

School Organisation

Kew Riverside Primary School

Consultation Information Leaflet

School organisation changes in Richmond

A proposal for Kew Riverside Primary School

Important information for parents and carers regarding the pre-statutory consultation

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames is seeking your views on a proposal to close Kew Riverside Primary School, with changes intended to take effect from 1 September 2027.

This document sets out the reason why the local authority is proposing to close the school, and the process by which it will do so, the questions it needs to consider, and the way in which you can let your views be known.

Details about the decision making process, including the factors to be taken into account when making decisions, are shown towards the end of this document.

What does this mean for my child?

Ensuring a high-quality education and a smooth transition for every child is our absolute priority. If the proposal is approved:

- every child will be guaranteed a place at Darell Primary School. Parents are able to apply for a place at any other school, where places are available
- we will work closely with the school leadership teams of both Kew Riverside Primary, and Darell Primary, to maintain continuity in curriculum delivery and staffing stability during the transition period
- children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), particularly those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs), will be prioritised for support and tailored transition plans

Why is this proposal being made?

The primary driver for this proposal is a significant and sustained decline in primary aged pupil numbers across the borough, and specifically within the area served by Kew Riverside, and the impact that this has on the financial sustainability of the school.

There has been a significant fall in the birth-rate across Richmond, and this is expected to continue.

In addition, and in common with many areas of London, families are increasingly moving out of the borough, accelerating the drop in pupil numbers. Across London, over 90 primary schools have closed or merged in the last five years due to these trends.

Schools are funded predominantly on a per-pupil basis and so fewer pupils means less funding, making it increasingly difficult for schools to maintain the same number of classes, deliver a broad curriculum, recruit and retain staff, and be able to balance their budget.

It is important to note that this, and other school organisation changes, are not being proposed due to concerns about the current quality of education at primary phase schools in the borough. We are fortunate that all our schools were rated as good or outstanding under the previous Ofsted framework, and pupils in the borough receive an excellent education.

However, with fewer families seeking a school place, action is required to prevent more of our schools becoming unsustainable. Inevitably, if schools continue to operate with less funding due to fewer pupils, the quality of education will be impacted due to the pressure on staffing and resources.

Why Kew Riverside Primary School?

The local authority has developed a strategy to respond to falling pupil numbers in our primary schools. This has considered the impact across all 45 state funded infant, junior and primary schools. From this, a number of changes are proposed affecting a number of schools. This is just one of those proposals.

The local authority is rightly proud of its schools as they continue to deliver high standards despite the challenges of falling rolls.

Kew Riverside has been proactive in responding to the drop in pupil numbers it has experienced, making changes to the way classes are organised, with associated staffing changes. The school has successfully implemented these changes and reduced its costs, whilst maintaining the high standards that parents have come to expect.

The school has seen a significant fall in its pupils in recent years. With a capacity for 210 pupils, the school had 145 pupils on roll in 2021/22. It currently has 87 pupils on roll, and this is expected to fall still further over the next five years.

The school is currently using financial reserves to balance its budget, but these will be fully used by the end of the 2026/27 financial year, at which point the school will begin to accumulate a deficit. The school's three year budget plan indicates a deficit of over £400,000 by 2028/29.

Despite the efforts made by the school, there are things that are outside of its control. There simply are not enough children to sustain the number of school places available, and for Kew Riverside, the relatively small size of the school means that it is particularly vulnerable from any further drop in numbers.

Of the three schools in the immediate area, Kew Riverside attracts just 13% of the resident cohort. With pupil numbers across the area forecast to fall by 12.5% over the next five years, the impact on Kew Riverside, given its already low numbers, will be significant. It is difficult to envisage the school being able to recover its budget deficit position.

Action now is important to protect primary education provision in the area. The school is not financially sustainable, and this, in time, will impact on the quality of education.

What is the scale of the drop in pupil numbers?

The following table illustrates the impact of falling primary aged pupil numbers in recent years, and the forecasted impact over the next five years (this is in italics).

Pupil number forecasts are calculated using data from the ONS and Health Authority, taking into account a range of factors that impact on demand for school places, including the impact of residential development. Forecasts have been proven to be accurate over time. As well as forecasting future demand at local authority level, forecasts are also produced at planning area level. A planning area is a feature used by all local authorities to consider demand for places and make planning decisions, based on smaller geographical communities. In Richmond there are ten local planning areas.

Should the forecasted numbers be realised, it would represent a 21.0% reduction in primary age pupils across the borough; 13.5% across the planning area; and 45.9% reduction at Kew Riverside.

National guidance suggests that some surplus capacity should be retained for flexibility, and to meet future growth. Typically, local authorities seek to maintain between 5% and 10% surplus capacity.

The total available capacity across Richmond, before any recent/proposed changes is 18,480 places. The total capacity in the immediate area is 1,050 places. This equates to 18.7% surplus capacity across the local authority, and 37.1% in the planning area.

Academic year	Richmond primary pupil numbers	Planning area primary pupil numbers	Kew Riverside pupil numbers
2021/22	16,173	690	145
2022/23	15,941	669	116
2023/24	15,652	680	106
2024/25	15,366	656	89
2025/26	15,014	660	87
2026/27	14,496	658	84
2027/28	13,918	638	80
2028/29	13,595	618	73
2029/30	13,322	612	74
2030/31	13,099	600	75
2031/32	12,865	597	77

What has the local authority and its schools done in response to falling pupil numbers?

In response to falling pupil rolls, the local authority and its schools have taken various steps to reduce cost, make efficiency improvements, whilst maintaining standards.

