its finances are too stretched.</p> <p>Best Regards</p>
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<p>5th March 2025</p>	<p>feedback: concern about proposal to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and merge the student body with Holmleigh</p> <p>Myself and other parents maintain that there were alternatives to the consultation options Hackney Council put forward, and that Hackney Council consistently chose not to accept these.</p> <p>Staff, govenors and parents have asked quite a few times for Hackney Education and the Hackney Council Cabinet member for Education to appeal to the Secretary of State for permission to create a 'properly merged' school, with as many staff as possible from both schools merging with the two pupil rolls. As far as we are aware, Hackney Council havent made enough effort to appeal in this way or push for for any kind of special permission towards a better outcome that we currently face, in light of the high number of pupils at Sir Thomas Abney who particalarly need stability in their environment.</p> <p>To the contrary,</p> <p>Hackney Council appear to have acted with the best interests of Homleigh pupils, inspite of the needs of Sir Thomas Abneys pupils.</p> <p>There is clearly going to be a negative impact on the children of STA, this has not been addressed adequately to date.</p> <p>I understand that this is a consequence of your actions to date over this matter,</p> <p>but it can be seen as indirect discrimination, and we demand that it is properly justified.</p> <p>It would be a reasonable adjustment in these circumstances to ensure (by offering timely secure contracts) that the current TA staff and support staff in general, who face a more volatile job market are encouraged to transition to the new Homleigh school with the STA student body.</p> <p>If this is not made possible, Hackney Council needs to explain their rationale, responding both to the positive impact of the teaching assistants and support staff moving with the student body, and the minimal negative impact of the financial cost of this.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Due to the treatment they have faced, many of the staff at STA would be quite justified to no longer feel they can securely commit their time and skills working for Hackney Council.</p> <p>As a Hackney resident, I am ashamed of this, it signals the demise of the quality and reputation of Hackney Education. We have been shown your prediction graphs of the falling pupil rolls in an attempt to justify the closure of our school to us, but we were not shown any plans of what our council is doing to attract families back to the area.</p> <p>We can only assume that families are not the demographic that Hackney Council is prioritising in the future.</p> <p>Sir Thomas Abney Parent</p>
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<p>5th March 2025</p>	<p>Subject: Objection to the Proposed Merger of Sir Thomas Abney School with Holmleigh Primary School</p> <p>Dear Sir/Madam,</p> <p>I am writing to formally object to the proposed merger of Sir Thomas Abney School with Holmleigh Primary School, effective 1 September 2025. While I understand the Council's duty to ensure a sufficient and sustainable number of school places, I have significant concerns regarding the long-term viability of this plan in light of the continued decline in</p> <p>primary school enrolment across Hackney. According to the January 2024 pupil census, there were 2,400 fewer children in Hackney's primary schools compared to 2017, with projections indicating a further decline of 2,700 or more by the mid-2030s. The October 2024 census also highlighted that reception intake was significantly below capacity, with 610 unfilled places, and a total of 4,855 surplus places across all year groups. Given this sharp decline in numbers, it is questionable whether the proposed expansion of Holmleigh</p> <p>Primary School to a two-form entry school will remain viable in the long term. The Council's plan assumes that increasing Holmleigh's intake to 60 pupils per year group</p> <p>will be sustainable, yet current trends indicate otherwise. If primary school numbers continue to drop as predicted, the newly merged school may soon face the same financial</p> <p>instability that led to the discontinuation of Sir Thomas Abney School. This raises concerns</p> <p>about potential future closures or disruptions, ultimately affecting the quality of education</p> <p>provided to the children.</p> <p>Furthermore, the justification for the merger does not adequately address what measures</p> <p>will be put in place should enrolment figures fail to meet the projected numbers. How will</p> <p>the Council ensure that this expanded provision remains viable in the long term without leading to financial difficulties? Without a clear strategy to mitigate the risks of fluctuating</p> <p>pupil numbers, this proposal appears to be a short-term solution to a long-term demographic challenge.</p> <p>Additionally, there has been no clear outline of what contingency plans are in place should</p> <p>the proposed intake figures not be achieved. What will happen if Holmleigh Primary School</p> <p>also struggles with surplus places in the future? Will further school closures or mergers be</p> <p>necessary, causing further instability for families and staff?</p> <p>Moreover, while the Council has a duty to ensure a sufficient number of school places, it is</p> <p>equally responsible for ensuring that schools remain financially stable. The continued decline in primary school numbers suggests that this proposal may lead to financial difficulties down the line, ultimately repeating the same issues that have led to this merger</p> <p>proposal in the first place.</p> <p>I urge the Council to reconsider this proposal and provide more substantial evidence of how the merged school will maintain a sustainable intake, given the ongoing decline in primary school enrolments across the borough. A more strategic approach to managing surplus places should be explored, rather than proceeding with a merger that may not</p>
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	<p>be sustainable in the near future. I appreciate your time in considering this objection and look forward to your response. Yours sincerely, Year 3 pupil mum from Holmleigh School</p>
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