

School Organisation

**Hampton Wick Infant and
Nursery School and St John
the Baptist Church of England
Junior School**

Consultation Information

School organisation changes in Richmond

A proposal for Hampton Wick Infant and Nursery School and St John the Baptist Church of England Junior 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 develop a primary school to replace Hampton Wick Infant and Nursery School (HWINS) and St John the Baptist Church of England (CE) Junior School (SJB), with changes intended to take effect from 1 September 2027.

The local authority, after discussion with the governing bodies of HWINS and SJB, and the London Diocesan Board for Schools (LDBS), believes that bringing the two schools together to form a primary school is the best path forward.

This document sets out the reason why the local authority is now proposing to bring the two schools together, the process by which it proposes to 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?

The two schools have worked closely together, and the proposal builds on that relationship by formally bringing them under a single governing body and school leadership team, and ultimately consolidating onto a single site. These measures seek to respond to the fall in pupil numbers and the financial challenges that this presents.

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

- every child currently on roll at one of the two schools will be guaranteed a place at the primary school
- we will work closely with school leadership 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

The local authority will put in place support during transition to support staff and pupils during the period of change.

Whilst the primary driver in bringing the two schools together is financial, linked to the drop in pupil numbers, for separate infant and junior schools there are often wider educational benefits in doing so:

- easing transition that would otherwise exist as pupils move schools
- remove administrative duplication that exists across two separate schools
- aid curriculum planning and delivery across key stages 1 and 2
- efficient use of resources, with a single leadership team, and in time, a single site

It is recognised that through existing collaborative arrangements, the two schools have done much to ensure strong transition arrangements, and strong curriculum planning. The proposal will provide the environment whereby more efficient use of resources can be made.

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 the two schools, and the impact that this has on the financial sustainability of the schools.

There has been a significant fall in the birth-rate across the Richmond borough, 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.

Added to this, as separate infant and junior schools, both schools experience significant diseconomies in having two leadership teams and staffing establishments, and in maintaining two buildings. This significantly increases the financial challenges for the two schools.

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 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 financially 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 HWINS and SJB?

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.

Prior to the development of the strategy, the governing bodies of HWINS and SJB had been having discussions about bringing the two schools together and had agreed in principle that this would be a positive step.

The local authority agrees that bringing the two schools together as a single primary school will create a stronger, more sustainable school, and provides the best opportunity for the continued delivery of primary school provision in the area.

Action now is important to protect primary education provision in the area. Without action, both schools are vulnerable to low and falling pupil numbers and are not sustainable in their current form.

The proposed primary school will have a published admission number (PAN) of 30, giving a total capacity of 210 pupils. Places in the nursery are in addition to this.

This is the optimum size for a small primary school enabling separate classes for each year group. Initially, because of the combined pupils numbers on roll at the two schools, there will be a greater number of pupils and this will be accommodated utilising the two school buildings until such a time as the pupil numbers can be accommodated on a single site.

What is the scale of the drop in pupil numbers?

The following table illustrates the impact of falling pupil numbers in recent years, and the forecast impact over the next five years.

Pupil number forecasts are calculated using data from the Office of National Statistics (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 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, 14.1% across the planning area, 41.1% reduction at Hampton Wick Infant, and 25.4% at St John the Baptist Junior.

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 the Richmond borough, before any recent or proposed changes is 18,480 places. The total capacity in the local planning area is 2,100 places. This equates to 18.7% surplus capacity across the local authority, and 17.3% in the planning area.

Academic year	Richmond pupil numbers	Planning area pupil numbers	Hampton Wick pupil numbers (average per year group)	St John the Baptist Pupil numbers (average per year group)
2021/22	16,173	1,884	202 (67)	228 (57)
2022/23	15,941	1,838	168 (56)	233 (58)
2023/24	15,652	1,793	156 (52)	222 (55)
2024/25	15,366	1,774	143 (48)	222 (55)
2025/26	15,014	1,735	128 (43)	212 (53)
2026/27	14,496	1,677	136 (45)	185 (46)
2027/28	13,918	1,617	130 (43)	174 (43)
2028/29	13,595	1,679	120 (40)	170 (42)
2029/30	13,322	1,658	118 (39)	165 (41)
2030/31	13,099	1,643	121 (40)	173 (43)
2031/32	12,865	1,618	119 (39)	170 (42)

What is the situation at HWINS?

