

Statutory Notice

Proposal to discontinue (close) Sir Thomas Abney Primary School including the Language Resourced Provision (LRP) and amalgamate (merge) the student body with Holmleigh Primary School

Hackney Council publishes these proposals under section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013. This notice is published following a consultation which took place between 8 October and 19 November 2024. The proposed changes would take effect on 31 August 2025 and 1 September 2025.

Hackney Council proposes to discontinue Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (Fairholt Rd, London N16 5ED), and merge the student body with Holmleigh Primary School (Dunsmure Rd, London N16 5PU).

The remaining merged school (Holmleigh Primary School), will move from its current location at Dunsmure Rd, London N16 5PU, to the new site at Fairholt Rd, London N16 5ED between 1 September 2025 until August 2026, should the proposal be agreed.

The reason for publishing this proposal is the significant fall in pupil numbers across Hackney, and at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School in particular.

This proposal is linked to a proposal to expand Holmleigh Primary School from 1 form of entry to 2 forms of entry and to add special educational provision there, by designating it as a Language Resourced Provision (LRP). This proposal can be viewed here:

consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger

Together, these proposals would see:

- Sir Thomas Abney Primary School discontinued on 31 August 2025;
- Holmleigh Primary School expanding from 1 form of entry (30 pupils admitted in each year group), to 2 forms of entry (60 children admitted in each year group) from 1 September 2025;
- All children attending Sir Thomas Abney Primary School offered a place at Holmleigh Primary School should parents/carers want one;
- All children on roll at Holmleigh moving from the current site at Dunsmure Rd, London N16 5PU to the new site at Fairholt Rd, London N16 5ED, between 1 September 2025 until August 2026, and;
- An LRP for up to 10 children opening at Holmleigh Primary School on 1 September 2025

This proposal was published on 6 February 2025. Within four weeks of the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by visiting consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger (scan the QR code below), by emailing: school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk, or by writing to: School Sufficiency & Estates Team, Hackney Council, Hackney Service Centre, 1 Hillman Street, London, E8 1DY.

The closing date for receipt of responses to the representation period is 5 March 2025 at 5pm. The Council's Cabinet will meet after the end of the representation period, in April 2025, to take the final decision on all proposals in this notice and the linked notice.

This notice is an extract from the complete proposal. Copies of the complete proposal can be viewed at: consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger

If you require a paper copy of this, please contact us via email at: school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk.

Terry Bryan



Assistant Director, Schools Estate Strategy

Publication date: 6 February 2025



Full Statutory Proposal to discontinue Sir Thomas Abney Primary School including the Language Resourced Provision (LRP) and amalgamate (merge) the student body, including those attending the language resourced provision, with Holmleigh Primary School

1. Contact details (name and address of the proposer):

Hackney Council
Hackney Service Centre
1 Hillman Street
London
E8 1DY
Tel: 020 8356 3000
Email: school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk

Name, address and category of school to be discontinued:

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (community school)
Fairholt Road
London
N16 5ED
Tel: 020 8800 1411
Email: admin@sirthomasabney.hackney.sch.uk

Name and address of school to amalgamate (merge) with Sir Thomas Abney Primary School:

Holmleigh Primary School (community school)
Dunsmure Rd
London
N16 5PU
Tel: 020 8802 7420
Email: admin@holmleigh.hackney.sch.uk

This proposal is linked to a proposal to expand Holmleigh Primary School from 1 form of entry to 2 forms of entry and to add special educational provision there, by designating it as a Language Resourced Provision (LRP). This proposal can be viewed here: consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger

2. Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to close the school: 31 August 2025

It is proposed to implement the closure as follows:

- No reception year pupils will be admitted for the 2025/26 school year. Parents and carers who have expressed a preference for this year have been informed of the proposal for closure in 2025, before the closing date for applications on 15 January 2025.
- Current reception, Years 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 pupils on roll at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School on 31 August 2025 (including those attending the LRP) will transfer to the roll of Holmleigh Primary School from 1 September 2025.
- Pupils in Year 6 will transfer to secondary school for the start of the 2025/26 school year.
- The Language Resourced Provision (LRP) at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School will be established at Holmleigh Primary School to accommodate those children currently attending this provision.

- Holmleigh Primary School would move from the current site at Dunsmure Rd, London N16 5PU to the larger school site at Fairholt Road, London N16 5ED from 1 September 2025.

