

**Resources Department
Town Hall, Upper Street, London, N1 2UD**

AGENDA FOR THE CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee are summoned to a meeting, which will be held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on **26 February 2024 at 7.00 pm.**

Enquiries to : Theo McLean
Tel : 0207 527 6568
E-mail : democracy@islington.gov.uk
Despatched : 16 February 2024

Membership

Substitute Members

Councillors:

Councillor Sheila Chapman (Chair)
Councillor Valerie Bossman-Quarshie (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Fin Craig
Councillor Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong
Councillor Toby North
Councillor Rosaline Ogunro
Councillor Saiqa Pandor
Councillor Claire Zammit

Substitutes:

Councillor Jilani Chowdhury
Councillor Ilkay Cinko-Oner
Councillor Paul Convery
Councillor Benali Hamdache
Councillor Dave Poyser
Councillor Heather Staff

Co-opted Member:

Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese
Vacancy Church of England Diocese
Vacancy Primary School Parent Governor Representative
Vacancy Secondary School Parent Governor Representative

Quorum is 3 Councillors

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TO FOLLOW

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The next meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee
will be on 29 April 2024

**Please note that committee agendas, reports and minutes are available
from the council's website: www.democracy.islington.gov.uk**

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Agenda Item 4

London Borough of Islington
Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - Monday, 15 January 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on Monday, 15 January 2024 at 7.00 pm.

Present:	Councillors:	Chapman (Chair), Bossman-Quarshie (Vice-Chair), Craig, Jegorovas-Armstrong, North, Ogunro, Pandor and Zammit
Also Present:	Councillors	Ngongo and Williamson
	Co-opted Member	Mary Clement, Roman Catholic Diocese

Councillor Sheila Chapman in the Chair

162 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (ITEM NO. 1)**

There were no apologies for absence.

163 **DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (ITEM NO. 2)**

There were no declarations of substitute members.

164 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (ITEM NO. 3)**

There were no declarations of interest.

165 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (ITEM NO. 4)**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th November 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings and the Chair be authorised to sign them

166 **CHAIR'S REPORT (ITEM NO. 5)**

The Chair reminded members of the upcoming evidence gathering sessions, as part of the Committee's review into The Children's Workforce. This included a focus group with teachers and support staff which had been delayed, a focus group with Human Resources, and a visit to the Islington Foster Carers Association's Coffee Morning. Members were also encouraged to contribute suggestions for evidence sessions.

The Chair paid tribute to the Director of Safeguarding, Laura Eden, who was leaving the Council after eighteen of years of service, to take up a post in the London Borough of Newham; particular commendations were paid for Laura Eden's role in overseeing a reduction in the population of looked after children, creating Bright Futures, embedding trauma informed practice and Islington's motivational practice

model in the organisation. Members of the committee also expressed their gratitude for her service, on behalf of the borough's children and young people.

167 EXTERNAL ATTENDEES (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 6)

None.

168 ITEMS FOR CALL IN (IF ANY) (ITEM NO. 7)

None.

169 PUBLIC QUESTIONS (ITEM NO. 8)

None.

170 BRIGHT START AND FAMILIES FIRST FOR CHILDREN PATHFINDER PROGRAMME UPDATES (ITEM NO. B1)

Officers began their update by stating that they had brought this item to members for information and feedback. The purpose of the item overall was to show the volume and scope of the universal offer, the current environment and the shifts that were underway. This was a draft report and in future, it was envisaged that officers would report on this annually, to scrutiny. In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- This was the first opportunity to have an integrated Bright Start report, as well as the first time that health data had been incorporated. Officers had also captured the volume of registrations for Bright Start services, activity data and demographic data, which had enabled resources to be shifted as required.
- There were 697 maternal assessments given to mothers in Quarter Two.
- The Families First for Children Pathfinder (FFCP) Programme was the result of a children's social care review by the Department for Education (DfE). Part of the aim was to think about how social care and early help services could be run differently. The government had committed £2 million, for test and learning approaches. In the first wave last year, three or four pilots across the country were given the resource for this. The government had since tested interest for six bids as part of a second wave, for which Islington had submitted a bid.
- There were several parts to the reform, including reviewing safeguarding partnership arrangements; a major piece of work around social care; the joining together of services and consideration given to running family services differently.
- Even if Islington's bid was unsuccessful, there was now legal guidance to say that the Children in Need service did not need to be operated by qualified social workers, which could for example, include bringing in officers from Family Help. Officers stressed that Horizon Scanning was in place. It had also been ensured that Children in Need services were in the same ward locality format as bright start, bright futures and early help services, but concern had been raised in feedback from the Association of Directors of Children's Services, regarding how a council would manage monitor risk.
- Islington had a combined front door, unlike other local authorities. There was minimal transfer and changes of contact, bringing stability to families.
- Members noted in the key findings, that there had been an increase in children attending SEND groups and enquired as to what that meant for children that

