

Written Report

Prepared December 2024

The London Borough of Hackney

Consultation To Merger Or Close Six Hackney Primary Schools



**Kwest
Research**

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Appendix 1: Supporting documents for Harrington Hill Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

Submission from the Governors of Harrington Hill

Harrington Hill Pupil Voice

Appendix 2: Supporting documents for Holmleigh Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

Submission from the Holmleigh Governing Body

Holmleigh Pupil Voice

Appendix 3: Supporting documents for Oldhill Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

Oldhill Pupil Voice

Appendix 4: Supporting documents for Sir Thomas Abney Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

Response from the Sir Thomas Abney Governing Body

Sir Thomas Abney Pupil Voice

Appendix 5: Supporting documents for St Dominic's Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

Submission from the St Dominic's Governing Body

St Dominic's Pupil Voice

Appendix 6: Supporting documents for St Mary's Proposal

Copy of questionnaire

St Mary's Pupil Voice

1. Introduction & Background

During October and November 2024, Hackney Council undertook an informal consultation on the following proposals:

- Expansion of Harrington Hill Primary to two forms of entry and merger with Oldhill Community School on 31st August 2025.
- Expansion of Holmleigh Primary to two forms of entry and merger with Sir Thomas Abney Primary on the latter's site on 31st August 2025.
- Closure of Oldhill Community School on 31st August 2025, either with or without a merger with Harrington Hill Primary.
- Closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary on 31st August 2025, either with or without a merger with Holmleigh Primary.
- Closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary on 31st August 2025.
- Closure of St Mary's Church of England Primary on 31st August 2025.

The consultation ran for six weeks between 8th October and 19th November 2024 and aimed to gather feedback on the proposals, not just from parents and staff of the schools in scope, but also from wider categories of stakeholders that may be impacted by the decisions.

The consultation was hosted on Hackney's Citizen Space and was open to residents and stakeholders across the borough. Copies of the questionnaires are included in appendices 1 to 6.¹

In addition, paper consultations and questionnaires were sent to the following numbers of staff and parents at each affected school:

- Harrington Hill - 230
- Holmleigh - 260
- Oldhill - 300
- Sir Thomas Abney - 140
- St Dominic's - 270
- St Mary's – 100

In October 2024, Hackney Council commissioned Kwest Research to analyse and report on the results of individual paper and online forms returned during consultations on the proposals.

¹ <https://consultation.hackney.gov.uk/communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools/>

1.1 Response Rates

At the end of the consultation period, a total of 369 postal and online questionnaires had been received.

The following table shows the number of responses to each proposal that were received by the time the consultation closed on 19th November 2024.

Proposal	Number of emails received	Number of online replies	Number of paper forms	Total responses
Expansion of Harrington Hill	0	11	19	30
Expansion of Holmleigh	0	84	26	110
Closure of Oldhill (with or without merger)	0	33	15	48
Closure of Sir Thomas Abney (with or without merger)	0	46	26	72
Closure of St Dominic's	1	59	11	71
Closure of St Mary's	1	31	6	38

Table 1: Number of responses per proposal

2. General Overview Of Response To The Proposals

Although there were only a small number of replies to the Harrington Hill consultation, respondents are broadly in the favour of the proposal to expand the school to two-form entry and merge with Oldhill. However, the majority of responses to the other consultations are against the proposals for that school.

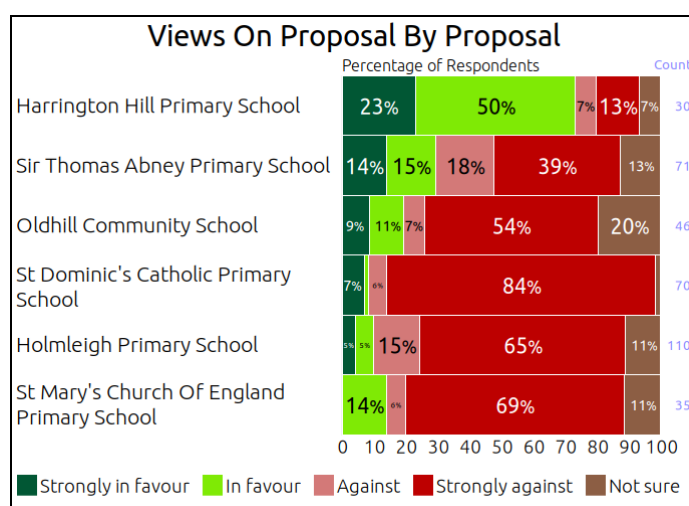


Figure 2.1

In both cases, respondents are less in favour of the second proposals for Oldhill and Sir Thomas Abney, to close the school without a merger, which are universally unpopular.

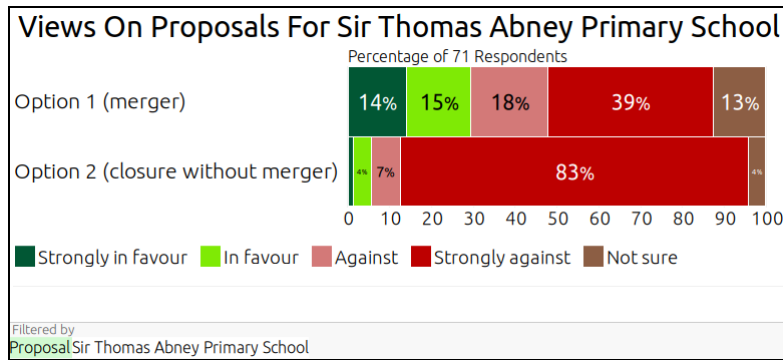


Figure 2.2

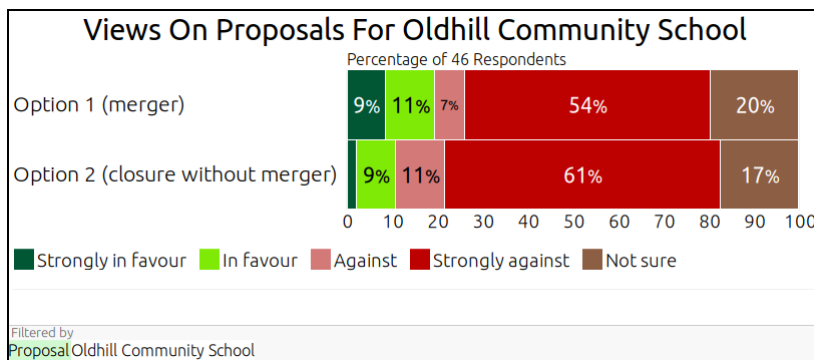


Figure 2.3

The graph below shows the results from the different respondent groups to the consultation. This is only shown at an overall level due to the small number of responses in each group when broken down by individual proposal.

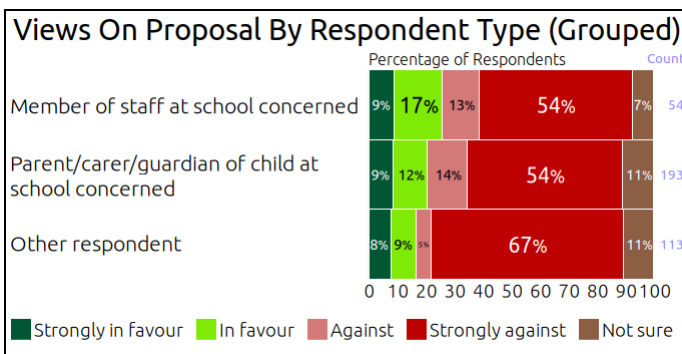


Figure 2.4

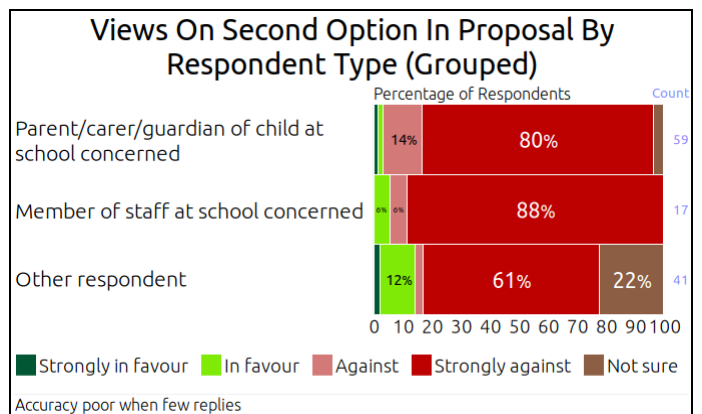


Figure 2.5

2.1 Summary Of Views Expressed In The Consultation Feedback

The consultation feedback received is wide ranging, including many testimonials from parents in support of their current school. The key themes in the comments are discussed in more detail in the sections on each individual proposal.

Having reviewed all the feedback, it is possible to broadly summarise the key points raised in response to each proposal, whilst also acknowledging that there are subsidiary themes in the comments that are discussed in more detail in the relevant sections of the report.

Harrington Hill

The majority of respondents to the Harrington Hill consultation welcome the move and make positive comments, although it should be noted that only a small number of responses were received. Staff are happy to have job security, despite some concerns about the impact on their workload. Some respondents express concern about larger class sizes.

The school governors would like to have more detail on how the Council intends to mitigate the risk of disruption as well as more information about the plans for the ARP and Children's Centre currently at Oldhill. Their feedback is included in full in appendix 1.

Harrington Hill pupils were also asked their opinions with 19 responding positively with words such as 'happy' or 'good' and 9 saying they were 'unsure', 'scared' or similar.

Holmleigh

Many respondents are concerned about Holmleigh, rated outstanding by Ofsted, being set up to fail with the proposed expansion and the move to the larger Sir Thomas Abney site, which is further from the current catchment area, without good transport links. The large Charedi community around the Sir Thomas Abney site is not expected to send their children to a non-Jewish school and thus respondents question whether there is sufficient demand for any two-form local authority maintained school in that location.

Reservations to this effect are also expressed in the submission from the Holmleigh governing board, which is discussed in the relevant section of this report, with a copy included in appendix 2.

The most common word used in the Holmleigh Pupil Voice is "sad", mentioned by 43 children, followed by "happy" (24).

Oldhill

Oldhill has the highest proportion of respondents whose comments mention having a child with SEN (8%). Much of the feedback on this proposal relates to concerns about the impact of the move on children, in particular the loss of the ARP, with some respondents suggesting it would be better if Harrington Hill were to move to the Oldhill site where specialist facilities already exist.

In the Oldhill Pupil Voice submission, the most common word is 'sad', mentioned by 49 children, followed by 'disappointed' (22). Nineteen children made positive comments about the school, their lessons or their teachers.

Sir Thomas Abney

The key concern amongst respondents to the proposal for Sir Thomas Abney is that the amalgamation with Holmleigh is not a true merger as none of the current staff are being retained. Many are also worried about the disruption of SEN support, including the loss of the LRS.

These concerns are echoed in the submission from the Sir Thomas Abney governing body, which is discussed in the relevant section of this report and included in full in appendix 4.

A review of the comments made by Sir Thomas Abney parents, carers or guardians reveals that ten out of the twenty-five who responded to this consultation made comments suggesting they may not have fully understood all aspects of the proposal. For example, some mentioned having to go to the Holmleigh site or made a similar reference to having to travel further to get to school, whilst others talked about the staff staying the same.

The most common word used in the Sir Thomas Abney Pupil Voice submission is 'sad' mentioned by 10 children, with the same number making comments that showed reluctance about the changes.

St Dominic's

Respondents to the St Dominic's consultation are particularly concerned about the loss of a faith school, especially when the nearest Catholic primary is 30 minutes away. Furthermore, many say they thought the council was giving the school two years to turn things around, starting from September 2024, and express disappointment that the changes have not been given time. Concerns are also expressed about the potential impact on the Irish Traveller families at the school.

St Dominic's governing body have submitted their rationale for why they believe the proposal should be abandoned. This expands on the points above and is discussed in the relevant section of this report, as well as being included in appendix 5

St Mary's

There were only a small number of respondents to the consultation about St Mary's, with the vast majority against the proposal. Compared to the other consultations, a smaller proportion of respondents were directly connected to the school (parents/guardians or staff). The key concerns raised include job losses and the impact on children.

Pupils at St Mary's were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the school closing. Reviewing the comments, the most common word used is 'sad', mentioned by 19 children, followed by 'nervous' (14).

3. Response To The Proposal To Expand Harrington Hill Primary

At the start of the consultation period, 230 forms were given out to parents and staff at Harrington Hill primary school, although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 30 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to expand the school to two-form entry and merge with Oldhill Community school.

55% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school, 34% are staff or governors at the school, 7% members of staff at another primary school in Hackney, while 3% are other respondents.

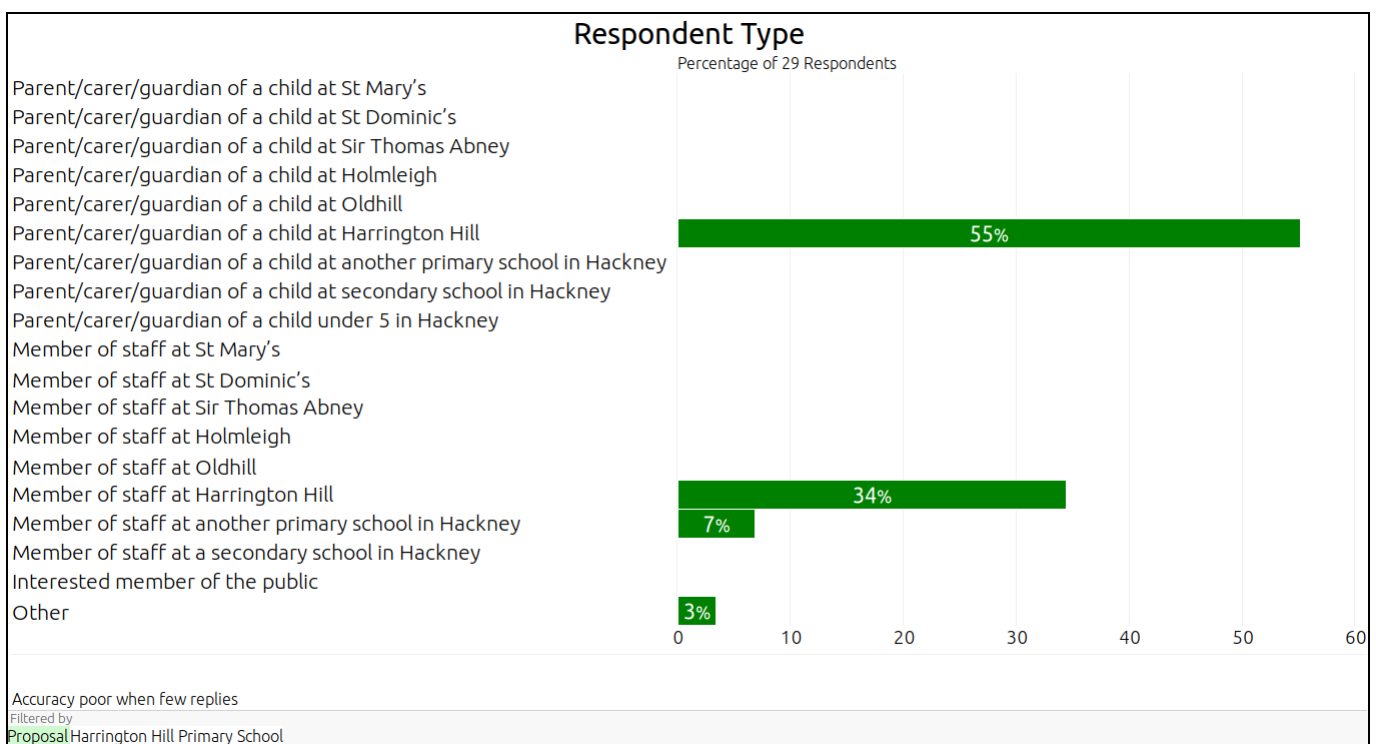


Figure 3.1

Overall, 23% of respondents are strongly in favour and 50% in favour of the proposal. In contrast, 7% are against and 13% strongly against the idea.

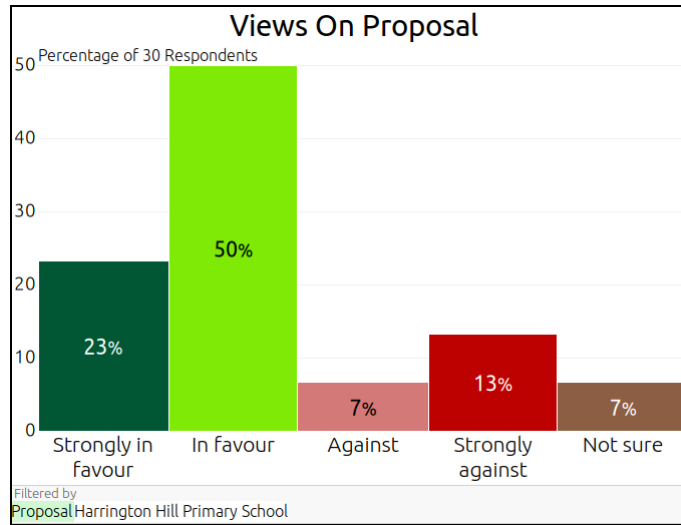


Figure 3.2

Parents, carers and guardians are less positive about the proposals to expand the school, compared to other respondents. There are only a very small number of replies and accuracy is very limited. Therefore, caution must be used when interpreting these results due to the small numbers of respondents.

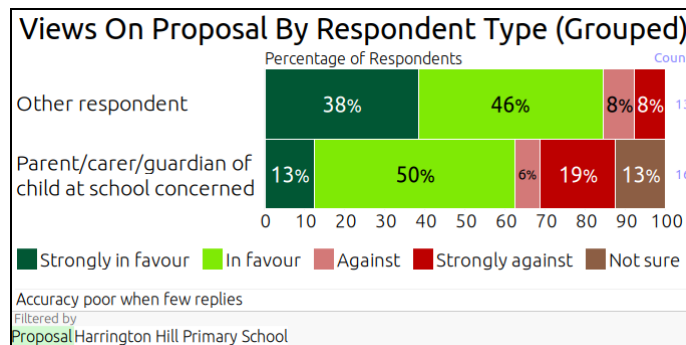


Figure 3.3

3.1 Analysis Of Comments On Proposal To Expand Harrington Hill

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; and there was also space for additional comments.

3.2 How Proposal For Harrington Hill Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes. 37% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 30% talked about the impact on staff. 10% referred to the impact on SEN provision and 7% made comments about schools (either existing or potential new schools), rather than the proposed change. Although 13% made more general comments about the consultation, the majority of these were respondents who conceded the proposal did not affect them directly.

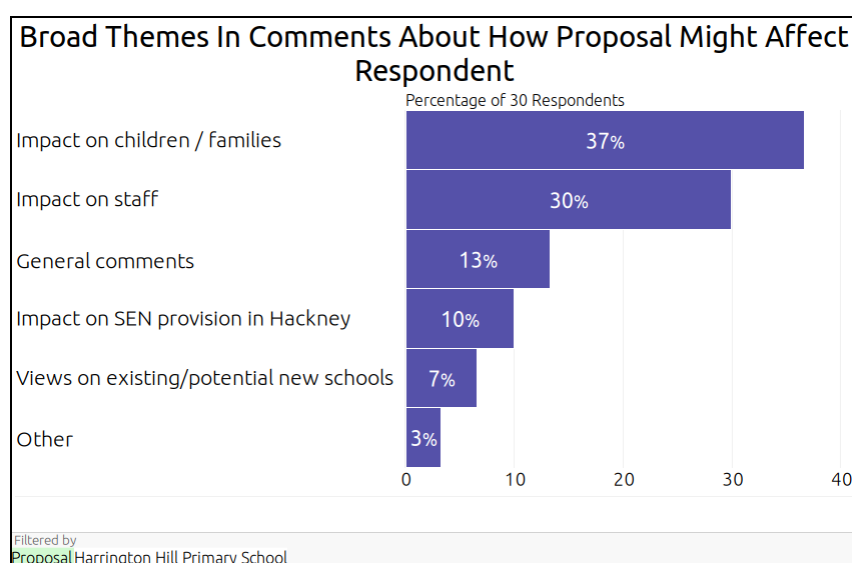


Figure 3.4

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

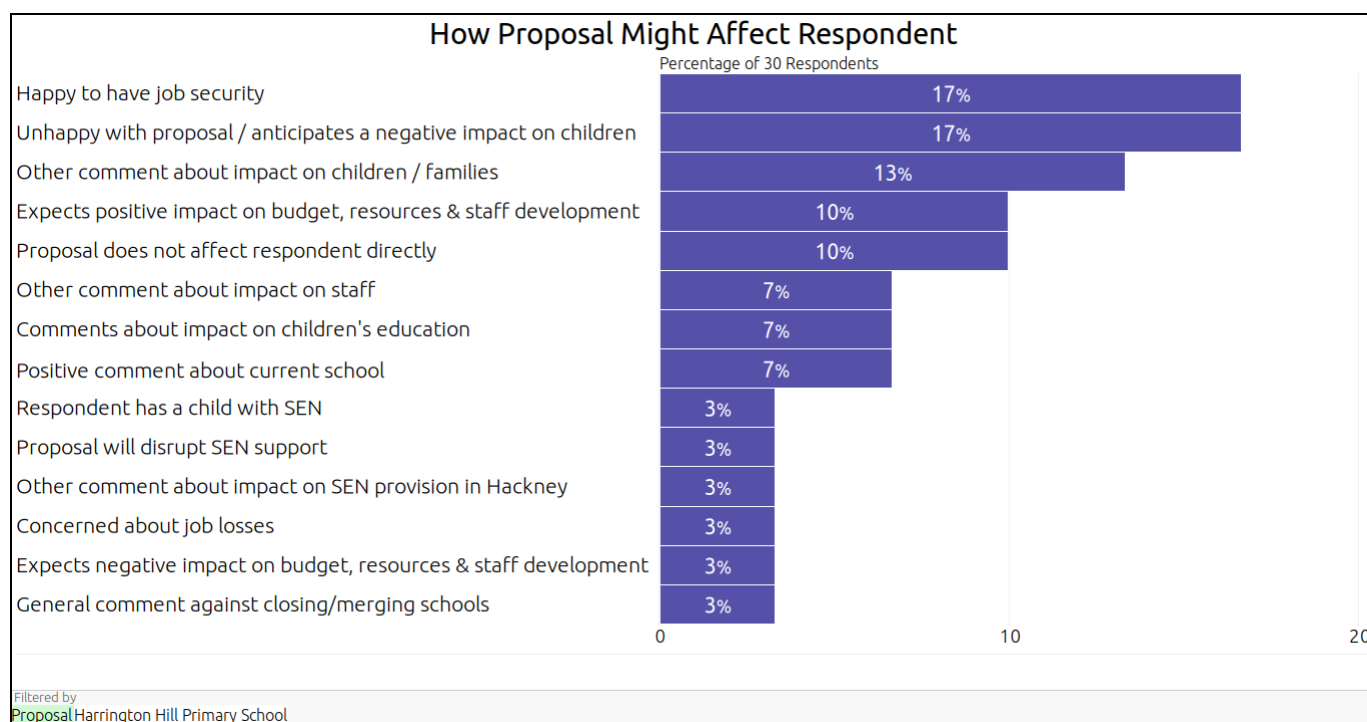


Figure 3.5

3.3 Impact Of The Harrington Hill Proposals On Children & Families

17% are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate a negative effect on children and families

7% express concerns about the impact on children's education

3% mention having a child with SEN

Several respondents mention choosing Harrington Hill due to its small class sizes, which they feel are better for children, and so they worry about the impact of the change on their child's education. Some examples of these comments are shown below.

Larger schools are difficult learning environments for children with SEND. Both of my children are on the SEND register at Harrington Hill. It's important to have small primary schools in the community that enable children to thrive. Outside of SEND considerations, children do better in small classes that enable more 1:1 time and targeted interventions.

Part of the reason why we choose Harrington Hill for our [child] was the small class size. Larger class sizes can cause staff stress and to struggle to meet individual needs.

Positives in my view: Harrington Hill [will] hopefully have more funds, for example, to fund longer hours or after school club and other extra activities. Worries: we chose Harrington Hill for our [child], mainly because the school feels very intimate, has small class sizes and kids get more attention. I worry that the class sizes will be bigger after the merger.

3.4 Impact Of The Harrington Hill Proposals On Staff

17% are happy that staff have job security

10% anticipate a positive impact on budget, resources and staff development

7% comment about other potential impacts on staff

Staff members are happy to have job security and respondents hope to see better infrastructure at the school including learning materials, resources, and more diverse training programmes. There is also a recognition that the merger may lead to increased workloads in the short term, with associated impact on morale. In addition, there are some concerns about the increase in pupils with additional needs, particularly given the separate consultation about the current ARP at Oldhill.

Job security, with the expansion, there is likely to be an increase in student numbers, which could lead to more staffing needs, be opportunities for career progression, such as taking on additional responsibilities and professional growth. Working in a larger, merged school environment could offer new opportunities for professional development. It will give me access to more diverse training programs, and chances to develop new skills in a dynamic, evolving environment.

Career development opportunities – possible openings for new roles or leadership positions. Access to more resources. Collaboration and networking – larger team of educators. New colleagues, build relationships and create stronger professional network. Student diversity will be increased. Job security.

The merger raises significant concerns about the impact on staff roles, workload and morale. I would hope to see more detailed assurances (including detail on additional funding) on how risks are minimised. There remains real concern amongst the teaching staff that a very high proportion of EHCPs will create challenges; particularly if the appropriate level of funding is not provided, or additional ‘merger’ funds are insufficient in order to provide training and professional development opportunities. [...] The transition will undoubtedly see our staff experience a period of increased workload and pressure. Clear planning, support and communication will be vital to minimise the adverse effects of such a period.

3.5 Other Themes In The Harrington Hill Comments

10% of respondents acknowledge that the consultation does not affect them directly.

7% made positive comments about Harrington Hill as a school

3% have a child with SEN and the same proportion express concerns about the impact of the changes on SEN support

Some examples of the comments received on these topics are given below.

The consultation confirms that the ARP currently located at Oldhill will close if the school closes but suggests moving it to Harrington Hill so that the children who currently attend it could move over with it. I understand that there will be a separate consultation about the ARP, however no timeline for this has been confirmed.

I myself and all my siblings went to Harrington Hill very happily and now my [child] is enjoying school as it is.

Hackney schools should not be closing due to falling rolls. Schools are not a business that needs to make a profit, they are a vital part of public infrastructure that should be properly funded. If there is a wider, underlying issue then time and energy should be spent fixing that rather than managing school closures. This closure/merger will disproportionately affect children with SEN.

3.6 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For Harrington Hill

The proposal gave customers the opportunity to make alternative suggestions for the Council's consideration but only eight respondents to the Harrington Hill consultation did so. A selection of their comments are shown below.

A phased transition could be beneficial to ease the anxiety that may be experienced by the children, parents/carers and staff. For example, EYFS and KS1 could be the first to be transitioned over [to] Harrington Hill, later followed by KS2.

Instead of closing down schools, the extra space could be used for educational purposes – nurseries, SEN provisions. The council could set up inclusive SEN provision to help students learn and socialise and mix with peers.

If the old school across the road is available, I suggest we open that up for the students of Oldhill Community School.

3.7 Additional Comments For Harrington Hill

Slightly more respondents (13) made additional comments at the end of the survey. These focused on the impact on individuals and concerns about the process and a selection of this feedback is shown below.

I am happy that the merger will make Harrington Hill a bigger and more stable school. Please try to keep the family feel of the school alive with more children, it is very special.

I feel more children will add more pressure on staff. I feel our children may not be able to adapt to the new system if the merge goes ahead. I feel the children may not get the best quality of education and attention they need with more children added to the equation. How would the children affect the early years provision already at Harrington Hill?

Concerned that if the merger goes ahead and a final decision is made in April, it does not allow enough time to recruit new staff, set up an ARP and ensure smooth transition for new pupils.

This process is shockingly brief. Why is the consultation time on the potential closure of this many schools the same as to implement a bike lane? Are schools and the children that attend them somehow less important than drivers? The timeline for informing parents and the children who will be affected is also shockingly brief, again disproportionately having an impact on children with SEN who may find it more difficult to adapt to massive changes in their lives and routines.

Will we still be at risk if even after the merger our numbers remain lower than expected? Will we be given the resources from Oldhill after the merger? Will we have a transition day/taster day before the merge happens next academic year? Will we have a larger budget given to us to cater the needs of all existing and new children?

3.8 Response From The Governors Of Harrington Hill

The governors of Harrington Hill submitted an online response to the consultation and included some lengthy additional comments sharing their views and concerns. Several other governing bodies submitted similar feedback as email attachments, and these are analysed separately in the relevant sections of this report. Therefore, to ensure an equal approach, the key points raised by the governing body of Harrington Hill are outlined below and their full comments are included in appendix 1.

- The governors recognise the potential benefits of school admission numbers being as close as possible to its Planned Admission Number (PAN) to maximise the funding received. However, there is concern about the immediate and long-term impact of the merger on student outcomes. The merger may cause significant disruption to both existing pupils and those transferring from Oldhill, particularly pupils who require additional teaching support. Pupils, parents and staff will experience a busier and noisier school environment on a daily

basis. The governors are keen to receive more detail about how the Council intends to mitigate these risks.

- The Alternative Resource Provision (ARP) at Oldhill will close if the school does and its future is part of a separate consultation, with the suggestion of moving it to Harrington Hill so that the children currently attending can move at the same time. The governors are concerned that there should be no interruption to the service provided by the ARP.
- Whilst encouraged by the stated goal of the proposals to create a stronger school system, the governors are concerned that already vulnerable pupils and families are not further disadvantaged by the proposals or the transition period. They would also like reassurance that efforts will be made to protect Harrington Hill from future school closures.
- Recognising that the school's staff are dedicated professionals, who will experience a significantly increased workload and pressure during the transition, the governors say it is vital staff are supported and feel valued during the process. The governors also hope to see more detailed assurances on how the potential negative impacts on staff will be avoided.
- The governors acknowledge the financial pressures the Council is under and the importance of financial stability but they want more clarity on the long-term financial sustainability of the merged school. In particular, they are keen to receive further details about how any adaptations, required to suit the expanded school, will be funded, especially with regard to the transfer and accommodation of the ARP at Harrington Hill. Similarly, they ask that the Council confirms its preferred approach and timeline for the Children's Centre at Oldhill so that Harrington Hill understands its commitments from September 2025 in time to allow for resource planning.

3.9 Harrington Hill Pupil Voice

Pupils at Harrington Hill were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the merger. When asked how they feel about welcoming children from Oldhill, the majority of the responses were positive with words like 'happy', 'good', 'excited' or 'confident' mentioned by 19 children, whilst 9 were 'unsure', 'scared', 'worried' or similar.

The children were also asked if they had any worries or concerns: the most commonly cited issues relate to the school being busy and more crowded (mentioned by 10 pupils), as well as difficulties making friends, bullying or fights (cited by 6 children).

When asked to consider how the Oldhill pupils might be feeling, the children mostly thought they were likely to be worried, scared or nervous about changing schools.

The full Pupil Voice document can be found in appendix 1.

4. Response To Proposal To Expand Holmleigh On The Sir Thomas Abney Site Merging The Schools

At the start of the consultation period, 260 forms were given out to parents and staff at Holmleigh primary school, although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 110 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to expand the school to two-form entry and relocate it on the Sir Thomas Abney site, merging the two schools.

75% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school and 6% are staff or governors at the school, whilst the remaining responses came from a range of other respondents.

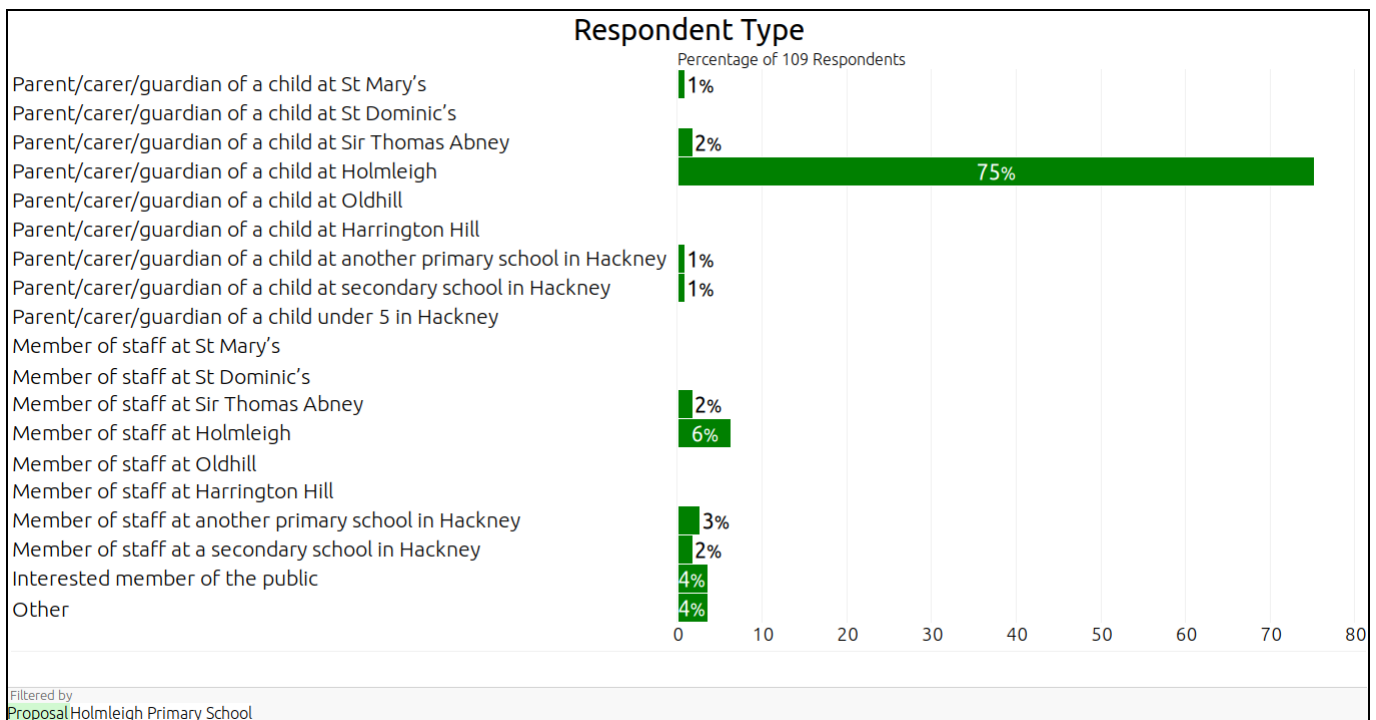


Figure 4.1

Overall, 5% of respondents are strongly in favour and 5% in favour of the proposal. In contrast, 15% are against and 65% strongly against the idea.

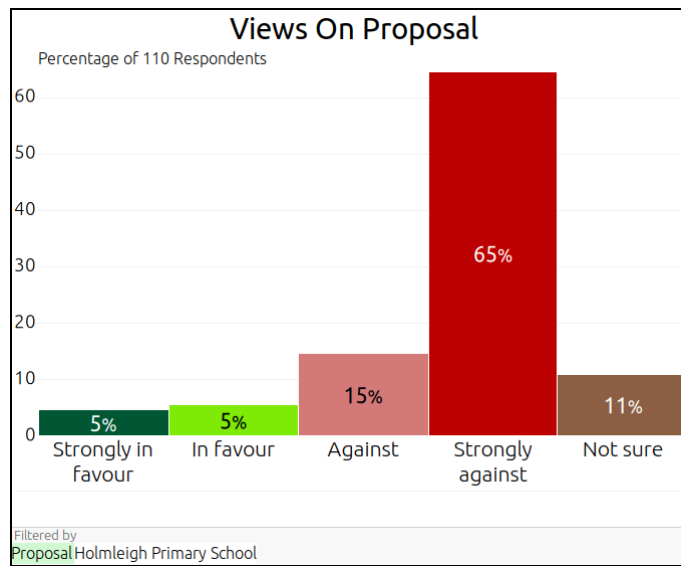


Figure 4.2

The views of parents, carers and guardians of children at Holmleigh are broadly in line with those of other respondents.

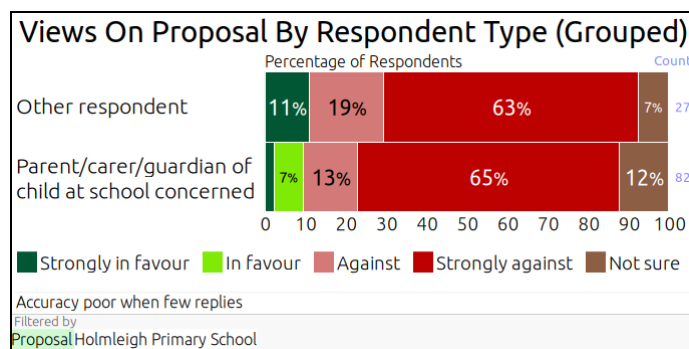


Figure 4.3

4.1 Analysis Of Comments On Proposal To Expand Holmleigh On The Sir Thomas Abney Site

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; as well as providing space for additional comments.

4.2 How The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes. 59% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 40% made comments about schools (either existing or potential new schools). 9% talked about the impact on staff and 5% referred to the impact on SEN provision.

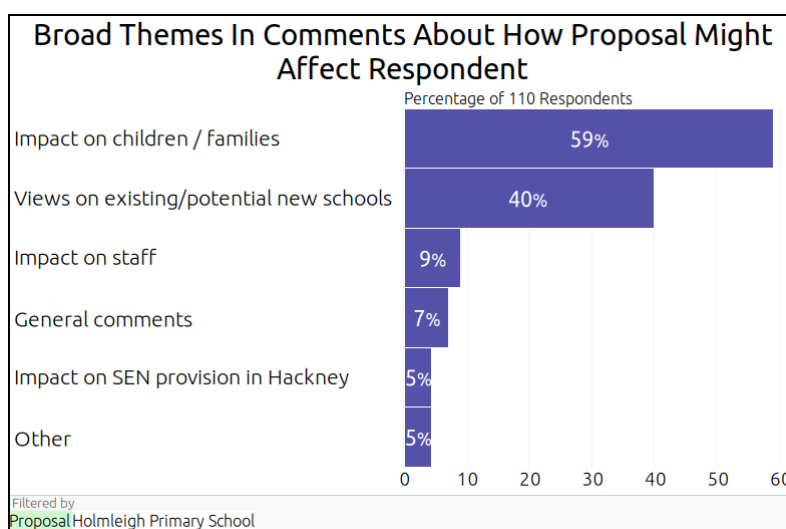


Figure 4.4

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

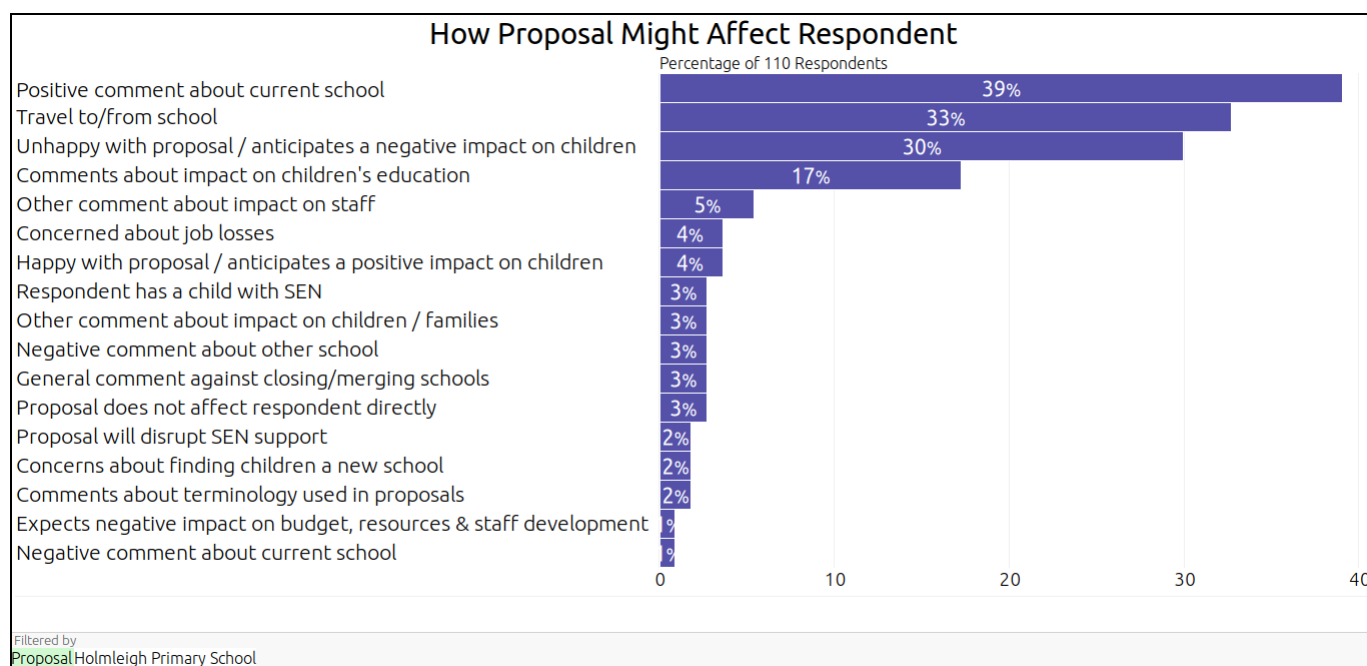


Figure 4.5

4.3 Impact Of Holmleigh Expansion On Children / Families

33% express concerns about changes to their travel to and from school

30% are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate it having a negative impact on children

17% mention concerns about the impact on children's education

Specific points raised in the comments include the following:

- Sir Thomas Abney's site on Fairholt Road is described as being too far from the main road and public transport links. Parents mention not being able to walk their children to school then get to work in time and express concerns about the financial impact of working fewer hours or having to put their children in breakfast and/or after school clubs. A few respondents also mention that the neighbourhood is "notorious for dangerous driving".
- It is believed that the vast majority of residential properties surrounding the Sir Thomas Abney site are occupied by the Charedi community, who have no use for a non-denominational mixed primary school in this location. Therefore, many respondents are concerned that the relocation and merger of the schools will lead to the closure of Holmleigh in the near future, further disrupting children's education.
- Parents worry about how the expansion to two-form entry, on a larger site, will impact their children's education with many commenting that they chose Holmleigh specifically because it is a small school.

A selection of these comments is shown below.

Fairholt Road is in a much worse location for many families. [...] It is too far from the A10, Holmleigh's proximity to families living towards Clapton is a significant part of its appeal. Its proximity to the main road and buses, to Seven Sisters tube, and for families living in the Guinness estate flats on Stamford Hill is of vital importance. Has the council even done a poll of families who intend to leave Holmleigh if it is forced to move to the STA site? We do not think you have. It is my belief that a problem for STA is that virtually none of the current and former target families who need a mainstream co-Ed school live around STA. The housing is overwhelmingly lived in by our Haredi neighbours.

From the moment you enter Holmleigh it has a warm, family feel that is a secure and inclusive environment for all pupils. The move to the Sir Thomas Abney site is a risk for Holmleigh, taking on such a large site. Hackney are proposing we move to a school that has "the largest footprint site of any primary school in Hackney" when the council know school rolls are falling. Not only are school rolls falling across the borough, if you look at the specific demographic of the area of the schools you will note that the local Haredi community populates a vast majority of the area around Sir Thomas Abney with no use for a non-denominational mixed primary school in the area.

*Holmleigh works well **because** it's a tightly-focused single-intake school, based in an appropriate location. Merging the student base and relocating to the Thomas Abney site will essentially end Holmleigh as we know it [...] In a best-case scenario, your plans will create several years of disruption that will affect hundreds of children at a crucial stage of their development. In the worst case, your proposal may destroy everything that makes Holmleigh one of Hackney's greatest success stories.*

If Holmleigh moves to Sir Thomas Abney site, we'd also have further to travel, and logistically it would make drop off and pick up harder to the point we would choose somewhere lese. There are a huge number of parents for whom that is true, who already come from the east of the A10. On top of that, of course, you're proposing to take the bizarre step of interfering with the best Ofsted rated school in the whole of Hackney a few years ago.

The size and cosy feel of Holmleigh impacts the school culture – where everyone sees and knows everyone – passing in the small colourful hall in between things – if a child like mine struggles to make friends – they still leave happy having spent the day in a nurturing environment. These are the reasons we chose the school – if the move goes ahead we are more likely than not looking to move [my child] Not to the TA site but elsewhere – despite the outstanding supportive staff [at] Holmleigh. It is also a walk away from transport links I use to get to work – which may mean having to put [my child] into breakfast club and after school care club which will cost me money.

There is a no bus route so as a car-less family, our only option will be to leave far earlier in the morning. As working parents, this will also have an impact on how easily we can get to school to collect [our child] from after school club and will likely mean I have to decrease my working hours. Hackney Council has a green agenda and is committed to decreasing car use. I believe that for those Holmleigh parents who do have cars, this will increase car use on the school run.

4.4 Comments About The Schools In The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals

39% of respondents made positive comments about Holmleigh

3% made negative comments about Sir Thomas Abney

1% made negative comments about Holmleigh

Parents say they chose Holmleigh specifically because it is a small school, which many describe as having a “cosy” and “family” feel, as well as its outstanding rating from Ofsted, and worry that these benefits will be lost in the expansion to two-form entry on a larger site. There are concerns that the merger will result in the subsequent closure of Holmleigh in the near future.

A selection of the feedback received on these issues is shown below.

I am very sorry for STA school but dragging the outstanding, oversubscribed and excellent Holmleigh into their difficulties seriously risks the future of Holmleigh too, and this feels actually shameful. What makes Holmleigh so special is the ambition that the staff and parents have for the children, the dedication for their education and also their psychological wellbeing, and the very successful model that staff and families work so well together to foster.

Our [child] is in year 3 at Holmleigh primary school and [they] really love it there. The small school has developed, over many decades, a Loving, Caring Nurturing environment for all children. [...] Changing the school in the proposed way would destroy all the best parts of this school [which] are the main reasons why the school has the outstanding OFSTED report.

