

School Organisation

Kew Riverside Primary School

Frequently Asked Questions

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Additional points raised during pre-statutory consultation

This document brings together questions, queries and comments that have been raised during the pre-statutory consultation.

1. Why was Kew Riverside Primary identified for closure when other schools weren't?

Kew Riverside Primary School was identified for closure following a comprehensive review of pupil numbers, site capacities, and financial projections across the local area.

Key factors included the following:

Pupil forecasts and falling rolls

Kew Riverside has experienced significant and sustained low intake numbers, with falling rolls creating severe long-term viability challenges compared to neighboring schools.

Site capacity and flexibility

Due to its smaller physical site and building size, Kew Riverside has limited capacity to accommodate displaced pupils from other schools or expand if local demand changes in the future. In contrast, nearby schools (such as Darell Primary) have larger physical capacities capable of absorbing displaced cohorts.

Financial sustainability

The low pupil numbers at Kew Riverside lead to compounding budget deficits that cannot be comfortably resolved through internal cost savings alone, whereas other local schools have clearer pathways toward achieving balanced budgets.

2. When was the decision made regarding the proposal, and why was it brought forward at this time?

Detailed sustainability work and options appraisals commenced at the start of 2026.

This timing ensured that initial financial reviews were thoroughly conducted and evaluated before bringing forward a comprehensive consultation proposal to the community. The final proposal to proceed with consultation was formally agreed late in the summer term.

3. Why not close Darell Primary School and make provision for pupils at Kew Riverside?

Darell Primary School is also impacted by falling rolls and has seen pupil numbers drop over time. With a capacity to accommodate 420 pupils, it currently has 169 pupils on roll, and this is forecast to drop to 155 by 2030/31. The published admission number has been reduced to 30 to enable the school to plan its class organisation based on a capped number of pupils, and this has enabled the school to implement cost savings.

The school currently has a deficit budget position, but is expected to achieve a balanced in-year budget in 2027/28, and eradicate its deficit in 2028/29.

In this respect, the school is in a relatively stronger position than Kew Riverside Primary School.

The local authority is required to demonstrate how it will make provision for pupils displaced from a closing school. In the case of Kew Riverside, it is possible to demonstrate that provision can be made at Darell Primary School. Darell has got the physical capacity to accommodate all of the current Kew Riverside pupils from September 2027.

Because of the physical capacity of Kew Riverside school site, if Darell was to be closed, it would not be possible to guarantee a place at Kew for all of the pupils displaced from Darell Primary School because capacity at Kew Riverside is 210 pupils. In Richmond Council's school expansion programme in 2014, Darell Primary School's capacity was expanded to support two forms of entry and a capacity of 420.

If there was a need to increase pupil place capacity in the area at some point in the future, it would be possible to do so using space at Darell. It would not be possible to do so at Kew Riverside because of the smaller building.

The 'community' of children and families at Kew Riverside could all be accommodated on the Darell Primary School site.

4. Why not amalgamate Kew Riverside Primary School and Darell Primary School?

The school organisation regulations don't provide for the 'amalgamation' of schools. To achieve broadly the same outcome would require the closure of both schools and the establishment of a new school.

Other than in exceptional circumstances, any new school must be established as a free school and the local authority would therefore need to identify a sponsor that would be prepared to manage the new school.

One exception to this is where the local authority is proposing to establish a new school to replace a maintained infant and maintained junior school, and section 11 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) enables the local authority to do so without a competition to establish a free school. This is why a merger is proposed in relation to infant and junior schools elsewhere in Richmond.

The route to establish a free school is complex, requiring the local authority to invite interest from sponsors, and then working with the successful sponsor to establish the new school. It involves the staff of both existing schools being made redundant, a new governing body being established for the free school, and for that governing body to then agree and recruit a new staffing establishment. It is a more lengthy and onerous process than the closure of a single school.

For this reason this option was discounted.