then moved into schools. In response, members were told that the SEND groups currently delivered were interventions, which would then be followed by support. The intervention and support wouldn't necessarily prevent SEND issues, but in the cases of developmental delay, the early support would likely prevent these issues becoming disorders, as the ability to change outcomes was greatest in early years.

- Members noted that the many families came to Islington for the Bright Start provision, but enquired as to how a family support worker would cope, logistically or financially, with being a lead professional for no extra pay. In response, members were told that it was absolutely right to question the capacity of system and that the family need encompasses all – there were risks in the approach of treating all cases as though they were social services-related. There was already the right number of staff to manage the Children in Need cases and Early Help services, but officers were waiting to hear what learning will come out of the programme's first wave.
- Members were told that safeguarding partners were already starting to think about the rollout of family hubs. Families wanted to receive a service in their community that was accessible, and family based. A meeting had taken place whereby, discussion was had on how safeguarding influences family help services. The Fairer Together strategy had helped with that vision.
- Members noted that the Quarter 4 registrations for those aged four, were at 106%, and enquired as to the reason behind the rise. In response, members were told that the Children's Social Care review was very focused on decision making and families making decision for themselves and encompassed all work of the family. It wasn't that 100% was being reached, but the data was sometimes elective and not always updated. Officers ensured there was a reduction in duplication of services by working with partners and utilising opportunities.
- Members asked how officers adapted the offer to different groups of the community, to which the Committee were told in response, that some of the programmes were targeted. Data was used to identify gaps and challenges. An example was commissioning of tuition to Turkish and Somali children, some of which was able to be done internally. It was important that those that come through the universal service were then fed through to the specific service that captured their needs.
- Members praised the Health Visitors' work as exceptional.
- Members voiced concern and questioned the possibility of how a volunteer, for example, would be quality assured / safeguarded, should the Government's proposed approach allowing the work of a qualified social worker to be done by non-professionals, come to fruition. In response, the Committee were told that the current setup was for the safeguarding partnership to train staff and partner agencies. Partners were already required to have a designated safeguarding lead and there was already a good referral system; additionally, all staff were able to identify child abuse and any child in need of early, targeted support would have this overseen by a qualified social care manager. However, there would be a need to build in further mechanisms to manage those safeguarding risks, should more families were being worked with by a non-social worker, it is possible though. It was at the Council's discretion to refuse the proposed changes currently, but there was always a possibility that in future, this could become a funding-dependent requirement.
- Members noted that Islington had good practice currently, and enquired as to how, with all the proposed new initiatives, that good practice would remain. In response, the Committee were told that the ultimate responsibility would

always sit in statute with the Director of Children's Services, but it was a matter of ensuring the basics remained in place, that quality assurance methods were in place and that there was continuous auditing and reviewing with families and staff.

RESOLVED:

That the item be noted.