The school has seen a significant fall in its pupil numbers in recent years. The school historically had a PAN of 60, giving it a total capacity of 180, although its PAN was temporarily increased to 90 in response to high demand for places in the latter part of the last decade. With a PAN of 60, demand for places has continued to fall and the school had 128 pupils on roll in the 2025/26 academic year.

With the school's budget driven largely by pupil numbers, the school is currently unable to achieve a balanced budget and has accumulated a deficit. That deficit is estimated to reach £160,000 by the end of 2026/27.

What is the situation at SJB?

As with the infant school, the published admission number was temporarily increased to 90, giving a total capacity of 360 but subsequently returned to 60, giving a revised capacity of 240. The school currently has 185 pupils on roll.

The school draws the majority of its pupils from HWINS and so, as numbers in the Infant School drop, the Junior School will be impacted still further.

The school has relied on reserves to balance its budget in 2025/26 and, whilst measures to reduce costs have been implemented, the school is expected to go into deficit by 2028/29 as pupil numbers continue to drop.

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 measures in response to falling pupil numbers, and in order to reduce costs whilst maintaining standards.

- **Reduction of 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 organization and staffing establishments.
- **Collaborative leadership and governance:** a number of schools have adopted shared leadership models, such as Executive Headteachers, and formal collaborative arrangements, including federations, as a means of reducing costs.
- **Vertical grouping of classes:** this is where mixed age classes are established when there are insufficient pupils in a single year group to enable that group to be taught as a single class.

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 forecast 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. HWINS and SJB are two of those schools.

What alternatives have been considered?

Before proposing amalgamation, the local authority carefully evaluated a range of options to address the sustainability challenges facing the schools. These included the following.

- **Maintain the status quo:** not taking action would be likely to result in the financial position of both schools becoming increasingly challenging, and educational standards declining.
- **Reduction in PAN:** we considered reducing each school's capacity, however, this would not address the fundamental issue of the two schools' high unit cost per pupil and their 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 deficits projected at both schools means that these measures alone would not provide the necessary financial viability.
- **Entering into an arrangement with a multi academy trust (MAT):** a decision for each of the schools to join a MAT would ultimately be for the governing body of each school to decide, but would require the support of a MAT, the Diocese, and the Department for Education (DfE)'s Regional Schools Director. It is unlikely to be supported as this would not address the falling rolls issue at the schools. Further, It is unlikely that a MAT would be willing to enter an arrangement with the schools due to their low pupil numbers and the expected budget challenges in future years.
- **Closing both schools:** there is still a need for school places in the area. Closing both schools would mean that we are not meeting our statutory duty to provide sufficient school places.
- **Amalgamating the two schools:** this is our preferred option, after discussion with the governing bodies of both schools and LDBS.

What is the proposal?

The proposal is to amalgamate the two schools to create a single 210 place primary school with nursery.

The regulations that govern how changes are made to schools sets out how this should be done, by closing one school and changing the age range of the other.

It is therefore proposed to close one of the two schools and extend the age range of the other school in order to establish a primary school for pupils aged 4 to 11, with a PAN of 30, providing a total capacity for 210 pupils, in addition to the nursery provision.

All pupils currently on roll at the two schools will be guaranteed a place in the primary school.

The intention being that, when pupil numbers permit, the primary school will move onto a single site. It is anticipated that for a period of time the primary school will have to operate on a split site to accommodate the combined pupil numbers currently on roll at the two schools.

The existing maintained nursery at HWINS will be retained as part of the new primary school.

The governing body of the primary school will decide on the name of the new school, but will be expected to consult with the school community before doing so.

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 bringing the schools together as a single primary school, and on the mechanism by which this should be achieved.

Following this initial consultation, the local authority will determine whether there is support for the proposal, and agree the following.