5. How has the projected deficit been determined for Kew Riverside?

While the 2025/26 financial outturn showed an in-year deficit of £75,103.70 (funded by existing revenue reserves, leaving a closing balance of £231,685), the indicative in-year deficit for 2026/27 is projected at £212,417. This will reduce remaining reserves to approximately £19,268 by the end of 2026/27.

For 2027/28, an indicative in-year deficit of £215,177 will fully exhaust the reserves, resulting in a net deficit position of £195,909 and, by 2028/29, with an indicative in-year deficit of £261,792, the cumulative forecast deficit reaches £457,702.

These figures are based on the school's own three-year budget plan.

Projected forward, the deficit would be £917,000 by 2030/31.

The primary driver of this accelerating deficit is the sharp decline in pupil numbers combined with fixed premises costs and high unit costs per pupil that cannot be offset by standard pay and inflation increases to school budgets.

6. Why can't Kew Riverside be given more time to demonstrate that it can improve its financial position?

The school has taken decisive action to reduce costs in recent years and this is to be applauded. However, pupil numbers have continued to fall, and the school has been unable to bring costs in line with its budget. It has relied on the use of reserves which are now exhausted.

Financial regulations require schools to operate within their budget. Where they are unable to achieve a balanced budget, there is an expectation that the governing body will put in place a deficit recovery plan demonstrating how the school will bring its budget into balance, and eradicate any accumulated deficit, within a three year period. The scale of the in-year deficit at Kew Riverside is such that it is not possible for the school to do this.

7. Why not reduce capacity in other schools to ensure pupils are distributed more equitably?

To manage the borough-wide decline in pupil numbers and support long-term school sustainability, the local authority has implemented permanent reductions in published admission numbers across multiple primary schools.

By September 2027, 12 forms of entry will have been permanently removed from Reception intakes across Richmond to align operational capacity more closely with local demand, and further reductions to published admission numbers in seven schools are now proposed.

However, under school admissions legislation, the local authority cannot arbitrarily restrict intakes at popular, oversubscribed schools to direct families toward schools with falling rolls. Parents have a legal right to express a preference for any state-funded school, and admission authorities are legally required to allocate places if capacity exists.

Attempting to restrict intake at popular schools to redistribute pupils would violate statutory rights and would be subject to challenge and overturn by the Office of the Schools Adjudicator (OSA).