171

SCHOOL ORGANISATION SCRUTINY UPDATE (ITEM NO. B2)

The Chair opened the item for discussion first by noting to officers, that the Committee were interested to hear about progress on the ground with specific schools. In the discussion on the item, the following points were raised:

- Officers highlighted that plans to reorganise, amalgamate and close schools were very difficult decisions and accepted that these would not be popular, but that the feedback from schools was broadly understanding of the rationale behind the proposals. In terms of the specific schools affected, officers stated that the proposals had understandably not landed particularly well, given the impact on those schools and their school community. Broadly, however, schools were said to have preferred that the council was taking decisions swiftly, given the urgency of the situation, with factors such as the cost of living, low birth rate, and the housing crisis, all contributing to falling pupil numbers, the impact of which was being felt by schools financially.
- Officers were mindful that the conversations they had with affected schools were sensitive and approached it as such, given the direct impact on those schools' staff and families.
- Members were told, that while Islington as the local authority can propose closures for its maintained schools, there were complexities regarding faith schools. While officers always aimed to work in partnership with the relevant diocese, there had been instances where this relationship had been more challenging when considering possible school mergers and closures.
- Additional complexities included schools obtaining academy sponsors/status. While officers had nurtured relationships with academy boards in the borough, they had no authority to direct academies to close or reform, which impacted on the council's ability to take a strategic approach to building resilience in local schools.
- Officers reiterated that these proposals were made with reluctance, and in response to falling pupils in inner London. A significant number of the borough's schools were one form entry. It was stressed that it was the absolute last resort to propose a school for closure, and there would have been both a strong evidence base in support of the measure, and an exhaustion of all other options before taking this step. Many factors would be taken into account, including capacity in neighbouring schools and the resilience across the entire school estate.
- In response to members' questions regarding the inclusion factor, officers stated that they were mindful that most schools in the borough had high numbers of students with SEND or in receipt of free school meals, and carefully considered the impact to them in their proposals. Officers went on to state that they had explored several variables that could help address the impact on inclusion, but no option was without challenges.
- The programme was currently in Phase Two and the timescale that officers were working towards, was to take forward the initial proposals. Every school had been RAG-rated, and a letter issued to each, confirming their individual

status. It often had to be explained that a red rating wasn't an immediate precursor to closure and meetings had taken place with schools that had been rated red, wherein officers would explain the data behind that classification as well as what would need to happen for a school to be proposed for closure.

- Officers confirmed that the list of each school's RAG status was being withheld from public disclosure due to it being a sensitive matter for the schools, their staff and the local communities concerned. There was also the risk of this data being misinterpreted, given that there had been confusion around red ratings. The letters that had been sent to schools with this information had been sent confidentially.
- The financial position of the borough's schools had the potential to impact the wider Council finances. The entire school estate had been mapped, in terms of financial position and viability as well as the offer. In the proposals, consideration had also been given about how the schools estate fit in with the wider corporate portfolio and potential alternate uses.
- Officers stated that they had to follow the Department for Education (DfE) consultation process, wherein decisions could be made only after the four-week formal consultation period had ended.
- Members made note that despite the procedures Islington had to follow, the local authority could still be emotionally intelligent in its conduct, which officers insisted that it was. In response they also stated that officers had shown resilience and maturity while carrying out this challenging work, and that to nurture positive working relationships in the community, it required all sides to approach the issue of school closures and amalgamations with maturity and understanding.
- Members made note that they did not want the proposals to exacerbate the issue of there being less families in Islington.
- Members highlighted that while there had been positive news in the local press about the implementation, a recent council report had acknowledged that there had been difficulties on transparency. In response, officers stated that they were investing a lot of time in engagement, which not just a matter of sending letters, but also having difficult and sensitive conversations with affected parties in the school and wider community.
- Officers stated that some of the conversations with the individual school governing bodies, was to encourage them to manage their resources more tightly. The scale of deficits in some schools were said to be bigger than the entire budget of that individual school. It was also acknowledged by officers that while the local authority could have taken more assertive decisions earlier in the process, the governing bodies of individual schools held responsibility for the direct management of their school's budget, with the local authority only having broad oversight. There had been a lack of a steer at a high level from the Department for Education (DfE) as to how early or fast to be taking decisions on the viability of schools, and it was a similar situation facing London's local authorities.

RESOLVED:

That the item be noted.