Children really do thrive here, all age groups engage with each other, and values of respect, support, and curiosity are really brought to life by being a small tight-knit community. Each and every child is given support to achieve their very best, and in spite of limited resources, this school dreams big. The pastoral care guiding each child’s educational journey is truly astounding. All of this would be extremely challenging to replicate on a bigger scale, and in this particular situation I have very strong doubts that it would be sustainable long-term.

We specifically chose Holmleigh Primary School for our child based on its single-form entry, and the warm ‘family’ vibe of the school which has been built up over a long period and the school team obviously work very hard to maintain. Our child is happy at the school and we would be negatively impacted if the school was moved and merged with STA. We are worried that Holmleigh, a successful, excellent school with an incredible ethos ‘the Holmleigh way’, will encounter problems if it is moved to the STA site which has already proven unsuccessful and costly to run. Whereas Holmleigh is thriving in its current form and site its future would be placed in jeopardy if moved to the STA site. Does the council offer any stringent financial or demographic forecasting that suggests the case would be otherwise?

I have two children at Holmleigh. It’s a well run, outstanding local primary that is a tribute to Hackney Education services. I’d be devastated to see this school ruined in order to save another school, which is sadly not working.

4.5 Impact Of The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals On Staff

4% of respondents are concerned about job losses (from the feedback, it appears these are comments from Sir Thomas Abney staff who are responding to the Holmleigh proposal)

1% anticipate a negative impact on budget, resources and staff development

5% made comments about other potential impacts on staff

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

Holmleigh is a small school, where everyone knows one another. We have a good relationship with parents and children. So moving to STA, where it is a much bigger school, I can't imagine it being the same. I can imagine the workload to be double and can't imagine having much contact with parents and children due to the layout of offices and classrooms.

The school has already endured three restructures, leadership changes, and extensive building works that required staff to work through the summer. Another round of disruption could exacerbate stress levels and impact morale.

The proposal will affect my mental health and wellbeing as I await the outcome of the proposal, which will not be known until April 2025. This means there will not be enough time to relocate and be ready to open in September 2025. My holidays will be impacted as I worry about the huge amount of work needed to be done in order to ensure the school is ready to receive pupils.

4.6 Impact Of The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals On SEN Provision

3% of respondents mention having a child with SEN. A selection of comments about the impact of the proposal on SEN provision is shown below.

Just concerned about [child] as [they are] SEN not sure how it would impact [them].

My [child] is a SEND child, [they] will not cope with the transition, reason I chose Holmleigh was because one form entry, the homely feel. I will have to remove my [child] if it goes ahead. This will have an impact on many children's mental health.

Our [child] has special needs and [they] have settled and been looked after much better than we might have anticipated when [they] started school. The fact that Holmleigh is a small site and single-form primary where all the management and support know [child's] name and [their] needs is a massive help, one that we do [not] wish to lose going into the final two years of [their] primary education.

4.7 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposal that they felt the council should consider. The majority of comments suggest leaving the school on its existing site because respondents feel the changes are setting it up to fail. Other key themes in the feedback are comments against the proposal and other suggestions for how the merger could be approached. Full details are shown in the graph below followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

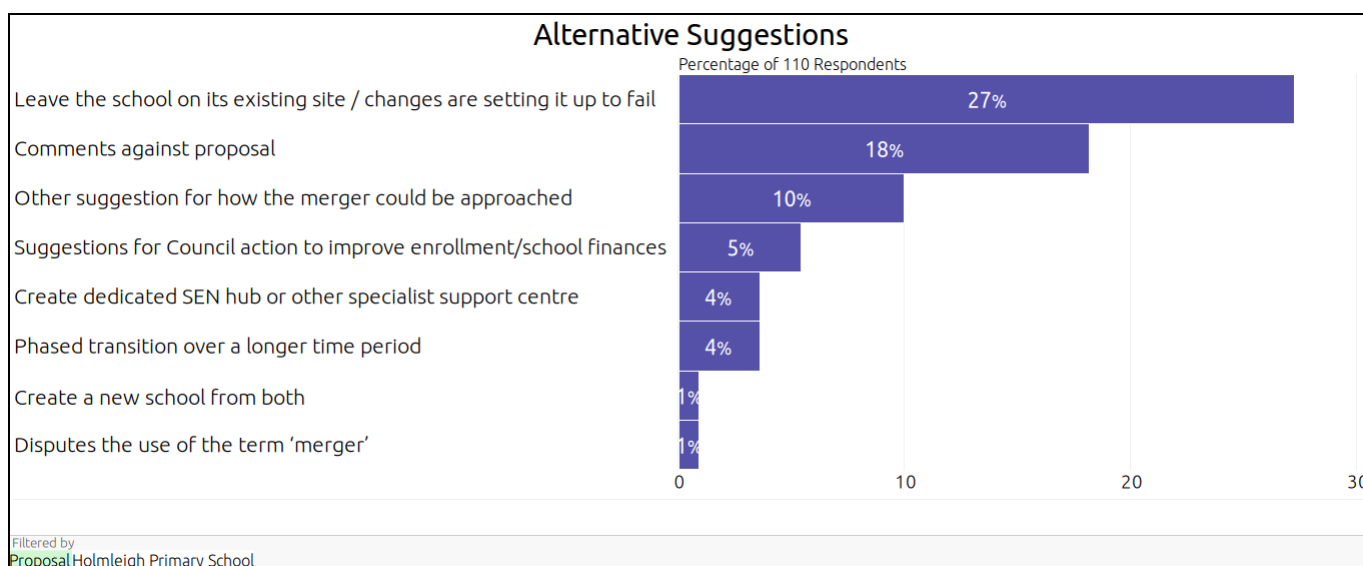


Figure 4.6

Changes Are Setting School Up To Fail

I am aware that our ultra orthodox Jewish community is growing, and in need of more sites for education and worship. The families who historically would have gone to Thomas Abney no longer live near the school, and the vast majority of that housing services our orthodox Jewish community. Surely the Thomas Abney site would be much more suitable for them?

The 'failing' school is STA. Don't drag Holmleigh into another school's problems and destroy the Holmleigh model in an attempt to fix STA's problems.

Unfortunately, I agree with the council's view that two schools in this location are not sustainable, given that the majority of the local population does not use non-denominational schools, and the number of families with school-age children continues to drop. In the long-term, it would surely be more sustainable to close STA, and keep Holmleigh as a thriving, sustainable, single-form entry school.

[Holmleigh Primary School] management are experienced in running a one form entry school. To move them to a new much larger site, and we are not just saying twice the size of what they are used to but much bigger with not twice the number of children is just setting them up fail. This is a huge disservice to a school who have proved themselves in more ways than one to be an excellent one form entry school. Help them to maintain their site, which I understand is in dire need of updating and leave them to thrive.

Comments Against Proposal

Holmleigh is in convenient walking distance to where I live. I don't want Holmleigh to move further away.

I would be in favour of Holmleigh staying as it is and Sir Thomas Abney closing – not a merger of the two.

I think Holmleigh primary school should stay as it is. Students at Sir Thomas school can be allocated to another school.

Other Suggestions For How Merger Could Be Approached

Doing more research into the demographic. Lengthening the timeframe for the consultation and merger.

I urge the council to delay the proposal until additional consultation has been undertaken. A reasonable period of information gathering, financial forecasting and community, parent/carer consultation is necessary, and I suggest the council allow an additional year for this process to be fully explored.

School closures are complicated and emotive enough for communities without this highly confusing and overcomplicated method. The most straightforward, transparent and fairest solution is to close schools and give parents a choice of schools within their community without implying that one school is better / more worthy than another by moving one school onto the site of another that is closing.

Other Suggestions

Instead of merging schools, there are many other approaches the council could consider. Adjusting catchment areas to balance enrolment could work, or they could look into creating federations, where schools keep their identities but share leadership and governance. For schools with declining numbers, repurposing part of the building as a community hub or specialist academy might bring in new students. They could also focus on supporting struggling schools directly, with more funding or programs to attract families. These options seem far less disruptive than mergers and could address the issues without harming strong schools like Holmleigh.

Perhaps look into using the TA site as a smaller secondary for the very many kids who are struggling with anxiety so much that they are no longer able to attend their large anonymous secondary schools.

4.8 Additional Comments About The Holmleigh Expansion Proposals

At the end of the consultation, respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments about the proposal. The key themes in this feedback are concerns about the risk of future closures, mentioned by 25% of respondents, as well as other concerns about the process (17%). Positive comments about Holmleigh feature in the feedback from 19% of respondents, whilst 13% discussed the impact of the proposal on children and families. Full details of the themes in these comments are shown in the graph below, followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

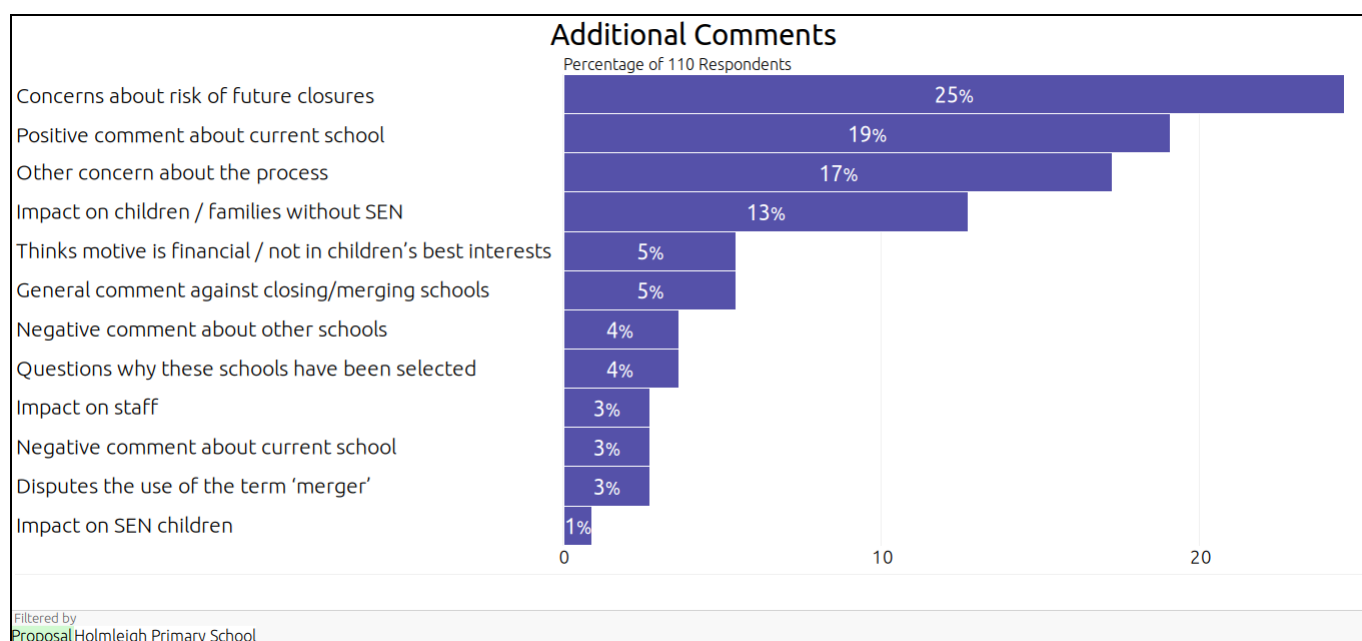


Figure 4.7

Concerns About Future Closures

I am deeply concerned that STA is in an area that no longer serves the immediate houses around it and this is a big reason why the numbers are falling. The Charedi community educate their children elsewhere but live in most of the housing surrounding the school and their population is growing. If STA is struggling to fill places you have not given us any reassurance or projects to indicate that Holmleigh won't struggle also. What is your proposal then?

In order for Holmleigh to succeed in running a two form entry school on the Sir Thomas Abney Site it would need to have a full roll of at least 450 children. The combined roll of Holmleigh Primary School and Sir Thomas Abney is not even close to 400. Any upheaval causes dissatisfaction and anxiety for parents, so the numbers are likely to be less by the time this 'merger' goes through. Holmleigh are being set up to fail. What is the point of destroying not one but two schools in this way?

If the Stamford Hill West area cannot sustain a two form entry Primary School then the merger would likely lead to the closure of the school in a relatively short period of time 3-5 yrs. While the council is willing to provide a loan to get the merged school started it cannot overcome a general lack of demand. We do not yet have sufficient information to be able to determine the future pupil demand for the area, not the number of pupils that would be necessary for the merged school to break even.

Other Concerns About The Process

It was worrying that the representatives [at the meeting with parents] only wanted to talk money rather than giving any reassurance that the merger would be managed in a way that puts the kids first. Further to this, the language they constantly used, was “when this happens”. This made it feel like the decision was already made, even though this is supposed to be a consultation. Before the meeting, I was open to understanding their reasoning, but after hearing their responses, it became clear that their focus isn’t on what’s best for the children – it’s about pushing through what’s easiest for them.

When we spoke to [name] – Director of Education and Inclusion at Hackney Council, at the Holmleigh consultation he gave the impression that more cuts would have to be made in order for Holmleigh to reduce its deficit. But this is not the case – Holmleigh is effectively full and making a surplus of £50,000 per year. [Name]’s behaviour was disingenuous and if you mislead parents to try and make your case for the school merger how can we trust what the Council and its representatives say? Back in 2017, Hackney Council spent £317,000 expanding STA to make it a three-form school site and then found it didn’t have the numbers to go to a three-form school? If the Council’s demographic predictions were wrong then – why should we assume its predictions will be correct now and that STA will be able to support a two form school.

Positive Comments About Holmleigh

As highlighted by Ofsted, Holmleigh’s small scale enables it to deliver an exceptional education experience to its diverse and disadvantaged pupil population, including those with special educational needs and English as an additional language. These pupils who are represented in much higher proportions at Holmleigh, benefit greatly from the well-loved premises that provide a “home from home” environment.

[Holmleigh] is already a proven success. Despite the additional cost often associated with one-form entry schools Holmleigh has consistently maintained financial stability, as reflected in its current accounts. It is clear that Holmleigh is able to sustain itself while delivering an excellent standard of education.

The council should consider leaving Holmleigh Primary school as it is a high performing school. What makes Holmleigh unique is its homely and intimate environment. A merger will destroy this.

Holmleigh is cherished by many due to its unique character and its smaller, more personal size. Parents have specifically chosen Holmleigh for these reasons, and they do not desire a larger school. This move will not improve matters for either the staff or the children. I would also like to highlight all the work that was done over the summer holidays, including the installation of a new central heating system and radiators as well as repairs to the roof. What will happen to all of that?

Impact On Children & Families

From the outset [of the meeting between parents and Hackney Education], it was disheartening to witness a lack of genuine engagement with the concerns raised by parents. Time and again, questions about the emotional, social and academic welfare of our children were met with answers that pivoted back to finances, with little to no reassurances that the council is committed to mitigating the disruption this merger would inevitably cause.

If the merger proceeds, my child and others at Holmleigh would face a disruptive transition to a larger, less stable school at a site that is less accessible for many families.

There is no plan at all to support the children and maintain the family-like atmosphere that the kids are currently thriving in. From conversations with council employees, it is clear that this has not been considered. There is no current plan for safeguarding or protecting the children through this.

4.9 Response From The Holmleigh Governing Body

The Holmleigh School Governing Body submitted a Collective Statement, as an email attachment, in response to the consultation. The key points from this submission are detailed below, whilst the full document can be found in appendix 2.

- The governing body's primary responsibility is the safeguarding, wellbeing, and long-term financial sustainability of the school and its wider community. Their statement aims to present a balanced view of the consultation process highlighting concerns and information gaps that are currently preventing them from endorsing the proposal.
- Whilst recognising that Hackney Education has made efforts to engage with them, the governing body considers that many of their questions remain unanswered in sufficient detail. A list of the questions and responses received are included in the appendix to governing body's statement.
- Their concerns relate to five key areas: financial feasibility; educational impact; premises; staff wellbeing; and governance and implementation.
- On the issues of financial viability, the statement points out that Holmleigh has a viable deficit recovery plan, with a surplus projected within two years, and strong demand for places. Concern is expressed about the higher operational costs for the larger Sir Thomas Abney site and the statement questions its sustainability if pupil numbers drop. The governing body say they need further detail about the financial modelling provided by Hackney Education before they can have confidence in the long-term viability of the merged sites. For example, if all students from both schools remain in the new combined school, it would still be 35 below capacity in the first year, and it is likely that some parents may choose to move their children elsewhere. Furthermore, they express concern about the three year repayable loan that has been proposed due to the short time period and lack of detail provided about the required repayments.

- The governing body states that Holmleigh’s strengths must not be compromised. These include its single form entry, tailored SEND support, and strong home-school relationships. The statement adds that the proposed plans do not sufficiently address the risks to pupil outcomes, staff cohesion and the quality of education provided. It identifies five specific areas that should be addressed: educational continuity, cultural integration, student wellbeing, stakeholder engagement, and monitoring and accountability.
- Over £1.3m has recently been invested in decarbonisation and renewing the school roof. Closing the school would add Holmleigh to Hackney’s portfolio of closed school sites, which cost an estimated £250,000 per annum for maintenance and security. In addition, community assets including the Schoolkeeper’s House and Edible Playground will be lost if the merger goes ahead. The governing body expresses concern that no condition survey, site visit or clear refurbishment timeline for Sir Thomas Abney has been provided, resulting in significant uncertainty about the costs involved.
- The statement recognises the need for adequate support to be provided to Holmleigh staff if the merger goes ahead, especially since they have already faced significant challenges in recent years, including multiple restructures, leadership changes, and extensive building work requiring them to work through the summer. It also states that there has been a lack of meaningful engagement between the staff and governors of both schools, which has hindered discussions on key issues including leadership, staffing and community impact. The Holmleigh governing body considers that the proposed timeline for completing the merger is increasingly at risk and they also express concern about the impact of the ambitious timeline on staff stress and morale.
- The statement recognises the potential benefits of the proposed merger, such as larger facilities, specialist SEN support and more children being able to benefit from Holmleigh’s exceptional leadership and teaching staff. However, it argues that these are outweighed by the current lack of evidence that the merger would be a feasible, viable or sustainable solution for either school.

4.10 Holmleigh Pupil Voice Submission

Pupils at Holmleigh were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the merger. Reviewing the comments, the most common word used is ‘sad’, mentioned by 43 children, followed by ‘happy’ (24). Some children expressed multiple emotions. A summary of the sentiments in each comment is shown below:

- Sad: 43
- Happy: 24
- Angry: 12
- Excited: 9
- Reluctant (not wanting to move): 8
- Nervous: 7
- Uncertain: 2

The full Pupil Voice document can be found in appendix 2.

5. Response To Proposal To Close Oldhill Community School (With Or Without A Merger With Harrington Hill)

At the start of the consultation period, 300 forms were given out to parents and staff at Oldhill Community School although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 48 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to close Oldhill Community School, with or without a merger with Harrington Hill primary school.

52% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school and 10% are staff or governors at the school, whilst the remaining responses came from a range of other respondents.

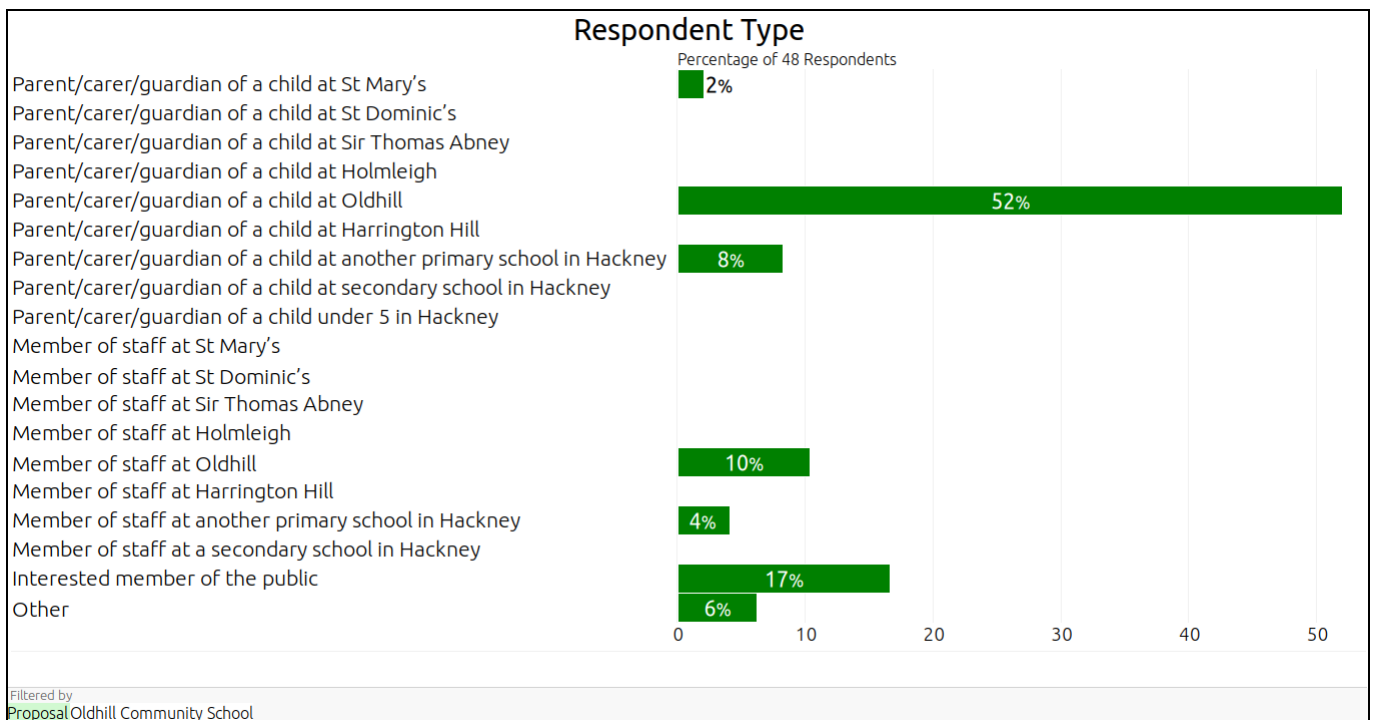


Figure 5.1

There were two options in the proposal for respondents to consider: firstly, to close Oldhill and merge with Harrington Hill, thereby allowing children to stay together, or to close the school without the merger. Respondents are against both options.

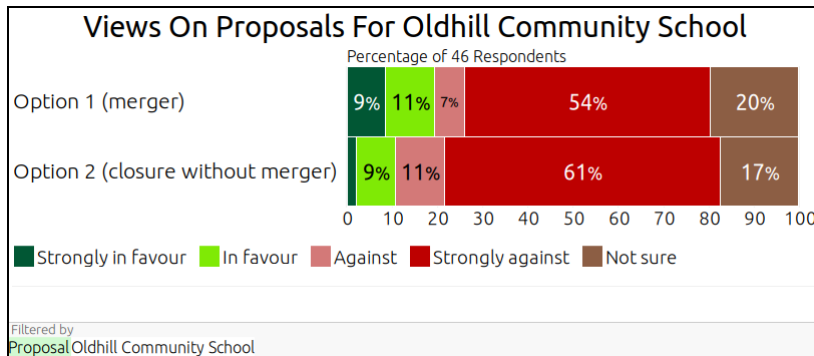


Figure 5.2

In each case, parents, carers and guardians are less positive about the proposals to close the school with a merger (option 1) or without a merger (option 2), compared to other respondents. Caution must be used when interpreting these results due to the small numbers of respondents and the resulting limited accuracy of the data.

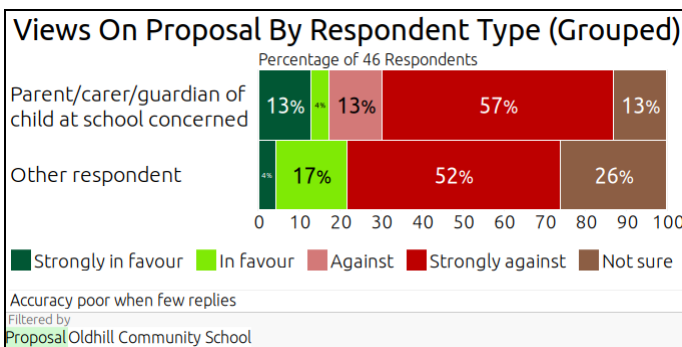


Figure 5.3

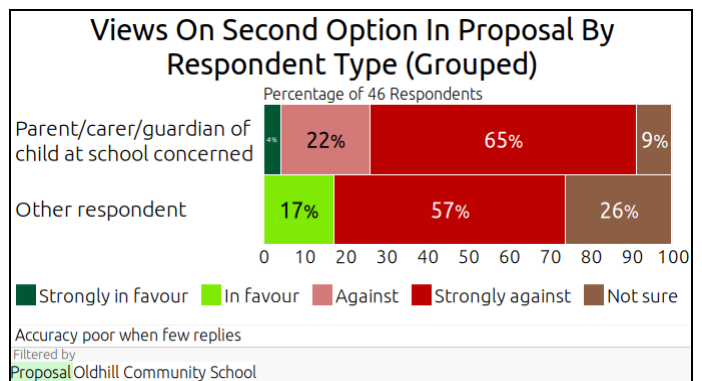


Figure 5.4

5.1 Analysis Of Comments On The Proposals To Close Oldhill

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; as well as providing space for additional comments. There was space for respondents to provide feedback on how each option in the proposal might affect them.

5.2 How Proposal To Close Oldhill & Merge With Harrington Hill Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the first option in the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes. 54% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 29% made comments about the schools involved. 17% talked about the impact on SEN provision and 10% referred to the impact on staff.

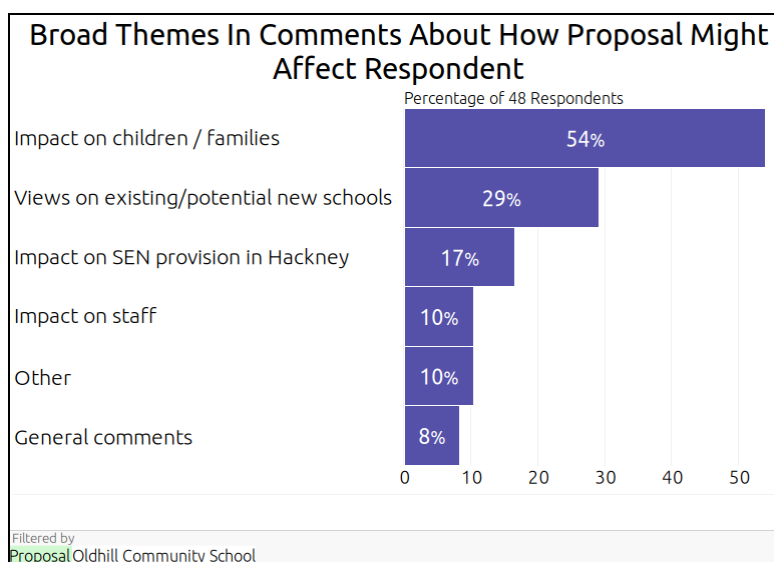


Figure 5.5

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

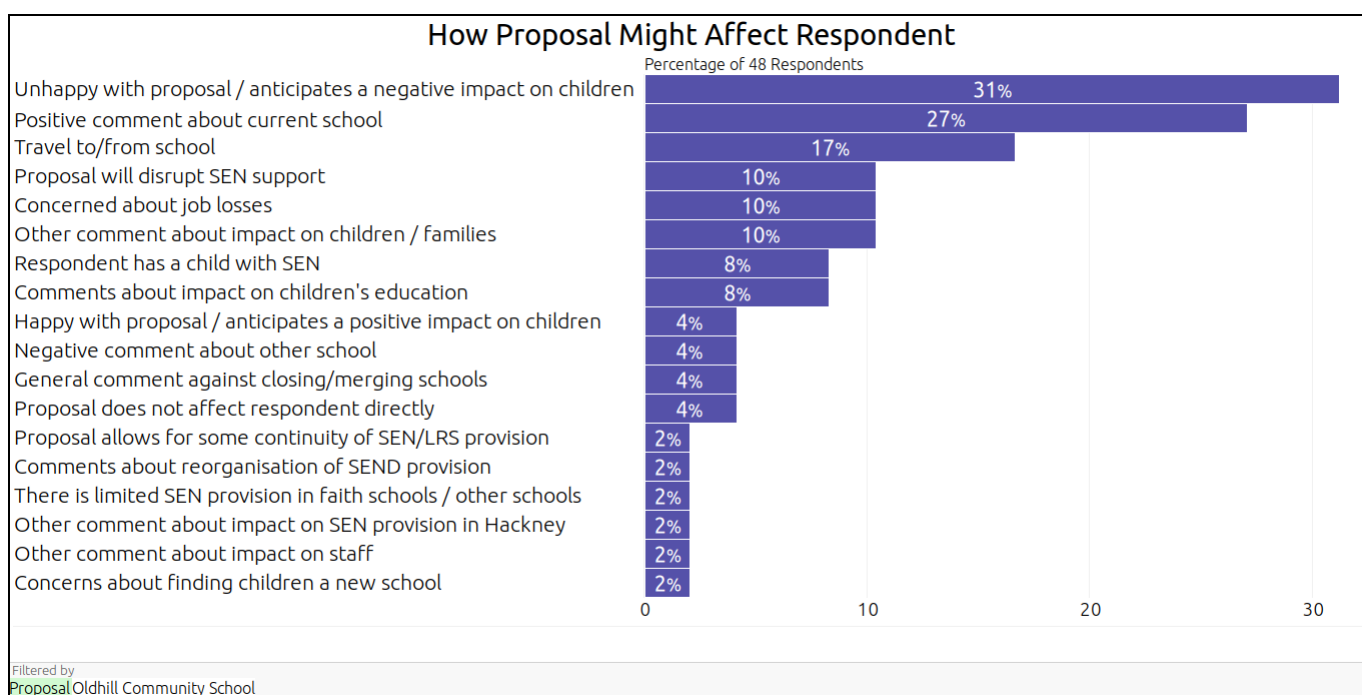


Figure 5.6

5.3 Impact Of Oldhill Merger Proposal On Children & Families

31% of respondents are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate it having a negative impact on children

17% commented about changes to their travel to and from school

10% made other comments about the impact on children and families

8% are worried about the impact on children's education

A selection of the feedback received on these topics is shown below.

*All my [child]'s school friends/peers will still be in contact so no loss of peers [...]
Harrington Hill is near my home, so convenient to travel to and from school*

I need stability for my child as [they have] moved many schools. We lived in a refuge near Oldhill and even though I have been moved out I still would like my child to be at Oldhill.

*Changing the location and education provider will have a great difficulty in my personal life due to distance and all arrangements in place after school clubs etc...
The change will be the 3rd in terms of school for my [child]. Previously we had to change school due to housing issues and rehousing from the council, This change impacts the children's mental health very negatively. They have already missed out so much from the Pandemic.*

I don't want Oldhill Community School to close, It is a big school and other schools should be merging with Oldhill. My kids made lots of connections with pupils and teachers [and] it is walking distance to my kids' home.

The change affects me a lot because my children are used to their school environment and their friends, and their grandmother and uncle live near the school, so when it is difficult for me to pick them up, they can help me by picking them up.

5.4 Comments About The Schools In The Oldhill Merger Proposals

27% of respondents made positive comments about Oldhill

4% made negative comments about Harrington Hill

A selection of these comments is shown below.

Oldhill has been an important part of our community for many years and it is more than just a school. It's where my child has made friends, where [they] are comfortable with [their] teachers and the teachers know my child and each child individually. This is a place where families feel connected.

Harrington Hill doesn't offer Afterschool club and as a mother I depend on this service being a full time worker

Removing the school, which is a community school, which serves the community, to merge with Harrington Hill is not in the best interests of the community as they do not offer the specialist skills which we do.

The option will affect my children and my family because the school was a great school for my children with lovely staff and lovely environment and very convenient and walking distance from home. The school has a lot of opportunities for working mums e.g. After school clubs and a lot of meetings for parents

School staff and external professionals at Oldhill have been working hard to create an autism-friendly school culture over many years. We have concerns that merging with a new school might impact on the overall culture of the school, specifically in relation to Autism and SEND

5.5 Impact Of Oldhill Merger On SEN Provision

10% of respondents think the proposal will disrupt SEN support

8% mention having a child with SEN

Although only a small number of respondents gave feedback about SEN provision, some lengthy comments were received about the need to expand SEN provision in Hackney. An NHS speech and language therapist also expressed concerns about the future of the ARP, currently at Oldhill, pointing that setting up a new, high-quality AEP would probably take 3 years, and in the interim, the quality of provision may decline.

A selection of the feedback provided is shown below.

Merging the school is better than closing down. I have an autistic child. [They] had to change 2 schools and this is [their] third school. We are trying ECHP but all the time we are changing schools so they couldn't sort this out. [They] need an ECHP – a one to one teacher. We bought uniform and I thought [they] would go until Year 6. But unfortunately, I learned two weeks after [they] started school that it was closing down or merging. If it merges, we are going to have the same teachers or new?

At Oldhill, we have a significant number of children with EHCPs – currently 34 – compared to just 9 at Harrington Hill. This large difference highlights the challenges we face, particularly with limited funding. The lack of funding is often due to children arriving in reception or joining the school without an EHCP, despite needing 1:1 support or higher levels of funding, or because their EHCPs have been incorrectly allocated. This move is not solving the problem, just moving it and putting a further strain on Harrington Hill's budget, staff and resources.

My [child] has an EHCP and Harrington Hill does not have an APR resource unit. I will not send my [child] there. It will be devastating for [them] to move to a place with no known staff and a new building.

Instead of closing schools like Oldhill, Hackney should take this opportunity to extend SEN provision, repurposing these sites as specialised hubs to meet the increasing demand for SEN support. This approach is not only in line with legal obligations under the Children and Families Act but also serves the long-term needs of the community by prevent disruption to vulnerable children and offering sustainable solutions to the SEN crisis.

We are aware that there are a high number of children with SEND at Oldhill (47% of the school register = SEND) [...] the closing school (Oldhill) currently has specialist spaces and equipment for SEND e.g. extra intervention rooms, quiet safe spaces to support emotional regulation, rooms for supported meal-times/snack time, sensory room, soft play. Will the new school have adequate space to continue this?

5.6 Impact Of Oldhill Merger On Staff

10% of respondents are concerned about job losses

2% made comments about other potential impacts on staff

A selection of the feedback provided about the impact on staff is shown below.

It will affect my job because I am the only bread winner in my house.

Despite facing redundancy, my primary concern remains how the closure of Oldhill will impact the children and families within our community. [...] To minimize disruption, especially for our EHCP children, it would make more sense to merger Harrington Hill's children and staff into the Oldhill site, similar to the approach being taken with Holmleigh and STA. This would ease the stress and movement for children with additional needs, who will likely struggle with the transition. The ARP facilities are excellent at Oldhill and there would be no need for an ARP consultation or works. While Harrington Hill staff could remain safe in their roles, Oldhill staff would continue to face the risk of redundancy.

I will lose my job.

5.7 How Proposal To Close Oldhill & Without A Merger Might Affect Respondent

The second option in the consultation is to close Oldhill without a merger taking place. The feedback has been classified into a number of broad themes. 46% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 15% talked about the impact on SEN provision and 10% referred to the impact on staff.

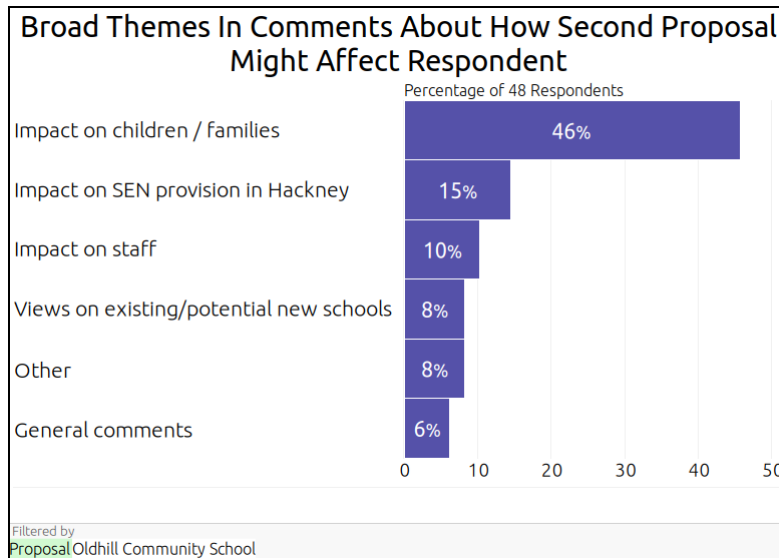


Figure 5.7

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

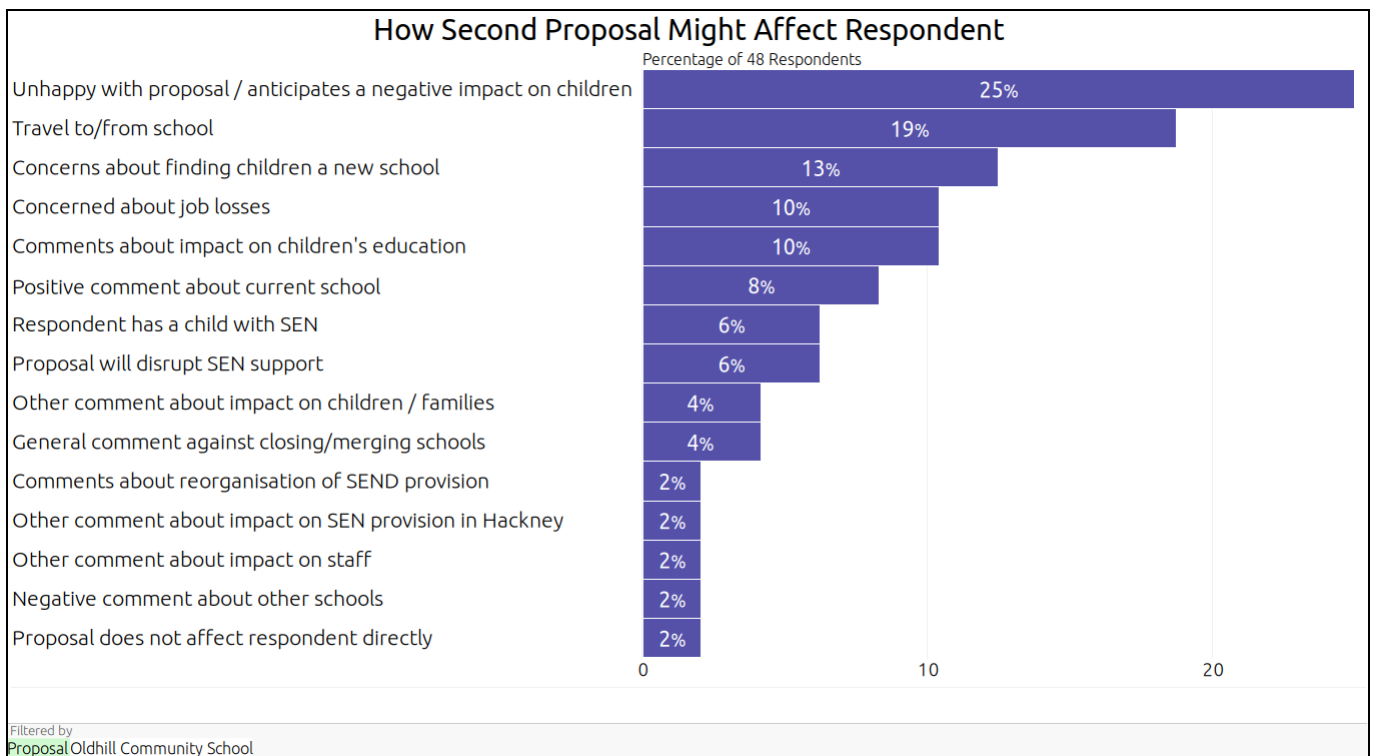


Figure 5.8

5.8 Impact Of Closing Oldhill Without A Merger On Children & Families

25% of respondents are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate it having a negative impact on children

19% commented about changes to their travel to and from school

13% are worried about finding children a new school

10% are worried about the impact on children's education

A selection of these comments is shown below.

The abrupt change in their learning environment could lead to academic setbacks, as children will have to adjust to a new school, new teachers and potentially longer travel times. This disruption could hinder their progress, confidence and motivation which are all critical at this state of their education. Moreover, the closure will place a financial and logistical burden on families. Many parents rely on the current proximity of the school to manage their daily schedules and the closure would create additional transportation costs and time constraints for working parents.

Despite the downside of children not necessarily moving with their friends, I believe closure would be a better option, as it would provide a more stable opportunity for securing a place at another school for the remainder of their primary years. The large number of EHCP children would be more evenly distributed across schools in Hackney, reducing the financial burden on any one school.

Transitioning three children to a new school will be a lot for me to handle mentally, physically and otherwise.

I will have to look for another school which is an inconvenience. I would need to look for [a] primary school and then a secondary school, such an inconvenience. Loss of contact with all [their] peers, friendships have been made. The school is very near my home.

Is disruptive to current Oldhill pupils who will not stay together as they move school.

This has really affected my family and children as a whole and it's a depressing time for us.

5.9 Impact Of Closing Oldhill Without A Merger On SEN Provision

6% of respondents think the proposal will disrupt SEN support

6% mention having a child with SEN

As with the responses to the first option in the proposal, although only a small number of respondents gave feedback about SEN provision, some lengthy comments were received about the need to expand SEN provision in Hackney. An NHS speech and language therapist also expressed concerns about the effect of closing the ARP, currently at Oldhill, considering the impact on the quality of provision as well as the impact on the children with ARP places.

A selection of the feedback provided is shown below.

Autistic children need consistency and predictability and experience high levels of anxiety around change. They need consistent environmental supports and consistent support staff. Moving to another school setting could have a negative impact on the children and their emotional regulation and behaviour.

My [child] will have to go to a new school where [they] won't know anyone. As [they have] autism, it took [them] 3 years to settle down into Oldhill Children's centre first and the school in reception next. You are playing with the future of my child.

Oldhill Autism Resource Provision (ARP) supports 10 children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC). The closure of this provision would disrupt the continuity of care and specialist support these children rely on. [...] If Oldhill closes without a merger, there is no guarantee that all SEN provisions, including the ARP, will be maintained or replicated elsewhere. This could leave SEN children without appropriate local support, forcing them to travel further for specialised services or attend schools ill-equipped to meet their needs.

My child will be entering year 6 [their] last year in primary education [they have] SEN along with physical medical issues. Closing the school without a merger is unreasonable and puts a lot of pressure on parents and children trying to find another school that is appropriate and can accommodate [their] needs. This will mean having to start over at a totally new school having to make new friends this will seriously effect [them] mentally and emotionally

5.10 Impact Of Closing Oldhill Without A Merger On Staff

10% of respondents are concerned about job losses

2% made comments about other potential impacts on staff

Examples of the comments made are shown below.

It would not change anything for me whether there is a merger or a closure. I do hope staff who currently work at Oldhill school (all of whom I can tell are brilliant!) can find new positions on good terms.

I will lose my job.

ARP staff need to be highly skilled and experienced and therefore staff need a high level of specialist training. These training needs would need to be considered when setting up a new ARP with new staff.

5.11 Comments About Schools In Oldhill Proposal

8% of respondents made positive comments about Oldhill

2% made negative comments about other schools

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

The school serves as a hub for social interaction, engagement and a sense of belonging for many families. Closing it down will weaken this bond and could lead to a less connected and less vibrant community.

The school has great teachers and is very positive in the community. I can't imagine the impact it will have on my disabled children.

5.12 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For Oldhill

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposal that they felt the council should consider. Key themes in the feedback are comments against the proposal, the creation of a dedicated SEN hub or other specialist support centre and using the Oldhill site, rather than Harrington Hill’s for the merger. Full details are shown in the graph below followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

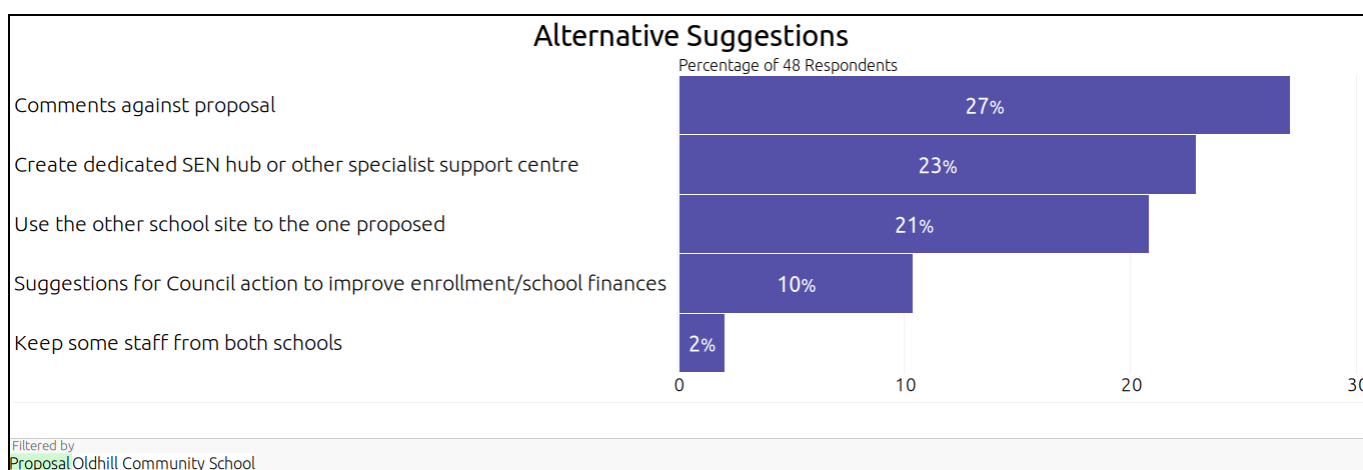


Figure 5.9

Comments Against The Proposal

I don't have any suggestions because I think it's a very good school with very good professionals. I just hope that you don't close it and that you reconsider your decision.