8. What is the comparative financial benchmarking for Kew Riverside Primary School when compared with other schools?

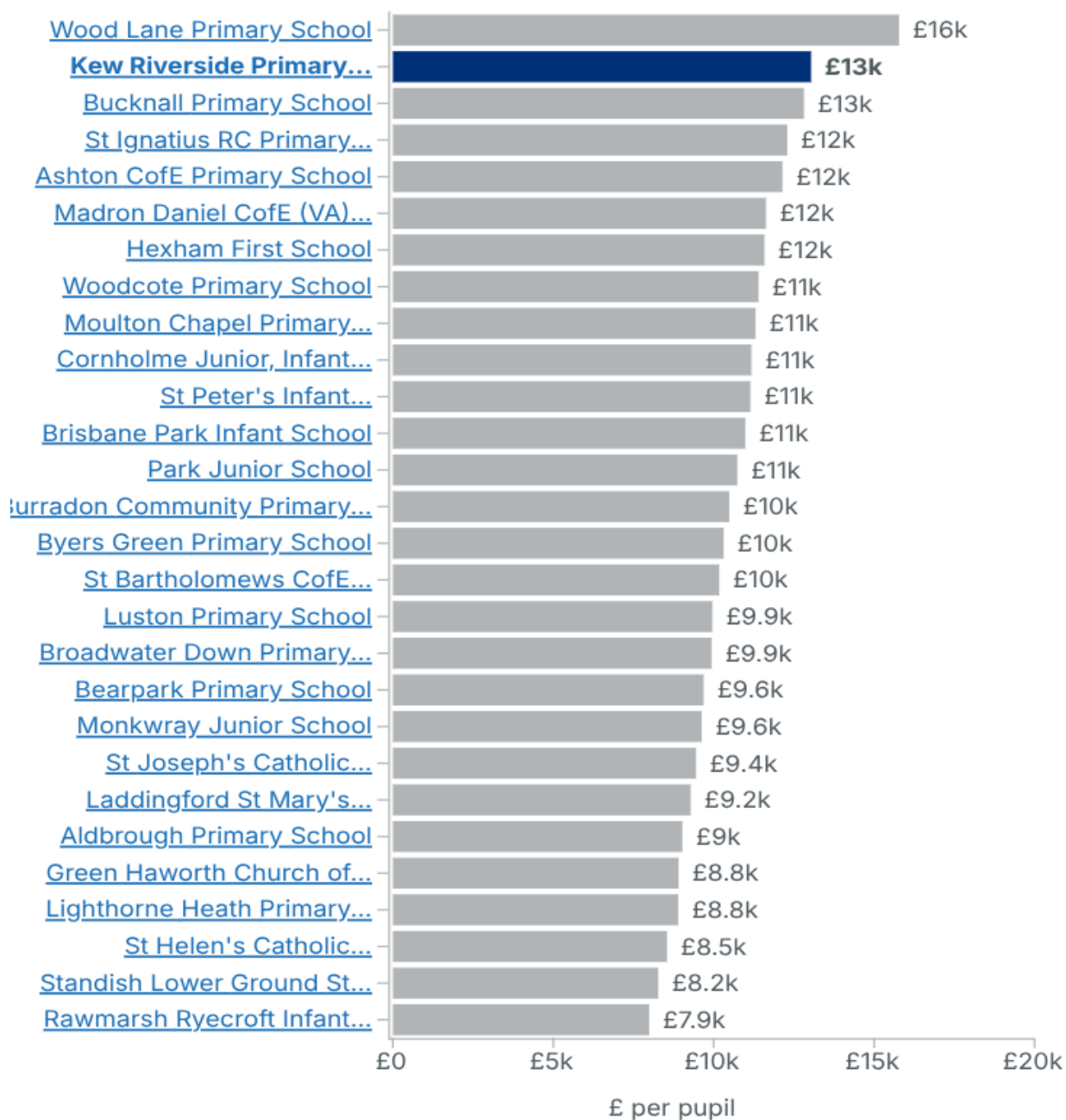
Benchmarking against similar-sized schools highlights that high fixed staffing (representing over 85% of standard school budgets) and fixed premises overheads distributed over a small pupil base result in disproportionately high unit costs per pupil compared to similar-sized or full-capacity schools.

The DfE publishes national benchmarking data that enables these comparisons. [DfE Benchmarking data](#).

The following table shows Kew Riverside, when compared nationally with other schools of similar characteristics. The benchmarking tool includes a number of datasets that enable comparisons to be made in a number of ways.

The following is just one example, based on expenditure per pupil, per year, comparing Kew with primary schools with similar characteristics, and is used for illustration.

Total expenditure



9. What will the proposal save, and how will the savings be used?

Schools are funded by the government. The local authority receives funding from the government through the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG), based on the number of pupils on roll in maintained schools. This funding is then allocated to schools based primarily on pupil numbers, but with additional elements including a lump sum, and to reflect school specific factors such as deprivation.

The proposal to close Kew Riverside Primary School addresses significant operational inefficiencies and prevents escalating financial liabilities, ensuring that Dedicated Schools Grant funding is used effectively across the borough.

In closing a school, there is no saving to the local authority, but it does enable the funding available to be used more effectively.

When displaced pupils transfer to other receiving schools across Richmond (such as Darell Primary School), the associated per-pupil revenue funding directly follows them. Consolidating pupil numbers into receiving schools increases their operational capacity and financial sustainability, reducing unit costs per pupil across the local authority and ensuring DSG resources deliver maximum educational value to children across the entire borough.

10. Has the PFI arrangements for the Kew Riverside building been taken into account?

The local authority is fully aware of the implications of the PFI agreement and its associated ongoing costs. Given that the proposal is currently at an early, pre-statutory stage, no decisions have yet been made regarding any future use of the school building and site. If the proposal progresses following consultation, further detailed work will be undertaken to explore possible alternative uses and evaluate the associated financial obligations.