3. Reason for Closure

The proposal arises due to a fall in pupil numbers and the associated impact on the educational and financial viability of the school. The school is being proposed for closure due to underlying sustainability issues relating to its unrecoverable cumulative budget, which is projected to reach a deficit position of £881,692 by the end of the current financial year (2024/25). The number of pupils enrolled at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School has been steadily declining, from 334 at the October school census in 2019 to 173 at the time of the latest school census in October 2024:

Pupil Roll (Oct Census)	Roll	Capacity (R - Y6)	% Surplus
2019	334	420	20%
2020	309	420	26%
2021	267	420	36%
2022	211	420	50%
2023	196	390	50%
2024	173	360	52%

Note: The PAN of Sir Thomas Abney was reduced from 60 to 30 in September 2023.

The current pupil roll numbers are now less than half its originally intended planned capacity for 420 pupils. The Council is proposing the closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School because the school is no longer sustainable.

Having reviewed the school's financial position against its reducing pupil roll the Council has concluded that the budget position is very likely to further deteriorate. To reach a sustainable financial position it is likely to compromise the quality of education and standards at the school. This would also have a direct adverse impact on children with the highest level of need.

Borough Position

At the January 2024 pupil census there were 2400 fewer children in the borough's primary schools when compared to January 2017, the year when numbers in our primary schools peaked. The number of children joining reception classes in Hackney's mainstream primary schools has, in fact, been falling since 2015. The reception numbers are predicted to continue falling over the coming years and could see the total primary pupil numbers in mainstream primary schools drop by a further 2700 or more by the mid-2030s.

At the October 2024 census there were 2065 children in reception in mainstream primary schools. This is well below the current reception capacity of 2675 places. This means that there were 610 (23%) unfilled reception places in Hackney. Across all year groups there were 4855 (24%) unfilled places in Hackney.

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient number of school places for pupils and that places are planned effectively, and aims to reduce surplus places in the borough to a sustainable level.

The fall in numbers together with reduced funding from central government, means that some of our schools are facing major challenges. If we continue to allow schools to remain open with significant levels of surplus places, it may well put schools at severe financial risk.

4. Pupil numbers and admissions - numbers of pupils for whom provision is currently made

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School is a maintained community school for pupils aged 3-11. The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 30 for Reception and Year 1 and 60 for all other year groups, giving a total of 360 places. At the October 2024 census, the school had 173 children on its roll .

	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
October 2024 census	24	21	25	26	32	21	24	173

The following table shows the number of unfilled places in each year group at the October 2024 pupil census.

Published Admission Number, roll and unfilled places (October 2024 census)

	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
PAN 2024/25	30	30	60	60	60	60	60	360
October 2024 census	24	21	25	26	32	21	24	173
No. of unfilled places	6	9	35	34	28	39	36	187
% of unfilled places	20%	30%	58%	57%	47%	65%	60%	52%

The October 2024 census reports eight children in the nursery at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.

SEND characteristics of children at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School are included in section 11 below.

5. Displaced pupils

Should the proposal be agreed, the council would make arrangements for all children from Sir Thomas Abney Primary School to attend Holmleigh Primary School. Children currently attending the Language Resourced Provision (LRP) at Sir Thomas Abney would transfer to the LRP that will be established at Holmleigh Primary School.

Should parents not wish for their children to transfer to Holmleigh Primary School, there are vacancies across Reception to Year 6 in other Hackney primary schools. Parents can express any alternative preferences for other schools through the in-year admissions process should they wish to do so. Families will be offered one-to-one support to ensure their children have places at suitable schools, and will be given extra priority for places at nearby schools (where the local authority is responsible for admissions).

The reported number of children at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School at the October 2024 census is outlined in section 4 above. It is expected that pupil numbers will change; they may reduce between now and the final Cabinet decision, and during the implementation period following any Cabinet decision to proceed with the proposals. The October 2024 census reports that eight children were on roll in the nursery (N2 class). These children would be of statutory school age when the proposal to merge the student body is implemented. Parents will be supported to apply for a reception place for their children for the start of the academic year 2025/26.

No interim arrangements are required for pupils.

6. Impact on the community

Schools are more than just places for children to receive education, as they play an important part in their local community. We do not underestimate the impact that such changes would have on the community, parents, carers, staff and pupils, if approved. However, the impact of falling rolls is being felt widely across many schools, and it is evident that over time it is becoming increasingly more difficult for them to continue to achieve the best possible outcomes for children.

A merger of the student bodies of Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney Primary Schools would bring the following benefits:

- Enable the students at Sir Thomas Abney to remain together, rather than be displaced across a number of schools in the area.
- Enhance the leadership and build capacity to ensure the continuity of strong educational outcomes for both sets of pupils.
- Secure the continuity of the borough's highly valued Language Resourced Provision at Holmleigh Primary School with no reduction to the borough's SEND offer, and without the need for children receiving this to move site
- The potential to offer an enhanced range of wraparound and extended provision for the benefit of both school communities.