I think this school is bigger and a great location for all the children who already go to the school. It's walking distance from the bus stop so please bear [that] in mind before taking any decision. The school has great teachers for SEN children, it will be a shame if it closes or merges with Harrington Hill

These two choices are based only on budget and not in the SEND needs. I believe it is disability discrimination and I will personally go to a solicitor to stop this consultation.

This school provides great support for the community children's centre, extended activities, midwifery, Autism Resource Provision... It doesn't make sense for this to be destroyed, considering all the benefits for the community and the potential negative impact, especially on the most vulnerable families and children. While understanding the low number of children I suggest another school to merge with Oldhill and Oldhill to remain open.

Creation Of Dedicated SEN Hub Or Other Specialist Support Centre

Given the current SEN crisis and the lack of sufficient local provisions, Oldhill could be repurposed into a dedicated SEN hub. This hub could offer specialised resources for children with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC), as well as children with other complex needs. It could provide a range of services such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, and emotional support, ensuring children receive the comprehensive care they need in a local setting. This would maintain the existing ARP and expand its capacity to meet growing demand.

Bring specialist SEN services back in-house rather than sending children to private schools. This could be done as part of phased transition in this building or another school that is being closed.

This building/space could be used for a special school for children within the Jewish community. Currently they have nowhere to place children with special educational needs who can't be in a mainstream classroom

Using Oldhill's Site Rather Than Harrington Hill's For The Merger

As Oldhill has the provision for an ARP already in place, and more children currently on roll than Harrington Hill, they could merge into Oldhill.

I believe it would better serve the community if Harrington Hill merged into the Oldhill site, similar to the approach being taken at Holmleigh and STA. This would provide greater support for the EHCP children and their families, ensuring that at least the environment remains stable, even if the adults change. Stability is crucial for these children, and maintaining a familiar setting would help ease the transition and reduce the impact of such a significant change.

Move Harrington Hill to Oldhill site as it has the facilities for SEND like a sensory room and a soft play area.

Suggestions For Council Action To Improve Enrollment/School Finances

Teach other languages at school, this will maybe attract more students. Change the school name and refurbish the building

Look at other avenues to clear the debt at Oldhill, such as selling the site to a larger organisation and arranging a lease back.

Rather than closing down Oldhill, I suggest considering a consolidation of resources and programmes with nearby schools, such as a school merger or partnership. By sharing administrative services, combining extra curricular activities and pooling resources, we could reduce costs without sacrificing the quality of education that Oldhill provides. Another option could be to introduce new programmes or initiatives that attract more students to the school, such as specialised curriculum tasks (STEM, arts of vocational programmes) that differentiate Oldhill from others.

5.13 Additional Comments About Oldhill Proposal

At the end of the consultation, respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments about the proposal. Positive comments about Oldhill feature in the feedback from 10% of respondents, whilst others discussed the impact of the proposal on individuals such as staff (6%), SEN children (4%) and other children/families (4%). Concerns about the process were also raised with 4% in each case worrying about the risk of future closures or mentioning other concerns. Full details of the themes in these comments are shown in the graph below, followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

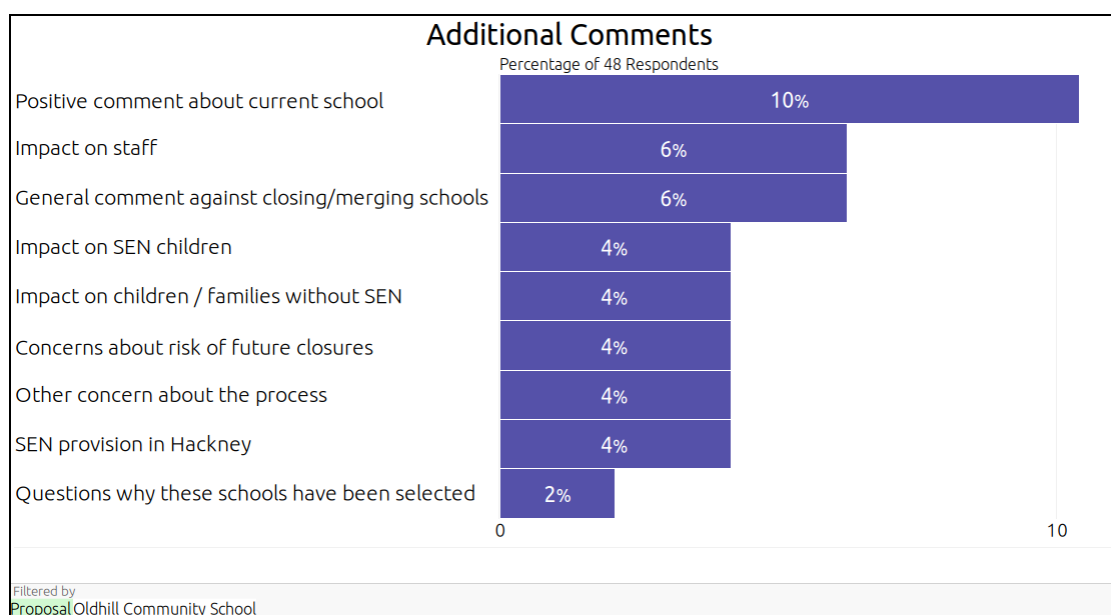


Figure 5.10

Positive Comments About Oldhill

My [child] has thoroughly enjoyed being taught at Oldhill Community School. It would be a shame to close the school..

Do not close this fantastic school serving the most disadvantaged families and community.

I do hope the school will be allowed to stay open as it really has such a positive impact on the street and the neighbourhood, parents come together outside and inside for activities. There are very few such 'natural' options to come together across different cultural backgrounds in the Cazenove ward of Hackney.

Impact On Individuals

Having worked at Oldhill for over 20 years under three different headteachers, it is deeply saddening to see this decision being made. As a school, we have worked tirelessly to serve our community and children, and our hard work is clearly reflected in our results.

Providing the children with the best education is the most important aspect. The large number of SEND children in the school need a safe and nurturing environment. Splitting the children up and moving them around to many schools, as Harrington Hill would not be able to accommodate our large number of EHCP children

Concerns About The Process

If parents are given the option to send their children to Harrington Hill, some may choose to do so, while others may not. However, if Harrington Hill is unable to fill their available spots, could this lead to the possibility of their closure as well?

This consultation is too short, and the length of time between the decision being made, parents being informed, the school winding down and closing is shockingly brief.

While I understand the reasons behind this decision, it would be more appropriate to have full transparency regarding the overall situation of all schools in Hackney. It's important to understand how Oldhill differs from other schools and why it has been selected, especially when other schools may have fewer children and potentially greater financial challenges. Our priority should always be the needs of our children. Moving them to a school that could face the same situation next year seems incredibly short-sighted. It's essential that we ensure stability and continuity for their education, not just for the sake of immediate financial decisions.

5.14 Oldhill Pupil Voice

Pupils at Oldhill were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the merger. Reviewing the comments, the most common words used are 'sad', mentioned by 49 children, followed by 'disappointed' (22). Some children expressed multiple emotions. A summary of the sentiments in each comment is shown below:

- Sad: 49
- Disappointed: 22
- Positive comment about Oldhill school: 19
- Worried/scared: 16
- Happy: 13
- Other words/emotions: 6

The full Pupil Voice document can be found in appendix 3.

6. Response To Proposal To Close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (With Or Without A Merger With Holmleigh)

At the start of the consultation period, 140 forms were given out to parents and staff at Sir Thomas Abney Primary School although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 72 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School, with or without a merger with Holmleigh primary school.

50% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school and 18% are staff or governors at the school, whilst the remaining responses came from a range of other respondents.

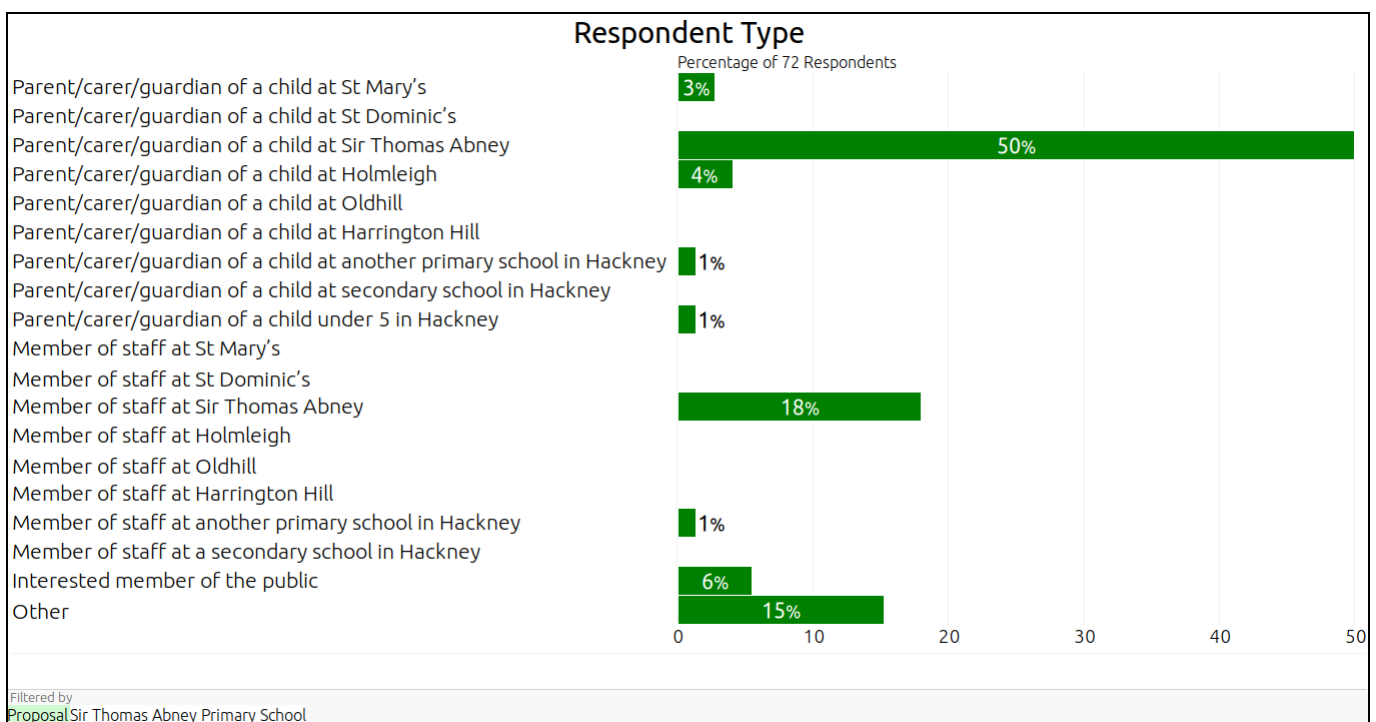


Figure 6.1

There were two options in the proposal for respondents to consider: firstly, to close Sir Thomas Abney and merge with Holmleigh, on the Sir Thomas Abney site, thereby allowing children to stay together, or, secondly, to close the school without the merger. Although respondents are against both options, there is more support for the first option (the merger) than the second, which virtually all respondents say they are against.

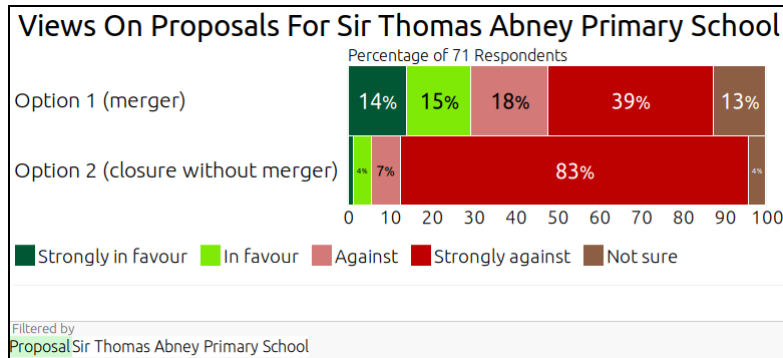


Figure 6.2

Although there are only a small number of responses from staff members at the school, those who responded are all, universally, against either option. Views amongst parents, carers and guardians are mixed with regard to the first option (the merger), although the majority are against the proposals to close the school without a merger (option 2). Caution must be used when interpreting these results due to the small numbers of respondents.

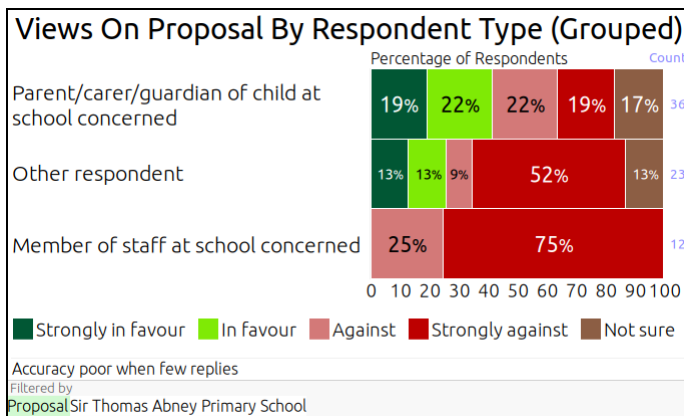


Figure 6.3

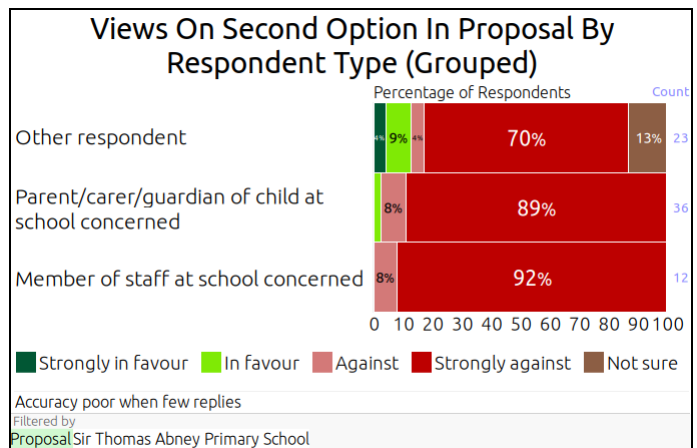


Figure 6.4

6.1 Analysis Of Comments On The Proposal To Close Sir Thomas Abney

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; as well as providing space for additional comments. There was space for respondents to provide feedback on how each option in the proposal might affect them.

6.2 How Proposal To Close Sir Thomas Abney & Merge With Holmleigh Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the first option in the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes.

43% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 32% referred to the impact on staff. 31% made comments about the schools involved and 17% talked about the impact on SEN provision. The general comments, from 21% of respondents, included concerns about the terminology used in the proposal.

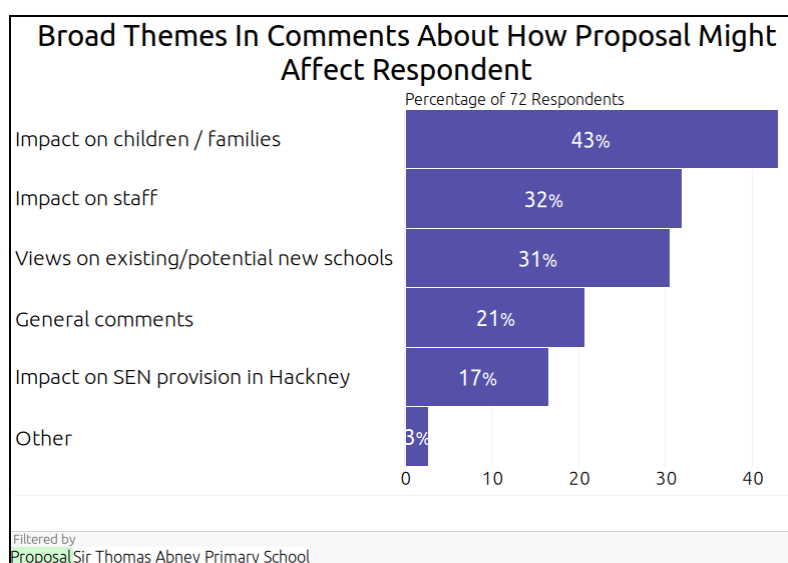


Figure 6.5

In addition, a further review of the comments made by Sir Thomas Abney parents, carers or guardians reveals that ten out of the twenty five who responded to this consultation made comments suggesting they may not have fully understood all aspects of the proposal. For example, some mentioned having to go to the Holmleigh site or made a similar reference to having to travel further to get to school, whilst others talked about the staff staying the same.

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

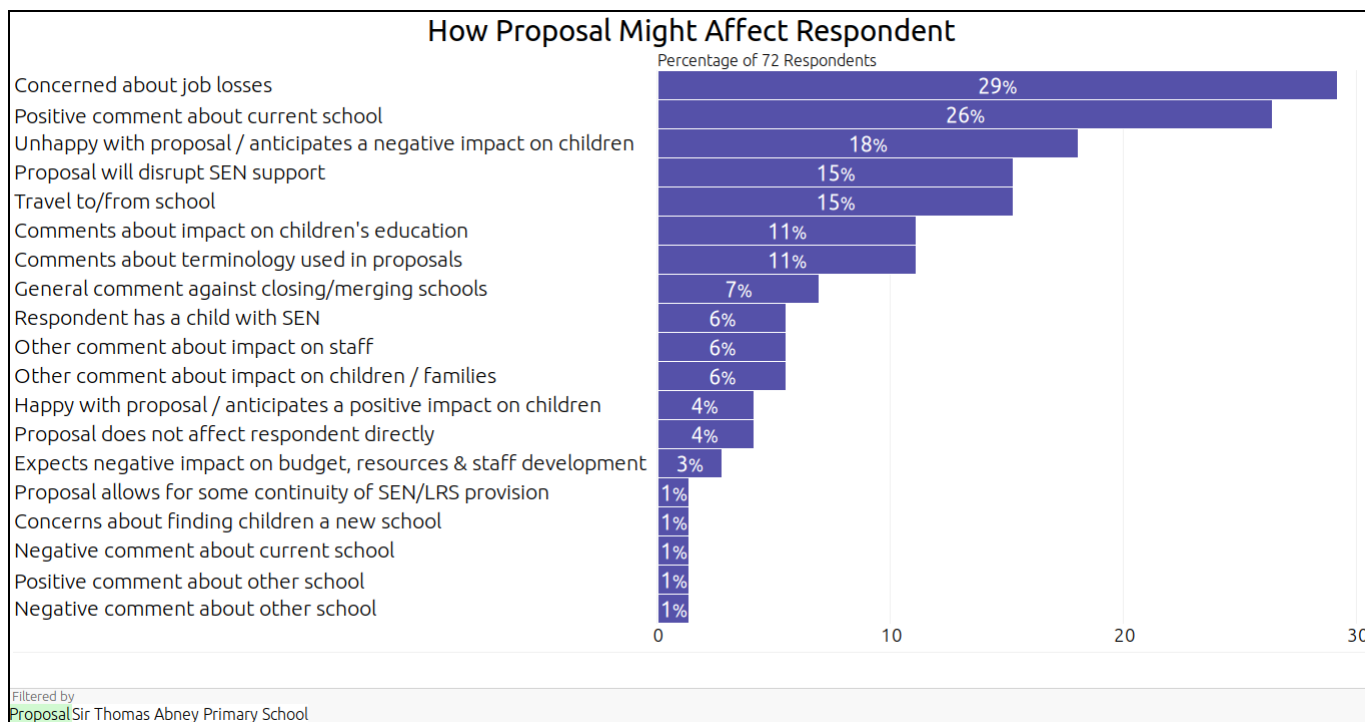


Figure 6.6

6.3 Impact Of Sir Thomas Abney Merger Proposals On Children & Families

18% of respondents are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate it having a negative impact on children

15% commented about their travel to and from school

11% are worried about the impact on children's education

6% made other comments about the impact on children and families

As mentioned above, almost half of parents, carers and guardians of children at Sir Thomas Abney, who responded to the consultation, made comments that suggested a degree of confusion about how the merger proposals would work. This is particularly evident in comments around travel to school. Some respondents talk about the benefits of the staff staying the same, whilst others are clearly aware that the staff will change. A selection of the feedback relating to the impact of the merger proposal on children and families is shown below.

My child is confused about this merge as [they] might not be able to see the teachers [they are] used to and not sure how the new merge will affect [them], how the teachers would be. Also, [they] might not be able to see [their] friends.

Of the two options available, this is the best. We do worry about the effect on our [child], having to adapt to a completely new teaching staff, but as the decision to close STA as an independent school has already been made, this would cause the least disruption.

This proposal of closing Sir Thomas Abney and merging it with Holmleigh is going to affect my job/work because I live close to Sir Thomas, so dropping my [child] and picking a bus to work is good and easy. Dropping my child at Holmleigh will cost me my job because that means I will always be late.

This option is a [big] impact to my child because [they are] worrying to lose [their] teachers and friends. As a parent, I'm also worry for the classroom size and number of students.

My child would benefit from staying in the environment that makes [them] feel safe, secure and stable, surrounded by the continuous close bonds and relationships [they have] built up with the trusting staff and friendships of [their] peers. Moving [them] to a new school would result in myself having to relocate job as well as resettle my child in a new environment

My [child] and I would be impacted by this because we would need to walk further as Holmleigh is further away from us. This might also make me late for my work.

It would mean we are able to keep our kids in a school which is close to home and also, Sir Thomas Abney school is a great school with great teachers, so I know my kids are getting a great education.

6.4 Impact Of Sir Thomas Abney Merger Proposals On Staff

29% of respondents are concerned about staff job losses

3% expect a negative impact on budget, resources and staff development.

Many of the comments expressing concern about job losses also question the terminology used in the consultation, describing the proposal as a “takeover” rather than a true merger. As previously mentioned, not all parents at the school appear to realise that the Sir Thomas Abney staff are to be made redundant but many of those that do are unhappy about this aspect of the proposal. A selection on the comments on these topics is shown below.

I will be made redundant and will lose my post of [subject] lead. I will see my years of work making the teaching of [subject] a strength of the school destroyed.

If the location [of the LRS] was the same, Holmleigh would also presumably have more chance of recruiting the highly experienced Speech and Language Therapy assistant currently employed by STA, whose skills and knowledge are extremely valuable; losing this member of staff would be of huge detriment to the smooth running of the LRS and the effectiveness of therapy. This is also true for the knowledgeable staff and SMT who have years of experience of the LRS

I am at risk of redundancy, as are all of the staff at Sir Thomas Abney. An initial discussion with Hackney officers suggests that staff at both Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh would be offered the opportunity to apply for jobs in a ‘merged’ school in a fair and equitable way; staff at both schools would be offered the opportunity to apply for voluntary redundancy. This is not the case. Hackney officers did not initially communicate the true facts of the proposal.

Making all my child’s teachers redundant is not an option that takes my child’s best interest into consideration. My child is very sensitive to change, and has already been displaying signs of stress as a few of [their] classmates have started leaving.

Although this option is to merge the two schools the council has decided to dispense with all the brilliant teachers and support staff at STA and have excluded all stakeholders at the school from any decision making in the future of a school that they have spent their careers in making what it is today. This is a disgraceful way to treat employees that have been nothing but loyal and committed to this borough.

I prefer the idea of the schools merging, but I just don’t understand why Holmleigh is somehow being treated as the better school, with none of their teachers at risk of redundancy, and they will be the new school, and nothing from STA. I chose to send my child to STA, NOT to Holmleigh. A true merger would have something from both the schools, not simply shut one, and move the other to its site.

6.5 Comments About Schools Involved In Sir Thomas Abney Merger Proposal

26% of respondents made positive comments about Sir Thomas Abney

1% in each case made negative comments about Sir Thomas Abney, positive comments about Holmleigh or negative comments about Holmleigh

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

I want Sir Thomas Abney to merge with Holmleigh Primary because Sir Thomas is an amazing school and has all the modern facilities for kids to learn and grow and the staff are amazing and have the kids' best interest at heart.

Lack of expertise in Holmleigh School to run a larger setting with an ARP. Leadership at Holmleigh School currently requiring intensive support so unlikely to be able to manage a merger without increased support.

As a parent who has had 3 children attend Sir Thomas Abney, I am very happy with the school layout, staff, care and location. My [child] who currently attends STA is also happy.

My [child] recently joined Sir Thomas Abney, in September, and has been getting on really well and I believe has had the best possible start to school life. If this merger is to happen, [they] will not only lose the teachers who have been doing a brilliant job but many other aspects too. We chose this school for a particular reason. After visiting many schools, this school offered such a warm and comfortable feeling which has been reflected after [they] actually began.

6.6 Impact Of The Sir Thomas Abney Merger Proposal On SEN Provision

15% of respondents believe the proposals will disrupt SEN support

6% explicitly mention having a child with SEN

1% consider that the proposals allow for some continuity of SEN/|LRS support

Whilst stating that they are in favour of neither option, a Speech and Language Therapist, working at the Sir Thomas Abney LRS and overseeing LRS provision in Hackney, acknowledges that the merger allows for some continuity of LRS provision and is the better of the two options available. Parents of children with SEN express concern about losing the staff who currently provide this support and pay tribute to their expertise and experience.

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

Merging with Holmleigh on the existing STA site would at least enable some degree of continuity for the children who attend the LRS, many of whom have already moved from other schools in order to attend the provision, thereby minimising additional disruption. Keeping the provision on the same site would also hopefully mean that the physical set-up of the therapy rooms and resources (vital to effective therapy delivery, and by no means guaranteed at another school) could be maintained.

Both our children have needs SEN and medical. The facility here has been instrumental in putting the correct care in place to make sure their needs are met. Without the STA staff, who are amazingly talented and care, this school will not be the same. The speech and language unit have done incredible work with our youngest [child]. I worry that we will lose this unity and their expertise. [Name] is the best SEN head we have ever come across.

I have recently moved my child to Sir Thomas Abney for the start of year 1 for the academic term 24/25. This place was offered to us after going through an extensive process of Speech and Language therapy, and the education health panel. [...] Closing this school will certainly mean that I will have to move my child back to [their] previous school where support for SaLT is not available.

6.7 General Comments On The Sir Thomas Abney Merger Proposal

11% of respondents expressed concern about the terminology used on the proposal

7% made general comments against closing schools

4% recognised that the proposal does not affect them directly

Respondents question the use of the term ‘merger’, suggesting that this is misleading because only the students of the two schools are being combined, whereas the Sir Thomas Abney staff are losing their jobs and its governors will have no say about the new school.

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

I would like the rationale to be explained fully prior to any decision being made – please email that out to the parents affected. This is a direct request – why is the “merger” being done in this way, as a takeover, rather than an actual merger.

The Council has falsely presented the situation as if there are only two options. This is misleading. There is a third option, which is a “true” merger. However, a merger would be subject to the presumption of academisation and the tendering process for interest on the part of academy trusts. [...] It is frankly disgraceful the way the Council has misled the public. This is not a “merger”. This is the closing of STA and mass laying off of its staff.

As a governor at Sir Thomas Abney Primary I find it upsetting that the council is using outdated guidance. The way the current proposal is written means that we will have no say about the new school.

6.8 How Proposal To Close Sir Thomas Abney Without A Merger Might Affect Respondents

The second option in the consultation is to close Sir Thomas Abney without a merger taking place. The feedback has been classified into a number of broad themes. 53% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 24% referred to the impact on staff and 21% talked about the impact on SEN provision. 17% made comments about Sir Thomas Abney or other schools. The comments suggest that this option is more clearly understood by parents, carers and guardians than the merger proposal, with the majority of their feedback relating to the school closing.

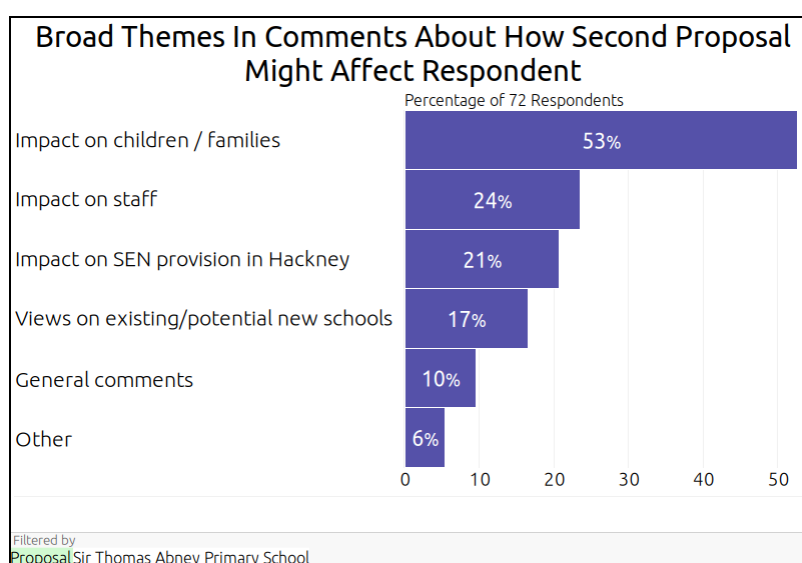


Figure 6.7

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

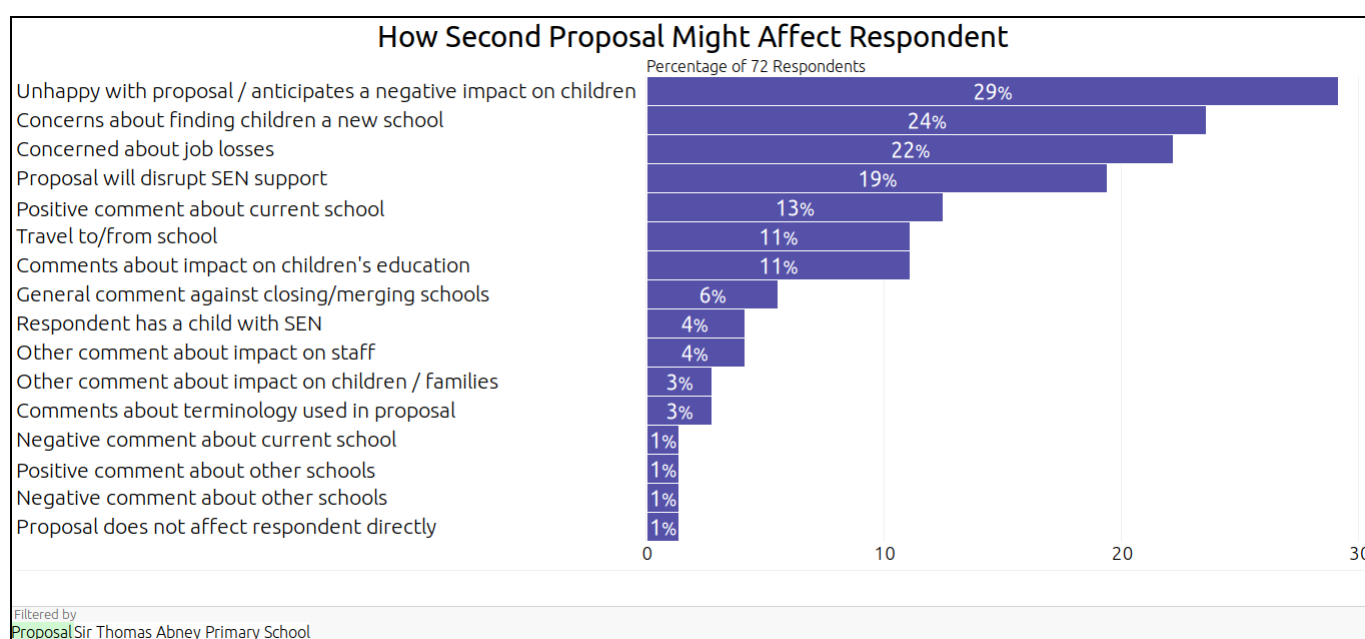


Figure 6.8

6.9 Impact Of Closing Sir Thomas Abney Without A Merger On Children & Families

29% of respondents are unhappy with the proposal and anticipate it having a negative impact on children

24% express concerns about finding children a new school

11% commented about their travel to and from school

11% are worried about the impact on children's education

A selection of the comments made is shown below.

If Sir Thomas Abney School were to close, this would negatively impact us as there aren't many schools close to us. Also, I would worry that the other schools would be full already and I wouldn't manage to get my kids in there. We can't travel far for a school as both me and my husband don't drive.

A full closure would be horrific for the children to be split up and sent to different schools, especially if they are potentially schools which we would not chose to send our children to in normal circumstances.

This is clearly a dreadful option, with absolutely no reason to be considered. All the children would lose their friendship groups, their teachers and their school environment in one fell swoop. Do not do this. My [child] has already been crying at the thought of losing [their] friends.

The worst of two bad options. Our [child] really struggles to adapt to changed circumstances and putting [them] through the trauma of having to change schools again is truly worrying.

6.10 Impact Of Closing Sir Thomas Abney Without A Merger On Staff

22% of respondents are concerned about staff job losses and examples of the comments made are shown below.

I would lose my job. All the systems I have been working to build up over the past few years would be dismantled. The staff team I have helped to train and develop would be dispersed. In addition, all the children I have been supporting would be dispersed to different schools. The provision I have worked to put in place for them would be destroyed. It would also mean a huge workload for me to prepare for their transitions.

I will be made redundant. As will all staff at Sir Thomas Abney. The expertise of all staff will be lost. The expertise in providing a highly inclusive provision for all pupils, as well as for those pupils within the school's LRS will be lost as well.

Closing Sir Thomas Abney is a huge loss. It has a big playground and has an amazing Language unit. Staff are very experienced, it will not be fair for them to lose their jobs.

6.11 Impact Of Sir Thomas Abney Closing Without A Merger On SEN Provision

19% of respondents believe the proposals will disrupt SEN support

4% explicitly mention having a child with SEN

A Speech and Language Therapist, working at the Sir Thomas Abney LRS and overseeing LRS provision in Hackney, has set out their reasons for strongly objecting to this option: the process of re-locating the LRS would be time consuming and cause disruption to therapy, as well as causing uncertainty amongst families. All places in the LRS are currently full and these children are more vulnerable than most to difficulties with transition

A selection of the feedback about the impact on SEN provision of Sir Thomas Abney closing without a merger is shown below.

Many of the children at Sir Thomas Abney have SEND (around 50%, which is significantly higher than any other mainstream school). This makes them more vulnerable socially, emotionally and academically. Having to cope with such a fundamental change will undoubtedly be difficult for many children with SEND to process and will have a significant negative effect on their mental wellbeing and learning. Sir Thomas Abney has an Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) for children with DLD and speech disorders. Staff expertise in teaching with Developmental Language Delay and Speech Disorders will be lost through compulsory redundancies.

The Children's SaLT team have recently undertaken a QI project to increase awareness of and referrals to the LRS. This has been successful and all places are currently full. The closure of STA in any form will have negative consequences and undo some of the work of this project anyway, but this is likely to be greater if we don't even know where the LRS will be located. The physical space allocated to the LRS is vital to the successful provision of therapy. There is no guarantee another school in the borough will have suitable space. Children with speech and language needs are more vulnerable than most to difficulties with transition, in part because those unfamiliar with their communication style may struggle to communicate effectively with them. If STA were to close without a merger there is a greater probability that they would transfer to a school without familiar peers, which could be detrimental to their communicative participation and their overall well-being.

We have gone to great lengths to find a school that was able to meet both our children's needs. Our youngest has a severe speech disorder, the support [they receive] at STA cannot be matched in another school. [They] will not have this support if STA closes. Our older [child] has SEN needs, [they] will massively miss [their] peers, [they struggle] with change. [They have] full 1:1 support, not only will a full close effect [them] emotionally, with lasting effects left on [them], we will never get the same medical care STA provided for [their] type 1 diabetes. We had to move [them] from [their] previous school due to medical negligence.

6.12 Comments About Schools

13% of respondents made positive comments Sir Thomas Abney and a selection of these are shown below.

There is a need for a good school in this area and STA sits on a perfect site where children can learn and thrive. Fantastic education and care is being provided for the children in this area by the staff at STA (including a large number of children with complex needs).

Sir Thomas Abney Primary School does an excellent job in preparing all of its pupils for the next stage of their lives. We have an expertise in SEND including a language resource for children with language delay. At the same time as consulting on closing STA Hackney Education’s SEND Strategy is talk[ing] about the need for more specialist provision in both mainstream and special schools.

6.13 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For Sir Thomas Abney

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposal that they felt the council should consider. Key themes in the feedback are comments about keeping staff from both schools, creating a new school from both Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh, suggestions for Council action to improve enrolment and school finance, as well as objections to the use of the term ‘merger’ and the creation of a dedicated SEN hub or other specialist support centre.

Full details are shown in the graph below followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

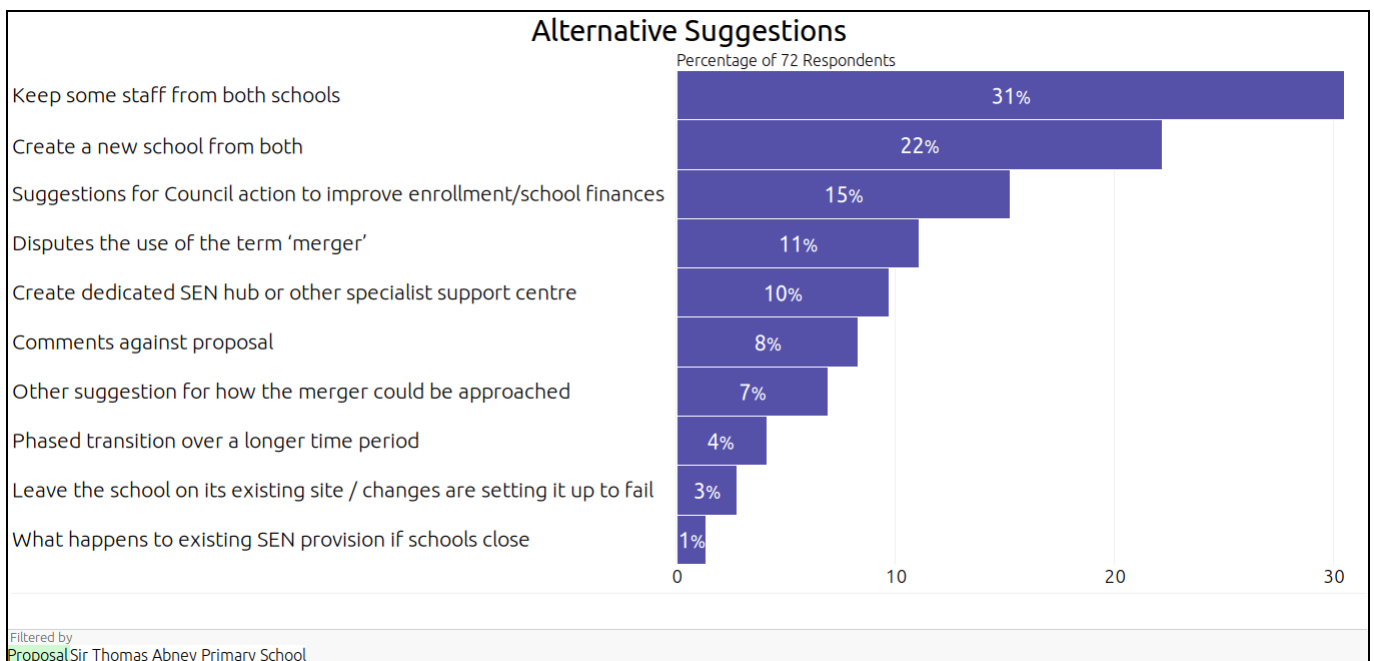


Figure 6.9

Keep Some Staff From Both Sir Thomas Abney & Holmleigh

I urge you to reconsider the decision to close Sir Thomas Abney and instead close both STA and Holmleigh and create a new school, instead of just closing one? It would then mean that the teachers could reapply and the best teachers would form a brand new school with the best staff for the area and the children attending

Offer voluntary redundancy to staff of both schools then last in first out / performance review for remaining staff.

There should be 50% staff from each school. You cannot take away a child's entire support system and not expect it to be detrimental to them.

The merger of Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh should involve capitalising and retaining the strengths of both schools. The SEND and DLD expertise of staff at Sir Thomas Abney will take a significant amount of time and resources to rebuild and replace. This is vital time that vulnerable children and families do not have and cannot replace.

At the initial meeting with the Governing Body, Hackney Education officers said that there would be a fair and equitable recruitment to the 'new' Holmleigh School from across both schools, there would be competitive interviews and staff from both schools would be entitled to request voluntary redundancy (minuted). This has never been the case, nor has an appropriate explanation been provided as to how and why inaccurate HR advice was presented.

Create A New School From Both Sir Thomas Abney & Holmleigh

A new or merged name for the school (Sir Holmleigh/Thomas Holmleigh for example), get the children from both schools involved in this part of the process by letting them have ideas or votes.

Hackney Council should consider the third option of a new school. Hackney Education have not made any attempt to put this to the Secretary of State for Education for fear of academisation. This is despite the current SoS for Education reporting that she wants to put the creation of new schools back to local councils.

Closing both schools and opening a new school on the site of STA with a fresh start and new name (causing less division in the community and a more equal process for the STA school community). This should be properly and positively explored (whether academisation is required or not)

Since the government's guidance on the "Free School Presumption" has changed I would hope you would put a pause on closing STA. It's time for you to speak to officials at the DfE about closing both Holmleigh and STA and opening a new LA maintained 2 form entry school at our current location

Suggestions For Council Action To Improve Enrollment/School Finances

If the council is concerned jointly of the cost of maintaining the school and the quality of education, then why is a third option of opening the schools to the academisation process not being considered. Not only would this alleviate the burden of financial strain on the council, allowing it to focus funding and resources to long term solutions not quick ill-thought out closures, it would also allow staff with all the expertise to be retained.

Rent out the schools in evening time for adult learners or other activities like church on Sundays, so that the school will have extra independent funds coming in.

Sir Thomas Abney is a school on a quiet residential street, if you don't advertise, how will people know it is there? There are probably children living closer to this school that are attending Woodberry Down.

Disputes The Use Of The Term 'Merger'

A third option would be for there to be a genuine merger of staff, children and name from both schools. This would show meaningful effort to meet the emotional and educational needs of all children and staff. The current suggestion is not [a] merger – you haven't merged two things if you leave a part of one out, you are deceiving parents with this terminology.

The Council have failed to explain why they have ruled out the option of a true merger, which would entail an academisation tendering process. Instead, the Council have presented one type of closure of STA (and misleadingly called it a "merger") and another type of closure of STA, as two different options: merger vs closure. This is an unfair and misleading description, which the majority of members of the public and school community would be unable to detect or appreciate. It is an unfair sleight of hand.

Holmleigh are sitting in a crumbling building and STA have the space to accommodate them. Excellent, best way forward is to combine the two schools. It all makes sense. Then why is the less experienced school being given priority over the more experienced school. How is this a 'merger'? It is a takeover.

Create A Dedicated SEN Hub Or Other Specialist Support Centre

I wonder however if full consideration has been given to ways to properly take advantage of the school's expertise in SEND and the school site with an enhanced SEND provision incorporated into Sir Thomas Abney. The school site, with its spread out layout and generous outdoor space would be ideal for a bigger SEND provision.

Smaller classes and smaller schools are excellent for the educational progress of children (as evidenced by Eton) and especially for children with SEN. They foster a caring ethos, each child is known and valued as an individual by a small staff, in a nurturing environment with personal attention. Once a school is closed it is lost for ever. Therefore I strongly recommend it is kept open, and the borough considers ways to develop it as a centre for excellence for SEND provision.

Keep the language provision so this remains an important part of the character of the school and enlarge the SEN provision too so the school becomes a hub of excellence.

Comments Against The Sir Thomas Abney Proposals

I would like Sir Thomas Abney to stay open. The council needs to do the necessary work on the building to make it more energy efficient and to help STA manage its deficit that way first before the drastic and irreversible action of closing the school.

Leave the kids where they are: where they're happy!

This decision is NOT in the best interest of the children who are the people who matter most in this decision. I do not see why the children should suffer so the people who earn the most money staff [are] unaffected.

Leave STA as it is. Sell it when year 1 goes to year 6.

Other Suggestions For How Merger Could Be Approached

Offer pupils from local schools due to close, e.g. Oldhill Street, the opportunity to merge with STA. One site. Holmleigh school should move to the STA building.

Asking established Academy Trusts (Mossbourne, Mulberry etc) if they would be interested in taking over the school

Is closing Holmleigh school and keeping Sir Thomas Abney with their staff an option? It seems to make more sense due to the size etc.