11. What alternative options were considered for Kew Riverside, and why were they discounted?

Federation and shared leadership arrangements

While shared leadership models (such as joint executive headship across schools like Darell Primary School) can reduce administrative overheads, staffing savings alone are insufficient to address Kew Riverside's structural deficit. With projected in-year deficits exceeding £210,000 annually and an overall cumulative deficit expected to reach £457,702 by 2028/29, the savings achieved through shared leadership (typically estimated at £50,000 to £80,000 per year) would not restore financial viability.

Multi-academy trust (MAT) partnerships

Joining or partnering with a MAT requires mutual agreement between the school's governing body, the host trust, and the DfE Regional Director. MATs assess prospective schools on operational and long-term solvency.

Given Kew Riverside's low enrollment (85 pupils against a 210 capacity) and persistent structural shortfall, surrounding MATs are unable to absorb the ongoing financial liability. Furthermore, centralising back-office functions does not address the primary driver of the deficit, which is the systemic decline in primary-age pupil demographics within the local planning area.

Procurement frameworks and efficiency savings

The school already participates in local authority and DfE procurement frameworks for catering, ICT, and core supplies. However, because non-staffing expenditures represent a minor proportion of the total cost base relative to fixed premise and staffing costs (which typically constitute over 85% of standard school expenditure), procurement optimisation alone yields marginal gains that cannot offset six-figure annual operational gaps.

Surplus capacity use and income generation

Alternative uses of surplus space, such as expanding wraparound care, nursery provision, or community lettings, were carefully evaluated. While these initiatives can generate modest revenue, they can also incur additional operational, utility, and staffing costs. Where the National Funding Formula primarily allocates resources on a per-pupil basis, ancillary lettings and other income cannot replace the substantial core funding loss resulting from unfilled primary places.

Deficit recovery timeline

Standard statutory guidance requires licensed deficit recovery plans to demonstrate balance within three years. While the school's opening revenue reserves of £231,685 funded the 2025/26 outturn deficit of £75,103, the accelerating indicative deficits (£212,417 in 2026/27 and £215,177 in 2027/28) will fully exhaust all remaining reserves by 2027/28.

Extending the recovery window is unfeasible when underlying expenditure exceeds annual income by an average of £229,796 per year, which would result in a cumulative deficit of nearly £917,000 by 2030/31 if unaddressed.

12. What else is the local authority doing in response to falling rolls?

In addition to structural proposals such as school closures or amalgamations, the local authority has implemented a strategic, borough-wide approach to manage falling pupil rolls by permanently reducing published admission numbers across multiple primary schools.

By September 2027, 12 forms of entry (translating to 2,520 primary places) will have been permanently removed across Richmond borough. Further proposed published admission numbers reductions at seven additional primary schools will bring the total reduction to 4,080 places.

This continuous reduction in admission capacity aligns operational capacity directly with actual local demand. It provides certainty to school leadership and governing bodies when setting class organisation and staffing structures, helping to reduce ongoing operational costs and protect the long-term financial sustainability of schools across the borough.

Alongside these published admission numbers adjustments, the local authority is also actively working with schools to identify alternative uses for surplus accommodation to further reduce premise overheads and optimise public resources.

13. Why is closure being proposed given the high educational standards at Kew Riverside, and the outcome of its recent Ofsted inspection?

The local authority fully acknowledges the school's high educational standards and the exceptionally positive outcomes of its recent Ofsted inspection in July 2026. The inspection highlighted the school's warm, inclusive culture, strong parental partnerships, ambitious curriculum, excellent pupil behavior, and exemplary provision for personal development.

It must be stated unequivocally that the proposal to consult on closure is in no way a reflection of any shortcomings or concerns regarding the quality of education, school leadership, or teaching standards, all of which remain highly valued.