- The designation of the school (community or voluntary aided [VA])
- The basis of the proposal (which school to close, and which school to extend the age range)
- The preferred building from which the school will be based once it is able to consolidate onto a single site.

The difference between community and voluntary aided schools primarily concerns their governance, religious character, and the autonomy held by the governing body.

- **Community schools** are maintained directly by the local authority. The local authority owns the land and buildings, is the employer of the staff, and sets the admissions policy.
- **Voluntary aided schools** are maintained by the local authority but are established with a distinct religious character (eg, Church of England). In VA schools, the governing body (which usually includes diocesan representatives) is the employer of staff, holds responsibility for the land and buildings (and typically contributes to their capital costs), and sets its own admissions policy.

What factors must be considered?

School organisation regulations

The school organisation regulations don't provide for the 'amalgamation' of schools. To achieve broadly the same outcome for separate infant and junior schools, the typical route is to extend the age range of one of the two schools to encompass key stage 1 and 2. Alongside this, the other school would then be subject to closure.

The decision on which school will extend its age range and which will close will be based on the outcome of the choice of designation ie, if community, HWINs would be extended and SJB would close; if voluntary aided, SJB would be extended (to include the nursery provision) and HWINS would close.

The designation of the school, and whether it should be community or voluntary aided

Guidance published by the DfE makes reference to faith provision, and the importance of maintaining the proportion of denominational places available in an area. It states:

In deciding a proposal to close a school that has been designated with a religious character, decision makers should consider the effect that this will have on the balance of denominational provision in the area, as well as taking account of the number of pupils currently on roll, the medium and long term need for places in the area, and whether standards at the school have been persistently low.

Where one school has a religious character and the other does not, or has a different religious character, both proposers and decision makers should consider what would best meet the needs of the local community. Decision makers should consider what impact the proposal will have on the balance of denominational provision in the area, the quality of the provision available and parental demand in the area for the different types of provision.

The local authority must consider what the designation of the primary school should be. Before it makes any decision it wants to seek the views of the community and consider those views alongside a range of other factors as outlined below.

The location of the school

In bringing the two schools together it is necessary to consider which of the two school buildings is the most appropriate from which the new primary school should operate. An assessment of the two sites will be undertaken as part of this process and a final decision made based on the suitability of the sites.

School budgets

Given that the primary reason for the proposal is to respond to the financial challenges faced by both schools as a result of falling pupil numbers, the local authority must assure itself of the financial viability of the proposed primary school.

In accordance with the financial regulations relating to school funding where a school is unable to deliver a balanced budget it must put in place a plan that demonstrates how it can achieve a balanced position, including addressing any accumulated budget deficit, within an agreed period of time.

Where changes are proposed, where a school is to be closed, if that school has a budget deficit, that deficit will pass back to the local authority, and will not transfer to the new primary school. Conversely, if the school that remains open (with an extended age range) has a budget deficit, this deficit will remain with the primary school.

The local authority will consider the implications on current and future budgets before making any decision.

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/October 2026
Review of outcomes from pre-statutory consultation and development of final proposals	October/November 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 ensure that the resulting primary school remains financially sustainable and able to deliver a broad curriculum while balancing its budget.
- **Financial data:** the current financial positions of both schools, including projected deficits, are critical to the decision.
- **Guidance from the DfE:** the process strictly follows Department for Education guidance regarding school organisation.
- **Faith provision:** carefully considering the effect on the balance of denominational provision in the area if a school with a religious character is closed or merged, especially where one school has a religious character and the other does not.
- **Role of the Diocese:** as a key strategic stakeholder, the London Diocesan Board for Schools is involved in discussions to ensure a strategic approach to pupil place planning and is a partner in the principle of bringing the schools together.

- **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 be found on the Richmond Council website and the AfC Info website.
- **Engagement events:** attend a face-to-face meeting:
 - At HWINS between 2.30pm and 4.30pm (parent and carer session to be held at 2.30pm and staff session at 3.30pm) on 13 October 2026, with an online governor session at 6.30pm on 1 October 2026.
 - At SJB between 3.30pm and 6.30pm (parent and carer session to be held at 4.30pm) on 6 October 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.