Children's Services Scrutiny Committee - 15 January 2024

The Chair opened the item for discussion. In the discussion, the following points were raised:

- Members expressed concern about school absence, particularly, persistent absence which seemed to be moving in the wrong direction and sought clarification on the issues impacting attendance in those schools. In response, officers stated that there were several concerning factors behind it, and historically, attendance had been poor in the borough, with improvement only seen during the COVID-19 pandemic. Officers had been working on a cluster approach, which had included a session where 17 schools had been brought together to share best practice. Schools had also been RAG rated on their attendance.
- Members noted the absence of the white working-class boys demographic, from the data, and other anomalies regarding boys with pupil premiums and boys of Black Caribbean heritage. Officers advised in response that reporting was by exception, and that previous reports to committee had included detailed ethnicity breakdowns at members' request.
- Fines were not used in punitive ways for parents, but for recurrent offenders such as those that took holidays in term time.
- Research had shown the take up of two-year-old provision had dropped off by 10% since last year, but the expansion of the expanded childcare offer was said by members to be positive and would hopefully attract more providers to offer targeted two year old childcare. Officers clarified that the hourly rate was determined by central government to deliver the offer.

ACTION:

Officers to find time on the work programme for an update of the last three to four months of attendance.

ACTION:

Officers to provide data for white, working class boys, black Caribbean boys and boys with pupil premium funding.

ACTION:

Officers to invite members to the meeting with the Children's Commissioner.

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WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24 (ITEM NO. B4)

The Executive Member's Report had been pushed to the next meeting of the Committee on 26th February 2024, where there would also be witness evidence from council officers and an update on achievement.

The reporting schedules for the Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership (ISCP) had changed and thus, the annual report would be presented to members in the autumn, which would fall in the next (2024-25) municipal year.

RESOLVED:

That the work programme be noted.

MEETING CLOSED AT 9.05 pm

Chair

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Resources Department
Town Hall, Upper St, N1 2UD

Report of: Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer

Meeting of: Children's Services Scrutiny Committee

Date: 26 February 2024

Ward(s): Finsbury

Appendix 1F to this report is exempt from publication

Subject: Call-in of the Executive decision on the 'Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools'

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Following the meeting of the Executive on Thursday 8 February, the Monitoring Officer has confirmed that a valid notice of call-in has been received regarding the decision made by the Executive on the 'Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools'. The report considered by the Executive is attached as appendices. Appendix 1F is exempt from publication.
- 1.2. A call-in is considered valid if it meets the requirements set out in paragraph 66 of the Council's Constitution. The requirements are that the call-in is submitted by any five members of the Council, is submitted to the Proper Officer within three working days of the date of the publication of the decision and gives reasons in writing for the call-in, together with a positive or additional course of action.
- 1.3. The call-in form received by the Monitoring Officer on 9 February 2024, attached as Appendix 2A, met the above criteria. The Monitoring Officer also received further clarification of the 'additional course of action' before the expiry of the call-in period and this is detailed in paragraph 3.10 and attached as an addendum to Appendix 2B.

- 1.4. As this decision relates to an education function, in accordance with paragraph 66.5 (c) of the Council's Constitution, the Monitoring Officer has referred the decision to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
- 1.5. The committee is asked to determine whether or not it agrees with any element of the call-in, or if it upholds the original decision made by the Executive on 8 February.

2. Recommendations

The Children's Services Scrutiny Committee is asked to agree to:

- 2.1. (a) Conclude that it does not object to the decision in question, in which case the decision shall take effect on the date of this meeting;

or

- 2.2. (b) Refer the matter back to the decision taker for reconsideration with reasons for its request.

3. Background

Role of Scrutiny Committees in relation to call-in

- 3.1. The powers of scrutiny committees to consider a call-in are detailed in Paragraph 9F(2) of the Local Government Act 2000, which requires that an authority exercising Executive arrangements must ensure that its overview and scrutiny committees have power to 'review or scrutinise decisions made, or other action taken, in connection with the discharge of any functions which are the responsibility of the Executive'.
- 3.2. The Local Government Act 2000, also places restrictions on the actions available to the scrutiny committee when considering a call-in. These limits are detailed in Paragraph 9F(4) of the Act. Scrutiny Committees do not have the authority to overturn a decision made by the Executive, but can either 'recommend that the decision be reconsidered by the person who made it', or can arrange for the function 'to be exercised by the authority'.