6.14 Additional Comments On The Sir Thomas Abney Proposals

At the end of the consultation, respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments about the proposal. 22% of respondents mentioned the impact on staff, whilst 13% referred to the impact on children and families. 11% dispute the use of the term ‘merger’ and 13% raise other concerns about the process. In 8% of cases, respondents refer to the impact on SEN provision and 7% mention SEN children in their comments. Whilst 8% of respondents made positive comments about Sir Thomas Abney, 6% think the council’s motive is financial and not in the best interests of children. Full details of the themes in these comments are shown in the graph below, followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics

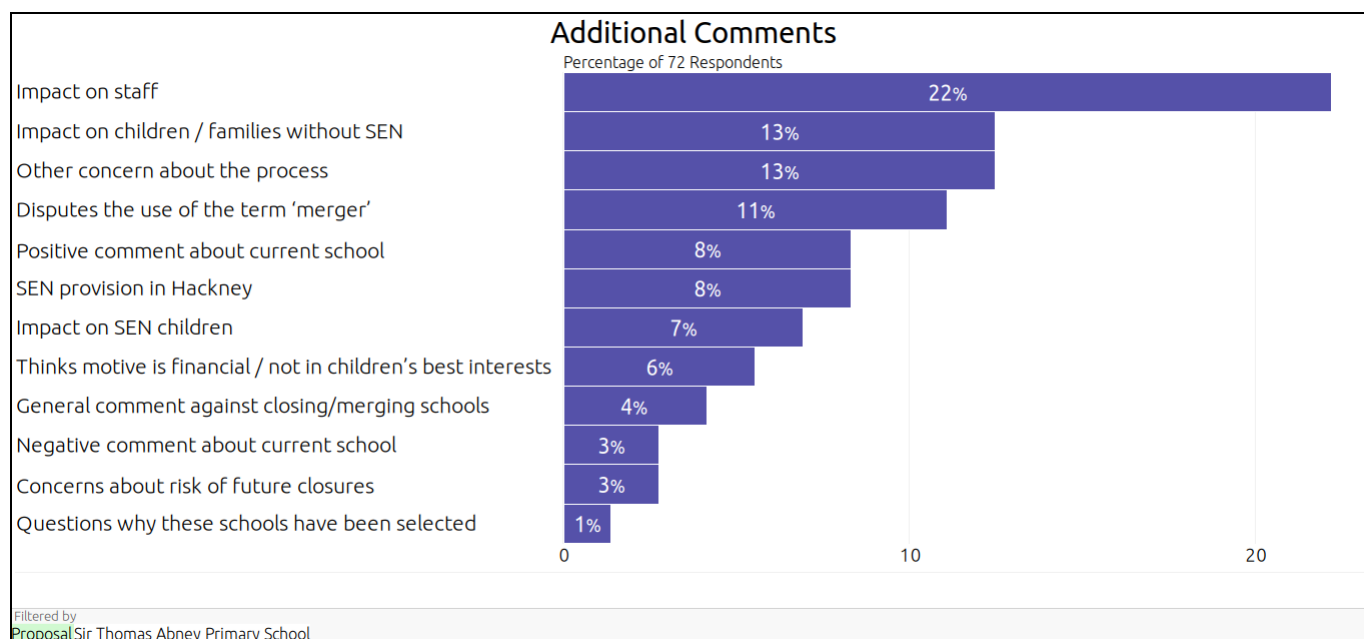


Figure 6.10

Impact On Staff

Students will be devastated when they realise that come September, because for many the reality has not hit yet because of the misleading nature of this consultation, they will no longer see the teachers who have known them for nearly their whole lives, who have supported and cared for them and provided stability and security.

I also feel that the council have treated the STA staff extremely unfairly – the borough cannot afford to lose such well qualified and experience[d] teachers and support staff. How can you ever hope to retain great teachers, school leaders and support staff when you treat them so poorly.

At initial meetings with Hackney Education, the STA governing body were told that if a merger was agreed by cabinet, staff at both schools would be offered voluntary redundancy. At subsequent meetings with Hackney Education Human Resources staff, STA staff have been told that they will be made redundant and will have to apply for jobs in the merged school however staff at Holmleigh have been told they will keep their jobs.

Impact On Children & Families

Hackney Council suggested that this decision was being made to ensure the well-being of the children would be looked after and considered, but in reality this will have a bigger impact on their well-being as it's a big change and upon return after the summer holidays 2025, they will have lost all sense of familiarity in terms of staffing and their environment.

Yes, children are resilient but it just doesn't seem fair that these are the only two options being proposed, none of which consider Sir Thomas Abney's staff or pupils.

So many parents have not actually understood what's happening to their child's education and the disruption. Personally feel we are meant to be thinking about the future of our children but doing this will not support our children.

Other Concern About The Process

As a result of the wording of this [the consultation], I am sure that very few votes to keep STA open, or pressing for a TRUE merger will be put forward. This will obviously skew the reading of the consultation, and negates the honesty of this consultation. Between last year's closures of schools and this consultation, there has been a drop in trust for families and teaching staff across the borough in Hackney Council's ability to show due care in their decisions.

Hackney's strategy for addressing falling rolls to date has been short sighted and focused on the closure of schools in deprived areas of Hackney. This seems to contradict Hackney's commitment to providing an equitable, high quality education for all pupils.

Inaccurate HR advice was presented at an initial governing body meeting and to senior leaders. Assurances that conversations with the Regional Director to discuss the third option never took place.

Disputes The Use Of The Term 'Merger'

The Council has falsely presented the situation as if there are only two options. There is a third option, which is a real, equal merger between the two schools. This option has not been given due consideration, though it is the preferred option of the UK government as expressed in Parliament. The Council has not explained why it thinks Parliament's express intentions for this kind of situation should be subverted by the ramming through of a false merger. Indeed, this very consultation is misleading (and is potentially unlawful) as it presents the closure of STA and the forced redundancy of its hardworking and skilled staff as a "merger", which it evidently is not.

To reiterate the point, it is not fair for the Council to rely on the lack of knowledge of members of the public regarding closure and merger options. Has the Council asked the Secretary of State for permission to be excepted from the presumption of academisation under the true "merger" (i.e. new school) procedure?

Positive Comment About Sir Thomas Abney

The most important part of my time at the school and the foundation of my education were the staff and teachers that worked there, many of whom are still there over a decade later. They brought, and continue to bring, so much experience and knowledge and passion that it creates an impact that no consultation paperwork or council meetings will ever truly understand.

It does NOT make sense in my view as a teacher educator to lose such a gem. I bring my students (trainee teachers) from the University to see what can be achieved in an inner city area like Hackney where space is often very limited. [...] We have something to be proud of here at Sir Thomas Abney the envy of many rural communities, DO NOT LET IT GO.

I think that the loss of STA would be a travesty. Merging the schools by closing STA is also a poorly conceived option – why would the council close a better performing school with more expertise and established resource for children across the borough with SEND and a fantastic school site – and then give it to a team that are not as successful, currently run a one form entry school and do not have comparable SEND experience.

SEN Provision In Hackney

The consultation document does not provide satisfactory information about the fate of the language resource provision. It would be a complex process to move the language resource provision, as the staff of the receiving school would need training in how to support the children's needs, and adjustments would need to be made to school procedures and policies to provide the supportive, language-rich environment the children need. The decision to close Sir Thomas Abney appears to have been taken purely on financial grounds and with no consideration of the complex and vulnerable nature of the children attending the school.

There is currently ambiguity over the timetable and process of the separate consultation for where the LRS should be placed. I would hope and expect that the SaLT team would be centrally involved in this decision, given that we have the best understanding of what a LRS needs in order to operate successfully. Not all children who attend the LRS have EHCPs, particularly if they have speech sound disorder in the absence of developmental language disorder (DLD). The process of transferring children cannot therefore be depending on reviewing EHCPs.

Impact On SEN Children

Whilst these proposals are being pushed through, there are grave concerns for the future of the SEND provision which Sir Thomas Abney have worked so hard to establish. The future of the Resourced Base hangs in the balance and the support and interventions in place for children with EHCPs. None of this has been clarified.

I really hope that the council understands the disruption it will be causing to my child. Having already moved [them] once, moving [them] again will just be detrimental due to a closure. I think it's important that Hackney Council understand the impact of this decision. Research demonstrates that remaining in the same school, offering early intervention, results in better outcomes for children.

As parents we are proud of all the staff at Sir Thomas Abney. They are like a second family to my children. There are many special children who would have a hard time accommodating or accepting such a drastic change.

Thinks Motive Is Financial

The whole process is based on financial problems that the council finds itself in. Yes, both schools have a deficit budget (the larger of the two school sites, STA, of course having the larger deficit). This is the only reason that the council are considering in closing STA without exploring better, fairer options that take into consideration the parents, children and wider community and the impact it will have on them – both now and in the future. The two options may perhaps be the easiest for the council – but they are definitely not better for the residents of this area of Hackney.

Moving forward, strategies need to be put in place to support schools struggling with crippling budgets. Closing them all down or proposing hostile takeovers is not a solution.

STA staff, parents and governors feel that this is a punitive process. It is obvious that STA is being closed purely on financial grounds.

6.15 Response From The Sir Thomas Abney Governing Body

The Sir Thomas Abney Governing Body submitted a response to the consultation, as an email attachment. The key points from this submission are detailed below, whilst the full document can be found in appendix 4.

- The governing body suggests that the process should be paused until the new government has finished reviewing its school funding and education policy, suggesting that this may include giving local authorities more say over schools, including free schools and academies. The response argues that Hackney Education has not properly explored the option of closing both Sir Thomas Abney and Holmleigh and opening a new school in the STA building.

- Reference is made to page 16 of the new Department of Education Guidance, published in October 2024, which allows local authorities to open a new maintained school when closing two existing schools. Furthermore, the Sir Thomas Abney governing body points out that the new guidance also specifies actions that must be taken by the local authority where existing provision for SEN children is being discontinued. It says local authorities must issue a statement setting out how the proposals are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for children with special educational needs. The governing body observe that they have seen no such proposal for either their Language Resource pupils or their large number of other SEND children.
- The governing body express concern about the changes in the planned approach to staffing after the merger. Initially, they were told that staff at both schools would be offered voluntary redundancy but subsequently, it has emerged that Sir Thomas Abney staff will be made redundant whilst Holmleigh staff will keep their jobs. Similarly, the governing body will have no say in either staffing or the school's ethos and direction.
- The statement concludes by noting that the process feels punitive and the decision is being made purely on financial grounds. The statement argues that both school communities should have an equal stake, whereas, with either of the two possible consultation outcomes, the Sir Thomas Abney governing body will have no substantive say in the future education of their pupils.

6.16 Sir Thomas Abney Pupil Voice

Pupils at Sir Thomas Abney were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the merger. Reviewing the comments, the most common word used is 'sad', mentioned by 10 children, with the same number making comments that showed reluctance about the changes. Some children expressed multiple emotions. A summary of the sentiments in each comment is shown below:

- Sad: 10
- Reluctant: 10
- Happy: 3
- Angry: 3
- Nervous: 1
- Positive comment about STA but nothing about change: 3
- Unclear: 3

A copy of the Sir Thomas Abney Pupil Voice can be found in appendix 4.

7. Response To The Proposal To Close St Dominic’s

At the start of the consultation period, 270 forms were given out to parents and staff at St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 71 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to close St Dominic’s.

44% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school and 17% are staff or governors at the school, whilst the remaining responses came from a range of other respondents.

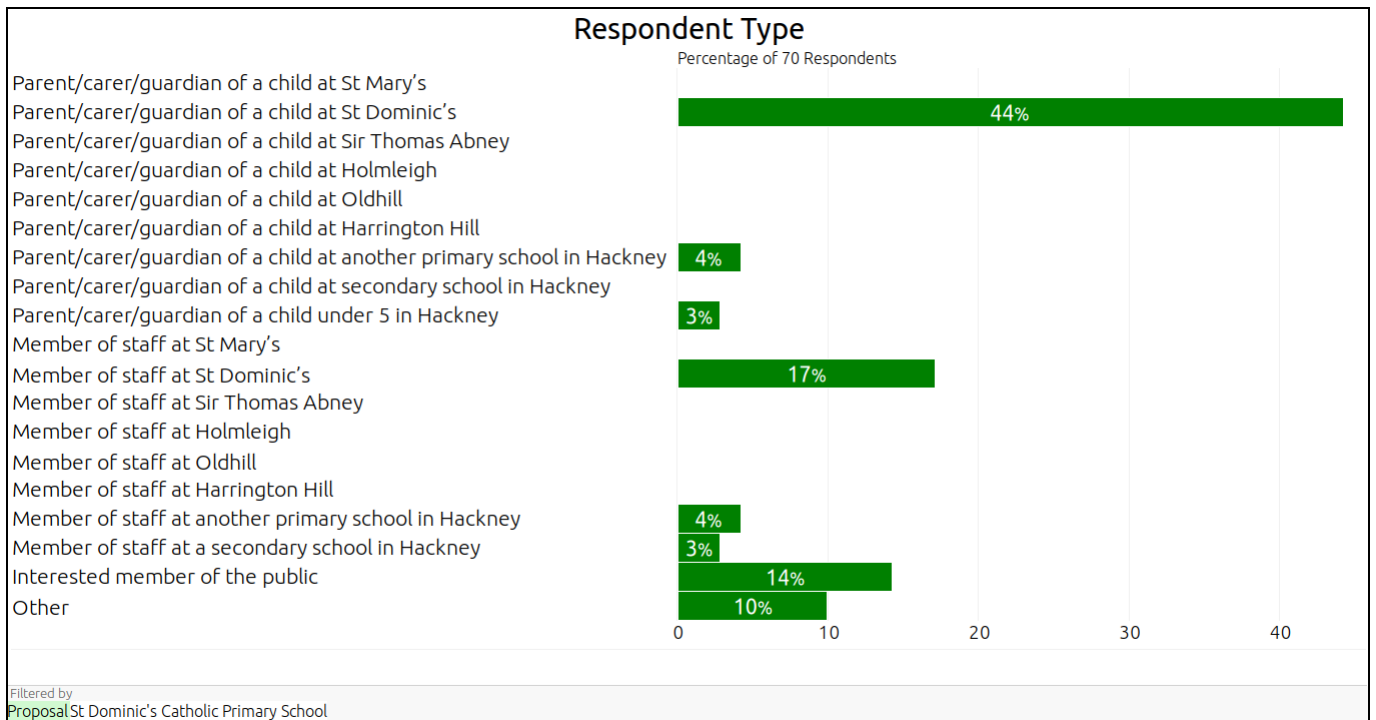


Figure 7.1

Overall, 7% of respondents are strongly in favour and 1% in favour of the proposal. In contrast, 6% are against and 84% strongly against the idea.

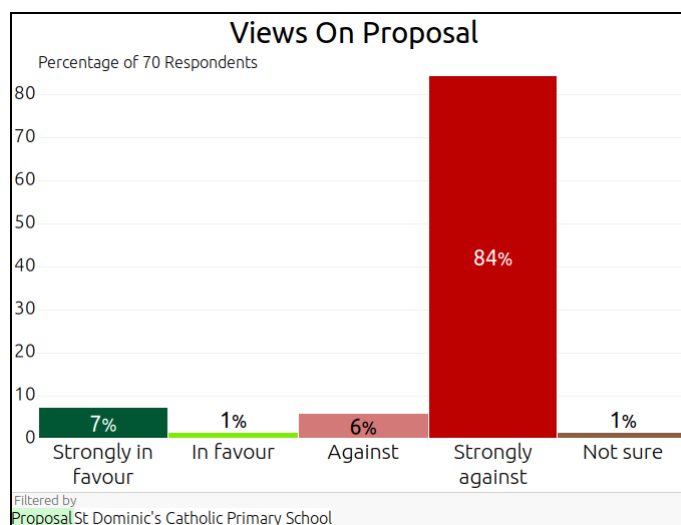


Figure 7.2

All the staff members who responded to the consultation are strongly against the proposal. The views of parents, carers and guardians are broadly in line with those of other respondents, although care must be taken interpreting these findings due to the small numbers involved.

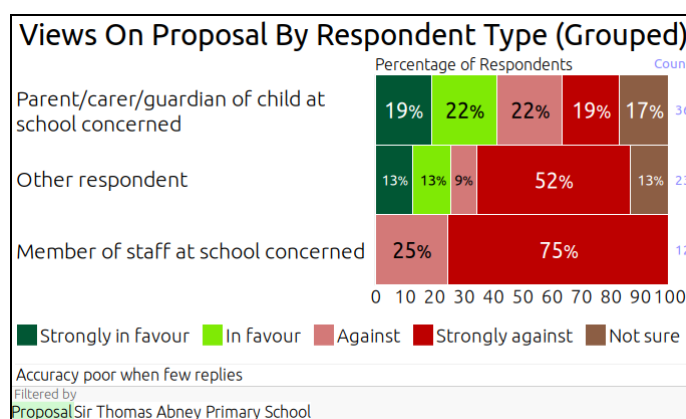


Figure 7.3

7.1 Analysis Of The Comments On The Proposal To Close St Dominic's

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; as well as providing space for additional comments.

7.2 How Proposal For St Dominic’s Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes. 63% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 14% talked about the impact on staff. 6% referred to the impact on SEN provision and 25% made comments about St Dominic’s, rather than the proposed change.

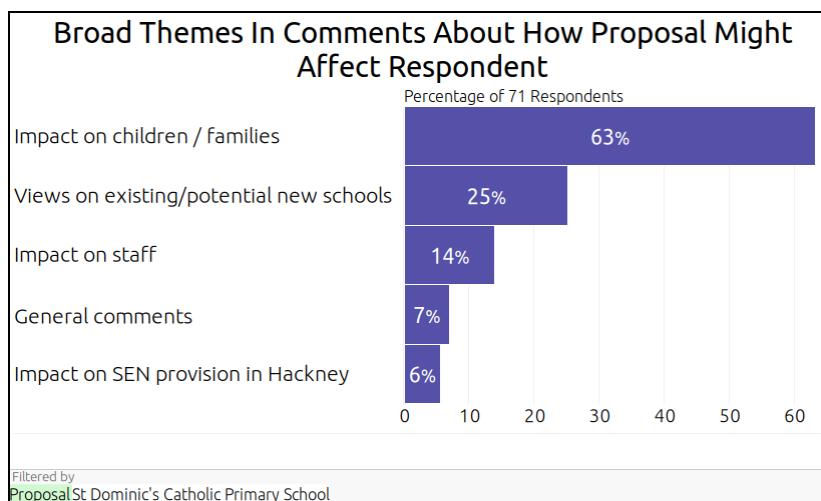


Figure 7.4

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

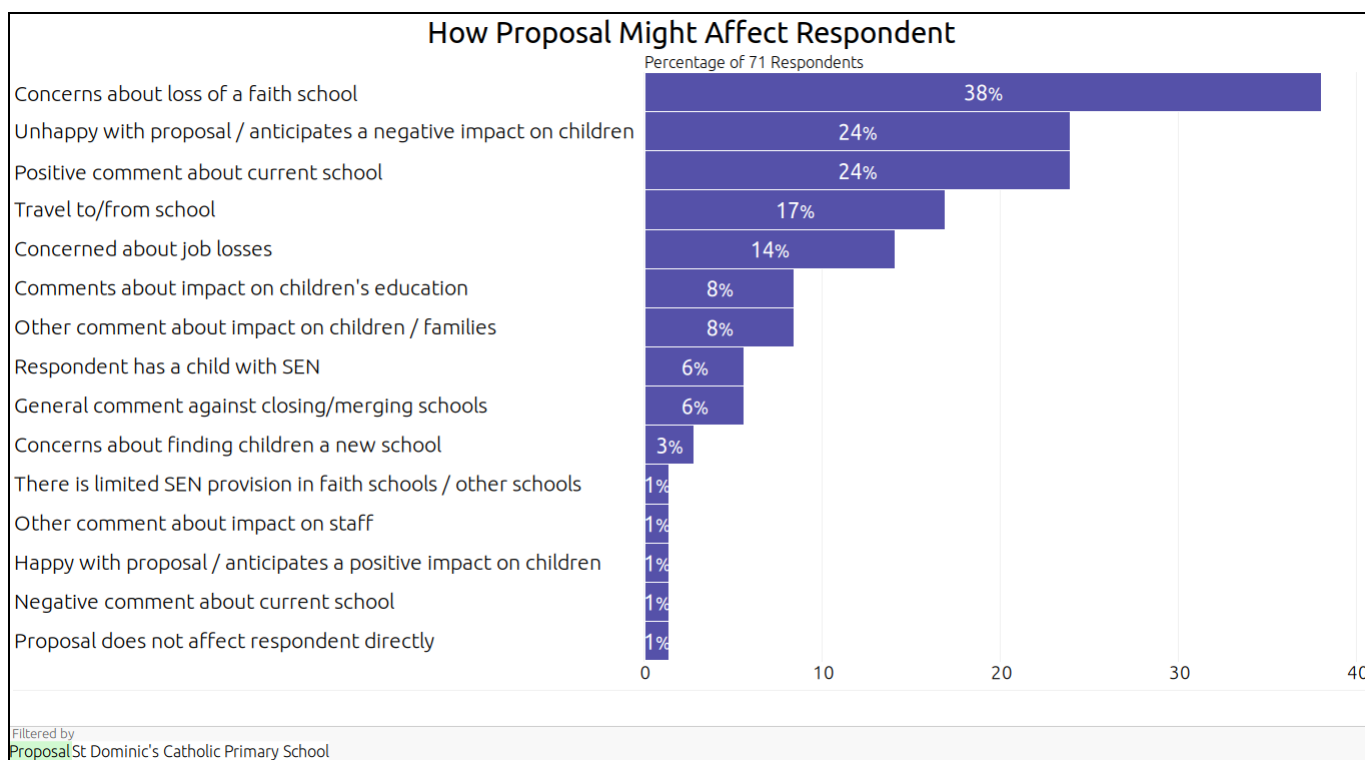


Figure 7.5

7.3 Impact Of St Dominic's Closure On Children & Families

38% of respondents are concerned about the loss of a faith school

24% are unhappy with the proposals and anticipate a negative impact on children

17% mention the impact on travel to and from school

8% are worried about the impact on children's education

8% made other comments about the impact on children and families

Many respondents express concern about the loss of a Catholic school, which is believed to be providing high quality education and received outstanding marks during a recent Catholic Ofsted, especially when the nearest alternative is 30 minutes away. Many children and families have close links to the local parish church. There are also concerns about the impact on the Traveller community, who currently trust St Dominic's with their schooling.

A selection of the feedback on these topics is shown below.

This proposal deprives Catholic children in Homerton of a Catholic education. There is no adequate alternative school. It also discriminates against children from the Traveller community whose access to education is already uncertain, and for [whom] trust in the school is an essential part of their choice. St Dominic's has this.

The proposed closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School would significantly impact my family, disrupting my [child's] education, emotional well-being, and sense of stability. St Dominic's has been more than just a school it has been a second family to us. [...] Despite not being Catholic myself, I have always felt welcome and fully included in the school community. This reflects the inclusive ethos of St Dominic's, where every family, regardless of background, is made to feel part of something special.

The school has provided high-quality Catholic education and received outstanding marks during the recent Catholic Ofsted inspection [...] The nearest Catholic school for our children to attend is too far for them, so their rights to practise their faith are being infringed upon. Every parent and staff member has a right to practice their Catholic faith, which infringes on their fundamental human rights. Many of our children and families are linked to our local parish church. By closing St Dominic's, you will affect the number of parishioners who attend the church.

The schools that have been offered [...] are up to 35 minutes away. This is not reasonable and would have a massive impact on me in terms of my travel, cost of travel and daily routines. To get there we would have to travel in high traffic areas adding a lot of time stress in the morning and afternoons. [...] I am part of a large cultural network in the school, and if the school closes, you will be breaking up that cultural network (African/Caribbean)

*To have children trek 30+ minutes *(assuming that all traffic/weather conditions are ideal) to the nearest Catholic school is unfair. It's not enough to offer places at secular schools, because a Catholic education will be lacking.*

7.4 Comments About St Dominic's

24% of respondents made positive comments about St Dominic's. Some examples of these comments are shown below.

My children love the school and the teachers as they are very good with how they teach them, they love their friends that they have made at the school, also the schools I very close to home and the kids are happy when leaving home to go to school.

St Dominic Teachers are part of my support group, as I suffer from depression and anxiety, this proposal has increased my anxiety level and I fear it will also affect my kids case we are deeply rooted here.

My [child] loves this school deeply and has already expressed that if it closes, [they do] not want to go to another school [they] would rather wait until [their] teachers move elsewhere so [they] can follow them. That says everything about the bond [they have] formed with the staff and the environment they have created.

There are many brilliant schools in Hackney; there is only one St Dominic's

The closure of our cherished school is bigger than just us. Local residents deserve to have a school they can easily walk to, one that has a strong academic record, that offers the closeness and individual attention of a one-form entry environment.

7.5 Impact Of Closing St Dominic's On Staff

14% of respondents are concerned about staff losing their jobs, with several staff saying that HR has told them there will not be many opportunities to continue working in Hackney. A selection of these comments is shown below.

As a lead teacher of some seniority at St Dominic's Primary School this closure will affect me considerably. I am [number of] years of age and have been a teacher for 16 years. As a teacher of considerable experience, I am on the upper pay school which will greatly affect my ability to obtain another job as often teachers with experience and over a certain age get overlooked in favour of ECTs because we are more costly. I live alone (I am a widow) and I cannot afford to retire early and if I have to take a lower paid job, it will affect my pension contributions and my ability to save for my retirement.

I am an experienced Teacher who has worked in Hackney for 28 years. I will struggle to find UPS/TLR/Leadership work or another teaching post in the borough; as HR said – there are few opportunities to continue working in schools in Hackney. [...] We were assured that having become a 'Soft Federation' with St Scholastica's Primary School, we would have at least two years to look at long term decisions for our school, only to be told weeks later that our school may close later this year.

HR have said that there are very few opportunities to continue working in Hackney unless it is in a MAT or Free School. I have a chronic illness, so this process is causing anxiety and brining on my flares – I will have to start all over again regarding getting reasonable adjustments for my needs.

7.6 Impact Of St Dominic's Closing On SEN Provision

6% of respondents explicitly mention having a child with SEN. Some examples of this feedback are shown below.

I have a younger [child] who is due to start nursery. Despite not having begun [their] time at St Dominic's yet, the school has already demonstrated unwavering support for [their] developmental and gross motor delays. The staff's kindness, understanding, and willingness to provide a shoulder to cry on have made an immense difference to our family during a challenging time. To think I would need to restart this process elsewhere, re-explaining [their] needs and rebuilding trust with an entirely new team, is overwhelming and deeply disheartening.

I am currently in the process of my children being assessed for having a neurodiversity which the school has been very supportive with, the simple idea of needing to change schools has been very distressing for my children so far therefore I believe they would struggle with the reality.

I am already in the difficult position of leaving a faith-based Christian school in Hackney to enrol my children in a non-faith special school out of borough due to the lack of suitable SEN provisions within a faith-based environment. This move is a significant compromise, as my family values both faith and specialised education. If St Dominic's were repurposed as a SEN placement, it would prevent other families from facing the same dilemma.

7.7 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For St Dominic’s

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposal that they felt the council should consider. Key themes in the feedback are comments about suggestions for Council action to improve enrolment and school finance, with many respondents making reference to the two year ‘Soft Federation’ with St Scholastica’s. Other options include suggestions that the school could join a Catholic Academy Trust or to be used as a specialist SEN hub. 31% of respondents made comments against the proposal, rather than suggesting alternative options. Full details are shown in the graph below followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

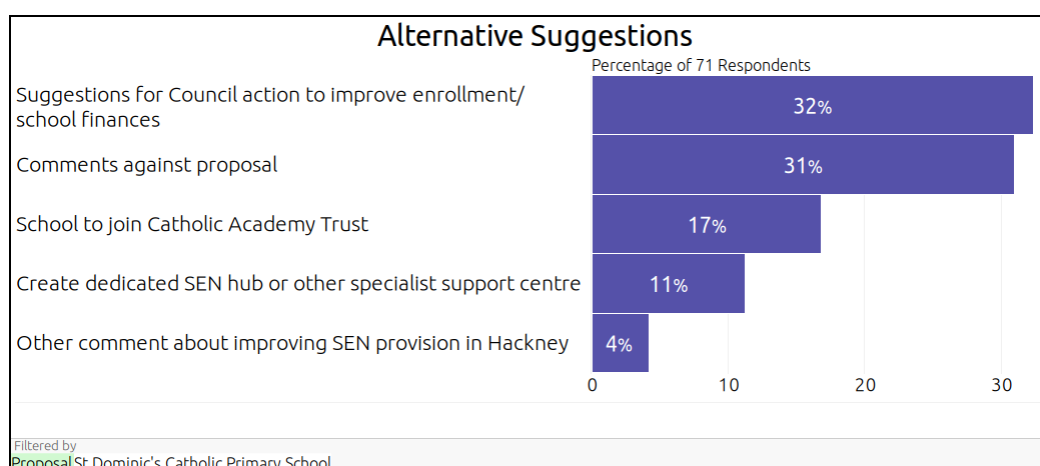


Figure 7.6

Council Action To Improve Enrollment/School Finances At St Dominic’s

The council should honour its initial agreement with the new management team to give them two years to address the school’s challenges. The leadership has already begun to make a difference, and prematurely closing the school denies them the opportunity to demonstrate long-term success.

We went to considerable efforts to obtain a 2 year provision for our school from the local authority so that we could work towards lessening our debt. We are 3/4 of the way through a PAN reduction programme, which when completed will reduce the yearly cost of the school considerably. We have an executive head who has considerably reduced our debts already and continues to do so. We have a motivated PTA who are constantly thinking of fundraising ideas.

St Dominic’s has the infants school building and the junior school building, which is annexed to the Church. Maybe the infants school building could close with students only using the junior school building.

The Government are supporting expanding early years provision, offering £150,000 School-Based Nursery Capital grants. Our school already has a perfectly good, well resourced Nursery which will be shut down along with the rest of the school. This makes absolutely no sense, educationally or financially. The ‘more free school paces for Nursery’ initiative will encourage more pupils to our school, thus addressing the falling numbers of pupils.

Comments Against Proposal To Close St Dominic's

Children love the school, closing the school will cause a lot of distress for children living in the close. [...] Families around the school do not have to rush from work or leave work to pick up children from school as sometimes we have neighbours who sometimes can pick the children up.

We have taught in 50+ primary schools, and St Dominic's is special. The improvement in the years we have been there is extraordinary. I have seen schools that struggle with falling rolls, and can't manage to support the remaining children. This is emphatically not the case with St Dominic's. Give them two years to turn it around, and they will.

St Dominic's is the only Catholic school in Homerton community. It provides support for the poor and needy who are struggling to have food on their table.

St Dominic's Could Join A Catholic Academy Trust

The council should revisit the idea of converting St Dominic's to an academy partnering with Lux Mundi allowing for additional funding and support. It is unclear how thoroughly this option was considered, and it deserves to be properly explored before resorting to closure.

I am 100% on board for the school to become part of the Lux Mundi Catholic Academy as the Diocese has offered this as an option and my two older children already attend Cardinal Pole part of this Academy.

Work with the Diocese on supporting the Academisation with the Lux Mundi Trust as this was offered to St Dominic's just last year.

Improve SEN Provision

Hackney has a SEND crisis and many children are attending privately run schools out of borough for a very steep price. Can our school become a dual-purpose setting where we accommodate SEND pupils? We do not believe the free school presumption excuse should be used [quotes from sections 10 & 11 of EIA 2006]

Currently, 200 children with EHCPs apply to The Garden School every year, with only 7 being accepted, leaving 193 children without appropriate placements. This failure to provide adequate SEN support within the borough is in direct violation of the legal duty to ensure suitable educational provision for all children with EHCPs. Closing schools like St Dominic's will exacerbate this issue, limiting access to the specialist support that these children require.

The school has an excellent reputation, evidenced by the fact that very few pupils have left since the consultation was announced. It has a good record for dealing with SEN children as referenced in its latest Ofsted report. SEN pupils without ECHP currently make up 24.3% of the school, where the national average is 13.6%; this goes up to 28% when ECHPs are added in.

7.8 Additional Comments About The Proposal To Close St Dominic’s

At the end of the consultation, respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments about the proposal. 20% of respondents made general comments against closing schools, 13% question why St Dominic’s had been selected and 18% raise other concerns about the process. Positive comments about the school are found in the feedback from 15% of respondents, whilst 13% mention the impact on children and families and 7% refer to the impact on staff.

Full details of the themes in these comments are shown in the graph below, followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics

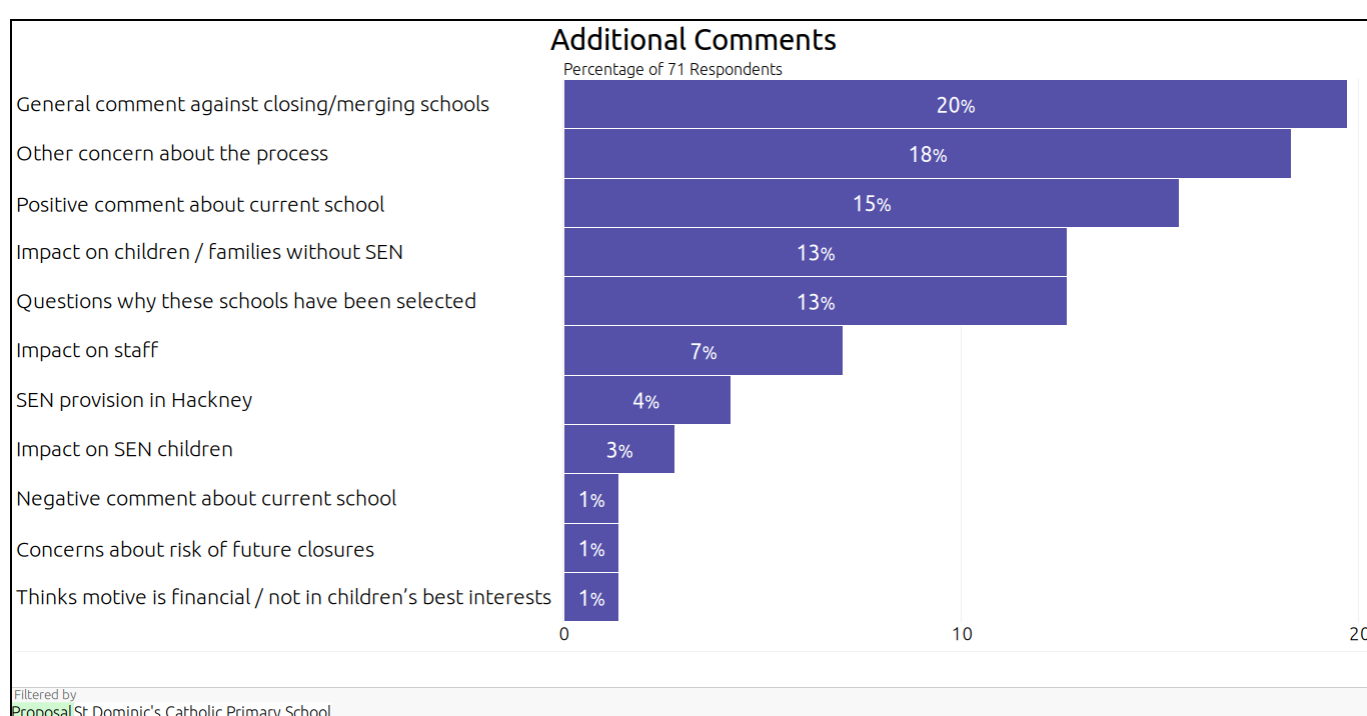


Figure 7.7

General Comments Against Closing Schools

Closing this school would break the hearts of children, families and teachers. The children and staff deserve the chance to turn things around and Hackney Council should be giving them this chance. It is clear that this Labour council are not prioritising children or education.

Schools should not be run as businesses that need to carefully watch their bottom line and avoid budget deficits. The council should spend their time lobbying the government of the day for additional funding rather than overseeing lengthy, drawn out school closures, particularly multiple at one time.

Save St Dominic’s Primary School for your community by not closing it down

Question Why St Dominic's Has Been Selected

Considering most of the schools that closed last year and most of the schools on closure lists this year are all in under resourced areas, closures will always disproportionately affect these groups (class/race/refugees etc). How can the Council be confident that they can meet their responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 / Public Sector Equality Duty

I also feel the process of shortlisting the schools has not been clear or above board when so many schools are in the same situation with a big financial deficit alongside falling rolls. St Dominic's Catholic education has a USP that cannot be found at the other local schools

This would not be happening to another faith school [it] is outrageous

Other Concern About The Process

The council keep saying this is a consultation and nothing is final but they are calling parents of children with ECHPs and helping them move on. Isn't this acting like they've already made the decision?

We have seen zero evidence of the council engaging with the local community in accessing the consultation forms. We were told these forms would get into the hands of those people. They didn't. What will happen to local businesses in the area if our school community are no longer attending.

The council's decision to push for closure feels rushed and short-sighted. By presenting flawed statistics, delaying the revised consultation, and not allowing sufficient time for improvement, the council has not given the school a fair chance. This undermines parents' confidence and disrupts children's lives unnecessarily.

Positive Feedback About St Dominic's

This school deserves to remain open. It is not about money, it is about children's lives. If you would like to come and sit in on one of our workshops to see just how important it is that the school is allowed to remain to continue we would be very happy to welcome you.

My family love St Dominic's primary school and how the school has impacted our [child]'s life emotionally and mentally.

St Dominic's deserves a fair chance as it's more than just a school. It provides a Catholic education whereby pupils, families and the community can follow their religious beliefs. With this proposal, you are significantly impacting families following their religion and teaching their children about their faith.

St Dominic's is a vital part of our community. Beyond academics, it provides a sense of belonging, stability, and moral guidance that cannot be replicated elsewhere. The staff's dedication to the children's well-being is unparalleled [and] they go above and beyond to make every family feel included and supported.

Impact Of St Dominic's Closing On Children & Families

Do not start a domino effect of pain across our community! The children will play the biggest price and [it will] most definitely cause mental stress

I feel that the council has a duty to consider the Catholic families, not least the Traveller community (a protected characteristic) who attend our school, who may well end up out of any formal education setting if you close St Dominic's

Parents like me deserve to have our choices respected. I chose St Dominic's because of its unique atmosphere, strong values, and excellent reputation. That choice was deliberate, and taking it away without exploring all viable alternatives is unfair. I urge the council to reconsider, give the new management team the time and support the need, and prioritise the well-being of the children and families who depend on this school.

Impact Of Closing St Dominic's On Staff

I feel there has been little transparency and have lost faith in Hackney Local Authority. Hackney needs a better redeployment scheme and support for workers, families and children – a helpline is not cutting it. Although the council has said this is just a consultation and no final decisions have been made why are parents getting phone calls offering alternate school places?

There should have been more contact with staff and parents regarding the possibility of closure, the news has come as a complete shock to all concerned and the consultation period is extremely short. Has the Secretary for Education been petitioned to help solve the school closures process? The attitude with which staff and parents have been spoken to regarding the proposal to close has come across as unprofessional – questions are regularly not answered. We still have many questions to be answered.

7.9 Submission From The St Dominic's Governing Body

The Governing Body of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School believes that the decision to consider the school for closure should be withdrawn. The key points from its submission are detailed below. The full document and its appendices can be found in appendix 5.

- The governing body says it is not aware of a detailed Equality Impact Assessment having been undertaken to understand the impact on vulnerable children.
- 47% of children who attend St Dominic's are from Catholic families. Closing the school would only leave three Catholic primary schools in Hackney, the nearest of which is 30 minutes away. The latest inspection by Westminster Diocese, in May 2022, found that the Catholic life of the school was outstanding. A copy of the Section 48 inspection report has been provided and is included in appendix 5.
- The governing body is also particularly concerned about the impact of the proposed closure on the Irish Traveller families who attend the school. These families trust St Dominic's and

the governing body argues that the expertise the school offers in meeting these children's educational needs will not be easily transferred to new school(s). The statement suggests that the proposal for closure substantially disadvantages St Dominic's Irish Travellers and contends that this is an unlawful interference with their rights under Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (right to non-discrimination) as well as Article 1 of Protocol 2 (the right to education).

- A restructure of the school leadership team and 'soft partnership' with St Scholastica's, due to last for two years, was signed off by the council in June 2024 with a view to it beginning in September. However, one week into the new school year, the council announced its proposals to close the school. The governing body argues that the proposal should be paused to give the new partnership a chance to establish and effect changes to bring about further savings. A copy of the partnership agreement is also included in appendix 5.
- Evidence of the academic standards at St Dominic's was also provided, including the 2023/24 attainment data (see appendix 5). The governing body notes that the last Ofsted inspection, in March 2023, found that St Dominic's continues to be a good school. A full copy of the Ofsted report is also provided in appendix 5.

7.10 St Dominic's Pupil Voice

Pupils at St Dominic's were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the school closing. Reviewing the comments, the most common word used is 'sad', mentioned by 23 children, with 16 making comments that they do not want the school to close. Some children expressed multiple emotions. A summary of the sentiments in each comment is shown below:

- Sad: 23
- Do not want school to close: 16
- Angry: 3
- Positive comment about St Dominic's but nothing about the closure: 2
- Happy: 1

A copy of the St Dominic's Pupil Voice can be found in appendix 5.

8. Proposal To Close St Mary’s Church Of England Primary School

At the start of the consultation period, 100 forms were given out to parents and staff at St Mary’s Church of England Primary School although replies were also accepted from wider stakeholders and interested parties. In total, 38 responses were received to the consultation on the proposal to close St Mary’s.

14% of respondents are a parent, carer or guardian of a child at the school and 22% are staff or governors at the school, whilst the remaining responses came from a range of other respondents.

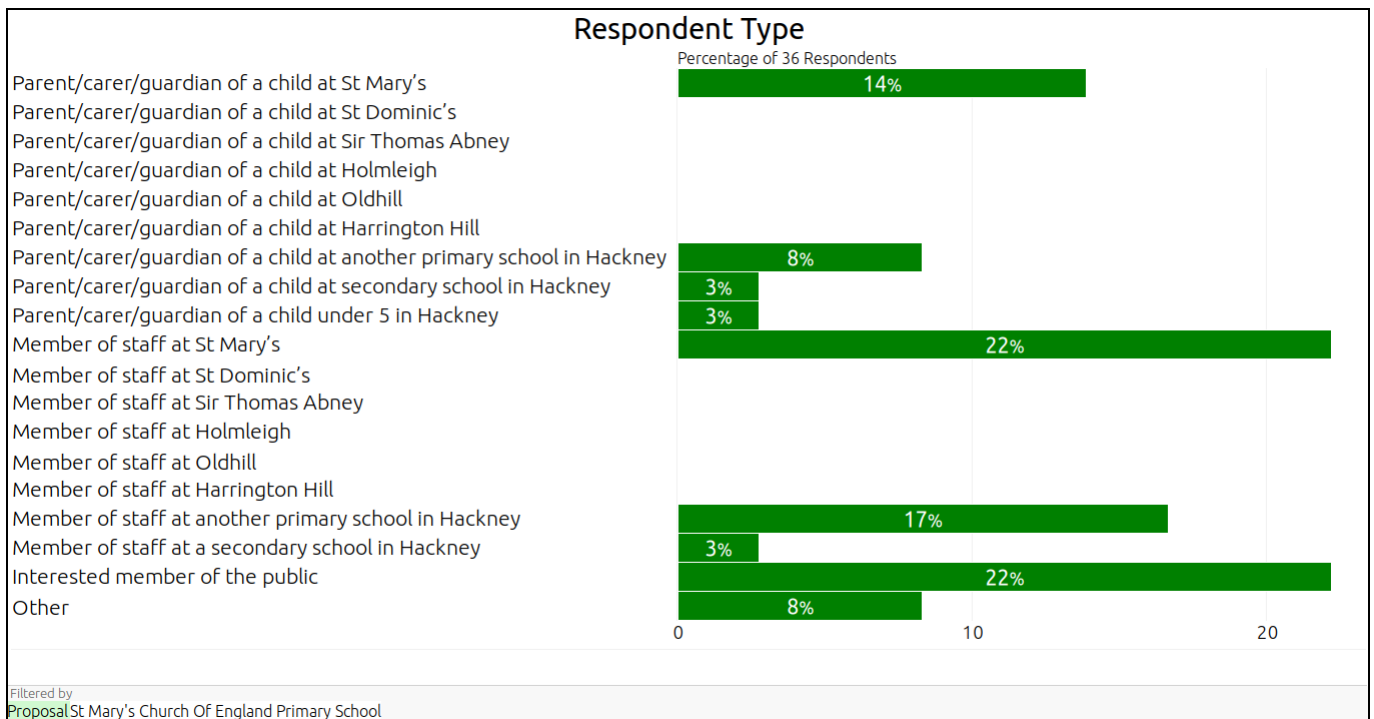


Figure 8.1

Overall, 0% of respondents are strongly in favour and 14% in favour of the proposal. In contrast, 6% are against and 69% strongly against the idea.

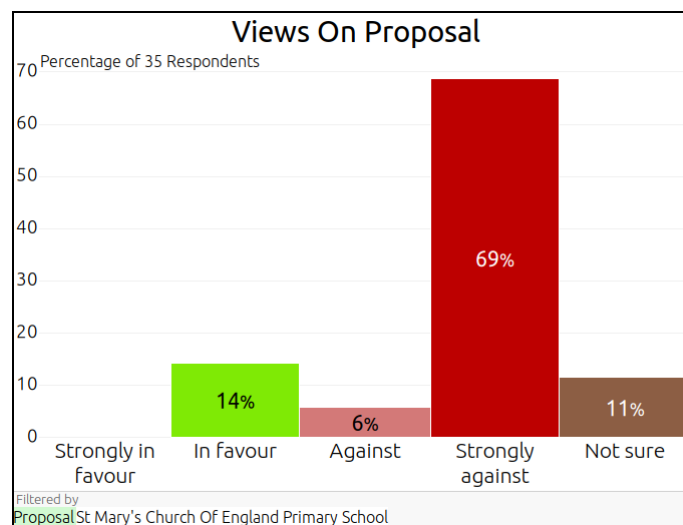


Figure 8.2

There were too few responses from parents, carers or guardians of children at St Mary’s to compare their views with those of other respondents.

8.1 Analysis Of The Comments On The Proposal To Close St Mary’s

The consultation included qualitative questions asking respondents to comment on how the proposal might affect them; any alternative suggestions they had; as well as providing space for additional comments.

8.2 How Proposal For St Mary’s Might Affect Respondent

The feedback received to the question about how the proposal might affect the respondent has been classified into a number of broad themes. 32% of respondents made comments about the impact on children and families, whilst 24% talked about the impact on staff. 8% referred to the impact on SEN provision.

Perhaps reflecting the number of respondents who are not either staff or parents/guardians of pupils at the school, 24% made general comments against school closures and 13% made comments about St Mary’s, rather than the proposed closure.