- **Reduction to published admission numbers (PAN):** permanent changes to PANs have been implemented in a number of schools to align capacity with demand, allowing for better class organisation and staffing establishments.
- **Collaborative leadership and governance:** schools have been encouraged to adopt shared leadership models, such as executive headteachers, and formal collaborative arrangements, including federations.
- **Operational efficiencies:** schools have implemented vertical grouping to optimise class structures, and the schools' forum established a 'falling school rolls fund' to provide financial support to schools at risk.
- **Targeted support:** schools have received bespoke assistance from school improvement and finance teams.
- **Stakeholder engagement:** regular briefings have been provided to the governor partnership to ensure governors are aligned on budget planning expectations and the ongoing strategy for managing falling rolls.

Whilst these measures have been successful, the ongoing scale of the drop in pupil numbers, and the significant impact that this has had on a number of schools, means that other measures must now be considered.

Following analysis of data looking at current and forecasted pupil numbers, levels of parental demand for places, and financial sustainability, a number of schools have been identified where further action needs to be taken. Kew Riverside Primary is one of those schools.

What alternatives have been considered?

Before proposing closure, the local authority carefully evaluated a range of other options to address the sustainability challenges facing Kew Riverside Primary School. These included the following.

- **Maintain the status quo:** not taking action would be likely to result in the financial position of the school becoming increasingly difficult to sustain educational standards.
- **Reduction in published admission number:** we considered reducing the school's capacity further. However, this would not address the fundamental issue of the school's high unit cost per pupil and its inability to deliver a balanced budget in the long term.
- **Federation and shared leadership:** while we have successfully supported other schools in adopting federated models or shared leadership, the scale of the financial deficit projected at Kew Riverside (over £400,000 by 2028/29) means that these measures alone would not provide the necessary financial viability.
- **Amalgamating with another school, entailing the closure of the school:** the regulations that govern how changes are made to maintained schools sets out the process involving the closure of the schools to be brought together, and the establishment of a new school in their place. That new school must be established as a free school. The process is more complex and onerous than the closure of a single school and so this option was discounted.
- **Entering into an arrangement with a multi academy trust (MAT):** a decision for the school to join a MAT would ultimately be for the schools governing body, the trust, and the DfE's regional schools director. However, joining a trust would not address the falling rolls issue faced by the school. It is unlikely a MAT would be willing to enter an arrangement with the school due to low pupil numbers and the expected budget challenges in future years.
- **Closing the school:** this is the preferred option for consultation on the basis that it will prevent a decline in education standards for the pupils currently attending the school, as well as strengthening other local schools by taking out surplus capacity.

What is the proposal?

The proposal is to close Kew Riverside at the end of the 2026/27 academic year.

Alongside this, the local authority will guarantee places at Darell Primary School, which is in the Kew Planning Area, for those children currently on roll at Kew Riverside, where parents want a place. For children not yet in primary school, the local authority is able to demonstrate that there is sufficient capacity in the area to accommodate all children requiring a place.

What is pre-statutory consultation?

The local authority is now undertaking consultation with the school community. The purpose of this initial consultation is to seek the views of stakeholders on the principle of closing the school.

Following this initial consultation, the local authority will determine whether to proceed with the proposal.

What is the impact on parental preference of removing provision?

Guidance to proposers and decision makers published by the DfE recognises the importance of respecting parental preference when bringing forward proposals to remove provision, but accepting the need to balance this with the effective management of places, and the need to remove places where there is surplus capacity.

What is the decision-making process?

This is a **proposal**, not a final decision. We are currently in the pre-statutory consultation phase to gather feedback from the community before any further steps are taken.

Activity	Timeline
Pre-statutory consultation (current)	September/November 2026
Review of outcomes from pre-statutory consultation and development of final proposals	November/December 2026
Education and Children's Services Committee - approval to proceed to statutory consultation	November 2026
Publication of statutory notices	January 2027
Statutory representation period	January/February 2027
Review of outcomes from statutory consultation	February/March 2027
Education and Children's Services Committee - Determination	April 2027
Implementation	1 September 2027

How will decisions be made?

Decisions regarding the proposal will be guided by a structured process, ensuring that all strategic and community factors are thoroughly evaluated.

The decision-making process will be informed by the following key elements.

- **Pupil number data and sustainability:** analysis of current and forecast pupil data to assess future demand and a view on the schools ability to remain financially sustainable and able to deliver a broad curriculum whilst balancing its budget.
- **Financial data:** the current financial positions of the school, including projected deficit, are critical to the decision.
- **Guidance from the DfE:** the process strictly follows DfE guidance regarding school organisation.
- **Consultation feedback:** all views and comments received during the pre-statutory consultation from parents, staff, governors, and local residents will be reported transparently to the Education and Children's Services Committee. This feedback helps shape the final proposals.

How can I have my say?

Your feedback is vital to this process. You can participate in the following ways.

- **Online survey:** complete the consultation questionnaire (the link can also be found on the Richmond Council website and the [AfC Info website](#)).
- **Engagement events:** attend a face-to-face meeting at the school at 3.30pm on 29 September 2026.
- **Written submissions:** send your comments via email to: schoolorganisation@achievingforchildren.org.uk or by post to the address below:
 - School Organisation Proposals, First floor (east), Guildhall 2, High Street, Kingston upon Thames KT1 1EU.

All feedback will be reported transparently to the Education and Children's Services Committee before a decision is made to proceed to the formal statutory stage.

For specific procedures and guidelines, parents can refer to the DfE [Closing maintained schools](#) that sets out the statutory process that local authorities are required to follow.

How can I contact the local authority about this proposal?

For further information or to request this document in an alternative format, please contact: schoolorganisation@achievingforchildren.org.uk.