

Statutory Notice

Proposal to discontinue (close) St Dominic's Catholic 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.

Hackney Council is proposing to discontinue St Dominic's Catholic Primary School. The reason for publishing this proposal is the significant fall in pupil numbers across Hackney, and at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School, Ballance Rd, E9 5SR in particular. The Council therefore proposes to close St Dominic's Catholic Primary School on 31 August 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 whether to close St Dominic's Catholic Primary School.

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 (scan the QR code below). 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 (close) St Dominic's Catholic 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

1a. Name, address and category of school proposed to be discontinued:

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School (voluntary aided school)
Ballance Rd
London
E9 5SR
Tel: 020 8985 0995
Email: admin@stdominics.hackney.sch.uk

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 will be transferred to other nearby schools (parents will be invited to express a preference for these schools in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 5 below.)
- Pupils in Year 6 will transfer to secondary school for the start of the 2025/26 school year.

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 £1,060,403 by the end of the current financial year (2024/25). The number of pupils enrolled at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School has been steadily declining, from 346 at the October school census in 2019 to 196 at the time of the latest school census in October 2024:

Pupil Roll (Oct Census)	Roll	Capacity (R - Y6)	% Surplus
2019	346	420	18%
2020	317	420	25%
2021	278	420	34%
2022	253	390	35%
2023	227	360	37%
2024	196	330	41%

Note: The PAN of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School was reduced from 60 to 30 in September 2022.

The current pupil roll numbers are now less than half of the school's originally intended capacity for 420 pupils. The Council is proposing the closure of St Dominic's Catholic 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.

The Diocese of Westminster recognises that there are significant challenges facing all schools currently as a consequence of the falling birthrate and combinations of other factors in recent years. The Council and Roman Catholic Diocese of Westminster entered into discussions during the consultation period to seek alternative options for the school's future. No identifiable alternative options for securing a future for St Dominic's Catholic School were identified.

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 reception places to a sustainable level, ideally between 5 and 10%.

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

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School is a voluntary aided school for pupils aged 3-11. The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 30 in Reception, Year 1 and 2 and 60 for all other year groups, giving a total of 330 places. At the October 2024 census, the school had 196 pupils on roll.

	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
October 2024 census	20	15	27	24	39	26	45	196

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	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total
PAN 2024/25	30	30	30	60	60	60	60	330
October 2024 census	20	15	27	24	39	26	45	196
No. of unfilled places	10	15	3	36	21	34	15	134
% of unfilled places	33%	50%	10%	60%	35%	57%	25%	41%

The October 2024 census reports 6 children in the nursery at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School.

SEND characteristics of children at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School are included in section 11 below.

5. Displaced pupils

We will offer each child currently attending St Dominic's Catholic Primary School a place in a primary school near to their home, that is Ofsted rated 'good' or 'outstanding'. Where possible we will place children at the school preferred by the parents including at other Catholic schools.

Other local schools would be able to accommodate the displaced pupils. There are sufficient places at other schools, including Catholic schools, within statutory walking distance to accommodate all pupils on roll. The Council would work closely with the RCDW to support families to move to other Roman Catholic schools if that is their preference.

Families will be offered one-to-one support to ensure their children have places at suitable schools, including extra priority for places at nearby schools (where the local authority is responsible for admissions).

The reported number of children on roll 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 6 children on roll in the nursery (N2 class), would be statutory school age if the proposal to close the school is agreed. Parents of these children 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

The discontinuation of St Dominic's Catholic School would reduce the number of surplus primary school places in the borough.

The Council considers that allowing surplus school places to remain above 20% through inaction would directly and negatively impact the financial viability of many Hackney schools, which in turn will have an impact on the quality and breadth of the education offered at those schools and adversely impact on its children with the highest level of need.

We do not underestimate the impact that this proposal would have on the community, parents, carers, staff and pupils, if approved. Schools are more than just places for children to receive education, as they play an important part in their local community. 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.

7. Rural primary schools

Not applicable.

8. Balance of denominational provision

The Council is under an obligation to consider the impact on the balance of denominational provision in the area before it determines the outcome of school closure proposals. St Dominic's is a Catholic primary school. Were the school to close then other Catholic primary school options would continue to be available in Hackney and neighbouring boroughs.

There has been a significant decline in the number of applications for Roman Catholic primary schools in Hackney over recent years and this mirrors the decline in the borough's Christian population, as evidenced by the last national census, where in Hackney the proportion of Christian residents reduced by 7.9% between 2011 and 2021. Roman Catholic schools have always been open to families of all faiths and no faith. However it is evident that changes to the borough's population have had a particular impact on the pupil recruitment at St Dominic's and other faith schools.

The table below shows the balance of denominational provision at entry to Reception over a ten year period. For 2025/26 the impact of the proposed closures is reflected and demonstrates that the balance of denominational provision in the borough would be retained.

School Year	15/16	16/17	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24	24/25	25/26
Reception Places in faith schools	585	615	600	600	600	600	600	570	570	570	480
Places in non-faith schools	2495	2555	2555	2555	2435	2435	2435	2330	2210	2105	2045
Total Places	3080	3170	3155	3155	3035	3035	3035	2900	2780	2675	2525
% faith places	19.0%	19.4%	19.0%	19.0%	19.8%	19.8%	19.8%	19.7%	20.5%	21.3%	19.0%

9. Maintained nursery schools

Not applicable - St Dominic's Catholic Primary School is not a maintained nursery school.

10. Sixth form provision

Not applicable.

11. Special Educational Needs Provision

No specialist places are specifically reserved for pupils with special needs at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School. The number and percentage of children with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and requiring SEN support is outlined below (October 2024 census).

	Number of pupils with EHCPs	% of pupils with EHCPs	Number of pupils requiring SEN support	% of pupils with SEN Support
St Dominic's Catholic Primary School*	9	5%	61	31%
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 SEN can often be challenging and requires 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. Children identified as having a special educational need and receiving SEN Support will be able to continue doing so at any school.

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 this proposal will be directly supported by the SEN team to explain the process of how their children will transfer to other schools. Families with children on SEN support will be offered one-to-one support to ensure their children have places at suitable schools, including extra priority for places at nearby schools (where the local authority is responsible for admissions).

The Council acknowledges the excellent support provided by Hackney schools for children with SEND and particularly at St Dominic's Catholic 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 this proposal, outcomes for pupils with SEND may improve as they would move to a more financially viable and therefore long term sustainable school. This means that the school would be able to provide the additional necessary support and resources required to support children with EHCPs and those on SEN support. Priority 1 of the Education Sufficiency & Estate Strategy is to increase SEN provision in Hackney and a programme to increase specialist provision is ongoing.

12. Travel

All children on roll at St Dominic's Catholic School will be offered places at local schools. Every parent is able to make a preference for an alternative school.

It is recognised that these pupils 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 new school will be less than 2 miles.

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. 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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- اگر آپ یہ جاننا چاہتے ہیں کہ دستاویز میں کیا لکھا ہے تو ازراہ کرم مناسب باکس میں صحیح کا نشان لگائیے اور اپنا نام، پتہ اور فون نمبر اس صفحہ کے نیچے لکھئے اور اسے نیچے دئے گئے پتہ پر واپس بھیج دیجئے۔ (Urdu)
- Nếu bạn muốn biết tài liệu này nói gì hãy đánh dấu vào hộp thích hợp, điền tên, địa chỉ và số điện thoại của bạn vào cuối trang này và gửi lại theo địa chỉ dưới đây. (Vietnamese)
- אויב ווילט איר וויסן וואס דער דאָקומענט זאגט, ביטע טיק די 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