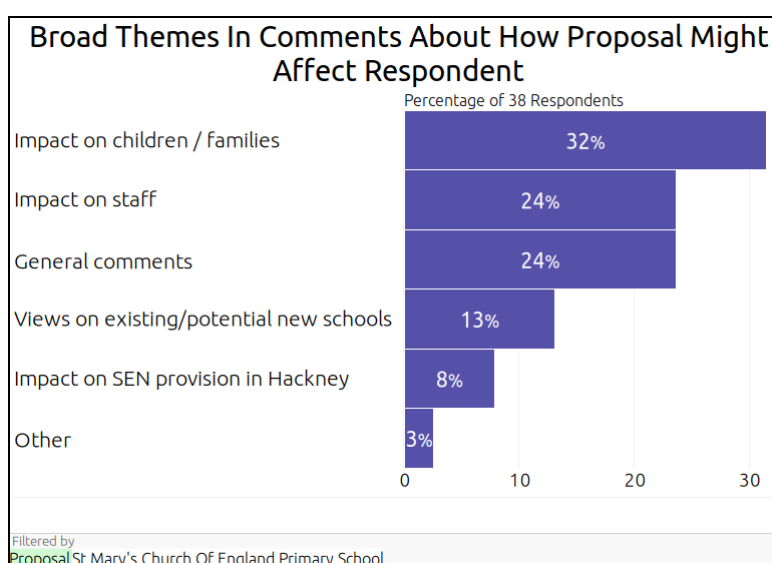


Figure 8.3

The qualitative feedback was further analysed to identify more specific themes, which are shown in the graph below and discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

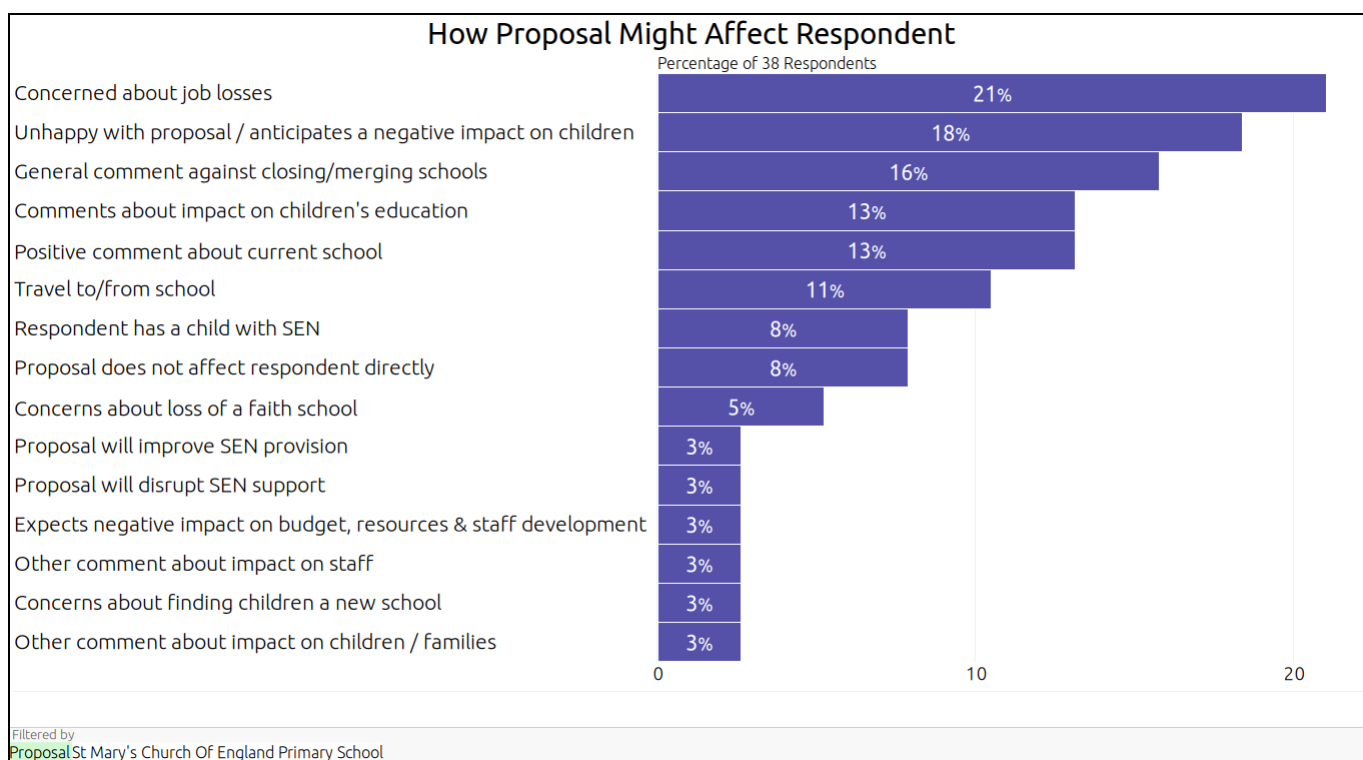


Figure 8.4

8.3 Impact Of St Mary's Closing On Children & Families

18% of respondents are unhappy with the proposals and anticipate a negative impact on children

13% are worried about the impact on children's education

11% mention the impact on travel to and from school

5% of respondents are concerned about the loss of a faith school

3% in each case express concern about finding children a new school or made other comments about the impact on children and families

A selection of these comments is shown below.

I would be put into a position where I have to settle my child back into school after [they have] just begun to gain confidence and come out of [their] shell in a smaller scholarship setting, with no guarantee that the next school I choose will not be shut down in the nearer future. I would be forced to make longer journeys with my child to the closest similar school at greater cost to me.

This proposal impacts me as my [grandchild] is a pupil at that school and I am closely involved with [their] school activities including taking [them] to and bringing [them] back from school. Since [they] became aware of the proposal [they have] been a different personality, poor appetite, very withdrawn, not wanting to talk or hear about the subject.

You will disrupt the lives and education of many children who will be broken hearted by this closure, as well as negatively impacting the lives of parents and teachers connected to the school.

Schools are a community hub. When the school closes, the community loses a place to gather. Schools make connections and get support from other parents and staff inside and outside of the school setting.

8.4 Impact Of St Mary's Closing On Staff

21% of respondents are concerned about staff job losses

3% in each case mention a negative impact on school budgets/professional development or make another comment about the impact on staff

A selection of this feedback is shown below.

I will lose my job but also in other schools in Hackney they know that they have to cut their budget, otherwise they might be the next school to close. Therefore, they are cutting important subjects. Like Spanish, PE, art, music, which allow children to shine and learn.

The closure of St Mary's Primary will deeply impact my job security, leaving me in an uncertain and vulnerable position. The competitive nature of finding a new teaching role is likely to bring added stress and anxiety, potentially affecting my overall wellbeing.

Students within schools closing will be distributed across Hackney and put into already overflowing schools at capacity which will effect me as a teacher in one of these schools.

8.5 General Comments Against School Closures

16% of respondents made general comments against merging schools.

8% acknowledged that the proposal does not affect them directly

Examples of these comments are shown below.

Impact on the local community – loss of one of the borough's oldest schools that also supports a vulnerable and low income demographic – may risk sending a message to Hackney that these communities and families are not welcome.

I don't think schools in Hackney should close. This unfortunately sets or continues a precedent that the solution to falling rolls and terrible government funding decisions is to simply close the affected schools rather than treat underlying causes and wider societal or demographic issues.

This is unlikely to affect me, although I know families who have had children at St Marys and also families who have children there now.

8.6 Positive Comments About St Mary's

13% of respondents made positive comments about St Mary's and a selection of these is shown below.

I know St Mary's to be a school that has and instills strong values and ethos within children. Should this proposal go ahead a strong and historic part of our community will be vanished.

We have a friendly, welcoming school including parents/carers that support one another in and out of school including outside school activities. I truly believe the small class sizes have enabled my children to get the most out of the support our wonderful staff provide.

Our school experienced transformations in 2023 which has been presented to us as something positive and beneficial for pupils but now the same arguments are being used negatively as the reason for school closure, in particular regarding merged classes. As parents, we feel that merged classes are great. This is a positive change.

8.7 Impact On SEN Provision

8% of respondents explicitly mention having a child with SEN.

3% in each case think the proposals will improve SEN provision, whilst 3% think they will disrupt it.

Examples of this feedback are shown below.

My [child] has an autism diagnosis and only now [have they] started making progress, settled down in the school, made friends, and joined friendship groups in the school. It took a long time to get to this point and any additional change to the current situation is going to cause [them] emotional stress and guarantee the reverse of the progress [they have] made.

The proposal would positively impact my family by providing much-needed local SEN placements, eliminating the need for costly and stressful out-of-borough applications. Repurposing existing buildings for SEN provisions would offer a faster and more affordable solution than building new facilities, allowing my children to receive the support they need within our community.

8.8 Alternative Suggestions Or Options For St Mary’s

Respondents to the consultation were asked if they had any alternative suggestions to the proposal that they felt the council should consider. Key themes in the feedback are comments about suggestions for Council action to improve enrolment and school finance or that school could be used as a specialist SEN hub. 11% of respondents made comments against the proposal, rather than suggesting alternative options.

Full details are shown in the graph below followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics.

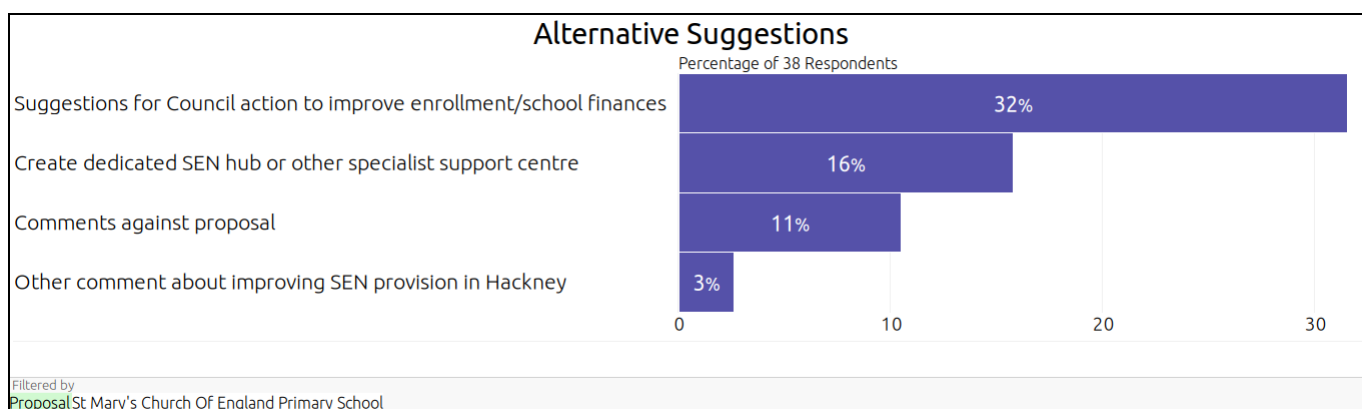


Figure 8.5

Suggestions For Council Action To Improve Enrollment/Finances At St Mary’s

I believe our school should now and should always have had extra support from outside sources i.e. our school being helped with providing extra funding sources, more after school associations as child care after school hours can be a reason parents have decided to move schools.

If there is so much emphasis on encouraging our students to enrol at St Matthias, why is this not being approached as an official merger, where St Mary’s staff could be offered roles to ensure continuity and preserve our community?

St Mary’s CoE School has just taken the bold step of sourcing their Nursery to a private enterprise with [the] aim of some financial benefits and long-term source of older class pupils. I believe such a brave enterprise should be encouraged and supported by the Council to maturity rather than swept under the carpet.

Creation Of Dedicated SEN Hub At St Mary's

As a smaller school St Mary's could be an idea setting for children with SEND who are not high [enough] support needs to meet eligibility for SEN schools. Smaller class sizes and a low arousal environment is often ideal for children with SEND to thrive in their educational environment.

St Mary's is in an excellent place to develop SEN provision. It is a small school with a small footprint, located [next to] a traffic-controlled road. Setting up or expanding alternative provision or SEN specialism here would not only be a great use of the space and unique location but also bring funding back in-house rather than it being sent to private schools or out-of-borough.

Comments Against Proposal

Close other schools if necessary but this is the oldest one in Hackney in a perfect place and should be left alone.

Smaller class sizes are good for children. Keep it as a small school.

Smaller classes and smaller schools are excellent for the educational progress of children [...] Once a school is closed it is lost for ever. Therefore I strongly recommend it is kept open

8.9 Additional Comments About St Mary's

At the end of the consultation, respondents had the opportunity to make additional comments about the proposal. 5% of respondents question why St Mary's had been selected and 21% raise other concerns about the process. 11% in each case talked about SEN provision in Hackney or made general comments against closing schools. Positive comments about the school are found in the feedback from 8% of respondents, whilst 5% mention the impact on children and families.

Full details of the themes in these comments are shown in the graph below, followed by a selection of comments on each of the key topics

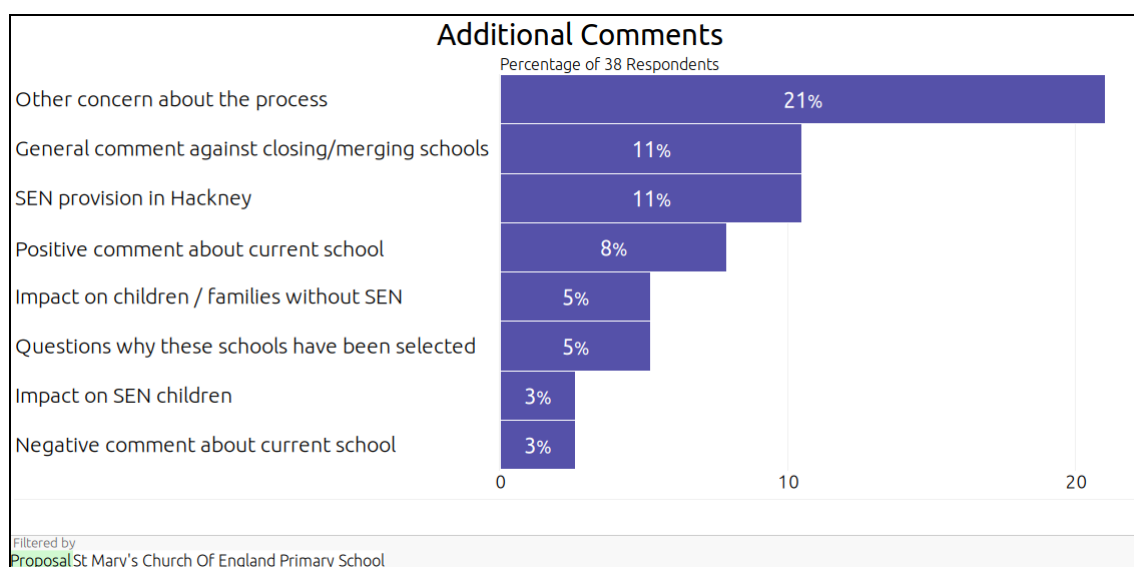


Figure 8.6

Questions Why St Mary's Has Been Selected For Closure

St Mary's CoE School has been judged to be a Good School with Outstanding Pupil character [...] The conceptual view that pupils from lower rung[s] of the ladder families are being targeted by the Council in their current proposal is taking hold.

We have a large number of black children, mixed race children, refugees, and children from families that are underprivileged. It feels that we are being targeted because we don't fit the new gentrified look of Stoke Newington. It feels that equality that the council is so proudly advocating on their social media is not applying to us. We were told that as a school we would better fit demographics of a school in Dalston. How is that not a demographic cleansing?

Other Concern About The Process

I think it's clear that Hackney wanted this school gone – nothing has been [done] to try and save it or get more children in.

I think it's incredibly irresponsible and negligent of the council to not make it explicitly clear in the overview section of the document about the relationship between gentrification in the Borough and education. This is being fuelled by unsustainable local council policies in London, particularly in Hackney, and the discriminatory impacts and consequences that come along with such policies.

The council's failure to thoroughly explore alternative solutions before deciding to close schools reflects a disappointing lack of foresight and consideration for the long-term impact on communities.

Impact On SEN Provision

Given the vulnerability of SEN pupils, it is essential that the closure of St Mary's does not negatively impact their education, well-being or access to support. The Council must take proactive steps to consult with SEN families ensure adequate provisions in alternative schools, and provide transitional support. Without this, the closure risks exacerbating the existing challenges SEN pupils face, undermining their right to a fair and equitable education.

Allowing some schools to host a smaller number of pupils per class can allow a mid way approach that can help those children not high support needs enough to be in specialised schools and not "high functioning" enough for a typical mainstream.

General Comments Against Closing Schools

Primary school closures have very negative effects.

The decision to close the schools will have a far reaching effect in the community and possibly encourage more people with young families to move away. The reasons behind the closure are complicated and myriad but I want to advocate for tackling those reasons instead of closing schools.

Positive Comments About St Mary's

St Mary's, being a small school, is better positioned to offer more individualised attention to pupils with SEN. Smaller class sizes and a close-knit community enable teachers and support staff to build stronger relationships with students, offering more personalised support.

Shutting a 'good' school with small class sizes to fill already large classes seems counterproductive for the future of our children's education.

Impact Of Closing St Mary's On Children & Families

I think the whole school community is extremely sad about the proposed closure of St Mary's as we serve the most deprived and vulnerable families in our community. Sadly, I believe gentrification of the areas has played a large part in our falling roll as affluent families who live in the areas do not want to attend a church school with high pupil premium and deprivation.

These school closures are damaging to both the near and distant future of our children's education.

8.10 St Mary's Pupil Voice

Pupils at St Mary's were asked to submit their thoughts and feelings about the school closing. Reviewing the comments, the most common word used is 'sad', mentioned by 19 children, followed by nervous (14). A summary of how the children feel about the school closing at the end of the year are shown below.:

- Sad: 19
- Nervous or scared: 17 (14+3)
- Angry: 8
- Happy or excited: 6 (5+1)
- Mixed emotions: 1

The pupils were also asked how they feel about going to another school. Here, the most common word was 'nervous' (18 children) followed by excited (13). A summary of how children feel about going to a new school is shown below:

- Nervous or scared: 22 (18+4)
- Excited: 13
- Sad: 10
- Happy: 6

A copy of the St Mary's pupil voice can be found in appendix 6.

9. Submissions From Organisations With Proposals For One Of The Potentially Vacant Sites

Children Ahead, a local Charedi SEND organisation, responded to two of the consultations because they wish to submit a proposal to use one of the potentially vacant school sites in Stamford Hill (Holmleigh, Oldhill, Sir Thomas Abney), with a preference for Holmleigh due to its location.

Children Ahead works with all 23 local Charedi schools to provide support for children with mild to moderate SEND needs but their premises are currently at risk.

The organisation responded twice to the Oldhill consultation and once to Holmleigh. In each case, they answered 'not sure' in response to the question about the proposal itself.

Another respondent to the Holmleigh consultation also has a suggestion for another organisation that would be interested in the potentially vacant school site:

Misgav is an organisation for learning-disabled adult women in the community. It is currently struggling to find premises so that the day-service can run seamlessly. Having central premises like the Holmleigh Road school building in the centre of Stamford Hill would allow our service users to be integrated well into the community because they would be able to transition from their local jobs and their courses and support at the day centre. Misgav would be strongly interested in renting/buying the building should the school merge with another one.

This respondent described themselves as “an interested member of the public” and responded ‘strongly in favour’ to the question about the proposal itself.

10. Demographic Profile Of Respondents

Postcode Areas Of Respondents

Responses were received from postcodes across the borough and further afield.

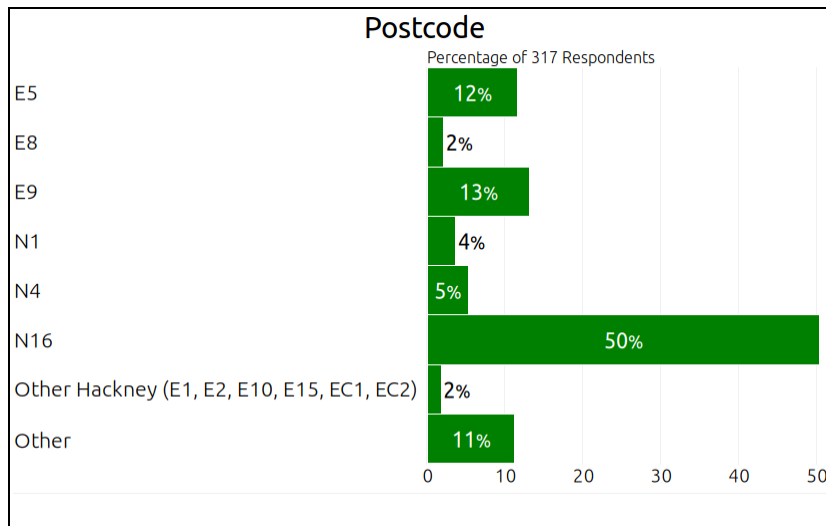


Figure 10.1

Gender Of Respondents

69% of respondents are female and 25% are male.

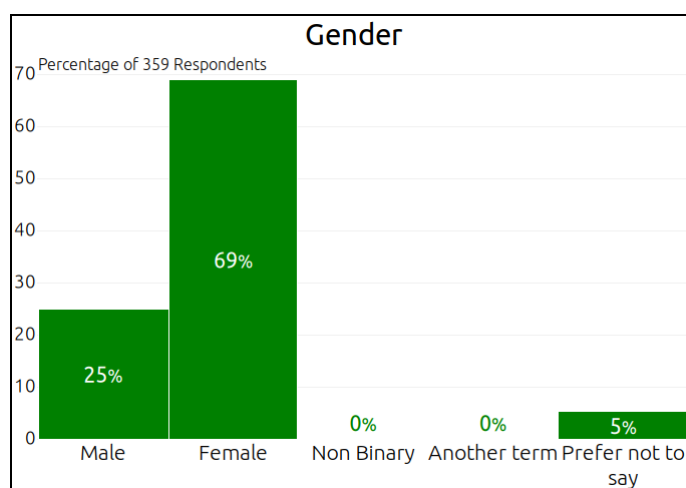


Figure 10.2

Age Profile Of Respondents

Responses were received from a broad cross section of age groups.

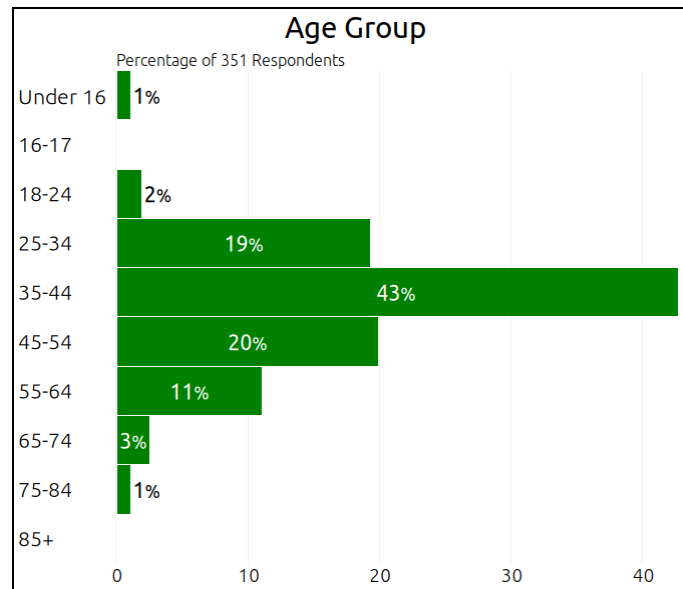


Figure 10.3

Disability

9% of respondents have a disability and 18% have caring responsibilities.

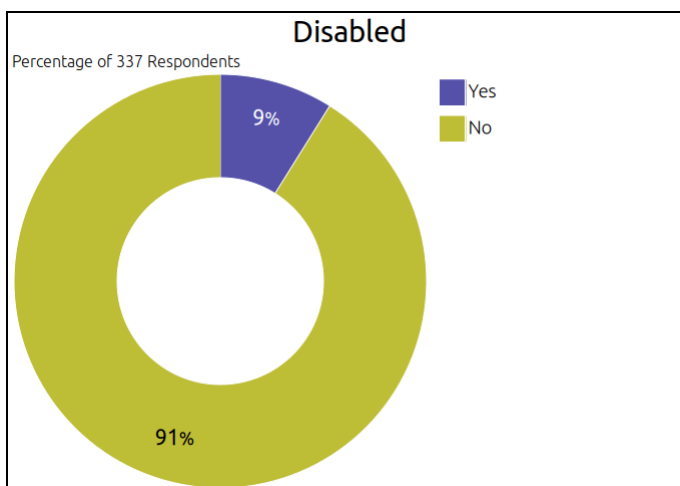


Figure 10.4

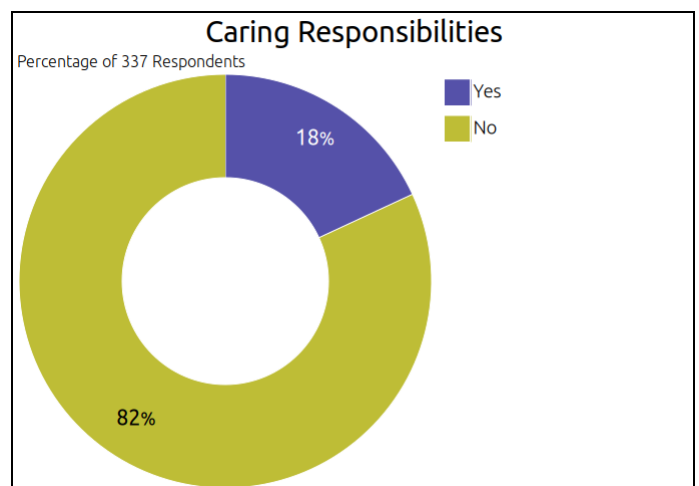


Figure 10.5

Ethnicity Of Respondents

Half of respondents are White, 20% are Black and 7% are Asian. 17% of respondents describe themselves as being from another ethnic group and 6% say they are from a mixed background.

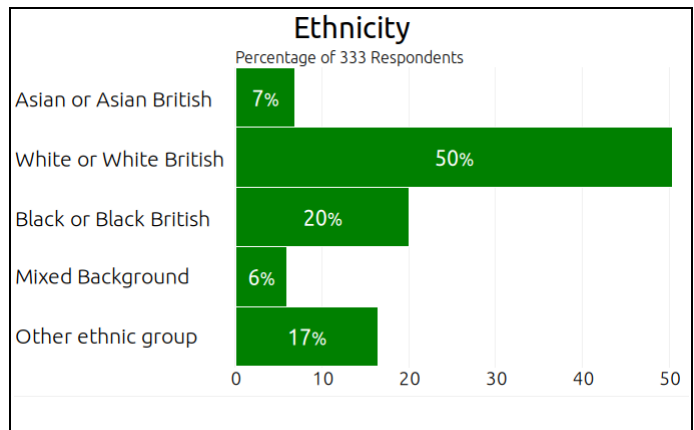


Figure 10.6

Religion Of Respondents

29% of respondents describe themselves as being atheist/having no religious belief.

45% of respondents are Christian and 16% Muslim, with smaller proportions following other religions.

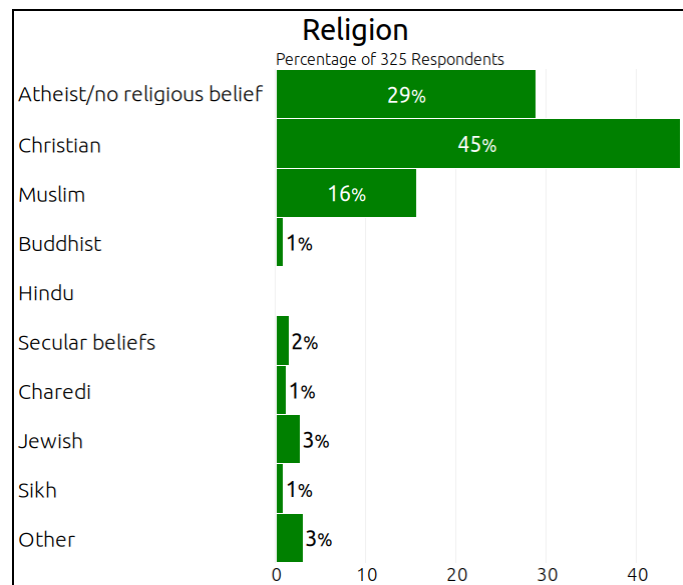


Figure 10.7

Sexual Orientation Of Respondents

15% of respondents reported that they prefer not to answer the question about sexual orientation. 81% say they are heterosexual, whilst 2% are bisexual. 1% in each case describe themselves as a gay man, lesbian or gay woman.

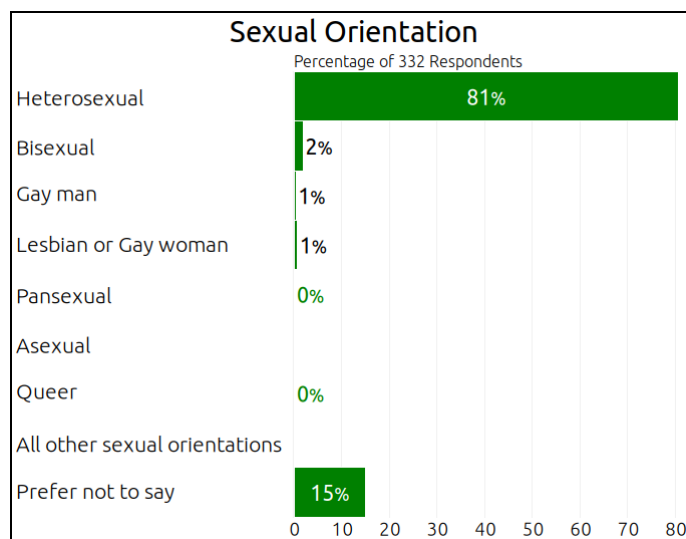


Figure 10.8

Housing Tenure Of Respondents

26% of respondents rent from the council and 21% from a housing association, while a further 24% rent privately.

9% of respondents own their home outright, whilst 12% have a mortgage. 5% are in a shared ownership property.

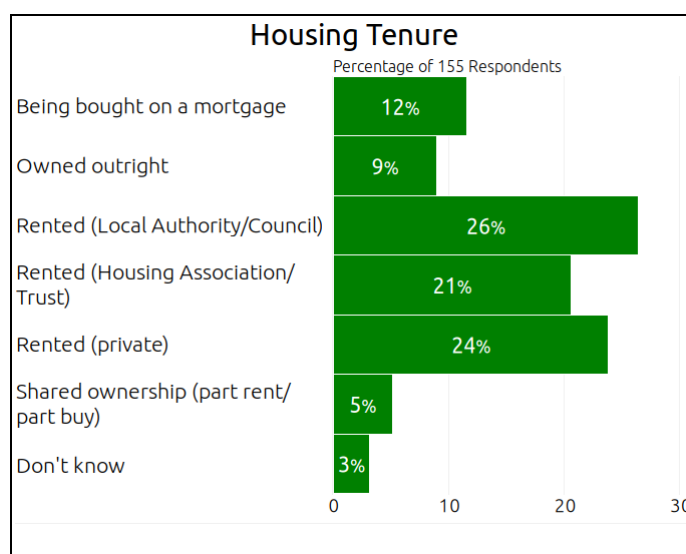


Figure 10.9

Appendix 1 – Harrington Hill

Copy of Questionnaire

Response from the Governing Body of Harrington Hill

Harrington Hill Pupil Voice

Proposal for Harrington Hill Primary School

Overview

Hackney Council is consulting on a proposal to expand Harrington Hill Primary School to two forms of entry (2 classes per year group). This proposal is linked to another one to close Oldhill Community School on 31 August 2025. The two proposals together would mean that the schools can be merged. All pupils at Oldhill would be offered a place at the expanded Harrington Hill school. Harrington Hill would remain on its current site.

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Please read the proposal document for [Harrington Hill Primary School](#) <user_uploads/consultation---harrington-hill-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools, including the proposal linked to this consultation on the future of Oldhill Community School. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link: [Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools](#) </communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Proposal for Harrington Hill Primary School

Expand Harrington Hill Primary School from one to two forms of entry and merge the school with Oldhill Community School.

Consultation on the expansion of Harrington Hill Primary School from one to two forms of entry, and the amalgamation of the student body (merger) of Harrington Hill Primary School with Oldhill Community School on the site of Harrington Hill

Overview

We are consulting you about a proposal to expand Harrington Hill Primary School to two forms of entry (2 classes per year group). This proposal is linked to another one to close Oldhill Community School on 31 August 2025. The two proposals together would mean that the schools can be merged. All pupils at Oldhill would be offered a

3 How do you feel about this proposal on page 2 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this proposal affect or impact you?

5 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

6 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

7 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

8 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

10 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

11 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

12 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
- White or White British
- Black or Black British
- Mixed background
- Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

13 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
- Christian
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Secular beliefs
- Charedi
- Jewish
- Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

14 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know

I am writing to you on behalf of the Governing Body of Harrington Hill in response to Hackney Council's consultation on the proposed expansion of Harrington Hill and the merger of the student body of Harrington Hill and Oldhill. After careful consideration of the proposals, we would like to share our views and concerns.

Educational Impact

The educational wellbeing of our students is our foremost priority, we therefore welcome the stated goal of this proposal to create a stronger school system where every child has access to a broad and enriched educational experience. We recognise the potential benefits of a school having admission numbers as close to its Planned Admission Number (PAN) as possible and thereby maximise the funding it receives, however we are concerned about the immediate and long-term impact of the merger on student outcomes. In particular:

Disruption to students: A merger of this scale could cause significant disruption to Harrington Hill's existing pupils as well as those who will be moving over from Oldhill, particularly those in receipt of additional teaching support. Both sets of pupils - as well as staff and parents / carers - will be navigating a busier and noisier school environment on a daily basis. We note that the separate consultation on the future of Oldhill School, when specifically addressing the question of what it would mean for a child to be part of a larger school (Page 5 of the Oldhill consultation) stresses the desire to hear the children's voices in the options being considered. We are not sure why this particular sentiment wasn't included in the Harrington Hill consultation (though acknowledge that the school has since been contacted directly to provide this) and would urge the Council to provide more detail on how they intend to mitigate these risks and engage with both sets of pupils to ensure a smooth transition for all pupils that will be attending an expanded Harrington Hill from September 2025.

Alternative Resource Provision (ARP): The consultation confirms that the ARP currently located at Oldhill will close if the school closes but suggests moving it to Harrington Hill so that the children who currently attend it could move over with it. We understand that there will be a separate consultation about the ARP, however we are certain that the Council shares our concern in ensuring that there is no interruption to the service that the ARP provides and that the children attending it will be able to start the new school year in September 2025 in the same manner that they have started previous school years. We therefore urge the Council to move forward with its consultation on the ARP as soon as possible and, when doing so, to provide a clear timeline for the transition of this service alongside clear funding proposals so that we can be confident of avoiding any interruptions in its provision.

Community and Identity

Harrington Hill serves as a key asset to a community that faces various socio-economic challenges. The staff and facilities at Harrington Hill provides, on a daily basis, a crucial support system for families and children both in terms of education but also stability, meals and extracurricular activities that might otherwise be inaccessible.

We are therefore encouraged by the stated goal of the proposals to create a stronger school system where every child has access to a broad and enriched educational system. We would urge the Council to consider the full scale of the impacts of the proposals on the entirety of the school community, especially in terms of pupils with compound disadvantages such as

our SEND pupils. We must ensure that pupils and their families who are already vulnerable are not put at further disadvantage by these proposals or the transition period. With regards to the Council's longer-term strategy, we would like reassurances that every effort will be made to protect and support the Harrington Hill community from further threats of school closure.

Staffing and Wellbeing

The merger raises significant concerns about the impact on staff roles, workload and morale. We would hope to see more detailed assurances (including detail on additional funding) on how any potential negative impacts on staff will be avoided, and how professional development opportunities will be provided for current staff from both schools to ensure integration going forward.

The vital support that Harrington Hill provides to its community is only possible because staff at the school are dedicated professionals who are integral to driving our pupils forward. It is vital that they feel supported and valued during this process, and that clear communication is maintained throughout the transition period. The transition will undoubtedly see our staff experience a period of significantly increased work and pressure. Clear planning, support and communication will be vital to minimise the adverse effects of such a period.

Financial Considerations

We acknowledge the financial pressures faced by the Council and recognise that this proposal is partly driven by the need for financial sustainability. However, we seek more clarity on the long-term financial sustainability of the merged school. Specifically:

- Has the Council identified the risks that resulted in Oldhill School developing a large financial deficit and is it confident that these risks are not merely being transferred to an expanded Harrington Hill School?
- Whilst the consultation confirms that the Council will assess the Harrington Hill site to identify any adaptations required to suit the expanded school, we would welcome further details as to how such adaptations will be funded particularly for any works that will be required to transfer and accommodate the ARP at the Harrington Hill site (and on that particular issue we would reiterate the point made above as to the need to ensure that such works are completed and the ARP is fully operational before the new school year starts in September 2025);
- Whilst the school has been advised of additional funding to support transition to an expanded school, no further details have been provided nor when funds will be released;
- The consultation addresses the Children's Centre at Oldhill, confirming that it will remain at its existing site albeit under the management of Harrington Hill, another school or the Council. We would urge the Council to confirm its preferred approach and proposed timeline for this as soon as possible so that Harrington Hill is fully aware of its commitments from September 2025 in good time and can plan its resources accordingly.

The Governing Body of Harrington Hill is committed to working constructively with the Council to ensure that the best interests of our students, staff, and community are protected. We remain open to further discussions and consultations on this matter. If, as a result of the consultation, the merger was to take place; we would work in the best interests of both school communities.

Thank you for considering our response. We look forward to your reply.



Pupil Voice November 2024

Consultation Proposal – amalgamation of Oldhill with HH

How do you feel about welcoming children from Oldhill to join us at Harrington Hill?

- Happy – making new friends
- Excited using the space around the school creatively
- Scared it will be busy and noisy
- It will be crowded
- Unsure - There could be more accidents in the playground
- Former Oldhill pupil: "I'm excited I will see my friends again!"
- Happy because they will bring along new games and ideas for us to take over
- I feel shy because there will be new faces in the school
- I'm feeling happy to meet them and play new games with new children. I'm bored of playing Kingball all the time
- If I was here next year, I would've felt confident because I'm in Year 6 so I would've become a role model to them
- I feel confident and I'll show respect
- I feel confident having new people join us but I also feel nervous for the same reason
- I feel anxious and worried
- Good because we're being nice and kind and welcoming more people.
- Also good because, more friendship opportunities (xxx said same).
- Good because we can build a bigger community.
- A bit nervous to meet new people and see new faces. Especially if there are a lot of people at school.
- I feel good about this as I have more friends to play with.
- I will feel confident as I have met a lot of the children from there.
- I don't feel excited but scared as they will be lots of people and not much room.
- I feel happy as the past year lots of children have left so it is an opportunity to make new friends.
- I feel unhappy as the school will be crowded.
- happy because my xxx will have more friends
- my xxx has a friend at Oldhill so it will be nice for xxx
- it could be good for the school to improve the resources
- If I was still going to be at HH then I would be really happy because there would be more people to be at school with
- happy for my xxx who can make more friends

Do you have any worries or concerns?

- The classrooms and lunch hall will feel crowded and lack of space
- Whole school assemblies will feel very busy and not enough space
- I don't know if I will make any new friends
- They might not have the same rules and values as our school
- The playground will feel busier and that might lead to more accidents
- Yes because at Oldhill they might be doing things differently to us
- Their school rules might be slightly different to ours so they might start playing football in the playground
- I feel worried because somebody new might join HH and start bullying me

- When we met Oldhill last week, their Year 5 and 6s were in blazers. When they join us they might not like the change.
- They will be feeling worried, nervous, anxious, sad, disappointed, confused and even scared. Some of them already met us but most of them don't know anyone here so they might not feel confident.
- What happens if there is a lot of people joining and we might get mixed up into a different class (mixed with the new children and maybe separated from original class)?
- If loads of people join, will there be enough space in the playground? Are we going to have separate breaks/playtimes
- Will the lunch hall be big enough?
- I'm worried about if people start fighting in the playground because when I used to go to Oldhill, there used to be fighting in the playground and people would grab each other's necks.
- Will the current art room etc be used as classroom and where will our art room be?
- I am concerned about new children starting the school.
- I am feeling overwhelmed because I do not want to make new friends.
- I am worried as there will be new children.
- I feel worried as I will not know what to say to the new children.
- it could be a bad idea because the playground will be too busy and children
- What if there are bullies at Oldhill that join the school
- How will we all fit in this building?
- How will we all share the playground equipment
- How will we all fit in the hall for concerts etc?
- We feel that it might all be a bit overcrowded
- I am worried about having to remove the Art Room and the Music room

How do you think the children at Oldhill might be feeling at this moment in time?

- Sad because they have to leave their school and teachers
- Excited because they will be making new friends
- Worried – new school, new equipment, new faces
- Anxious about making new friends over at HH
- They might feel sad about their teachers losing their jobs
- I think they might be feeling nervous because they're meeting other children.
- Worried because they may not know where to go, like which classes.
- Happy because some of their old teachers and TA's may be coming to our school and sad to separate from some of their friends.
- Scared to be coming to a new school.
- I think they will be happy as they will make new friends.
- I think they will be feeling nervous and some might be happy to make new friends.
- I think they will be feeling nervous and happy as all schools are different.
- I think they might be scared and worry about bullies
- sad because they are moving school and they have to say goodbye to their teachers
- sad about missing the memories they had at Oldhill
- scared and nervous about meeting so many new people at the new school
- hard to adjust with the new journey to school
- emotional about seeing new school
- but happy to be moving with their friends
- Maybe angry

HH can:

- Be welcoming

- Be kind when they come and ensure they join in both in class and in the playground
- Continue being mature and disciplined. If we stay in a strict structure and routine, they will find it easier to adjust to us

Oldhill can:

- Come to us with confidence
- Approach us respectfully
- Visit us throughout this academic year in their year groups and have school tours and meet the children/staff members
- Meet Wilma the worry monster and write any worries they have whilst they visit us

If the merger goes ahead, what things can we do to make it a smooth transition for the children at both schools?

- Improve our playground and create more space
- We will need more equipment – basketballs
- We can be extra friendly and respectful when they arrive – set up buddies for them
- Help them with their learning in class
- Share equipment and resources with them
- Have an open day for parents to visit us
- Invite them to our annual summer fayre
- Staff at HH to prepare and organise everything, ready for them to join us in September to ensure a smooth transition
- One year group at a time to visit HH us and have a school tour
- To be nice and compliment them
- School council can make posters about good suggestions.
- We can show the children around the school.
- We can have supportive buddies to help them.
- meetings with them
- more playground resources

Appendix 2 – Holmleigh

Copy of Questionnaire

Holmleigh Governors' Collective Statement

Holmleigh Pupil Voice

Proposal for Holmleigh Primary School

Overview

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

Please read the proposal document for [Holmleigh Primary School](#) <user_uploads/consultation---holmleigh-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools, including the proposal linked to this consultation on the future of Sir Thomas Abney. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link: [Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools](#) <communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Proposal for Holmleigh Primary School

Proposal to expand Holmleigh Primary School from one to two forms of entry and merge the school with Sir Thomas Abney Primary School.

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

Overview

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

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law

3 How do you feel about this proposal on page 2 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this proposal affect or impact you?

5 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

6 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

7 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

8 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

10 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

11 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No

12 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
- White or White British
- Black or Black British
- Mixed background
- Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

13 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
- Christian
- Muslim
- Buddhist
- Hindu
- Secular beliefs
- Charedi
- Jewish
- Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

14 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know

Collective Statement from the Holmleigh School Governing Body Regarding the Consultation for the Proposed Merger of Holmleigh with Sir Thomas Abney School

As the governing body of Holmleigh School, our primary responsibility is the safeguarding, wellbeing, and long-term financial sustainability of the school, its pupils, staff, and the wider community of parents and caregivers. In this statement, we aim to present a balanced perspective on the consultation process, outlining our concerns and gaps in information that currently prevent us from endorsing Hackney Education's proposal to merge Holmleigh with Sir Thomas Abney.

We acknowledge the efforts of Hackney Education representatives to engage with governors and address our queries. However, the majority of our questions (detailed in Appendix A) remain unanswered to a degree that is robust enough for making an informed decision in the best interest of Holmleigh.

We have outlined our key concerns across the five areas under which we are considering the proposals for the merged schools: i) financial feasibility; ii) educational impact; iii) premises; iv) staff wellbeing; and v) governance and implementation. We have consolidated our concerns in detail below, however in summary:

Financial Viability:

- Holmleigh has a viable deficit recovery plan projecting a surplus within two years, with strong demand for places (204 pupils currently enrolled and a sustainable target of 193).
- The proposed merger raises concerns about higher operational costs for the larger Sir Thomas Abney site, which could become unsustainable if pupil numbers drop.
- Currently financial modeling shared by Hackney Education requires further detail for the governing body to have confidence on the long-term viability of the merged sites.
- The possibility of a three-year repayable loan has been proposed by Hackney to support the school merger initially, but this is a short period of time and there is no clarity on how repayment will be made or future sustainability.

Education and Wellbeing

- Holmleigh's strengths, including its single-form entry, tailored SEND support, and strong home-school relationships, must not be compromised.
- Risks to pupil outcomes, staff cohesion, and the quality of provision have not been sufficiently addressed in the proposed plans.

Premises

- The closure of Holmleigh risks adding to Hackney's portfolio of costly mothballed sites, despite recent investments of over £1.3M in decarbonization and roof renewal.

- Community assets such as the Schoolkeeper’s House and Edible Playground, critical for pupil wellbeing, would be lost. External grants and investments have been made in this site, which will be lost.
- No condition survey, site visit, or clear refurbishment timeline for Sir Thomas Abney has been provided, leaving significant uncertainties about the feasibility and cost of relocation, ongoing operational costs, pending building repairs etc

Staff and wellbeing

- The proposed merger raises concerns about the well-being of staff, many of whom have dedicated over 15 years to Holmleigh, fostering strong personal and professional connections within the school community. Need for adequate support to be provided if the merger was to proceed

Governance and Collaboration

- There has been a lack of meaningful engagement between Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney staff and governors, hindering discussions on critical issues such as leadership, staffing, and community impact.

The Holmleigh governing board remains committed to maintaining a dialogue with Hackney Council on the proposals. However, we would like to see all of our points below clarified to ensure that sufficient information is provided to support a well-informed decision on whether to proceed with the merger.