The closure proposal is driven entirely by significant, external, borough-wide demographic changes, including a sustained drop in live birth rates and broader demographic shifts across greater London as families relocate outside the capital.

Despite proactive restructuring and efficiency measures implemented by school leadership to reduce operational expenditure, fixed site facilities overheads and staffing costs cannot be scaled down further without compromising curriculum delivery.

With remaining revenue reserves expected to be fully exhausted by 2026/27, the school faces accelerating annual in-year deficits exceeding £210,000.

14. Has the impact of residential development been considered?

Local authority pupil place planning and forecasts (calculated using ONS, Health Authority, and SCAP data) fully integrate expected pupil yield from approved and planned local residential developments. These forecasting models have proven accurate over time.

Across the Kew planning area, the most recent approved SCAP data models a modest estimated yield of approximately 17 primary-aged pupils from residential developments expected to complete between 2026/27 and 2031/32 (specifically in 2028/29).

Site Allocation 31 in the Local Plan identifies potential for residential redevelopment at Kew Retail Park (indicatively 500 to 1,000 units). However, pre-application proposals have stalled due to the current economic climate. Therefore, no major residential schemes are anticipated to deliver significant pupil numbers in the immediate future.

The broader, borough-wide decline in primary-aged children, driven by lower birth rates and family relocation out of London, far outweighs the minimal pupil yield from local housing schemes.

15. How will the local authority ensure a smooth transition to the alternative school?

Guaranteed places

Guaranteed places will be made available at Darell Primary School, alongside options for other local schools, enabling friendship and peer groups to stay together wherever possible. Close joint working will be established between leadership teams, special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and class teachers at Kew Riverside and Darell, and with other receiving schools, to ensure full continuity of curriculum delivery and support.

Opportunity for community continuity

This transition provides a unique opportunity for the Kew Riverside community to move together to Darell Primary School. By relocating as a cohesive cohort, children will be able to maintain their existing friendship groups and support networks, minimising disruption to their social and emotional wellbeing while fostering a strong sense of continuity and shared identity across the two schools.

Targeted support for the Year 5 cohort

There is explicit recognition of the unique sensitivity surrounding Year 5 pupils, who face two transitions in two academic years (moving to a new primary school for Year 6 and subsequently transferring to secondary school).

To support this cohort, bespoke, individualised Year 6 transition plans will be created, featuring familiarisation visits, 'meet the teacher and peer' sessions, and detailed curriculum mapping to minimise academic disruption during Year 6. Early coordination with secondary transfer teams will also ensure a joined-up, continuous transition process leading into secondary school entry.

Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), pastoral, and emotional health support

Dedicated transition planning and education, health and care plan (EHCP) reviews will be conducted for pupils with SEND or EHCPs in direct coordination with SENCOs and the local authority SEND team. Emotional and psychological support will be co-designed with Emotional Health Services (EHS), providing pastoral support groups, familiarisation activities, and dedicated wellbeing resources for pupils navigating change.

Maintaining operational and educational stability

A firm commitment remains to maintaining educational quality, staffing stability, and strong pastoral support at Kew Riverside throughout the 2026/27 academic year.

16. What about the impact on pupils with SEND?

Kew Riverside Primary School currently supports 17 pupils on SEN Support, representing 19.5% of its number on roll (NOR), and six pupils with an EHCP, representing 6.9% of its NOR. This reflects a higher proportion of SEND provision compared to the local planning area (13.6% on SEN Support; 8.2% with an EHCP) and the whole borough average (11.0% on SEN Support; 4.2% with an EHCP).

The local authority recognises the importance of tailored support for children with SEND during any transition. To ensure continuity of care and educational provision, the following comprehensive measures will be put in place.

Dedicated transition planning

Bespoke, individualised transition plans will be created for all pupils with SEND, incorporating structured familiarisation visits, 'meet the teacher' sessions, and gradual integration activities.

EHCP reviews

Formal annual reviews or interim reviews of EHCPs will be conducted in coordination with families to ensure named provisions, outcomes, and specialised support strategies are updated and fully aligned with the receiving school before transfer.