7. Rural primary schools

Not applicable.

8. Balance of denominational provision

Not applicable.

9. Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable - Sir Thomas Abney Primary School is not a maintained nursery school.

10. Sixth form provision

Not applicable.

11. Special Educational Needs Provision

Sir Thomas Abney is a Language Resourced School (LRS). A LRS provides extra support for pupils who have a diagnosis of developmental language disorder or severe speech disorder. Up to ten pupils attend the provision and spend most of the school day in mainstream classes with their peers but receive extra support from qualified speech and language therapists.

This proposal would see a language resourced provision established at the expanded Holmleigh Primary School. A separate notice relating to the establishment of the LRP at Holmleigh can be found at consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger

The number and percentage of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and requiring SEN support is outlined below (October 2024 data).

	Number of pupils with EHCPs	% of pupils with EHCPs	Number of pupils requiring SEN support	% of pupils with SEN Support
Sir Thomas Abney Primary School *	18	10%	58	34%
Hackney (primary phase)*	948	6%	2762	18%
England (state-funded primary schools)**	136,642	3%	651,458	14%

* Source: Hackney October 2024 pupil census

** Source: Department for Education, Special educational needs in England, Academic year 2023/24, Published: June 2024

The Council understands that a change of setting for pupils with SEND can often be challenging and require additional support to ensure a successful transition. Officers from the Council are making arrangements for children with EHCPs and those on SEN support to ensure that they are appropriately placed.

If the decision is taken to proceed as proposed, parents will be supported to help them understand their options and find out their preferences for alternative schools for their children.

Families with children who have an EHCP impacted by the proposals will be directly supported by the SEN team to explain the process of how their children will transfer to other schools if the Cabinet decision is to proceed with the proposal. Children identified as having a special educational need and receiving SEN Support would be able to continue doing so at any school, including Holmleigh.

The Council acknowledges the excellent support provided by Hackney schools for children with SEND and particularly by Sir Thomas Abney Primary School. Unfortunately the support provided will become increasingly difficult to sustain for schools with falling rolls. The financial impact of low pupil numbers is cumulative and means that, in the coming years, these schools will be unable to continue to provide the same level of support without exhausting contingency funds or going into deficit.

As a result of these proposals, outcomes for pupils with SEND may improve as they would move to a more financially viable and therefore long term sustainable school.

12. Travel

All children on roll at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School will be offered a place at Holmleigh Primary School and, with Holmleigh proposed to transfer onto the current Sir Thomas Abney site, would mean their journey to school is not affected. However, every parent is able to make a preference for an alternative school.

For parents that do not wish to take up a place at Holmleigh Primary School, they will need to make new journeys to school and may need to travel slightly further to other schools. However, in the majority of cases the journey to the nearest, suitable school will be less than 2 miles.

The relocation of an expanded Holmleigh school to the current Sir Thomas Abney site will mean that some Holmleigh families' walking route to school would increase marginally, however the maximum increase any family would experience is 450 meters. Families at

Holmleigh school who travel on average 10 minutes to get to the current school site would travel on average 13 minutes to go to Sir Thomas Abney site.

Eligibility for assistance with home to school travel will be determined in line with the Council's home to school travel policy, which can be accessed at education.hackney.gov.uk/content/help-home-school-travel

13. Project costs

These proposals do not require any capital works to accommodate additional children arising from the merger of the student bodies of Holmleigh Primary School and Sir Thomas Abney Primary School on the current Sir Thomas Abney site.

14. Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object to or make comments on the proposal by visiting consultation.hackney.gov.uk/children-education/stat-notice-closure-merger (scan the QR code below), by emailing: school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk, or by writing to:

School Sufficiency & Estates Team
Hackney Council
Hackney Service Centre
1 Hillman Street
London
E8 1DY

The closing date for responses to be received is 5 March 2025 at 5pm.



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

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- Nếu bạn muốn biết tài liệu này nói gì hãy đánh dấu vào hộp thích hợp, điền tên, địa chỉ và số điện thoại của bạn vào cuối trang này và gửi lại theo địa chỉ dưới đây. (Vietnamese)
- אויב ווילט איר וויסן וואס דער דאָקומענט זאגט, ביטע טיק די פאסטיגע קעסטל, שרייב דיין נאָמען, אַדרעס און טעלעפאָן נומער און שיק עס צוריק צו די אַדרעס אונטן. (Yiddish)

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Hall, Mare Street, London, E8 1EA