Signed,
The Governors of Holmleigh School

i) Financial Viability

Holmleigh Governors understand the context that has led to school closures in Hackney and are aware of the projected fall in pupil numbers in Hackney and beyond. The per-pupil funding challenges that left an increasing number of schools – especially one-form entry schools – facing deficits, have been difficult to manage in an era of insufficient funding for education from the central government.

At Holmleigh, we have previously worked with the Local Authority and SRMA consultants to produce a deficit plan (which has included three restructures) that has remained viable and projects a surplus over the next two years, following surpluses in the previous two academic years, in line with the LEA’s timescales.

As a governing body, we understand that the biggest risk to achieving this deficit reduction plan remains the projected fall in pupil numbers within the Hackney area. However, Holmleigh has remained close to capacity every year to date, with 30 places filled in Reception this academic year following 82 applications. Current enrolment is just 6 under

capacity at 204, and if this number is maintained, the school could clear its deficit within two years. After undertaking financial modeling, we believe Holmleigh could achieve and retain a surplus even with a realistic fall in enrolment (8%), and we are confident we can continue to operate as a financially viable school should the merger with Sir Thomas Abney not proceed. Holmleigh's governing board is confident that the school is well placed to remain financially stable as a single-entry school, especially given its excellent reputation and popularity, and the significant number of nearby school closures.

The Holmleigh Governors acknowledge the potential financial benefits of moving to a larger school, which could lead to higher investment per pupil for their education. However, the financial modeling shared by Hackney Education currently lacks sufficient detail and clarity to make an informed financial decision regarding the merger, particularly in demonstrating the long-term viability of the merged sites and providing adequate scenarios for expected future enrolments. Based on our initial analysis, there are several areas requiring further validation, including:

- **School Enrollment Projections:** The assumptions behind the projected pupil enrolment and funding are unclear. For instance, if all students from both schools remain at the new combined school, it will still be 35 students below capacity in its first year. This projection does not take into account the possibility of enrolment declines, as some parents may choose other educational options due to the merger. Moreover, with Hackney's pupil numbers expected to drop by 9% over the next five years, we lack clarity on the future enrolment in the combined school. This uncertainty poses a significant risk, particularly for a two-form entry school, as a decrease in student numbers could impact its sustainability.
- **Running Cost Assumptions:** We currently do not have a clear view of Sir Thomas Abney's running costs and, therefore, cannot conduct a detailed review of the realistic costs associated with combining the schools, especially at below capacity.
- **Funding Gaps:** We are aware of the possibility of a three-year repayable loan to support the school merger initially. However, this is a short time frame, and there is no clarity on how repayment will be made or on the long-term sustainability of the combined school.

Given these uncertainties, we ask to continue working with Hackney Council to ensure that a more detailed financial model is developed to give a realistic and fair view of the expected financial position of the combined school. There is a real risk that Holmleigh's financial position could worsen as a result of the merger, and we would appreciate greater transparency

ii) Education and Pupil Welfare

After speaking with current Holmleigh pupils and parents, the governors have expressed both concerns and a need for careful consideration regarding the potential merger's impact on Holmleigh's educational outcomes and its unique strengths. Holmleigh, currently rated

Outstanding by Ofsted, has achieved this status through sustained investment in high-quality teaching programs across key areas such as reading, writing, phonics, and maths. Over decades, the school has fostered a strong, distinctive culture centered on whole-child education, wrap-around support, and close home-school relationships. Its small, single-form entry structure has allowed for tailored SEND provision and a nurturing environment that benefits students both academically and personally.

Governors are concerned about the impact of the proposed merger on pupil wellbeing, as many parents chose Holmleigh not only for its single-form entry size but also for the particular benefits this structure enables for SEND students and the wider pupil body. We are particularly concerned about the impact on Holmleigh's more vulnerable pupils due to the disruption caused by the proposed merger. However, the proposed merger could also present opportunities to pool resources and combine expertise, which could create new opportunities for both schools, broadening the curriculum and enhancing access to facilities and extracurricular activities.

We recognize that a successful transition will depend on how well the merger is planned and implemented, with a clear focus on minimizing disruption and safeguarding the strengths of both schools. The success of the merger will also hinge on ensuring sufficient support for SEND pupils. Without clear plans to mitigate these risks, the benefits of the merger may not outweigh its potential challenges.

If the merger proceeds, governors would like to ensure that resources are allocated to support the transition and minimize disruption to pupils during this critical time in their educational journeys. Specific areas that should be addressed include:

- **Educational Continuity:** A detailed plan for preserving Holmleigh's high standards in teaching and tailored SEND support.
- **Cultural Integration:** Efforts to retain Holmleigh's ethos of wrap-around education, small-group focus, and strong home-school relationships.
- **Student Wellbeing:** Support for students transitioning to a new environment, including emotional and academic resources, and plans to minimize disruption, especially for vulnerable learners.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Ongoing consultation with staff, parents, governors, and the wider community throughout the merger process.
- **Monitoring and Accountability:** Establishment of measurable outcomes to track the merger's impact on educational quality and student wellbeing.

iii) Premises

The Governors have identified several risks associated with the proposed closure of Holmleigh, which they believe need careful consideration. These risks relate to investments already made at Holmleigh, uncertainties surrounding the costs of operating and upgrading Sir Thomas Abney, and the anticipated expenses of the move.

Holmleigh has recently received over £1.3 million in public investment, including funding for the decarbonization of its heating system and a complete renewal of the roof insulation and covering. These investments have significantly enhanced the school's infrastructure, making it more energy-efficient and sustainable. Closing the school could undermine the value of these investments, as they would no longer be utilized for their intended purpose. Furthermore, Holmleigh could be added to Hackney's portfolio of closed school sites, which incur estimated ongoing costs of approximately £250,000 annually for maintenance and security. This represents a risk of financial inefficiency, as public funds would effectively be spent maintaining a site that is no longer in use.

We also do not have a clear understanding of the costs associated with managing Sir Thomas Abney's premises or the required upgrades to accommodate two-form entry. The lack of a condition survey and a site visit means we have limited information on the current state of the premises and potential structural issues that could require repairs. Without Holmleigh governors having a clear picture of these costs, there is a risk that the financial burden of upgrading Sir Thomas Abney could be higher than anticipated.

The proposed relocation to Sir Thomas Abney introduces further risks. Relocation involves physical costs, such as moving staff and students, as well as adapting the site for a larger school. We would like to ensure a full cost assessment of the proposed move is undertaken and that these costs are considered as part of the business case for the merger.

iv) Staff and Wellbeing

The proposed merger raises concerns about the well-being of staff, many of whom have dedicated over 15 years to Holmleigh, fostering strong personal and professional connections within the school community. These longstanding relationships are central to the school's stability and culture, and the disruption of such ties could have a profound emotional impact. Staff have already faced significant challenges in recent years, including multiple restructures, leadership changes, and extensive building works that required them to work through the summer. These experiences have placed considerable strain on their mental health and resilience.

The additional pressures of a merger risk compounding this stress. Staff are likely to face increased workloads as they adapt to a larger school setting, new systems, and unfamiliar processes, all while supporting students and families through the transition. The uncertainty surrounding roles, leadership structures, and job security could further heighten anxiety, particularly given the lack of guarantees about staffing arrangements in the new school. Without clear measures to support staff through this period, morale could deteriorate, leading to potential retention issues and long-term impacts on the effectiveness of the merged school.

Ensuring staff well-being during this process is essential, as their ability to manage their own stress directly affects their capacity to support students and maintain a positive school

environment. To address these challenges, it is critical to provide clear communication, involve staff in decision-making, and implement comprehensive support systems, such as counseling services and structured opportunities for dialogue and feedback. By prioritizing staff well-being, the borough can help mitigate the risks associated with the merger and lay the foundation for a successful transition.

v) Governance and Implementation

Without meaningful engagement between Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney staff and governors presents a significant risk to both the governance and implementation of the proposed merger. Effective governance during such a transition requires transparent and collaborative planning to ensure that all parties are aligned and that decisions reflect the unique needs and circumstances of both schools.

In terms of implementation, the proposed timeline for completing the merger by September 1st, 2025, is increasingly at risk of being unachievable. Given the significant work required – relocating staff and students, preparing the new site, integrating curricula, and ensuring that all regulatory and operational requirements are met – it is possible that the timeline may need to be adjusted. Delays in preparation or unforeseen challenges in the setup process could further extend the timeline, putting additional pressure on the schools involved. A rushed or ill-planned implementation could have negative consequences on educational quality, staff morale, and community trust, particularly if key elements of the merger process are not adequately addressed in advance.

Additionally, the need to meet such an ambitious timeline could put staff under significant stress. There is a risk that staff may feel compelled to dedicate time over their summer holidays to ensure that everything is in place for the start of the new term. This added pressure could contribute to burnout and lower morale, which would negatively affect the overall transition. Given the emotional and logistical demands of the merger, it is important to consider the potential impact on staff wellbeing. The Governors are concerned that the lack of a realistic timeline and the absence of clear, adequate support could exacerbate existing stress levels, leading to disengagement or dissatisfaction among staff.

To mitigate these risks if the merger were to proceed, the Governors would like to ensure that more detailed and thoughtful planning is provided. This should include more regular communication and consultation with both schools' leadership teams and staff to address concerns early and ensure alignment on key issues. The timeline should be reviewed to allow for a more manageable transition period, and the risks associated with staff wellbeing should be taken into account, with adequate support structures put in place, as well as ensuring dedicated and funded project management support is provided. Without addressing these risks, the merger could inadvertently create more disruption, impacting both the operational success of the schools and the wellbeing of staff and students.

The lack of robust data, clear financial planning, and comprehensive risk assessments leaves us unable to support the merger at this stage. Whilst we can see that there are potential benefits to the proposed merger, like larger facilities, specialist SEN support, more children being able to benefit from Holmleigh's exceptional leadership and teaching staff, as it stands these do not outweigh the fact that there is currently insufficient evidence that it is a feasible, viable, or sustainable solution for either school.

We urge Hackney Education to address these deficiencies and engage transparently with all stakeholders to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils, staff, and the community - and to take responsibility for a robust feasibility study including detailed financial planning.

We remain committed to further dialogue and consultation to explore solutions that truly serve the interests of both schools, and the wider community.

Yours sincerely,

The Governing Body of Holmleigh School

Holmleigh Governors - Open Questions for Hackney Council

Are there criteria set by Hackney council for when deciding when a school should be considered for closure? If there is, can you share.

The situation regarding falling pupil rolls and surplus primary school places is kept under constant review. The council in consultation with key stakeholders, including headteachers, governors and diocese representatives, has developed a set of objective criteria for the purpose of a comprehensive analysis of all Hackney Primary Schools. That criteria is summarised in [here](#).

Following this analysis, if schools are identified for consideration, meetings will take place between council officers and the schools' leadership to present the initial review findings and gather information to further inform the review process. This information is then considered alongside a range of additional factors in order to formulate proposals. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Alternative school options within statutory walking distance;
- Potential merger options (pupils to all move to the same school);
- Level of disadvantage amongst the school community;
- Number of nearby schools with availability to host children;
- Geographic spread of provision in the borough;
- Geographic spread of families attending school;
- Community cohesion and impact

Under what conditions would the merger not take place?

Results from the current informal consultation (8 October-19 November) will be considered by the Hackney Council Cabinet. The Cabinet will then make a decision on whether or not to publish a statutory notice for a merger of Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney primary schools.

Do you have a localized view of future primary pupil numbers i.e in the Stamford Hill area?

School roll projections across Planning Area 2

Planning area 2 covers Brownswood, Woodberry Down, Stamford Hill West and Springfield wards. There are 210 reception places available in PA2 across 5 schools.

The number of reception children on roll in each of the schools at the May 2024 census, and the corresponding level of surplus places, is shown in the table below.

Table 1. Schools in planning area 2 (Brownswood, Woodberry Down, Stamford Hill West and Springfield wards)

School	Holmleigh	Parkwood	Sir Thomas Abney	Springfield	Woodberry Down	Total
PAN	30	30	30	30	90	210
May 2024 Reception census	29	23	20	30	89	191
Surplus places	1	7	10	0	1	19
% surplus	3%	23%	33%	0%	1%	9%

It is worth noting that there are 2 Orthodox Jewish schools in the locality; Lubavitch Girls Primary School and Lubavitch Boys' Primary School. These schools form a separate planning area (planning area 1), due to their special characteristics. These schools are not usually considered by non Jewish parents seeking primary places and are therefore not included in planning area 2. You will be aware that the Council is seeking views on the future of Oldhill Community School, which although close to Stamford Hill, is located within a different planning area - PA5.

A map showing Hackney wards can be found [here](#). For the purpose of planning school places, the Council groups primary schools into 10 planning areas in line with the Department for Education's guidance and subsequent authorisation.

Planning area projections (2024)

Hackney commissions school roll projections from the Greater London Authority (GLA), along with most London boroughs. The GLA has access to a range of data sets which enables it to model movements across borough boundaries in a way that would be difficult for an individual local authority. Projections are run each year by the GLA, using information based on demographic trends (e.g. births, migration); the borough's housing development trajectory; Pupil level School Census data from the National Pupil Database (Spring Census 2019 to 2022), and the flow of pupils from their ward of residence (including those out of borough) to each school.

For the purpose of planning school places, the Council uses and publishes the central data set. The projected number of reception pupils in planning area 2 from 2025, is shown in table 2 below. As stated above, there are 210 reception places available in the planning area.

Table 2. Planning area 2 projections (central fertility)

Academic year	Rec	Yr1	Yr 2	Yr3	Yr4	Yr5	Yr6
2025/2026	196	188	180	189	186	203	184
2026/2027	192	190	184	174	185	182	204
2027/2028	190	187	187	179	171	183	184
2028/2029	195	184	183	179	174	168	184
2029/2030	195	189	179	176	175	171	168

What is the criteria that will be used to determine whether or not the merger will go ahead?

The Council will consider all the views put forward during this consultation period (8 October - 19 November) before making a decision on whether to publish proposals required by law. If proposals are published, there will be a further period for comments, called the representation period. This would last for 28 days. A final decision would be taken by Hackney's Cabinet at a later date.

Building:

What work/ upgrades have taken place to the STA site, and what site maintenance/ upgrades are pending / urgently required (boiler / heating/ windows / security etc). Will these be put in place by hackney education in advance of a potential merger?

The following work has been undertaken on the Sir Thomas Abney site:

- AMP Project Completed December 2023 - LED Lighting & Fire Alarm Replacement throughout the School.
- AMP Project - Completed August 2024 - Emergency fabric repairs following building movement in various areas.
- Building Movement being monitored

- Heating Upgrade Project - Boilers, Radiators and Pipework - Proposed for Summer 2025

Finance

What about Holmleigh School's current deficit, given the recent investments in the building that have been made in recent years (including through independent grants), can we make a case for the deficit to be reduced or removed to support the newly merged schools and ensure the merged school is in a strong position.

The LA cannot reduce or even remove deficits, regulations state:

Schools must submit a recovery plan to the local authority when their revenue deficit rises above 5% at 31 March of any year. Local authorities may set a lower threshold than 5% for the submission of a recovery plan if they wish. The 5% deficit threshold will first apply when deficits are measured as at 31 March.

The merger should increase pupil numbers and generate additional funding to support finances going forward. A recovery plan should be initiated alongside the proposed funding for the merger.

What is the budget for the mergers of the school if the decision is to press ahead? What project management support would be provided?

Budget is determined by pupil numbers and any exceptional costs to be considered by SLT on a case by case basis. Support from Hackney colleagues to be confirmed.

Staff and parents

How should parent and staff concerns be heard? Will this be consolidated by Hackney or is it the responsibility of governors?

Parent/carers and staff have been provided with the consultation proposals and hard copy consultation response form through the school. The same materials are available online via the council's consultation platform. All responses should be submitted via one of these methods.

There will be engagement events for parents/carers and staff. The first engagement event took place on October 10th, which provided an opportunity for families, and others impacted by the proposals to give their feedback and have their questions answered and express their concerns.

The local authority will consolidate the consultation feedback, the governing body does not need to play a role in this. However where paper consultation forms are returned to the school office the local authority asks that these are returned on a weekly basis.

What are next steps in terms of getting much needed on Holmleigh staff contracts and head position?

The employment of staff at Holmleigh School will remain unchanged, with the only adjustment being their relocation to the nearby Sir Thomas Abney School. We will maintain ongoing communication with staff, unions, and legal advisors to ensure everyone is well-informed and fully supported throughout the transition.

What 'lessons learned' have you identified from the 2024 school mergers?

Feedback from the previous round of school organisational changes was that a year and a half was too long, and this was detrimental to the school community, pupils and parents. The council has considered this and therefore reduced the length of the informal consultation stage and decision process to one academic year. Further lessons learned will be used to inform the proposal process and engagement.

Why is the decision made in April? How does this give sufficient time to implement a merger if that is the final decision?

A final decision will be taken in April 2025, but the logistics of the merger will take place over the remainder of the Summer Term and through part of 2025/26 school year. The precise timetable will be worked on with both sets of school leaders.

What does the process look like from here?

A six week public consultation on the proposal to expand to Holmleigh Primary School. A linked proposal, setting out two options for the future of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School is being consulted on separately. The consultation began on 8 October and will end on 19 November 2024 at 5pm.

A detailed timeline below should the proposal go ahead:

Date	Event
------	-------

8 October - 19 November 2024	Informal consultation. Parent/carer meeting and additional engagement opportunity to be confirmed separately by Holmleigh Primary School. Input, suggestions, and feedback help understand the school's importance to children, parents/carers, staff, and the community.
January 2025	Results of the informal consultation are considered by Hackney Cabinet. A decision is made whether to publish a statutory notice for the merger of Holmleigh and Sir Thomas Abney primary schools.
February - March 2025	If a decision to proceed was made; a statutory notice is published for a 4-week representation period.
April 2025	The outcome of the representation period and any objections are considered by the Cabinet, and a final decision on the merger proposal is made.
Summer term 2025	School merger arrangements are carried out (subject to Cabinet's decision), if the proposal is approved.
31 August 2025	Sir Thomas Abney Primary School officially closes.
1 September 2025	Holmleigh merges with Sir Thomas Abney and transfers to the old Sir Thomas Abney site.

Holmeligh pupil voice

Holmleigh - Early years

How do you feel about moving to Sir Thomas Abney?
I'm feeling good because there will be new friends.
I'm scared to go to the new school because there is different stuff away from this school.
I'm sad and shocked to go to new school.

Holmleigh - Year 1

How do you feel about moving to Sir Thomas Abney School? What would you say to Hackney Council about the plan to close our school and move to Sir Thomas Abney?
Me and my friends do not want to go to Sir Thomas Abney.
I am sad because I have to go to a new school Sir Thomas Abney
I don't want to move to Sir Thomas Abney
I do not want to go to Sir Thomas Abney
Me and xxx don't want to move to Sir Thomas Abney. I like Holmleigh Primary school. I'll miss my school.
I like my school
Hackney council I don't want to move to Sir Thomas Abney
[picture of two girls crying with a yellow sun and a cloud above their heads]

2024/25 Holmleigh Pupil voice

Year 2
I feel sad because I love Holmleigh. I don't want to move to Holmleigh.
I am sad, everything will be different.
I feel excited because it's a big school.
I feel excited to move because I want to know what it looks like. I want to stay because I like Holmleigh primary school.
I feel sad because I love this school.
I am happy because my friends outside school are there.
I feel sad because I like Holmleigh.
I feel happy because I will go to a new school.
I feel sad. xxxx
I feel sad because it will be big and different.
I feel sad because I want coach.
I feel excited because we are moving.
I'm feeling happy. I like Holmleigh.
I feel happy because it is a big school
I feel sad because this school is the best.
I feel happy because we never moved to a new school, since we've been to this school and i would love to move to a new school with my kind friends
I feel sad because this school is better. We will miss our teacher and I'm going to miss my teacher.
I feel sad because we have to leave Holmleigh. I want to stay.
I feel happy about Sir thomas abney school.
I feel happy because that was my old school.
I'm not sure?
Year 3
I feel sad because me and my friend might be split up and I am happy because bigger playgrounds are more fun. Please may we have a map so we don't get lost or get confused .

I feel nervous and happy because we might not be in the same class/ I would like to see how many classes and playground the school have.

I feel sad because im use to Holmleigh school and i've been here for a few years. I would like to say i don't want to move to a different school but i know a person for sir thomas abney.

I feel a bit upset because i will be separated from my class but i feel happy because i get a bigger playground. I would like to say can you make it more like Holmleigh.

I feel sad because I will move my house too. I don't want to moves schools

I feel happy, I like to move. I feel happy because big building.

I feel worried because I will miss this school/ I want to say I will be very upset if I have to move.

I feel excited because it will be a bigger playground/ I would feel happy because I will have more friends and maybe see my cousins.

I am sad because I live far away. Can you give a map of the school? I feel and happy because we are going to a new school

I will say that i will make new friends and it might be a bigger school than holmleigh

I feel sad because I am going to leave the school / I would like to say I am a little happy because I am going to make new friends.

I feel sad because I will miss the school but I will make friends / I would like to say the school building is very big.

I feel worried because I might move to east london and it's very far away from sir thomas abney/ I will like to say that being in this school is a little better than going to sir thomas abney

I feel excited because i will make new friends who will play with me/ I feel confused because why are we doing this.

I feel happy because bigger school means more friends/ I would like to say to hackney council please make a map of the school.

I feel sad because i live far. I feel happy because i will make friends/ I would like to make friends and it makes me happy and excited .

I am feeling upset because we are going to a bigger school/ I would like to say that maybe at a new school it wouldn't be so bad. Can we have a map

I feel nervous because i think i am not going to make friends and i think im going to get split up / i would like to say i am scared because the school is more bigger than holmleigh.

Sand and happy. Can we have a map of the school

I feel very sad because i moved schools once and i didnt like it i dont want to move / i would like to say dont move because i like holmleigh family.

I feel excited because i have a friend at thomas abney / i would like to say can some friends stay in the same class

I feel happy because I feel like a bigger school means a bigger playground / i would say thank you!

I feel mad because I might be separated from my best friend / i will say i will miss the monkey bars

I am sad because I might lose my friend. I am not going, never going.

Year 5

I'm feeling quite upset, because even though everyone will be there it will still feel like a different school and ill miss Holmleigh. But im also excited to explore a new building

I feel sad and nervous, I do not want this to be happening, and I don't want to go there.

I am sad, i am angry, i dont want to move

I feel kind of happy and upset because my big brother and his dad and my little brother and me all went here. I feel happy happy because i have always wanted a bigger school

I feel calm if we move schools to sir thomas abney. I feel happy to meet new people at sir thomas abney.

I feel more comfortable in Holmleigh primary school. I would say I really like to stay because I just love all my friends and our memories we made in this school. Please, I would love to stay!!!

Why are we moving schools?

I feel happy about going to sir thomas abney, if i were with the council i would say yes because sir thomas abney is bigger than holmleigh primary school.

Dear council please don't shut down hp;m;eigh it is a lovely place, i dont want to move to a bigger school the reason why is that what makes the school holmleigh is our school is nice and small, so please don't make us move

I feel very sad and upset with the council because Holmleigh is my family too / i dont want to move.

Dear council: please, please don't make our Holmleigh move! I don't like change.

I feel a little bit angry because I'm used to Holmleigh, but i am also happy because it will be a two form entry school / maybe move the sir thomass abney students here to Holmleigh

I feel happy to get to a new school and meet new children and see new classes / excited and sad again. I want to try new friends but i also feel sad because i am going to miss Holmleigh

I am feeling really nervous and confused on why we can't stay here, but I also feel really excited because my friend goes to sir thomas abney and i wonder if she knows about it. I have one question: what will happen to Holmleigh if we move?

I feel sad and angry because there is no point in moving school and I don't feel comfortable. There is no point in moving a bunch of children!!!

I feel sad because i am already used to Holmleigh and when we move to sir thomas abney everything is going to be different. I don't think we should move because what was the point of doing the roof and doing our mural and we have lots of memories here.

I feel sad about it because i dont want to move to sir thomas abeny. Because we have so many memories and also I don't feel comfortable moving

Year 6

I feel sad

Shame on you. Know better. We stayed 70% of our lives here

I feel upset about Holmleigh primary school moving to Sir Thomas abney, because if i ever want to come visit the school i would have to go visit a school i am not used to and a class i don't even know.

I am not happy and super annoyed. Shame on you hackney council.

I think we shouldn't move schools because all of us have memories here.

I don't think that this is fair to shut down our school. I know that we're in year 6 and will have left but I really want to visit the school when I'm in secondary school. I also don't think that parents and children have had a fair say in this. I really love this school and I would hate to see it shut down so please don't do it.

I feel sad because it's not fair that we have to move because there's not enough people. Shame on you council!

I am not happy. I want to stay. Shame on you!

I feel very sad that my school will become expensive houses for people who inherited money they didn't even earn it. I think the council is extremely jarring and i feel ashamed to be the same species as them.

I'm really angry because this was the school my step dad, my sister and brother and I went to too. I have spent 70% of my life and yes i know im leaving this year but seriously when i come and visit i wont know the school. I couldn't get angrier than this.

I feel upset and don't want to leave the school. I want to protest. I will do anything to not give up Holmleigh building. We shall not leave!

I would feel sad because it will look different and a bit weird and it wouldn't look the same.

I feel sad because moving to another school and i have been here for 8 years and i dont like it.

I don't want this school to move because I want to visit the school when I leave, the other school won't feel like Holmleigh.

I feel a bit sad and a bit angry. I would say it is unfair and against our rights.

I think that if it happens i will feel really sad because even if we have left the school i will feel sad because when i come to visit the school it will not be the school i know. It will still have most of the people but it wont feel like the school we have spent 70% of our lives in. so i really do not want to move to the new building.

Appendix 3 – Oldhill

Copy of Questionnaire

Oldhill Pupil Voice

Proposal for Oldhill Community School

Overview

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

Please read the proposal document for **Oldhill Community School** <user_uploads/consultation---oldhill-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools, including a the proposal linked to this consultation on the expansion of Harrington Hill Primary School. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link: **Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools** </communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Option 1 Proposal for Oldhill Community School

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

Consultation on the future of Oldhill Community School

Overview

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

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law. Depending on the final decisions made by the Council's Cabinet, they may lead to Oldhill closing and merging with Harrington Hill, which would expand to accommodate Oldhill pupils too. Alternatively, they may lead to Oldhill closing without merging with another school.

3 How do you feel about the Option 1 proposal on page 3 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this option affect or impact you?

Option 2 Proposal for Oldhill Community School

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

Consultation on the future of Oldhill Community School

Overview

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

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law. Depending on the final decisions made by the Council's Cabinet, they may lead to Oldhill closing and merging with Harrington Hill, which would expand to accommodate Oldhill pupils too. Alternatively, they may lead to Oldhill closing without merging with another school.

5 How do you feel about the Option 2 proposal on page 6 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

6 How might this option affect or impact you?

Further comments

7 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

8 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

9 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

10 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

11 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

12 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

13 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

14 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
 White or White British
 Black or Black British
 Mixed background
 Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
 Christian
 Muslim
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Secular beliefs
 Charedi
 Jewish
 Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

16 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

17 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know

2024/25 Oldhil Pupil voice letters

8/10/2024

Dear Hackney council officer,

I would like you not to close the school because it has been my favourite school. Even i would not like you to emerge with Harrington hill because it is better by itself and it had lots of good teachers. I am in year 5 and i just have one year left at oldhill school.

If it closes i might not see my friends ever again as they will be going to a different school, if they close it will be upset and then i have to got to a new school and make new friends even if I don't want to.

I want to study there and finish my exam and become a doctor just from learning in Old hill.

Please do not close it!

8/10/2024

Dear Hackney council officer.

Please dont close our school because i like my school alot. I am in year 2 and i want to stay in Old hill until I am in year 6. I love my teachers, they are all good to me. I like the way that they teach us. Also i dont want to miss my friends.

8/10/2024

Dear Hackney council officers.

Please don't close the school because I was in this school for six years. I want to be a headteacher when I grow up in Old hill.

That we have lots of memories with the school. They have good teachers and a very good headteacher.

Also if you close it my heart will be broken. I want to finish my last year in Old hill school to do my SATS.

Please don't close my school!

Oldhill pupil voice - Mixed year groups

Our ideas matter... What do you think?

Hello there whoever is reading this. I am going to talk about my feelings, memories and more. Let's start. My feeling okay that the school is closing because I will be gone but I am 50% disappointed. I have question for you mate.

Are you happy doing this?

I started in 2018 (nursery) and I left in reception again. Then I joined in reception again and I continued into Year 1, then went up to Year 2 where I left again then now here I am in year 6. I have been to 6/5 different schools. The schools i have been to:

- Jubilee
- Sir thomas

I forgot the others. Anyways please dont shut the school i wont be able to come see my teacher. I made a friend called xxx for 7/6/5 years.

I feel sad about the school closing down because i like all the teachers and i made so many friends and i dont want to lose them all and start all over again and i might get bullied at the school i am going to. I love the trips because they are very fun like going to victoria park, national history museum, science museum and epping forest.

I am stressed because parents have to start looking for schools for children and this is a unique school and we do fun things. My siblings love this school and they want to be in this school for their life . I have been in this school for eight years and they've did everything for us and gave us knowledge and confidence. The teachers are unique and lovely. I am so sad for everyone that's under year 6 cause parents would have to look for schools and if that school closed then they would have to go to a new school again. Everyone loves this school and we want to stay here, i love this school if my brothers leave i aint leaving. I love this school.

I been here in 8 year. I really love this school and my brothers love this school went i was going to year 1, and we went to the trips, and our homework, and we have a good photo and i will miss my teachers forever.

i am kind of sad and i was here in 8 years and am going to miss this even though i am going to a second school i am going going to miss all of my favourite teachers and all of the fun things we did and am kind of happy because in the second school am going to miss all of my favourite things i did. I wish I could stay in this amazing school and my family will be sad too because this school was amazing and I am in year 6.

My thoughts about the school closure is that it is not affecting us, meaning year 6 children but it is affecting people younger than us and it makes life difficult and stressful for parents because what if the child doesn't like their new school. Their parents can't keep on moving their kids into schools.

My feelings about the closure are sad because my favourite teachers are here and might not ever see them again.

Questions: was there an option of the school closing? Why can't other schools merge with us?

I am devastated to see my one and only primary school come to an end. I am extremely upset to see my first school come to an end, and not be able to come and say ' oh i used

to be in this class.' This letter can never explain what I am feeling and how this is all affecting me and my emotions run wild knowing my little sister in reception will not go through the same school journey and experience I went through. I am also heart-broken that some of my favourite beloved teachers have left early, and I feel as if we could have solved this problem by talking to parents and trying to raise money.

Dear Hackney,
Although I am in year six and this is my last year I feel bad for the parents because they have to get used to the school. I have been in this school for seven years and I also love to go on many trips like kayaking, ZSL, science museum and many more. I am also going to miss the unique teachers and the funny stuff the teachers do, especially my teacher xxx.

I feel calm because I am leaving the school. I have been here when I was three.

I feel worried and scared because this is my first school and because I am going to miss my friends and teachers. I will feel angry because when i go to to new school and when i will make new friends.

I feel a bit sad because we don't get to see our friends but there's a holiday which makes me sad and happy a bit.

I feel happy because I am going to have new friends and that school is more better and this is a bit bad school.

I feel sad and disappointed because I have been here since I was 2 years old. I am going to miss this place. This place is my childhood. I can't visit this place.

I feel upset that the school is closing because that is the only school near my house and the other schools are very far. When my friends are going to a different school I will miss them a lot because they are my best friends.

Sad because I won't be able to see my friends and because I have been here for 5 years.

I feel sad because i live next to the school and i have been here since i was a kid and because my brother who is 21, he came to this school and my sister who is 18 and my other brother who is 20. So i am sad because it's closing and...

I feel sad, normal because I feel sad because I won't be able to see my friends. Normal because the school is broke and I can just go to another one.

I feel normal because the school does not have a lot of money. But also nervous because ive been here for 8 years.

Although i am in year 6, i am really devastated that the school is closing because my sister was here and she had some really good memories and so have I. It is very sad that other children that want to experience PGL or prom in oldhill cannot unless they are in year 6. The school is important in this community, very good teachers had to sadly leave and leave their workplace, a place where they get money for bills and mortgages. It is kind of hard to find another one! And it's not even about the money it's also about the classes, the classes that will miss their teachers. The community will miss Oldhill. Thank you Miss xxxx, i will miss xxx and others.

I've been here for 8 years and it's an emotional loss for everyone in hackney we barely have schools in this community. We are united all together we will miss Oldhill we cant

even visit and have enjoyed all the activities that were done during these 8 years. Please keep our school open.

I am in year 6 i feel surprised because my grandma used to come here and used to work here and my 3 older cousins used to come here and i said ' the education matters not the population'

We did so much stuff in the past and the teachers love us. They do so much for us and we won't see them anymore.

I am in year 6 and i feel bad that the school is closing for my sister. She won't see her friends again and is nervous. I have lots of good memories like the teachers, my friends, trips, assemblies and being praised.

Although I am in year six and am leaving, I feel sad for my sister because she is in year three and she can't go to year six. My sister is sad and wants the school to stay here and not close. I really like football here and PE.

Dear Hackney,

I feel bad that the school is closing down i wish it didn't because i have been in Oldhill for 8 years and i will miss the school. They will not be that education, they wont experience prom, PGL, they wont experience. I feel bad, wish this school well.

I feel surprised and bad about leaving. This was my first ever school and i have been here since 2017....

Hi i am a year 6 student and my name is xxxx, my older brother xxx which is now 17 went ot this school. I joined this school in reception and been here 7 years and now i am a year 6 student and the last and now i am sad even though i am going to 2nd school near year and the school closer is next year and now i feel bad and sad. I will remember talking ti the teachers and all my friend.

Although i am in year 6 I'm kind of sad about the school closing because it was fun. In daycare school and my 2 sisters also love maths. it s not about the looks of the school, its about the quality of education, i laos love the trips of kayaking, ice skating, parks and museums. It's like a best dream . Headteacher if you're reading this then good luck buying a new school .

I feel sad that the school is closing because it was hard to get my friends. Now I might not have friends at my new school.

I feel so sad because i have been here since day one and i also feel worried because i kind of do not want to make new friends i will really really want to stay here until year 6 . I love this school forever.

I feel sad because I'm not going to see my friends in school ever again so I'm so so so sad and I will miss them so much.

I feel happy and disappointed because I will lose my friends and not see any of them. But I am happy because some people do not like me.

I feel happy since sometimes i dont like things in the school and my cousin said harrington hill, the same school im going to has a bit better food and because most of my friends are going to harrington hill too and because basically all the teachers are strict at oldhill.

I will feel sad because I don't want to make friends and I want to go to PGL with xxx but there are some people that I don't like in the class so I am a bit happy.

Since the school is closing I will say how I feel about it; but I still am going to miss it and my friends. I feel worried because making new friends is sometimes hard but if you are new it is very easy.

I hope it is like that for me at my brand new school.

I personally feel disappointed since I've been in this school. My whole life since daycare and in just two years I'm going in year 7 and I will miss most of my classmates. I'm happy some of them are going to the same one as me.

When I'm leaving the school I feel happy and nervous. I feel nervous because I have been here my whole life and I'm happy because I want to experience a new school and make new friends.

I feel nervous because getting new friends it is a challenge for us. I will also get embarrassed for being a new student. Just letting you know that I enjoyed it, it was fun, sometimes tiring but it was worth coming to this school. Thank you for all the hard work.

I feel happy because I am tired of the school and at my new school I can make friends.

I feel sad and disappointed about the school closing and scared about my new school. I am going to miss my friends so much. I love this school. I have been here since year one and I have always loved it. I love everything about this place i dont want it to shut down . When I heard that, I felt miserable, scared, and sad. Please done shut it down

I feel okay because I might never see xxx my bff and xxx,xxx,xxx, and they're my best friends, so yeah but I wanna go to a new school anyway. So yea, but it's fine because I have their phone numbers.

I am feeling sad because I am shy and I will miss my friends.

I am feeling confused and annoyed about this.

I feel nothing! And I will miss my friends but I have their phone numbers.

Dear Miss, I am confused why the school is closing because why does every class have to have 30 children in each class.

I'm feeling a bit sad ive been here since daycare and i someday wanted to add to the school. I'm sad because all of my classmates, everybody is going to be disappointed. Everybody is already leaving without saying bye. My change is going to come back this week. I'm gonna miss everybody in my school.

I feel happy about the school closure but I will miss my friends at the same time.

Dear miss i will be quiet.

I feel very sad that oldhill is closing down, it was my favourite school ever in my life. I will miss all the memories here in old hill. I will very much miss my friends. I hope everyone has been doing well in the new school.

I feel sad because i will not see my friend and some of my favourite teachers and i do not want the school to close and what school are you going to. I do not want to go to another

school you are going to.

Dear Miss, I am sad because I wont see my friends and you. Also i will miss my fav class which is dodgeball. I'm sad and happy at the same time. Bye Miss.

I feel sad because I have only been here for 1 and a half years....

I feel sad because I will not see my friends again.

In my school i will hope i get to make new friends if I can do what I said in year 2.

I feel very sad because people will bully me.

I am sad because the Old hill school is closing down and I hope it does not close down.

I don't want the school to close down.

I feel sad because i dont get to see my friends and teachers and the playground and trips. But at Harrington hill, I will make new friends.

I feel nervous about the school closing. But I am happy to go to the new school but I'm happy to have new friends. I love you.

I am sad because I don't want to go and I'm nervous. So much and I will miss this school and the teachers and the inside of the school and outside.

I think it's a good idea but I feel sad at the same time and I feel very nervous but I don't to go to a new school. I'm going to miss Old hill community school.

I feel a bit sad and a little bit happy at the same time because I want to meet new children and new teachers but I'm going to miss everybody here in Oldhill. I might be moving to Jubilee or Craveford school before July so I want to have a lovely time with my friends whilst I'm here.

I feel anxious and very emotional because I've been in this school since I was six months old, and I just love the school and I feel like the school is my own family.

I feel a bit sad about the school closing down because I have been in the school from year 2 to year 3. I have been overjoyed to be in this school and make some friends and I don't want the school to close down.

I am sad that the school is closing, a little bit sad because I like Old hill community primary school Children's centre. I am going to move to Harrington hill primary school.

I am very sad and disappointed that the school is closing because I've made so many memories with my friends in this school and I've been here for more than 5 years. My brother has to find a new school now and there's no school that is near our area so it's a struggle for my mum to put my brother in a new school. I'll miss this school very much since I'll probably never get to see anyone in this school again. It's very hard for me to hear this is happening and so far we don't have a school for my brother.

Question: why is the school closing?

Is there any recommended school for my brother in Stanford?

I am disappointed because I love this school because I made friends, I like the teachers and I listened to the school rules but I am sad that the school is closing down.

I am very disappointed that Oldhill is closing because I have made many friends and a lot of precious memories with them so I don't want to lose them. I have grown up here and now I have to leave and it is very annoying that I will not be able to see my favourite teachers anymore. Most of the time the people who went here got to come back and visit but now we can not go and then come back.

Question: 1) what is going to happen when it closes 2) what are you turning it into? 3) why do you have to?

I am disappointed that this school is shutting down because my siblings is in year 5, year 4 and nursery that that means they are not going to have the same experience as me in year six and the older year six left the school and they can come back the school and see it, but we are not going to. I have a question: 1)are you going to leave all the stuff in the school? 2)Are you going to leave the school (and break it down into pieces)? 3)what happens if people leave the school and no one is left?

I feel sad and upset because the school was so good to me, they were kind and I learned a lot and now I know how to read and I do not want the school to close. I will miss this school and I will come to see the school.

I am very disappointed about the school closing , here are some things that i am going to miss: My siblings are not going to have a school to go to, all of the year six's are not going to visit, i am going to miss all the teachers and all of my friends and also my brother is not going to have the same experiences as me and it is going to be really upsetting to see the school go.

Questions: 1) why is it going to close down?
2) what is going to happen to the school?
3)think about the teachers, where are they going to go?

Dear council,

I am disappointed that Oldhill community school is closing as I have so many memories at this very school with friends and teachers. Also I have younger siblings in reception and they would not have the same journeys growing up as I did and would not have the same opportunities as I did...I would not be able to come back and speak with the teachers.

Questions: what will Oldhill become after closure?

I am quite disappointed with this decision affecting many pupils of Oldhill community school along with staff as well. As we are in year 6 we will leave this school a;ready but I would've been looking forward to visiting old memories portrayed in this special building. Seven years of my life do not deserve to be forgotten along with my friends and fun. This school's foreseeable future will not last long and will soon turn to dust.

questions : 1) how has it come to this?
2) Did you decide for this, if not did you try to stop this outcome?

I know you don't have a choice but yeah. I think it is unfair. I mean at least let the year 5's go to year 6. ¼ of my memories are in Old hill, if possible if i come back it will be gone. No nostalgia, nothing. I was here since I was 3 years old, 8-7 years. I don't have any younger siblings but they won't be on the same journey. But can I ask something , why now?

Ever since I have been in this school I have experienced nice teachers. I am really disappointed that the school is closing because I have been in this school for most of my life. Also I have lots of friends here. Since i am in year 6 it wont really matter for me but my younger sibling had to move schools. Also since i am in year six, i wouldnt be able to visit this school and catch any memories because this school is closing. I wouldn't be able to visit all of the nice and wonderful teachers. Afterall i am really sad that the school is

closing.

I am upset because i have so much i have so many good memories about this school and good things, but i understand because some times we need to see siblings and they are not going to a good teacher that they know because all the teachers are good and nice they might get a bad teacher so with that being said i hope you have some sympathy for this school.

I am upset and disappointed with the decision that has been made. I was excited at the start of the year to come and look at the school and say i was there which i cant anymore. It is very emotional to see the other children in the school upset because they can't finish until year 6 in this school with their friends. It may not affect me but it does a little seeing some people looking down.

question : how and who is taking this school when we leave?

I am disappointed because the school is closing because I have friends here at this school and a lot of good hardworking teachers at this school. What are you guys going to change this school into?

I am disappointed that the school Oldhill community is closing down because I had so many memories here, and I was devastated when I found out it was closing down. When people were done here they came to visit but we couldn't. It's sad to see people leaving. I have learnt alot here and i think other people should learn what i did. I have a lot of knowledge because of Old hill. We had so many things, and we made the friends we have today because we came here. If we never did we would've never met them and the teachers are amazing.

Oldhill pupil voice

Letters written by year 3 pupils.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school close. I feel sad because the school is closing and Im worried because I may not go to the school my friends are going to.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I am going to miss my friend and miss my favourite teachers. And I am going to be scared because I might be bullied and might not have friends to play with.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I am not going to see my friends and shy because I am going to make new friends and going to miss your teacher.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad and upset. Sad because I am gonna miss you and my friend and teachers.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I'm going to miss the teachers and my friends ad I have no one to play with.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad I am miss friends and my playtime.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad/ happy. I feel sad friends. 1. I leave and ill miss xxx. 2. I'm happy because I want to be with the year 6 ball.

Dear Miss Benjamin,
I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel upset and angry because im going to meet new people and this was the only school that was close to my house and this school is my favourite school.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I feel sad and I hope the Oldhill Community School doesn't close down because it is sad.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because you I [will] miss our teachers and my friends and I am gonna miss everything because I wish you xxx close the school and I gonna go to one school and I am gonna miss everyone.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I am really scared that I will forget about the school. And a little bit happy to because I am going to a new school and I might learn something new. But more sad because we won't see our teachers any more. And that is really sad.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I have to find new friend. I am also feeling worried because what if I don't get a space.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because I will miss my friends and I feel happy because I get to meet new friends.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel happy because I know people from the [school] I am going to.

Dear Miss Benjamin,

I am writing to you to express my concerns about the closure of our school Oldhill community. I feel sad because we've been separated from our friends also I'm happy because we get to meet our new friends because they play with and have fun.

Appendix 4 – Sir Thomas Abney

Copy of Questionnaire

Response from the Sir Thomas Abney Governing Body

Sir Thomas Abney Pupil Voice

Proposal for Sir Thomas Abney Primary School

Overview

Hackney Council is consulting on proposals either to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and amalgamate (merge) it with Holmleigh Primary School, by offering all Sir Thomas Abney pupils a place there, or to close it without amalgamating. Under both proposals Sir Thomas Abney would close on 31 August 2025. The proposal to merge with Holmleigh means that the school would also move to the Sir Thomas Abney site permanently. A larger site would be needed to accommodate the children from both schools.

Please read the proposal document for [Sir Thomas Abney Primary School](#) <user_uploads/consultation---sir-thomas-abney-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools, including the proposal linked to this consultation on the expansion of Holmleigh Primary School. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link: [Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools](#) <communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Option 1 Proposal for Sir Thomas Abney Primary School

Option 1. Proposal to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and merge it with Holmleigh Primary School. Holmleigh would expand from one to two forms of entry.

Consultation on the future of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School

Overview

We are consulting you about proposals either to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and amalgamate (merge) it with Holmleigh Primary School, by offering all Sir Thomas Abney pupils a place there, or to close it without amalgamating. Under both proposals Sir Thomas Abney would close on 31 August 2025. The proposal to merge with Holmleigh means that the school would also move to the Sir Thomas Abney site permanently. A larger site would be needed to accommodate the children from both schools.

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law. Depending on the final decisions made by the Council's Cabinet, they may lead to

3 How do you feel about the Option 1 proposal on page 3 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this option affect or impact you?

Option 2 Proposal for Sir Thomas Abney Primary School

Option 2. Closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School without a merger with another school

Consultation on the future of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School

Overview

We are consulting you about proposals either to close Sir Thomas Abney Primary School and amalgamate (merge) it with Holmleigh Primary School, by offering all Sir Thomas Abney pupils a place there, or to close it without amalgamating. Under both proposals Sir Thomas Abney would close on 31 August 2025. The proposal to merge with Holmleigh means that the school would also move to the Sir Thomas Abney site permanently. A larger site would be needed to accommodate the children from both schools.