SENCo collaboration

Close, direct collaboration will be established between the SENCo at Kew Riverside and the SENCos of receiving schools (such as Darell Primary) to transfer detailed pupil profiles, learning strategies, and intervention histories.

Local authority SEND Team support

Specialised advisory support, educational psychology oversight, and therapeutic services will be deployed directly by the local authority SEND team to assist schools and families throughout the transition process.

Should the proposal go ahead, families will be given a guaranteed place at Darell Primary School, if they want the place. Darell has proven strength and experience in supporting children with SEND. It currently supports a higher proportion of pupils with EHCPs than Kew Riverside, 14.5% compared to 6.9%, and possesses additional specialist capacity through its dedicated specialist resource provision (SRP).

17. How will the admissions process operate for Kew Riverside given the proposal to close?

The standard admissions process continues to operate as normal. However, to ensure full transparency, the local authority will directly contact individual applicant families to ensure they are fully informed of the current consultation and potential changes.

Additionally, a clear explanatory note has been updated within the online admissions brochure to provide comprehensive guidance for all prospective parents.

18. How will parents be supported through the admissions process if seeking alternative schools to Darell Primary School?

While Darell Primary School is the designated receiving school where places are guaranteed for all affected pupils, the local authority is fully committed to supporting families who prefer to apply for alternative schools. This support includes providing clear, up-to-date information on available vacancies across other primary schools in the local area, offer guidance on navigating the standard admissions and application process, and ensure transparent communication regarding key deadlines and application choices to help families secure a suitable alternative place.

We update a vacancy list on the in year webpage every half term after schools have provided their numbers on roll. The [link to this information](#).

19. Can the admissions process or timescale be extended given that parents will need to accept offers before a final decision is made on the future of the school?

The national application deadline is established under the School Admissions Code and cannot be extended. However, the local authority uses a 'late for good reason' deadline (set for 11 February 2027 for the upcoming round) to incorporate families moving into the area and late applications into the initial allocation round. Extending past this date is not possible due to the requirements of the Pan-London file exchange and the processing timeline needed ahead of 16 April 2027.

Should the proposal progress to statutory consultation, Kew Riverside Primary School will be removed from national admissions coordination. A separate record will be maintained for parents expressing a preference for the school, who will be requested to name an alternative school on their online application.

Applications will continue to be processed through standard procedures. If the final decision is made to keep Kew Riverside open, applicants on the Kew Riverside record will be cross-referenced against system offers; if Kew Riverside represents a higher preference, it will be allocated accordingly. In cases where a child holds two offers of equal preference, parents will temporarily retain both offers and be asked to confirm their final selection following National Offer Day (NOD).

20. How will staff be supported throughout the process?

The local authority is committed to providing open communication, pastoral care, and practical career support to all staff members throughout this process.

The local authority fully acknowledges the understandable anxiety, emotion, and uncertainty surrounding potential changes. Staff are reassured that the process is currently in an informal pre-statutory consultation phase, and no final decisions have been made. Should the proposal move forward following consultation, Kew Riverside Primary School will remain fully operational throughout the entire 2026/27 academic year.

School leaders, governors, and local authority officers will work closely with staff to provide continuous support. Immediate access to emotional and wellbeing support is available through the employee assistance programme (EAP), trade union representatives, and local authority psychology services.

Every effort will be made to keep redundancies to a minimum by supporting affected staff to secure suitable alternative employment tailored to their individual career stage and personal circumstances.

The local authority will work directly with school leaders across Richmond borough to circulate vacancies, facilitate priority consideration, and assist staff through application and interview processes to retain valuable talent and skills within the borough.

At the appropriate time, once decisions are made or confirmed:

- individual, confidential one-to-one HR sessions will be conducted to discuss personal options and provide formal redundancy estimates calculated on continuous service length, age, and grade
- dedicated pension briefings will be arranged. Support staff under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) will receive advice through the Wandsworth and Richmond Pension Service, while teachers under the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) will be supported by the Kingston Teachers' Pension team