Reasons given for the call-in and the proposed positive or additional course of action

- 3.3. The reasons given for the call in, in the form attached as Appendix 2A were as follows:

The impacts of this decision on Drayton Park School have not been adequately considered.

Parents at Drayton Park School have not been adequately consulted.

The needs of SEND students at Montem have not been adequately considered.

The implications of this decision have wider ramifications for schools across the borough.

Student numbers and financial pressures need considering in the round, rather than taking out.

- 3.4. The proposed positive or additional course of action proposed in the call in form, attached as Appendix 2A were as follows:

We wish to call in this decision to ensure the council takes a holistic approach to addressing the serious crisis in over provision of school places across the borough.

We believe this decision to amalgamate Montem and Duncombe Schools ignores the “domino effect” on other schools both financially and in terms of school places and the decision needs to be deferred until a plan for other schools impacted by this decision and support for affected children, staff governors and parents is put in place.

Taking this decision in isolation leaves too many serious questions about the sustainability and viability of other schools and risks setting off an unplanned domino effect across other schools.

In Hackney an independent body reviewed the proposals. This should be considered here.

- 3.5. Prior to the expiry of the call in period, the Monitoring Officer received further clarification on the proposed positive or additional course of action

To begin a whole borough approach to reviewing school places and integrate Phase 2 of the school organisation plan with Phase 3 so that a planned approach can be taken to school places across the borough rather than taking decisions immediately without investigating and consulting on the consequences of early closures

Directly include Drayton Park school within the consultation process and review whether defederation is necessary

An independent body to review the proposals and the evidence base

Purpose of the committees consideration and possible outcomes

- 3.6. The purpose of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's consideration of the call-in is to determine if they agree to any part of it or not, by a majority vote of the committee members present.
- 3.7. If the committee determines that it does **not agree** with any part of the reasons for the call-in, the committee's decision will be that it upholds the decision made by the Executive and the Executive's decision will come into force at the conclusion of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting.
- 3.8. If the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee determines that it does **agree** with any part of the reasons for the call-in, they may refer the matter back to the decision taker for reconsideration with reasons for its request. The committee may also agree particular recommendations for the Executive to consider.
- 3.9. The item will then be added to the agenda of the next meeting of the Executive. The Executive will take into consideration the reasons for the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee's recommendations and one or more representatives of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee will attend the Executive meeting to explain their reasons.
- 3.10. The Executive may choose to amend their decision or to confirm the decision originally made. At the conclusion of this Executive meeting the decision will be final and not available for further call-in.

4. Implications

4.1. Financial Implications

- 4.1.1. Whilst this decision has no direct financial impacts, it is recommended that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee take into consideration the Financial Implications provided paragraph 8.1 of the original decision taken by the Executive, which is attached as Appendix 1.

4.2. Legal Implications

- 4.2.1. The legal implications in relation to the call-in are detailed within this report. It is also recommended that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee take into consideration the Legal Implications provided in paragraph 8.2 of the original decision taken by the Executive, which is attached as Appendix 1.

4.3. **Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030**

4.3.1. Whilst this decision has no direct environmental impacts, it is recommended that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee take into consideration the Environmental Implications provided in paragraph 8.3 of the original decision taken by the Executive, which is attached as Appendix 1.

4.4. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

4.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.

4.4.2. An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required in relation to this report, however, it is recommended that the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee take into consideration the Equalities Impact Assessment appended to the original decision taken by the Executive, which is attached as Appendix 1D.

5. **Conclusion and reasons for recommendations**

5.1. To determine the call-in received in relation to the decision made by the Executive at the meeting on Thursday 8 February, on the 'Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools'.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1– Agenda item 7 from the meeting of the Executive on 8 February 2024 'Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools' and the appendices to that report, as follows:

Appendix 1A – Consultation document on the Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools

Appendix 1B - Analysis of responses to the Public consultation

Appendix 1C – Redacted Feasibility Study

Appendix 1D – Equalities Impact Assessment

Appendix 1E - Proposed outline statutory notice

Appendix 1F – Individual responses – Exempt from publication (exemption 2: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual) – *to follow*

- Appendix 2A – Call in Form

Appendix 2B – Clarification provided to supplement Call-in form text on the proposed positive or additional course of action

Background papers:

- None.