The consultations are the first stage in a process we have to follow by law. Depending on the final decisions made by the Council's Cabinet, they may lead to

5 How do you feel about the Option 2 proposal on page 6 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

6 How might this option affect or impact you?

Further comments

7 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

8 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

9 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

10 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

11 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

12 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

13 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

14 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
 White or White British
 Black or Black British
 Mixed background
 Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
 Christian
 Muslim
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Secular beliefs
 Charedi
 Jewish
 Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

16 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

17 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know

Consultation on the Closure/Merger of Sir Thomas Abney Primary
School
Response from the Sir Thomas Abney Primary School Governing
Body

As a governing body we feel the consultation form is very limiting. It does not give scope for a complete answer.

We propose that you pause this process until the new government has a chance to finish revising both school funding and education policy. Bridget Phillipson, the Secretary of State for Education has said that she is looking at giving local authorities more say over schools including academies and free schools. Closing both STA and Holmleigh schools and opening a new school in the STA building hasn't been properly explored with either the Secretary of State or with Claire Burton, the London Regional Director of Education.

Deputy Mayor Bramble quoted the "Free School Presumption" at the cabinet meeting on the 30th September. Since then, however, the DfE has published new guidance. On page 16 Opening and Closing Maintained Schools, published in October 2024, it allows for the possibility of local authorities opening new maintained schools when closing 2 existing schools without the need for them to join multi academy trusts or free schools.

The new guidance also insists that: "Where existing provision that is recognised by the local authority as reserved for pupils with special educational needs is being discontinued, a statement as to how the local authority or the governing body (as the case may be) believe the proposals are likely to lead to improvements in the standard, quality and/or range of the educational provision for these children." None of us has seen any proposal for either the Language Resource pupils or our large number of other SEND pupils.

As the Deputy Mayor indicated in her statement of 30 September, the problem of falling enrolment in Hackney's primary schools has been caused, *inter alia*, by lack of affordable housing and Brexit, not by the many truly excellent schools. Enlarging one school from 2 form entry to 3 form entry in the northwest part of Hackney hasn't helped keep other schools full. Anecdotally we've been told by a number of Woodberry Down residents that parents feel they have to fight to be allowed to choose STA for their children.

We've been told that the main reason for the proposed closure of Sir Thomas Abney Primary School (STA) is financial. While longer term financial viability is an understandable concern, wiping out the deficit by closing an outstanding school will not help Hackney's finances in either the long or short term without addressing the reasons for both schools' deficits.

At initial meetings with Hackney Education, the STA governing body were told that if a merger was agreed by cabinet, staff at both schools would be offered voluntary redundancy. At subsequent meetings with Hackney Education Human Resources staff, STA staff have been told that they will be made redundant and will have to apply for jobs in the merged school however staff at Holmleigh have been told that they will keep their jobs. This has caused both distrust and upset at STA, disregarding as it does the efforts of all concerned to ensure that it is considered outstanding by the local authority itself. Why would our experienced staff want to continue to work in Hackney if this is how they are treated?

The STA governing body was told that we would work with the Holmleigh governing body to help ensure the success of the merger. Now that the proposed merger is only a merger of pupils, our experienced and dedicated board will have no say in either staffing or the school's ethos and direction.

STA staff, parents and governors feel that it is a punitive process. It is obvious that STA is being closed purely on financial grounds. We find it very unfair and sad that if you go ahead with either of the two possible outcomes in the consultation, we will have no substantive say in the future education of our pupils, despite our huge investment in the community, children, fabric and success of the school over many, many years. Both school communities should have an equal stake in the future of any school opening on the grounds of STA. We believe that a fairer and better way forward can be found. The short-sighted action that is being consulted on is detrimental to our community and has already create divisions in the school community.

Sir Thomas Abney pupil voice - Mixed year groups

Our ideas matter... What do you think?
I think that it would be a good idea because I can make new friends.
I think it will be quite sad because I liked the school. Please don't close the school!
I'm not happy that Sir Thomas Abney school is going to close because I might not see my friends and teachers.
I will be sad if Sir Thomas Abney close and I don't want to lose my teacher and friends.
I'd feel kind of sad because if the school closes because i've been in the school for a long time and I'd lose my friends
I feel sad because I have been in the school for a long time so it's sad
I like my school. I love my amazing school. I don't like my school clothes. I like my friends and xxxx. I like the school lunch. I like miss xxx and miss xxx and miss xxxx.
I feel mad because my xxx is at the school.
It makes me feel sad that my school might close as I will miss my friends and teachers and I like my school.
It will make me feel sad as I will not see my friends and teachers.
I think that the merging of STA and Holmleigh is unfair as the school never had a choice and the staff is being recounted and they are not getting offer jobs to compensate for it.
I think that in September about Holmleigh that they should come to Sir Thomas Abney because it is bigger and maybe it will be better quality for the students and that there will be more friends and bigger classrooms of more kids in the classroom.
I like school, my school is amazing
I feel sad and I wish the school didn't close
I think that they shouldn't close down but if the merge I hope our class stay the same and hope that we don't mix up. Also I think we should have a voice!
I like my school and my teacher and I don't want to move a different school
I feel a bit anxious and worried because the school might close but the school might merge as well so that I'm not sure about how I feel. I'm also worried about the teachers and staff in the school and my classmates since I might have new ones and I going to miss them. And I really love my school so I don't really know how I feel about merging.
I thic to STA
I think that the school should stay open
I don't want the school to shut down. I love this school.
It should stay here because i've been here for seven years and I wouldn't want it to close.

I've had loads of memories here.

If the school merges, I will be happy that it didn't close but also sad because it will not be the same. If it closes, I hope that it will be for the best even though Sir Thomas Abney will close.

I am going to miss xxx and xxx and xxx and I am going to miss you xxx so much

I think that STA students and staff should stay where they are because the staff shouldn't be made redundant just because Holmleigh is coming over or STA school is closing down. Please keep STA open!

I think the school should merge so that everyone would be guaranteed to get a place but it might displace a lot of people

I had support for my confidence and have become a better person.

I don't think we should merge because I like Sir Thomas Abney

I like my xxx. Lovely school. Don't close school.

I love my school and I love my teachers and I don't want my school to close.

I think we should not close. I like my lessons and teacher.

To merge I think it will be fine.

If the school merges/ closes then the staff will lose their job which is not good. If the school closes students need a new school. If the school merges every student gets to go holmleigh with new teachers which can get them nervous.

Appendix 5 – St Dominic’s

Copy of Questionnaire

Response from the St Dominic’s Governing Body

St Dominic’s Pupil Voice

Proposal for St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Overview

Hackney Council is consulting on a proposal to close St Dominic's Catholic Primary School on the 31 August 2025.

Please read the proposal document for [St Dominic's Catholic Primary School](#) <user_uploads/consultation---st-dominics-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link:

[Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools](#) </communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Proposal for St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Proposal to close St Dominic's Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2025.

Consultation on the proposed closure of St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Overview

We are consulting you about a proposal to close St Dominic's Catholic Primary School on 31 August 2025. This is the first stage in a process that we have to follow that may lead to the school being closed.

In recent years the number of primary age children in Hackney, and in many parts of London, has fallen. The reasons behind this are thought to include lower birth rates, lack of affordable housing for families, as well as Brexit and the recent pandemic. The fall in the number of children, leading to a high number of surplus school places

3 How do you feel about this proposal on page 2 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this proposal affect or impact you?

5 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

6 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

7 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

8 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

10 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

11 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

12 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
 White or White British
 Black or Black British
 Mixed background
 Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

13 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
 Christian
 Muslim
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Secular beliefs
 Charedi
 Jewish
 Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

14 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know



THE GOVERNING BODY OF ST DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSAL BY THE HACKNEY LEARNING TRUST TO CLOSE THE SCHOOL

1.0. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the reasons why we believe the decision to consider St Dominic's for closure from September 2025 should be withdrawn.

We believe that the decision to submit a proposal is premature and the significant impact of this on the children and their families has not been fully considered. We therefore submit the points below in response to the proposal to close St Dominic's:

2.0. POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION

We are not aware of a detailed Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) that has been undertaken to fully understand how the closure of St Dominic's would impact on the vulnerable children that attend this faith school.

2.1. DEPRIVATION OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION: EDUCATION:

St

Dominic's is a Catholic School and 47% of the children in the school are from Catholic families. There are disproportionately more Church of England (CofE) schools than Catholic in Hackney. There are 7 CofE Primary schools and 4 Catholic primary schools, one of which is now part of Lux Mundi Academy. Closing St Dominic's would only leave 3 Catholic schools available for parents to choose from. The nearest Catholic School is St Scholastica's, which is about 30 minutes away from St Dominic's, this is too far for our predominantly low-income parents to travel to if they wish their children to have a Catholic education. The Catholic life of the school was found to be outstanding at the last Section 48 inspection by Westminster Diocese in May 2022. The parents choose this school because the inspection found the following:

- *'This is a very welcoming and vibrant school, fully living out the school's mission: 'In Jesus, we love, learn, hope, trust and care'.*
- *Religious education is at the heart of the school.*
- *Pupils are actively involved in supporting those in need and proactive in responding locally, nationally and globally.*
- *The quality, strength and warmth of the relationships of all members of the school are outstanding and the school creates a tangible sense of unity and mutual respect.*
- *The partnerships between school, parents, parish, governors and diocese are exceptional and are a key, vibrant and central part of the school's understanding of itself as a community.*
- *The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are an example for all - outward facing and inclusive - and they have created a cohesive and joyful school.*
- *Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and pupils are offered many opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the liturgical year.*
- *The ways in which the school expresses its Catholic identity affirm the cultural richness of the community it serves. Section 48 Inspection report 2022 (Appendix 1)*



2.2. IMPACT ON VULNERABLE TRAVELLER FAMILIES: FAMILIES:

A

unique offer from St Dominic's is its strong links and support to the Irish Traveller families who have their children in the School

Irish Travellers are a marginalised (perhaps even the most marginalised) ethnic group in the UK and deal with varying forms of discrimination;

Discrimination in education and disparities in educational attainment are one of the ways in which this marginalisation and discrimination plays out;

Educational attainment of Irish Travellers is notoriously poor, per the Commons Briefing Paper 10016, 17th May 2024: 'Gypsies and Travellers: educational outcomes', (<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-10016/CBP-10016.pdf>), [2.1], the rates of educational attainment for Traveller children are c. one third of the general population. Per the educational statistics (<https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/find-statistics/key-stage-2-attainment>), to Key Stage 2, Traveller children are the second lowest performing group (slightly ahead of Roma children), with attainment rates less than half those of White British and Black Caribbean children and less than a third those of Black African children;

Traveller children also have the highest exclusion rates of any ethnic group, see CBP 10016, [2.4];

Traveller children are also more likely to be taken out of / stop attending school, with a key drop off (c. 22%) at the time of the transition from primary to secondary school (see <https://www.gypsy-traveller.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Education-inequalities-faced-by-Gypsies-Roma-and-Travellers-in-England-briefing.pdf>);

Schools' lack of awareness of / sensitivity towards Traveller culture and child specific needs is a factor which may result on Traveller children being taken out of school, see the ONS paper: Gypsies' and Travellers' lived experiences, education and employment, England and Wales: 2022

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/bulletins/gypsiesandtravellerslivedexperienceseducationandemploymentenglandandwales/2022#main-points>): *'Some participants reported a lack of awareness and sensitivity in schools to Gypsy and Traveller culture. Although Gypsies and Travellers are traditionally nomadic and this remains an important aspect of their culture, participants described having difficulty getting authorised absences to take children out of school to travel. There were examples of this resulting in disagreements with schools, parents withdrawing their children from schools and opting to home educate instead, to retain greater flexibility for travelling'*;

And the same regarding the specific issues Traveller children face with bullying (from other pupils and teachers) and its impact upon children remaining in education, see the ONS paper: *'Community members described experiences of bullying and perceived racism from other students as well as instances in which they or their children were felt to be unfairly punished for reacting to bullying, rather than the perpetrator. The management of these*



situations by schools were said to have sometimes resulted in young people being excluded from school, or parents choosing to withdraw their children from school'.

Per s. 149 EqA 2010, subsection (b), the public authority must have due regard of the duty to advance equality of opportunity and, per (c), to foster good relations.

St Dominic's offer:

- a. The school is experienced in meeting the particular educational needs of Traveller children,
- b. The school is valued by the parents from the Traveller community,
- c. The expertise the school offers to children and their families from the Traveller community is expertise that will not be easily transferred over to a new school, or worst still, to several schools if these children are not accommodated i.e., even if replicated, it will mean X years of worse treatment,
- d. As per e.g. the ONS, a key factor is the trust that Traveller parents have in schools, and there is evidence that the Traveller parents we have trust St. Dominic's.

The only relevant element of the council's EIA is the following:

'St Dominic's is a trusted school amongst the Traveller Gypsy and Roma ethnic groups. If a decision is made to close the school this may have a disproportionately impact on the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. Hackney is a diverse borough and as such, the proposed action is not expected to have a disproportionate impact on any specific racial or ethnic group beyond the noted considerations.'

This statement has grouped Traveller families into racial or ethnic groups.

There are two ways this can be interpreted. First, that the council accept a disparate impact on the grounds of race (and, therefore, perhaps making it less likely that St. Dominic's may be slated for closure). Second, given the waffle about Hackney being a diverse borough, a suggestion that other schools would be able to simply absorb the Traveller children. However, if it is the second, they fail to engage with what that means in practice.

It also fails to deal with:

- (i) The notorious importance of trust when dealing with Traveller families and the education system – it is entirely unclear how this is intended to be replicated; and
- (ii) The loss of time factor. Even if after X years another school builds up the same trust and expertise, how do you justify the disparate impact for X years to allow for closing this school?

We would therefore like to know the following:

- (i) To what extent has the issues relating to Traveller families been considered by the council,
- (ii) What weight has been afforded to these issues in reaching the decision of the proposed closure of St Dominic's
- (iii) How does the council propose to mitigate the consequences of closing St. Dominic's (iv)



Can the council confirm if an equality impact assessment has been carried out, taking into account the above information. IF so, could they provide a copy of this for review please?

We would like to challenge that by submitting the proposal for closure, the council are applying a policy which substantially disadvantages our Irish Travellers. This appears to be an unlawful interference with Traveller children's rights under Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (the right to non-discrimination), as well as Article 1 of Protocol 2 (the right to education).

2.3. PARTNERSHIP / 'SOFT FEDERATION' AGREEMENT WITH ST SCHOLASTICA'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL:

As

part of the financial recovery plan for St. Dominic's and following the retirement of the head teacher in August 2024, the governing body proposed a restructure of the school leadership team to make some savings. This involved a 'soft partnership' with St Scholastica's where an Executive Head was shared between the two schools instead of replacing a full-time head teacher. The school engaged extensively with Hackney Education's leadership team as well as with the Head of Finance, both of whom were sighted on our 3-year recovery plan. The council fully supported this agreement and signed it off in June 2024 for two years, just at the end of the summer term.

This school year marked the beginning of this partnership agreement from September 2024. It was therefore a shock to be informed one week into the school year, that the council proposes to close the school. It is the view of the governors that the council may have kept key information from the governing body and allowed us to enter into a 2-year agreement, only to decide to close the school when they haven't given the partnership a chance to be established and effect some changes which would bring about further savings.

We would ask that this proposal should be paused to allow this new partnership arrangement to continue for the duration of the agreed period of two years.

See attached for partnership agreement, agreed by Hackney Education and Westminster Diocese – Appendix 2

2.4 ACADEMIC STANDARDS FOR ST DOMINIC'S:

St. Dominic's children consistently achieve brilliant end of year/ phase assessment scores. Our EYFS and KS1 children score very successfully across literacy, numeracy and phonic screening tests. Our most recent end of Primary School/ KS2 progress data states that our children rank higher than the national average for achieving the age-related expectation in Reading (77%), Writing (82%), Maths (75%) and Grammar & Spelling (86%).

See Attainment Data 2023/2024 – (attached) – Appendix 3



The last Ofsted inspection in March 2023 found that St Dominic's continues to be a good school. The inspection noted that:

'This is a caring and welcoming school. School staff and pupils treat each other with respect and kindness. Pupils understand what is special about their school and work hard 'to love, learn, hope, trust and care'.

Bullying rarely happens here. If it does, adults act swiftly so that it stops. Pupils feel happy and safe here because they know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries.

Pupils are taught about democracy. They vote for their classmates to take on positions of responsibility. For example, pupils have opportunities to be members of the school council. Pupils can also apply to become 'Doves'. Doves are pupils who promote the spiritual life of the school by leading prayers and assemblies'

They found that St Dominic's did particularly well in the following areas:

'Leaders have designed a well-structured curriculum that meets the requirements of the national curriculum. They have identified what they want pupils to learn and broken this down into logical steps. For example, in Year 2, pupils can work out money problems involving change because they have previously been taught place value and subtraction. In the early years, children complete rangoli patterns with understanding. This is because they have previously been taught about patterns and symmetry. This supports children's readiness for Year 1

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively so that they can access learning alongside their peers. Leaders, teachers and other adults work together to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders seek advice and support from a range of external professionals, such as therapists and psychologists. These experts provide training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. Therefore, leaders and teachers adapt teaching and resources appropriately so that pupils with SEND develop independence and learn well

Leaders have created a nurturing environment for both pupils and staff. Governors are committed to and ambitious for the school. They understand what the school does well and what it needs to do to be even better. Governors work with leaders to check on the well-being of staff. Staff value the care and assistance they receive from senior leaders to support their well-being and workload.' **See Ofsted Report 2023 (attached) – Appendix 4**

3.0. CONCLUSION

Based on the points raised in this response, we believe that the council has not provided adequate time and space for a discussion around alternative proposal for the future of the school. The governing body agreed on the 'soft partnership' with St Scholastica's in good faith and with the full support of Hackney Education and the Westminster Diocese. It is only fair that the partnership should be given a chance to make a difference, not only in



strengthening Catholic education in Hackney, but also to impact positively on the children, staff and parents of St Dominic's.

The governing body of St Dominic's Primary School is therefore requesting that the proposal for closure of the school should be paused/withdrawn, and that the council education leadership and the Westminster Diocese should sit around the table with the school to agree an alternative proposal for the future of the school.

4.0. TABLE OF APPENDICES/ATTACHMENTS – ZIP FILE

APPENDIX	ITEM
1	Section 48 Inspection report 2022
2	Partnership / 'Soft Federation' Agreement between St Dominic's & St Scholastica's RC Primary Schools
3	St Dominic's School Attainment Data 2023/2024
4	St Dominic's Ofsted report March 2023

Report submitted by Dominic's RC Primary School Governing body

Signed: 

Eileen Bryant, Chair of St Dominic's GB

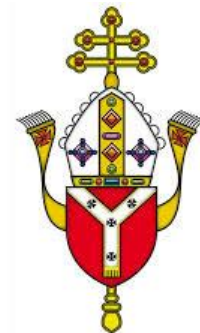
On behalf of St Dominic's Governors

Dated: 18th November 2024

St Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Ballance Road, London E9 5SR

Date of inspection by Westminster Diocese: 26 May 2022



Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

A. Classroom religious education is good

- The contribution of religious education is evident and permeates all aspects of the learning environment of the school.
- The scheme of work is used creatively and is delivered using a good range of resources.
- Staff create a positive, safe and nurturing climate of learning for all pupils.
- Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects.
- Pupils are offered a creative and varied curriculum to support them in becoming critical and independent thinkers.
- Behaviour and attitudes to learning by all pupils is consistently positive, enabling them to make good progress.
- Effective teaching strategies are evident in RE lessons and lead to good outcomes for most children.
- Senior leaders, governors and the subject leader for religious education demonstrate a clear vision and commitment to high standards.

Classroom religious education is not yet outstanding because

- There are some inconsistencies in approaches to teaching, so opportunities for challenge are sometimes missed.
- Pupils need further opportunities to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation, especially in KS2.

B. The Catholic life of the school is outstanding

- This is a very welcoming and vibrant school, fully living out the school's mission: 'In Jesus, we love, learn, hope, trust and care'.
- Religious education is at the heart of the school.
- Pupils are actively involved in supporting those in need and proactive in responding locally, nationally and globally.
- The quality, strength and warmth of the relationships of all members of the school are outstanding and the school creates a tangible sense of unity and mutual respect.
- The partnerships between school, parents, parish, governors and diocese are exceptional and are a key, vibrant and central part of the school's understanding of itself as a community.
- The headteacher, leadership team, staff and governors are an example for all - outward facing and inclusive - and they have created a cohesive and joyful school.
- Worship and prayer are central to the life of the school and pupils are offered many opportunities to celebrate the Eucharist and the Sacrament of Reconciliation throughout the liturgical year.
- The ways in which the school expresses its Catholic identity affirm the cultural richness of the community it serves.
- The school offers outstanding support for all staff which enables them to contribute well to the Catholic life of the school.

A. Classroom Religious Education

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection highlighted the need to improve teaching and pupil progress by ensuring that teachers set work at the right level in order to develop pupils' extended writing skills; that they provide pupils with more detailed feedback on how to improve their work and that they use questioning more effectively, particularly for the most able pupils.

The school remains committed to these areas; school leaders and staff are continually striving for improvement in classroom teaching and are ready to adapt current practice in order to improve standards. Pupils' work demonstrates plenty of opportunities for pupils to write at length. Teachers' marking now provides some feedback to pupils on how to improve their work. More effective questioning in religious education lessons is apparent in lesson observations.

All areas in the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The content of classroom religious education is good

The content of the religious education (RE) curriculum of this school meets the requirements of the *Religious Education Curriculum Directory* (RECD). Pupils are encouraged to be creative and are given the opportunity to present their learning in a variety of ways: art; drama; mind maps; technology; debates and discussions. Pupils clearly enjoy singing and Key Stage 2 pupils sang joyfully during the Ascension Day Mass at St Dominic's church. The emphasis on prior learning enables pupils to consolidate their knowledge as they move through the key stages of learning. Pupils are encouraged to think about key concepts through the use of 'talk partners' which helps them to become informed, independent and critical thinkers. Key vocabulary, highlighted effectively during lessons, encourages pupils to talk and write about their knowledge and understanding of their faith. One parent was 'proud that their child can pray so well'. Another parent declared, 'pupils' achievement is regularly celebrated and that inspires the children'. The school invites outside speakers as well as school staff of other faiths to help the children learn about other religions. Pupils are also given opportunities to visit places of worship in the community. One pupil stated that 'we need to be able to relate to anyone we meet'. Another pupil announced that 'everyone is accepted here'.

Pupil achievement in religious education is good

Pupil achievement is good when measured against the diocesan 'Standards Document', the school's own internal tracking system and deanery and diocesan moderation. Pupils are articulate and enthusiastic. The behaviour and attitude of pupils observed across the school is good. Children in Early Years were able to demonstrate excellent religious literacy by naming and explaining the key events of The Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus. Reception children were able to explain that the Holy Spirit gives them strength, power, love and energy and makes them feel 'strong, happy and excited.' Pupils in all key stages are keen to share their work and discuss what they know about their faith in peer and class discussions. Year 4 responses in answer to the question on display, 'After the Ascension, where is God now?' included the following: 'God is in us...in kindness...in laughter too'; 'God is beside me at all times'; 'God is in our family and friends'; 'God is love'. Pupils are aware of the purpose of marking but are not always given the detailed feedback they need in order to improve their work. Internal, deanery and diocesan moderations are used to improve teacher subject knowledge of the age-related expectations, thereby developing a shared understanding of assessment across the school. Pupil attainment is in line with other core subjects. Most pupils make good progress in RE and pupils' discussions in RE demonstrate a confidence in their use of religious vocabulary and in their understanding of key concepts.

The quality of teaching is good

The quality of teaching across the school is good. This leads to pupils achieving well over time. Through carefully planned professional development, teachers have improved their subject knowledge and this is leading to the planning and teaching of lessons which are beginning to deepen pupils' religious literacy. The RE subject leader has changed the planning meetings so that teachers are individually supported, a strategy which has been highly effective in improving the planning and delivery of lessons. Teachers have worked hard to develop learning intentions, supported by success criteria and driver words, to improve outcomes for all pupils. Teachers make links to previous learning in order to deepen understanding. In a Year 5 class, one pupil was able to talk through a topic confidently from beginning to end: Shrove Tuesday to Easter Sunday. The teaching in the Early Years classes included a good variety of activities which ensured the interest and engagement of all pupils. Differentiation was seen in some classes but this now needs to be shared so that all groups benefit from work set at the appropriate level. Support staff were observed playing a key role in supporting children with special educational needs. Teachers endeavour to ensure all pupils are engaged in their learning. However, there needs to be further consistency in applying appropriate challenge to all classes in the school.

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting religious education is good

Leadership and management of RE are good in this school. The RE subject leader, along with senior leaders, has a clear vision which is shared by all staff members and the governing body. The school's self-evaluation is accurate, recognising areas for development and highlighting effective strategies already in operation to address areas for improvement. Religious education targets form part of staff appraisals and reflect the current priorities in the school development plan. Teaching is monitored regularly and rigorously over time. The leadership team have worked hard to develop systems to support the staff in planning and delivering good RE lessons which engage and challenge pupils. School leaders are particularly committed to staff training and development. All staff, including those from other Christian traditions and other faiths, know that they are valued and there are excellent systems in place to enhance their contributions to the Catholic life of the school. The school recognises its areas for development and is committed to moving the school further forward. The governors are well informed and have been instrumental in ensuring that there is a clear vision and commitment to the school's key role in the educational mission of the church.

What should the school do to develop further in classroom religious education?

- To ensure teachers offer regular opportunities for stretch and challenge.
- To ensure all pupils have opportunities to develop the skills of analysis and evaluation, especially in KS2.

B. The Catholic life of the school

What has improved since the last inspection?

The previous inspection highlighted the need to increase the number of visits that are related to pupils' religious education topics, and to explore the possibility of introducing a Retreat programme as well as increasing the proportion of teachers who hold the CCRS qualification.

The school has worked hard at providing a range of speakers, especially in the teaching of other faiths. The knowledge of school staff of other faiths has been well-utilised to enhance lessons. In addition, high quality speakers deliver scripture workshops and planning sessions to support staff subject knowledge of the Catholic faith. A retreat programme for Years 5 and 6 has been established in collaboration with a local Catholic secondary school. School visits have included frequent visits to Westminster Cathedral. The number of teachers who hold the CCRS qualification has increased to 4 with another member of staff currently enrolled on the course. A number of both teaching and support staff have completed the Foundation Stones course in order to increase their knowledge of the Catholic faith.

All areas of the previous inspection have been fully addressed.

The place of religious education as the core of the curriculum is outstanding

The curriculum meets the requirements of the Bishops' Conference with 10% of curriculum time allocated to RE. The budget for RE is on a par with the budgets for other core subjects. An annual professional development day is focused on the religious education curriculum and the Catholic life of the school. This is attended by all staff, parish clergy and governors. The school rightly recognises the centrality of religious education and staff are encouraged to complete the Foundation Stones course to support their knowledge and skills. The leadership team, supported by the parish priests and governors, work very hard to ensure that pupils are provided with the best opportunities possible and that staff are well-supported in their professional development. Teaching assistants are allocated to every RE lesson as well as appropriate 1:1 adult support for pupils with special educational needs. RE displays and prayer corners are in place in every classroom with key words being prominent to enhance pupils' religious literacy. Human flourishing is celebrated through themed displays in all communal areas throughout the school. Displays are of high quality and are reflective of the school's work in Catholic social teaching and racial justice. Parents recognise the importance the school places on its Catholic life. Governors are very well-informed and work closely with the leadership team to develop and review the quality of pupils' religious experience and are aware of areas for further development. The school clearly places a high emphasis on the centrality of the Catholic faith to its mission and life.

The experience of Catholic worship – prayer and liturgy – for the whole school community is outstanding

The school excels in offering daily opportunities for pupils to pray and reflect. It meets its commitment to ensuring prayer and worship are part of the daily rhythm of pupils' experience at school. There is an excellent planned programme for prayer and worship so that pupils are afforded every opportunity to experience the breadth and richness of the Catholic tradition. The liturgical year is the foundation upon which the rich prayer life of the school is based. Mass is celebrated on Holy Days and Feast Days throughout the year. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is offered at key

times. Since the pandemic, pupils are becoming more confident in preparing and leading acts of worship and do so with reverence and pride. Even the very youngest pupils in the Early Years classes are able to show reverence during prayer times and can confidently pray the Sign of the Cross and the Hail Mary. The school's chaplaincy team, the Doves, know the school's mission statement and can recite it confidently. The Doves supported the preparation of worship in a Key Stage 1 liturgy. In a Year 4 class act of worship, pupils were able to share spontaneous prayers based on the meaning of the mission statement in their own lives. In discussion, the Doves shared that St Dominic's is a place where 'they are not told, but they are shown how to behave'. Staff are excellent role models for their pupils. The *Capture That Thought* book in each class from Year 1 to Year 6 is an excellent record of enabling pupils' voices to be heard through personal thoughts, prayers and reflections throughout the liturgical year.

The contribution to the Common Good – service and social justice –

is outstanding

It is clear that the school is a very nurturing environment where pupils are encouraged to develop and celebrate their gifts and talents so that they can flourish and become valuable members of the community. Pupils have many opportunities to explore and share these talents. The Doves, the school's chaplaincy team, are actively involved in service within the school, supporting prayer and worship, particularly for the younger pupils. Pupils' individual talents, achievements and service are celebrated in golden tree award assemblies. Pupils speak about how they feel valued by the acknowledgement of their gifts and talents during these celebrations. Pupils are extremely polite, welcoming and friendly and it is evident that they are taught to respect, value and celebrate everyone in their school and the world around them. The school promotes service and self-sacrifice in all aspects of school life and this is modelled by school staff. During the pandemic, the deputy headteacher organised a food and clothing bank and a teaching assistant volunteered at the local food bank. As a result, the pupils understand the importance of supporting those in need. The call to serve was the theme of the retreat for Years 5 and 6 in October 2021. Through regular assemblies and fundraising events for charities, including the Catholic Children's Society, Save the Children and Cafod, pupils understand that the Catholic community has a collective responsibility to be of service to the local community and to the wider world. Most recently, the pupils raised money for the Ukraine and for the Little Princess Trust. Pupils are committed to answering the call to service as disciples of the faith and as active global citizens.

The partnership with parents, school and parish, and collaboration as an integral part of the diocese through its relationship with the diocesan Bishop and those acting on his behalf

is outstanding

Partnerships at all levels are outstanding and the school should be proud of its work in this area. Parents are very complimentary and appreciative of the school's work as demonstrated by the responses when meeting inspectors and by the questionnaires reviewed during the inspection. Parents appreciate the welcome the school offers and the many invitations to join their children in worship. They also value the prayer bear sent home for children to pray with families, which is then sent back to school with prayers composed at home. Parents are actively supported by the school when faced with the challenges of inadequate housing and financial hardship. The school leadership team works closely with other Catholic schools in the deanery and is actively engaged with the diocese for moderation, collaboration and to participate in meetings and training. The school puts itself at the service of the diocese in a number of ways, including sharing their work on racial justice and unconscious bias. There are excellent links with the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary, St

Dominic's and St Jude's and the parish clergy are regular visitors to the school. The leadership team and the governing body are forward thinking, always seeking and forging a variety of positive partnership opportunities. They are invested in a long-term understanding of the school within the immediate and wider community and they actively follow their pupils' faith journeys by effective collaboration with the Catholic secondary schools attended by their pupils.

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school

is outstanding

The effectiveness of leadership and management in promoting the Catholic life of the school is outstanding. The headteacher with the senior leaders, governors and staff are an example for all – outward facing and inclusive – and they have created a wonderful, joyful school community. Senior leaders have a clear and accurate action plan which identifies the areas for further improvement. Governors are clearly effective and play a proactive role in supporting the Catholic life of the school. The link governor for religious education is highly involved and works with school leaders to provide insightful, strategic challenge. All leaders are fully committed to the Church's mission in education and the school's mission statement, 'In Jesus we love, learn, hope, trust and care' is at the heart of all they do. Faith is articulated and a bridge is built from the outside world to the Catholic life of the school. Displays throughout the school, where each child may see themselves reflected as a unique child of God, also reflect the cultural richness and diversity of the school community. The vision of true human flourishing, through a rich experience of Catholic life, is shared by the whole school community. As a result, pupils and staff experience an inclusive community dedicated to the development of the whole person. The outstanding leadership enables pupils and staff, of all faiths and none, to be nurtured and developed.

What should the school do to develop further the Catholic life of the school?

- To further develop pupils' understanding of Catholic Social Teaching throughout the school and their articulation of the theology behind their actions.

Information about this school

- The school is a two-form entry Catholic primary school in the locality of Hackney.
- The school serves the parishes of Immaculate Heart of Mary and St Dominic, Homerton, and St Jude's, Lower Clapton.
- The proportion of pupils who are baptised Catholic is 56%.
- The proportion of pupils who are from other Christian denominations is 43% and from other faiths is 3%. The remaining pupils are from families who have not declared a faith.
- The percentage of Catholic teachers in the school is 40%.
- The number of teachers with a Catholic qualification is 4.
- There are 30% of pupils in the school with special educational needs or disabilities of whom 9 have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP).
- The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups is well above average.
- The number of pupils speaking English as an Additional Language is well above average.
- There is a well above average rate of families claiming free school meals.
- 159 pupils receive the Pupil Premium (53%).

Department for Education Number	204/2900
Unique Reference Number	133669
Local Authority	Hackney
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary-Aided
Age range of pupils	3-11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on roll	299
The appropriate authority	The Governing Body
Chair	Mrs Eileen Bryant
Headteacher	Ms Deirdre Finan
Telephone number	0208 985 0995
Website	www.stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Email address	admin@stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	21 January 2016
Grades from previous inspection:	
Classroom religious education	Good
The Catholic life of the school	Outstanding

Information about this inspection

This inspection was carried out (i) under the requirements of the Canon 806 and (ii) in accordance with the Framework for Diocesan Inspections 2015 approved by the Archbishop of Westminster and (iii) under section 48 of the Education Act 2005.

- The inspectors would like to thank the governors, headteacher, staff, pupils and parents for their co-operation over the conduct of the inspection.
- During the inspection, 12 lessons or part lessons were observed.
- The inspectors attended 3 class acts of worship and the celebration of Mass for Key Stage 2.
- Meetings were held with parents, school staff, pupils and governors.
- Other evidence was gathered from contacts with parents through a questionnaire, scrutiny of a sample of pupils' work, observation of pupils in and out of lessons and examination of school documents.

Inspection Team

The inspectors are appointed by the Archbishop.

Ms Norah Flatley

Mr Tony Gorton

Ms Aisling Meehan

Lead Inspector

Associate Inspector

Associate Inspector

Information about inspection

The purpose of Diocesan inspection is to report to and advise the Archbishop on the quality of classroom religious education and the Catholic life of the school. The inspection report is also used to inform parents and carers, and the wider Catholic community. Inspection provides an opportunity to support, challenge, evaluate and promote the work of Catholic schools. It also assists schools in the work of self-evaluation and improvement, and enables the Diocese to celebrate with schools their sense of identity and their strengths as Catholic schools.

Inspection Grades

- Outstanding
- Good
- Requires improvement
- Causing concern

This report is published by the Diocese of Westminster and is available at:

<http://rcdow.org.uk/education/schools>

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Partnership agreement between St Dominic's and St Scholastica's Schools

For the purposes of this agreement, the term partnership refers to the management of both schools by the Head teacher of St Scholastic's Catholic Primary School assuming the role of Executive Head teacher (EH) at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School under the terms and conditions laid down below.

Vision and Aims.

1.1 A partnership should:

- Bring clear benefits for the children of both schools;
- Share and develop staff expertise across both schools;
- Try out different and innovative ways of working;
- Raise the aspirations of children, staff, parents and governors;
- Secure strong strategic leadership;
- Maintain and develop individual characters, the catholic ethos and distinctiveness of each school but also to use differences to enhance the experience for children from both schools.

2. Executive Headship (EH)

2.1 A school partnership will be established between St Dominic's and St Scholastica's School where both schools are managed by one Executive Head teacher.

- Both schools will maintain separate governing bodies;
- The schools retain their own identity and character;
- Trust and good relationships are not compromised;
- Raising achievements and developing high quality teaching and learning remain a key priority;
- The quality of education and curriculum provision is enhanced;
- The high standards of pupil behaviour are maintained;
- The confidence of all stakeholders is retained and secured for the partnership.

2.2 The working arrangements for the Executive Headteacher including dedicated leadership time shall be agreed and kept under review by the Chairs of Governors. The Executive Headteacher will support St Dominic's School for the equivalent of 2.5 days each week.

3. Implementation of Partnership

3.1 Both schools will pay due attention to the contractual rights of all affected employees and will seek professional advice in regards to these matters.

3.2 The Governing Body of St Dominic's School will ensure key information is shared in order to support appropriate safeguarding arrangement and financial probity (see annex A).

3.3 Both Governing Bodies will ensure arrangements are in place that permit each school to have an appropriate and reasonable level of day to day management and leadership of teaching and learning in place at all times in the absence of the Executive Headteacher (see annex A). Arrangements should be considered by the individual Governing Bodies with respect to the remuneration of other staff undertaking additional responsibilities.

3.4 Any complaints and concerns about the implementation and impact of the Executive Headship arrangements will be directed to the Executive Headteacher, who will promptly raise the issues with the Chair of Governors of partner schools. The Chairs of each Governing Body will take ultimate responsibility for investigating and resolving any such complaints and concerns.

3.5 Any complaints or grievances against the Executive Headteacher will be managed by the Chairs of Governors with guidance from Hackney Education.

4. Monitoring and Review of the Partnership

4.1 The outcomes of any external/internal reviews (parents, staff, SIP etc) will be reported to the governing bodies individually. These will also be copied to the Chair of Governors for information.

4.2 The performance management of any substantive Head of Schools/senior leaders remains the

responsibility of the Executive Headteacher. The performance of the Executive Headteacher will be monitored the Joint Committee. The Executive Headteacher's performance management will be carried out by a performance management review panel which will consist of two representatives from St Dominic's Catholic Primary School and one representative from St Scholastica's Catholic Primary School.

5. Financial Operation

5.1 The Governing Bodies will agree an appropriate temporary salary level for the Executive Headteacher for the time for which she will lead the partnership. The Chairs of Governors will seek guidance from the schools' linked officers for school improvement, Finance and HR to inform their decision.

5.2 The Chairs of Governors will agree the division of the Executive Headteacher's salary and other employment costs between each school in the partnership should have involvement from the Hackney Education finance officers (as set out in annex A)

5.3 Each school will make arrangements in conjunction with their School Finance Officer for the calculation and transfer of the proportionate employment costs of the Executive Headteacher. The costs and savings of the Executive Headship will be managed within existing school budgets.

5.4 Each school will establish the roles and responsibilities for financial management.

5.5 To ensure transparency, where the partnership arrangement involves charges between schools these commitments should be pre-agreed with the Leadership Committee of the Governing Body of St Dominic's Primary School. This is particularly important for charges not included in the original partnership agreement (For example, this might include the charges for 1 day per week of a senior leader, occasional days of support from admin staff or shared costs for resources or training.)

6. Dissolution of Partnership

6.1 In order to terminate the partnership before the scheduled end date, each school must give two terms' written notice and also have the support of the Director of Education (HEd). This requirement for two terms' notice shall not apply (a) in the case of the serious misconduct by either partner school or any persons acting on their behalf ; (b) if Hackney Education recommends the termination of the partnership occurs less than two terms' notice; and/or (c) if any event occurs which would result in either party (acting reasonably) desiring to terminate the partnership on less than two terms' notice on the grounds that such an event has had or would likely have a materially adverse effect on one or both of St Dominic's and St Scholastica's schools.

The Governing Body of St Dominic's or St Scholastica's School must agree by a majority vote to propose the dissolution of the partnership. In the case of a split vote, the Chair of Governors will have the casting vote.

6.2 Upon the dissolution of the partnership the Executive Headteacher will return to the substantive post and scale point, plus any salary points awarded due to performance management during the time of the executive headship at St Dominic's Catholic Primary School unless other arrangements have been agreed;

6.3 Should the executive headship dissolve, a review will be undertaken by governors of both schools and the Chair of the TAG to ensure that staffing and management structures match the future needs of each institution;

7. Review of the Agreement

7.1 The Chairs of Governors at both schools will review the agreement with the Executive Head at the mid-year Performance Management.

8. Alterations to this Agreement

8.1 Any alterations to this agreement, inclusions, deletions or additions must first be agreed by the Director of Education or Chair of the TAG and then by both governing bodies.

ANNEX A

EXECUTIVE HEADTEACHER ARRANGEMENTS

<p>1. Executive Headteacher and substantive post with current salary scale point</p>	<p>L/ship Scale Pt L21 £86,119</p>
<p>2. Planned start and finish dates</p>	<p>September 2024 to August 2026</p>
<p>3. Agreed Executive HT salary scale point</p> <p>Possible advancement through performance management review applies as usual</p>	<p>L24 - £91,095. 12% uplift - £102,026.40 Up to 42.98% oncosts - £145,877.35</p> <p>50% share of salary for each school – £72,938.67</p>
<p>4. Contractual arrangements</p>	<p>The Executive Headteacher will receive a contract variation confirming the arrangements for the planned duration of the partnership. This will be issued by St Scholastica’s Catholic Primary School.</p> <p>St Scholastica’s Catholic Primary School and St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School will share the cost of the Executive Headteacher’s salary which will include oncosts. Each school will be responsible for 50% of this total.</p> <p>St Scholastica’s Catholic Primary School will invoice to St Dominic’s Primary School for payment the 50% of the cost of the Executive Headteacher on a monthly basis.</p> <p>If it is anticipated that partnership costs are reasonably likely to exceed the 50% share of the Executive Headteacher salary, the Executive Headteacher will report to the Resources/ Leadership Committees of each Governing Body in advance and will seek the approval of such Committee prior to incurring any such increased costs (except in case of emergency).</p> <p>Prior to any such overspend, the Executive Headteacher and the Governing Body of St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School shall discuss a reasonable and appropriate arrangement for payment of these costs</p> <p>Each school will make its own arrangements to meet leadership and management requirements during the absence from the site of the Executive Headteacher. Any additional costs arising will be met by each school. A contract variation will be issued to any affected staff confirming the arrangements for the planned duration of the partnership.</p>
<p>5. Executive Headteacher working arrangements</p>	<p>The Executive Headteacher will normally split their time 0.5 / 0.5 between St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School and St Scholastica’s Catholic Primary School (on average not set days)</p>
<p>6. Leadership arrangements at each school when the Headteacher is off-site (any later changes will be agreed by the relevant Governing Body).</p>	<p><u>St Dominic’s Catholic Primary School</u> When the Executive Head teacher is off-site the following leadership is in place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interim Head of School Assistant Headteacher – Safeguarding & SENCO <p><u>St Scholastica’s Catholic Primary School</u> When the Executive Head teacher is off-site the following leadership is in place:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interim Head of School 2. Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion

7. Financial Management	Governors should consider whether the Scheme of Delegation should be amended in accordance with leadership arrangements in each school.
8. Safeguarding The Designated Person must be in a leadership position, and have Tier 3 LSCB training (1 day general; 2 days follow-up, renewable every 2 years). There must be a Deputy available when the DP is absent (DCFS Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment Guidance 2006_p14). All staff working across partner schools must be entered on the single central record for each school.	<i>The Designated Person (Child Protection) and Deputies for each school will be:</i> <i>St Dominic's Primary School</i> <i>Andrew Armstrong – Assistant Headteacher Safeguarding & SENCO</i> <i>St Scholastica's Primary School</i> <i>Emma Cousins - Assistant Headteacher for Inclusion</i> The Executive Head will inform the Chair of Governors of any convictions or cautions on their own DBS clearances and any changes since the dates of the last clearance. The Executive Head will give consideration to whether the Chair of the supported school should be informed of relevant information relating to any staff members working across schools. Schools will comply with safer recruitment practices. Any queries regarding safeguarding checks will be raised with the Executive Head and the Chair of Governors when appropriate.
9. Dates for review	Any concerns arising about the continued suitability of the arrangement will be raised immediately and appropriately with HLT
10. Arrangements to apply at the dissolution of the Executive Headship arrangement (including premature dissolution)	The Executive Headteacher will revert to her substantive post at the scale point shown above, plus any point/s awarded due to performance management during the time of the executive headship. This will be with immediate effect on the closure of the arrangement. A minimum of two terms notice will be given. Any staffing/salary adjustments at both schools, made to support the Executive Headteacher arrangement, will also close with immediate effect, and staff will revert back to their substantive post, plus any points awarded due to performance management during the time of the partnership. A minimum of two terms' notice will be given.

- The Executive Headteacher has provided St Dominic's Primary School with emergency contact details
- The Executive Headteacher has completed DBS checks and informed the Chair of Governors of St Dominic's Primary School of any convictions or cautions and any changes since the last DBS has been completed.
- The Executive Headteacher has declared any pecuniary interests and will require any staff members working across schools do the same.

Signed: Sandra Brierley



Executive Headteacher

Date: 24/06/2024

Signed:



Chair of Governors, St Dominic's School

Date Eileen Bryant 24/06/2024

Signed:

Chair of Governors St Scholastica's School

Date

Signed: Paul Senior



Director of Education (SSI) Hackney Education

Date: 24/06/2024



ST. DOMINIC'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

ACHIEVEMENT AND PROGRESS DATA

SUMMER 2024

EYFS

	LITERACY	MATHS
EYFS	63%	63%

KS1

	Phonics Screening Test
YEAR 1	74%

KS2

	READING	WRITING	GRAMMAR AND SPELLING	MATHS
Percentage of Year 6 pupils working at the expected standard or above	77%	82%	86%	75%
Percentage of Year 6 pupils achieving a high standard (or working at greater depth within the expected standard – writing only)	14%	9%	23%	9%
Average scaled score	105	N/A	106	103
Percentage of Year 6 pupils working at the expected standard or above in reading, writing and maths (combined)	66%			
Percentage of pupils working at a higher standard in reading, writing and maths (combined)	7%			

Inspection of a good school: St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School

Ballance Road, London E9 5SR

Inspection dates:

28 and 29 March 2023

Outcome

St. Dominic's Catholic Primary School continues to be a good school.

What is it like to attend this school?

This is a caring and welcoming school. School staff and pupils treat each other with respect and kindness. Pupils understand what is special about their school and work hard 'to love, learn, hope, trust and care'.

Pupils behave well in lessons and when moving around the school. This is because staff have high expectations of them. Lessons are not interrupted by poor behaviour. Staff regularly praise pupils and award them green points for demonstrating positive behaviour and values.

Bullying rarely happens here. If it does, adults act swiftly so that it stops. Pupils feel happy and safe here because they know that adults will listen to them if they have any worries.

Pupils are taught about democracy. They vote for their classmates to take on positions of responsibility. For example, pupils have opportunities to be members of the school council. Pupils can also apply to become 'Doves'. Doves are pupils who promote the spiritual life of the school by leading prayers and assemblies.

Pupils are taught about different faiths and cultures. Pupils visit different places of worship, and visiting speakers share their knowledge of other faiths. Pupils are encouraged to understand and respect different beliefs and customs.

What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?

Pupils are taught to read right from the start of Reception. This is because leaders want every pupil to learn to read fluently and without delay. Teachers and teaching assistants are well trained in the school's phonics programme. They are consistent in their teaching

of early reading. Staff check the sounds that pupils know regularly and systematically. This means that pupils who find reading difficult or who start to fall behind are given help to catch up. Pupils are given books that are matched to the sounds they know. This means that they read with developing fluency and enthusiasm.

Leaders have designed a well-structured curriculum that meets the requirements of the national curriculum. They have identified what they want pupils to learn and broken this down into logical steps. For example, in Year 2, pupils can work out money problems involving change because they have previously been taught place value and subtraction. In the early years, children complete rangoli patterns with understanding. This is because they have previously been taught about patterns and symmetry. This supports children's readiness for Year 1.

Leaders make sure that staff have the subject knowledge they need to deliver the curriculum. As a result, teachers deliver curriculum content clearly. However, sometimes, the curriculum is not delivered in the order that leaders intend. In some cases, the activities teachers choose do not link closely to the important knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to know and remember. This means that, sometimes, pupils develop gaps in their learning.

Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) are supported effectively so that they can access learning alongside their peers. Leaders, teachers and other adults work together to identify the needs of pupils with SEND. Leaders seek advice and support from a range of external professionals, such as therapists and psychologists. These experts provide training and support for teachers and teaching assistants. Therefore, leaders and teachers adapt teaching and resources appropriately so that pupils with SEND develop independence and learn well.

Pupils behave well in lessons. This is because expectations and routines are firmly established. This means learning is not interrupted. Leaders and staff help pupils to understand and regulate their feelings. Personal, social, health and economic education is well structured. Leaders aim for pupils to become responsible and respectful citizens. Pupils are taught about the importance of respect and the rule of law. They value and explore the views of others. For example, in Year 4, pupils debate and discuss the impact of climate change on the planet. Lessons across the curriculum help pupils to understand how to identify risks and how to recognise healthy and unhealthy relationships.

Leaders have created a nurturing environment for both pupils and staff. Governors are committed to and ambitious for the school. They understand what the school does well and what it needs to do to be even better. Governors work with leaders to check on the well-being of staff. Staff value the care and assistance they receive from senior leaders to support their well-being and workload.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders ensure that safeguarding is a key priority. Staff are well trained. Leaders provide regular and relevant training, which helps staff to identify and report concerns quickly. Regular updates ensure staff are aware of the risks pupils may face in the local community. Leaders respond quickly to concerns raised. Leaders work closely with outside agencies to secure the necessary support for pupils and families. Leaders carry out robust checks on staff before they are appointed.

Pupils have a good awareness of staying safe in different ways, including online safety. They know they should report concerns to an adult and know they should not share personal information with strangers online.

What does the school need to do to improve?

(Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In a few subjects, the curriculum is not delivered in the order that leaders intend. In some cases, the activities teachers choose do not make explicit important knowledge and skills that leaders want pupils to know and remember. This means that pupils do not routinely apply their knowledge to their current learning and develop gaps in their knowledge. Teachers need to ensure that activities clearly align with the knowledge and skills they want pupils to know and remember. Leaders should ensure that the curriculum is taught as intended so that pupils build the knowledge they need over time.

Background

When we have judged a school to be good, we will then normally go into the school about once every four years to confirm that the school remains good. This is called an ungraded inspection, and it is carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. We do not give graded judgements on an ungraded inspection. However, if we find evidence that a school would now receive a higher or lower grade, then the next inspection will be a graded inspection, which is carried out under section 5 of the Act. Usually, this is within one to two years of the date of the ungraded inspection. If we have serious concerns about safeguarding, behaviour or the quality of education, we will deem the ungraded inspection a graded inspection immediately.

This is the first ungraded inspection since we judged the school to be good in October 2017.

How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, '[disadvantaged pupils](#)' refers to those pupils who attract government pupil premium funding: pupils claiming free school meals at any point in the last six years and pupils in care or who left care through adoption or another formal route.

School details

Unique reference number	133669
Local authority	Hackney
Inspection number	10255485
Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3 to 11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	270
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair of governing body	Eileen Bryant
Headteacher	Deirdre Finan
Website	www.stdominics.hackney.sch.uk
Date of previous inspection	10 and 11 October 2017, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Information about this school

- This is a Roman Catholic school under the Diocese of Westminster.
- The school received a section 48 inspection under the Education Act for schools of a religious character in May 2022.
- The school runs a breakfast club and an after-school club.
- The school makes use of one registered alternative provider.

Information about this inspection

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. The inspector discussed the impact of the pandemic with leaders and has taken that into account in her evaluation of the school.
- The inspector held meetings with members of the senior leadership team to discuss school development, pupils' personal development and behaviour.

- The inspector met with members of the governing body and the Diocese of Westminster. She also met with representatives of the local authority.
- The inspector carried out deep dives in these subjects: early reading, mathematics and geography. For each deep dive, the inspector discussed the curriculum with subject leaders, visited lessons, spoke to teachers, spoke to some pupils about their learning and looked at samples of pupils' work.
- The inspector also spoke to leaders and looked at samples of pupils' work in history and science.
- The views of parents/carers and staff were also considered, including through Ofsted's surveys.
- The inspector reviewed the arrangements for safeguarding by scrutinising records and through discussions with pupils and staff.
- The inspector reviewed a wide variety of documentation provided by the school. This included leaders' self-evaluation, curriculum information and school policies.

Inspection team

Deborah Walters, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

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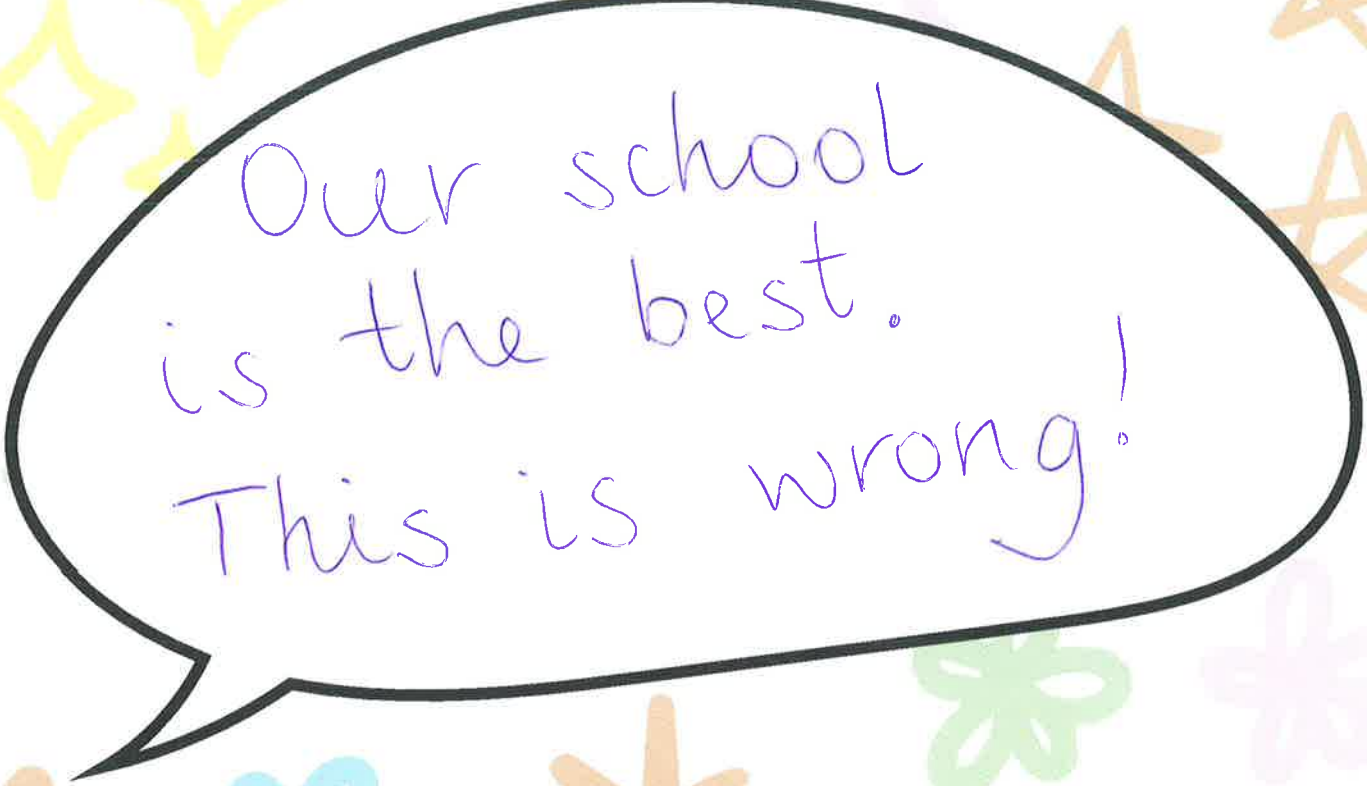
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This is mean
and cruel.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

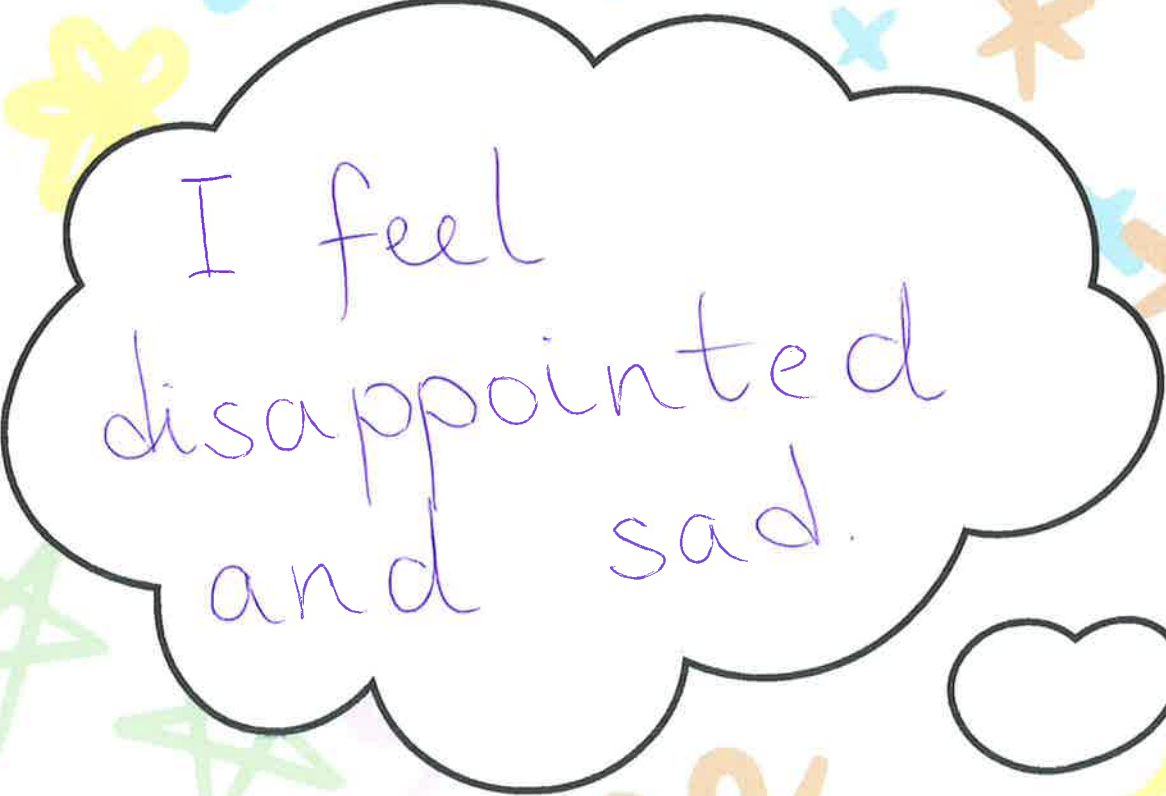
I feel sad
and lonely.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?



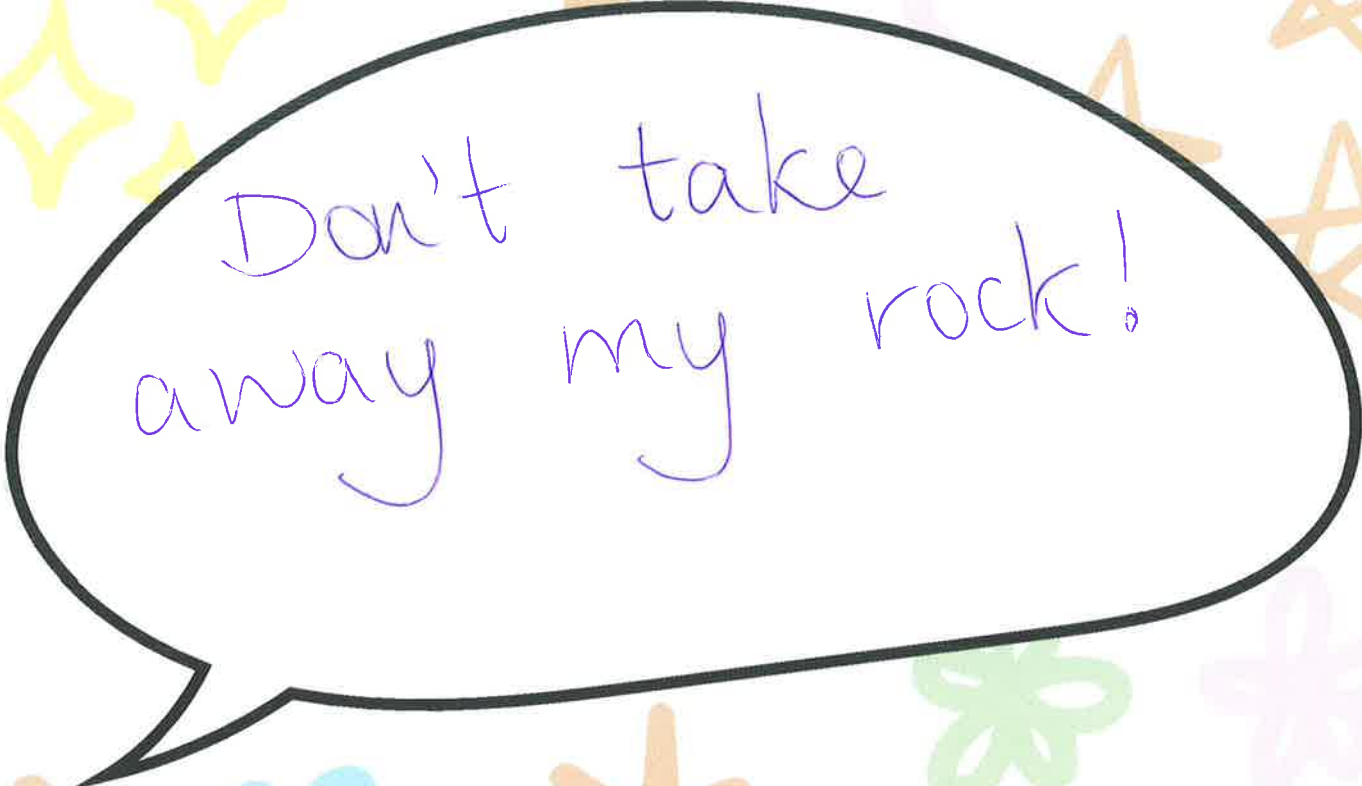
Our school
is the best.
This is wrong!

**What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close
our school?**




I feel
disappointed
and sad.

**How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching
your friend leave our school?**



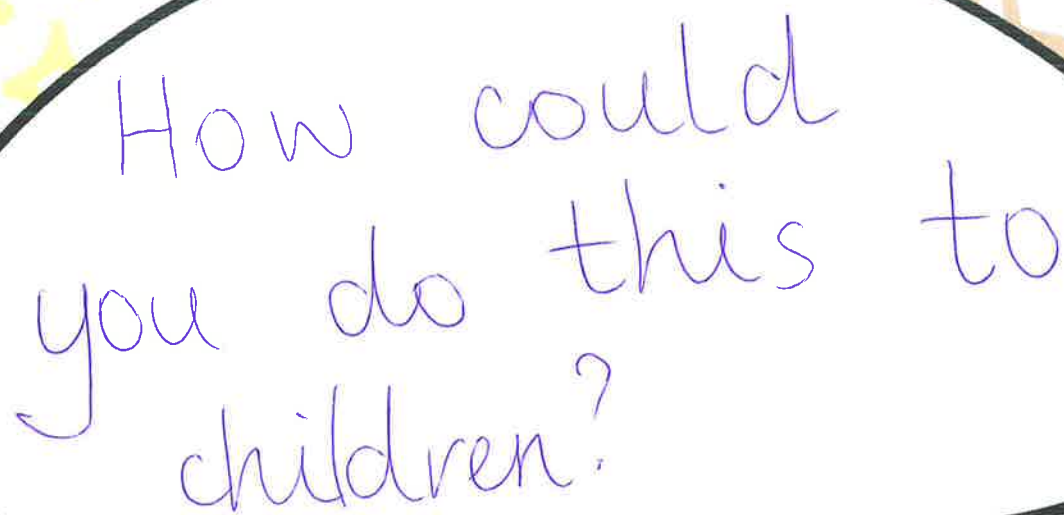
Don't take
away my rock!

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?



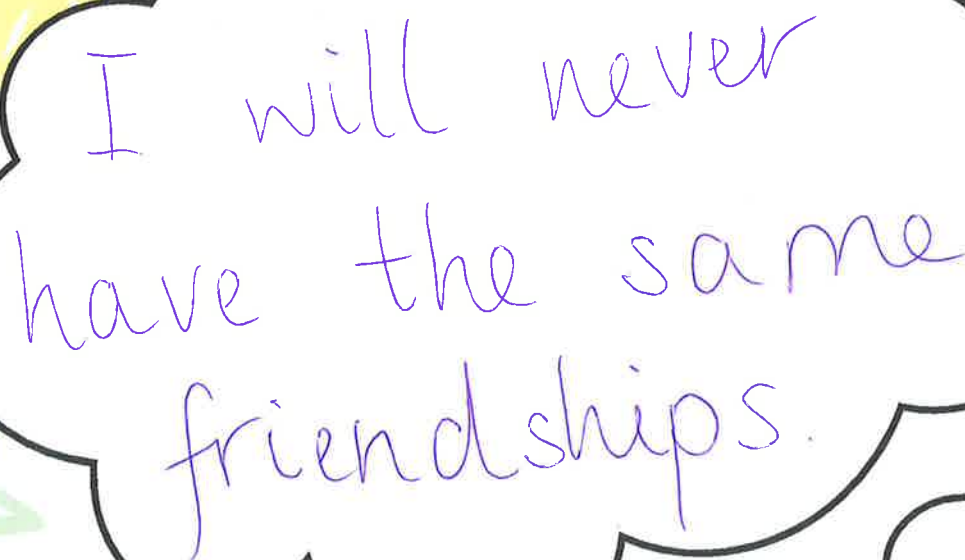
I will miss
everyone.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?



How could
you do this to
children?

**What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close
our school?**



I will never
have the same
friendships.

**How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching
your friend leave our school?**

I don't want the school to shutdown because little kids are still learning and it will be hard for kids and parents to find a new school.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

don't close our school just because we have low kids in our school I love this school because it is my community.

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

I say to not to close our school because it will be very upsetting to us, especially the little children. It will set a big worry to parents, leaving them no chose but to bring their children to new school. This action will tear the only Catholic school in this area's community down. This school has been runing on for 150 years and by the looks of it no-one would want this school to close.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

How I will feel if the school will close is devastated and ~~won't~~ would not like to see my friends upset as well.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

St Dominics is local school that has helped and benefited our community and you closing our school would leave such a bad image of Hackney council. St Dominics is a great example of Hackneys education system so why close it instead of closing our school you should lower your council tax.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would honestly feel sad because when I'm gone from St Dominics so is that spirit.

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

They shouldn't shut down because little children are still learning and finding a different school is tough.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would be heartbroken because I wasted all my time making friends.

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

St. Dominics school is the only catholic school in this area. If a person leaves this school they would have to find new friends and it would be very stressful.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

If my friend leaves this school I would feel really depressed and lonely for days.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

I say that the plan
is a disgrace.

I have been in school
for 6.5 years and i'll be
mad if you decide to shut down
150 years of knowledge

**What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close
our school?**

I'll feel good if it shuts
down because it's going to be
good memories.

But i'll be sad for the kids
with low education

**How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching
your friend leave our school?**

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

I would feel sad because I would have to make new friends and making new friends are hard and everything would be new for me.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would say please don't close the school because I have been in this school for a long time and I don't want to leave. This is the only school in Hackney.

KS

Don't Close
OUR
School it's
Our Childhood
School Please
Find a place in
your heart to keep our
School open.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

And I would
feel sad and
very heart
breaking
I
wouldn't
want to lose
my
friends.

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

please don't
close our school
because we
didn't go to year
6 so please don't
close our school

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

Sad, it is
to hard
to make
friends.

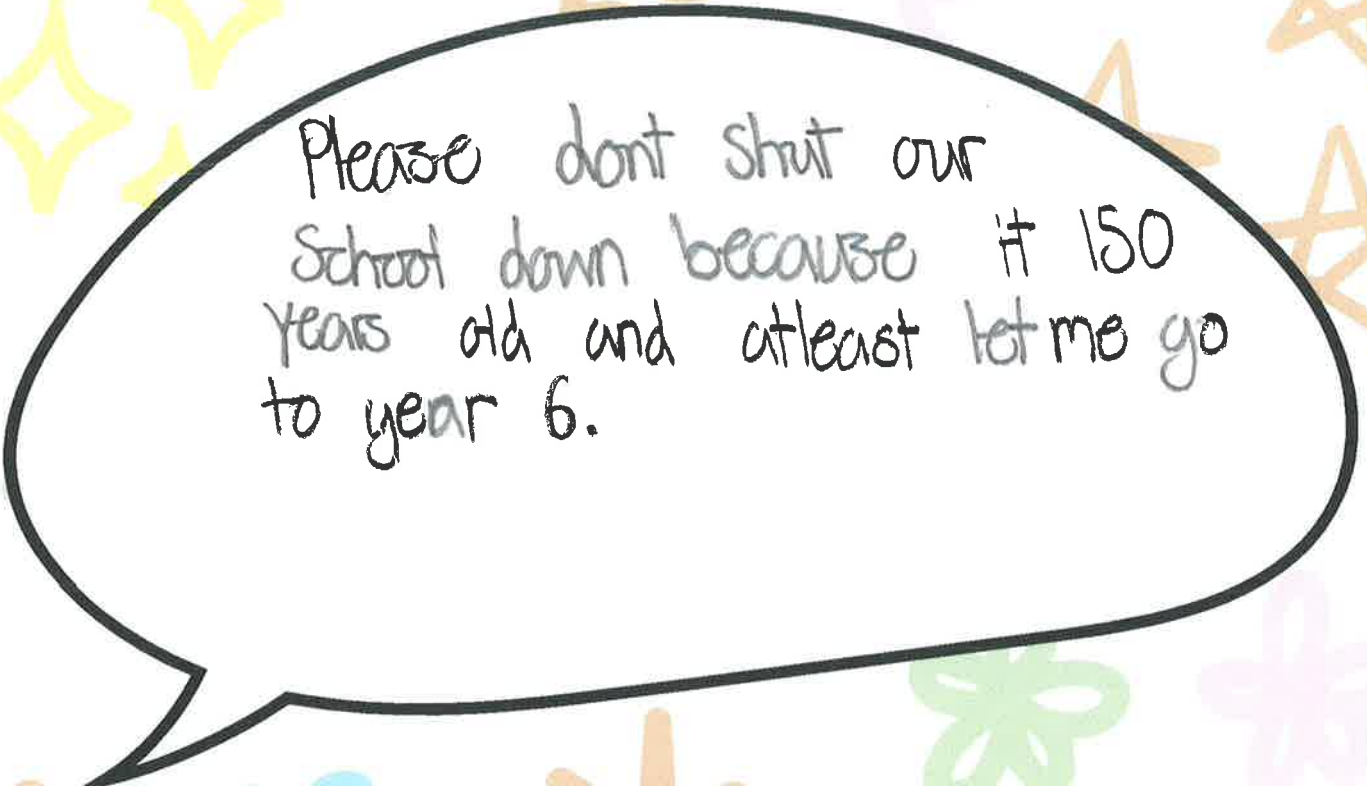
How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

You shouldn't close
a school if you
haven't experienced it.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

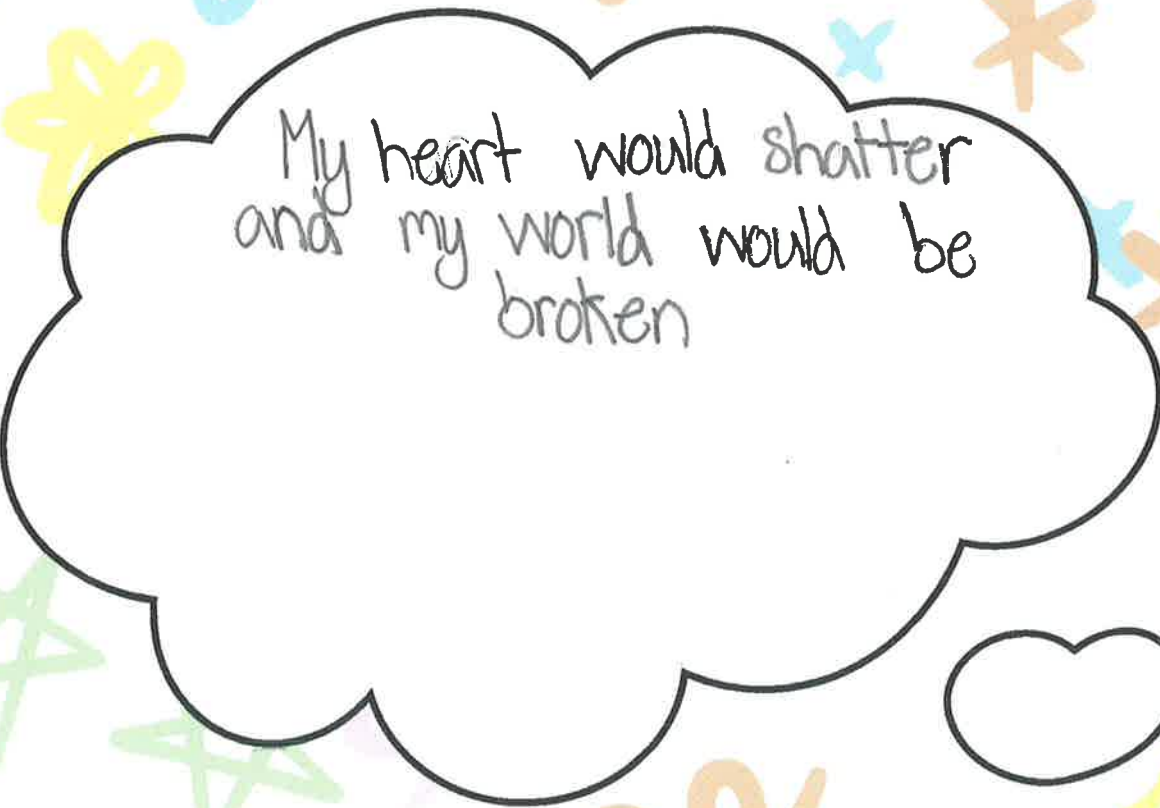
I'd be sooo
sad my heart
would break!!

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?



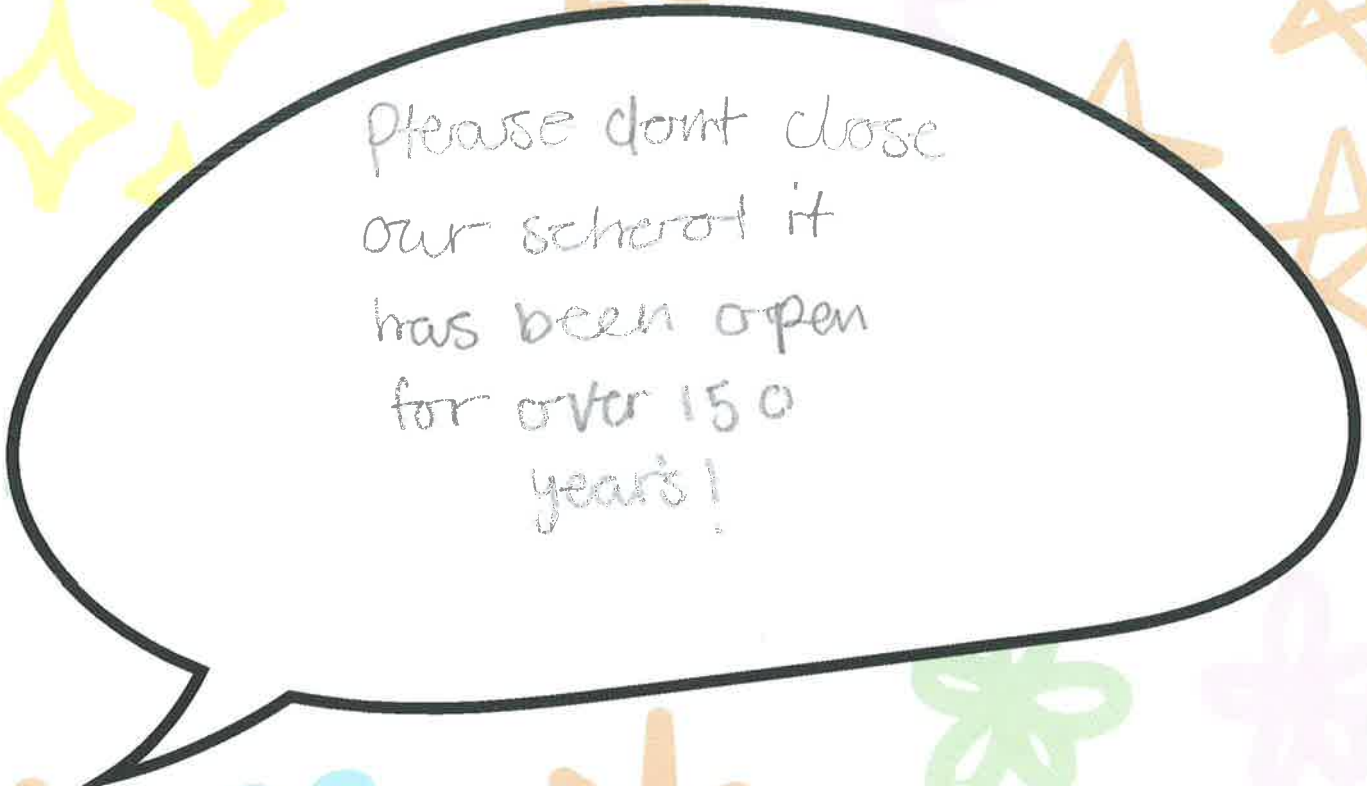
Please dont shut our
School down because it 150
years old and atleast let me go
to year 6.

**What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close
our school?**



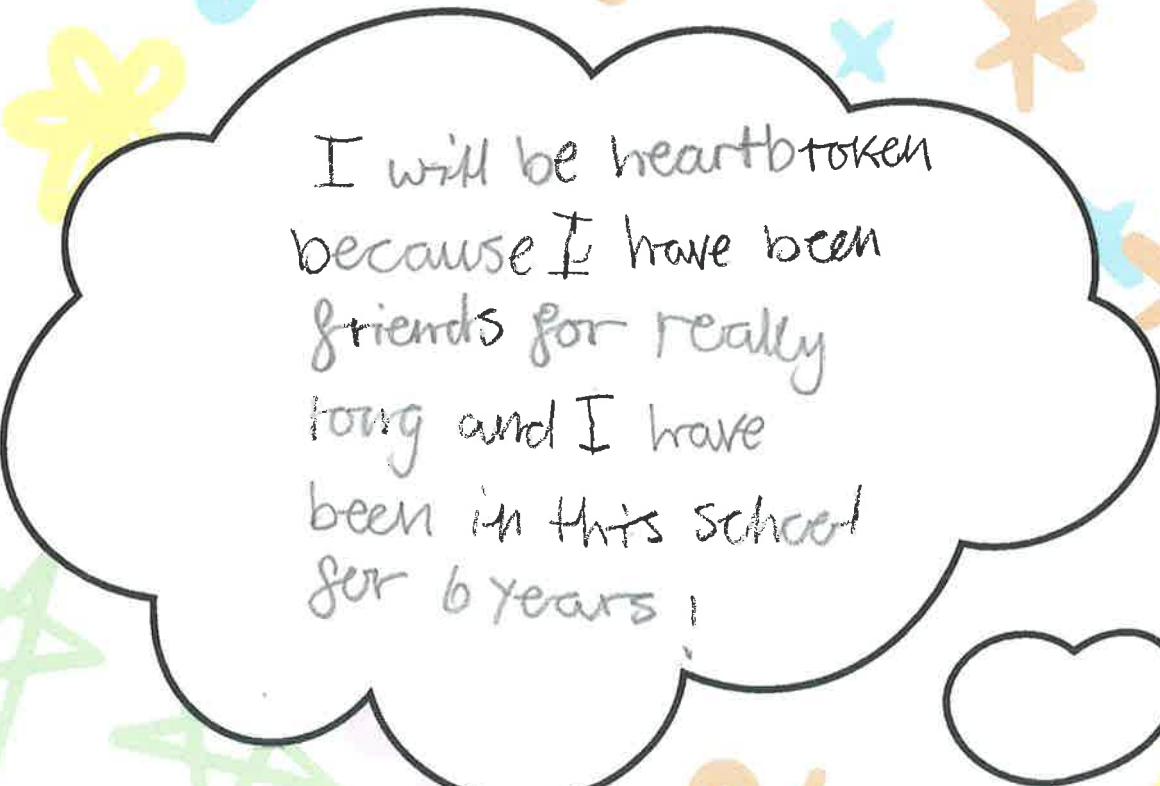
My heart would shatter
and my world would be
broken

**How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching
your friend leave our school?**



Please don't close
our school it
has been open
for over 150
years!

**What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close
our school?**



I will be heartbroken
because I have been
friends for really
long and I have
been in this school
for 6 years!

**How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching
your friend leave our school?**

I ~~would~~ would say they are making the wrong decision because this school is the most caring school ever and all of the teachers and TA's are the best and they are so kind. And the people who are in the school.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would be sad and confused. Sad because I might never see them again but also confused because why would they want to close a perfectly good school. Our school is a place where we help love and share with people and this school is a caring school and we are like family.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

Nariyah

don't Close our school
it Has 1 been open of
150 Years

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

OUR School is a
Good school we are
a family

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

no! Please give us more time.
St dominic's will show you that
we aren't just a school.
we are a community that will
fight even if there about
to close the doors!

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would feel devastated
that I would have to
leave the friends
I knew for a
very long time.
It would be hard
to let go. I just
could not imagine
leaving my school.

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

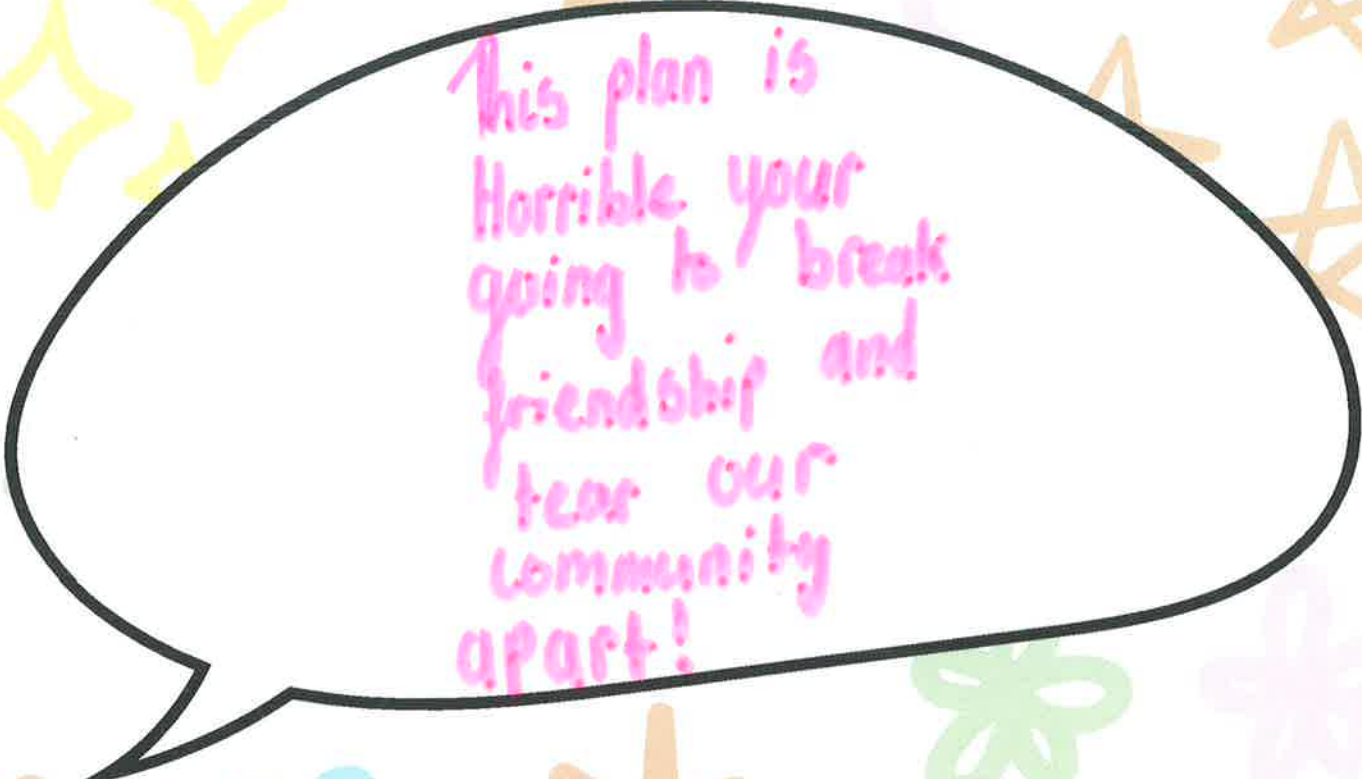
Why would you ^{close} our school?
Our school has been up for
many years and there are many
generations to come to this school.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I feel miserable
that the poor, ^{knowing} unfortunate
Youngers have to find another
School and leave their friends
it breaks my heart knowing
how sad they will be

B

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?



This plan is
Horrible. you
going to break
friendship and
tear our
community
apart!

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?



I feel
Horrible that
i might never
see my friends
again!

How do you feel about either leaving St.Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

Please do not close our school
because people won't be able to learn,
get smart and graduate.

What would you say to Hackney council about the plan to close our school?

I would feel sad

How do you feel about either leaving St. Dominic's or watching your friend leave our school?

SAVE ABE SCHOOLS

1. Please Please Please
SAVE our school if we
don't have a school we
be poor. Please please please
rais are we really need the
support for our school.

Chores every body we as children we
work hard to support our school
Please please please
support for us we really love
school and we try our best.

Reply

2. come come come with us
we can have a vote a vote
Please every body support us we
cannot live with out our school it's a life
to have school. school is when we
have so much fun and we learn
learn learn learning is my life
I love the life of my
school.

3. God we love you we come to you
and all or you but I need a
favor can you please save
our school is my favorite.

Appendix 6 – St Mary’s

Copy of Questionnaire

St Mary’s Pupil Voice

Proposal for St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Overview

Hackney Council is consulting on a proposal to close St Mary's Church of England Primary School on the 31 August 2025.

Please read the [proposal document for St Mary's Church of England Primary School](#) <user_uploads/consultation---st-marys-proposal.pdf> for full information about the proposal and before sharing your views.

The decision about these proposals will be made following consideration of a number of factors, including the results of this survey.

We are also consulting on proposals to close or merge (amalgamate) five other primary schools. If you wish to have your say on these proposals, follow this link:

[Proposed changes to Hackney primary schools](#) </communications-engagement/proposed-changes-schools>

If you have any questions about this proposal, or if you require this document in a different format, please email school.sufficiency@hackney.gov.uk. We will consider your request and get back to you in the next five working days.

Introduction

1 Which of the following best describes your interest in this consultation?

(Required)

Please select only one item

- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Mary's Church of England Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends St Dominic's Catholic Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Sir Thomas Abney Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Holmleigh Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Oldhill Community School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends Harrington Hill Primary School
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends another primary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child who attends a secondary school in Hackney
- A parent/carer/guardian of a child under 5 who will attend a Hackney school in the future
- A member of staff at St Mary's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at St Dominic's (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Sir Thomas Abney (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Holmleigh (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Oldhill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at Harrington Hill (e.g. teacher, teaching assistant, Governor, SENCO)
- A member of staff at another primary school in Hackney
- A member of staff at a secondary school in Hackney
- Interested member of the public
- Other

If other, please specify:

2 What is your postcode?

Proposal for St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Proposal to close St Mary's Church of England Primary School on 31 August 2025.

Consultation on the proposed closure of St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Overview

We are consulting you about a proposal to close St Mary's Church of England Primary School on the 31 August 2025. This is the first stage in a process that we have to follow that may lead to the school being closed.

In recent years the number of primary age children in Hackney, and in many parts of London, has fallen. The reasons behind this are thought to include lower birth rates, lack of affordable housing for families, as well as Brexit and the recent pandemic. The fall in the number of children, leading to a high number of surplus school places

3 How do you feel about this proposal on page 2 of the proposal document?

Please select only one item

- Strongly in favour
- In favour
- Against
- Strongly against
- Not sure

4 How might this proposal affect or impact you?

5 We would like to hear if you have any alternative suggestions or options for this school that you think we should consider?

6 Do you have any other comments?

About you

This information will help us to understand our service users and residents, allowing us to establish if the response to the questionnaire is representative of the borough. All information is used under the strict controls of the 1998 Data Protection Act and the 2016 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

This information is **optional** and will not be used in a way that identifies you.

7 Gender: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Male
- Female
- Non Binary
- Another term
- Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use your own term please provide this here:

8 Are you transgender or do you have a history of being transgender?

Please select only one item

- Yes
- No
- Prefer not to say

9 Age: what is your age group?

Please select only one item

- Under 16
- 16-17
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75-84
- 85+

10 Disability: Under the Equality Act you are disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities. Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

11 Caring responsibilities: A carer is someone who spends a significant proportion of their time providing unpaid support to a family member, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems. Do you regularly provide unpaid support caring for someone?

Please select only one item

- Yes
 No

12 Ethnicity: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Asian or Asian British
 White or White British
 Black or Black British
 Mixed background
 Other ethnic group

Other (please state if you wish):

13 Religion or belief: Are you or do you have...

Please select only one item

- Atheist/no religious belief
 Christian
 Muslim
 Buddhist
 Hindu
 Secular beliefs
 Charedi
 Jewish
 Sikh

Other (please state if you wish):

14 Sexual orientation: Are you...

Please select only one item

- Heterosexual
- Bisexual
- Gay man
- Lesbian or Gay woman
- Pansexual
- Asexual
- Queer
- All other sexual orientations
- Prefer not to say

Other (please state if you wish):

15 Housing Tenure: Which of the following best describes the ownership of your home?

Please select only one item

- Being bought on a mortgage
- Owned outright
- Rented (Local Authority/Council)
- Rented (Housing Association/Trust)
- Rented (private)
- Shared ownership (part rent/part buy)
- Don't know

Survey

Children at St Mary's CE Primary School

What year group are you in? _____

How do you feel about the school closing at the end of the year?

What will change for you when the school closes?

How do you feel about going to another school next year?



excited



happy



nervous



scared



sad

Survey

Children at St Mary's CE Primary School

What year group are you in? _____

How do you feel about the school closing at the end of the year?



surprised



angry



nervous



scared



happy



sad



neutral

What will change for you when the school closes?



Starting at a new school



Making new friends



A new bus journey to school



Walking a different route



New school uniform and PE kit

How do you feel about going to another school next year?



excited



happy



nervous



scared



sad

Closure Consultation Children's Survey Responses Reception to Year 5.

EYFS and KS1	Surprised	Angry	Nervous	Scared	Happy	Sad	Neutral
1. How do you feel about the school closing at the end of the year?	0	3	8	2	1	11	0

	New school	Making new friends	New bus journey	New walking route	New uniform
2. What will change for you?	9	7	9	5	11

	Excited	Happy	Nervous	Scared	Sad
3. How do you feel about going to another school?	7	4	4	1	1

KS2	Excited	Angry/Upset	Nervous	Scared	Happy	Sad	Mixed emotions
1. How do you feel about the school closing at the end of the year?	1	5	6	1	4	8	1

	Teachers	New school	Uniform	Journey	Friends	Class	School values/rules	Homework
2. What will change for you?	14	15	5	4	16	3	2	1

	Excited	Happy	Nervous	Scared	Sad
3. How do you feel about going to another school?	6	2	14	3	9



**Kwest
Research**