Final report clearance:

Authorised by: **Director of Law and Governance**

Date: 15 February 2024

Report Author: Philippa Green, Head of Democratic Services and Governance
Email: Philippa.green@islington.gov.uk

Children's Services
222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

Meeting of: Executive

Date: 8 February 2024

Ward(s): Finsbury

Appendix

Subject: Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. Across Islington, 46% of schools are projecting deficit budgets by the end of 2025-26, cumulatively this adds up to a projected deficit of £15m based on the ratified budgets submitted by schools at the end of 2022/23 financial year. The School Organisation Plan agreed by the Executive Board in October 2022 is the strategic plan to reconfigure the school estate to reflect the falling numbers of pupils so that all schools are financially viable. The School Organisation Plan was submitted to Executive Board alongside the Education Plan, 'Putting Children First' and the SEND Strategy to ensure the proposals presented do not compromise the quality of education or our corporate commitment to Inclusion.
- 1.2. The objective of this paper is to support the recommendation that Islington Council issue a statutory proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024 on the existing Duncombe site. This would technically close Montem Primary School and automatically transfer all existing pupils from Montem to Duncombe.
- 1.3. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are in the Hornsey Planning area which has the highest vacancy rate in Reception across all of Islington, with 32% vacancies. This figure is above both the Department for Education's recommendation of a 5% vacancy rate and the 10% vacancy rate used by most local authorities across London.
- 1.4. Both Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are two-form entry schools with 60 pupils in each year group, and both have a vacancy rate of over 50% in Reception. We expect

these numbers to decline further in the coming years. This means either school has the capacity to absorb pupils from the other.

- 1.5. Each surplus place is equivalent to a £5,700 loss of income and so this level of surplus creates financial pressure for both schools. As stated above across Islington, 46% of schools are projecting deficit budgets by the end of 2025-26, including Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools. The responsibility for managing school budgets sits with Governing Bodies but without the plans and resources to achieve balanced budgets, ultimately, the deficit will fall to the Local Authority, creating an additional financial pressure.
- 1.6. The Local Authority has a sufficiency duty to plan for school places as set out in the Education Act, and in exercising this duty a responsibility to ensure children attend good financially sustainable schools. This means that we must make some very difficult decisions.
- 1.7. An informal consultation was undertaken from 15 November to 20 December 2023 on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, this report details the process for consultation and summarises the feedback for consideration by Executive Board on whether to progress to formal consultation and the issuing of a statutory notice to amalgamate.
- 1.8. The amalgamation will address the existing and projected deficit at both schools, by reducing overall operating costs and creating a viable two-form entry school that is at full capacity.
- 1.9. The advantage of an amalgamation rather than a school closure is that existing staff will be ring-fenced to staffing positions in the amalgamated school.

2. Background

- 2.1. The School Organisation Plan approved by Islington Council's Executive on 13 October 2022 sets out how we will manage the high levels of surplus capacity in our schools to ensure the best outcomes for children and sustainable schools.
- 2.2. Phase Two of this plan was approved by the Executive on 19 October 2023, which agreed to launch an informal consultation on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools.
- 2.3. This followed a proposal in 2023 to close Pooles Park Primary School, which has the most vacancies in the planning area (62%). However, following an 'inadequate' judgement from Ofsted, the Department for Education issued an academy order and subsequently appointed an academy sponsor, The Bridge London Trust, to run this school. It is therefore no longer possible to proceed with our proposal to close Pooles Park school.
- 2.4. As a result of the academisation of Pooles Park there is a need to reduce capacity in the Hornsey area to account for falling rolls and reduced demand for primary school places. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are the two community schools with the next highest vacancy rates in the Hornsey planning area.
- 2.5. This report details the process of the first stage consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary schools and the responses received for consideration by the Executive to determine whether to issue a statutory notice to amalgamate.

- 2.6. The first stage consultation ran for five weeks from 15 November to 20 December 2023 with a series of consultation meetings held for parents and carers at both schools and a public meeting at a nearby, neutral, venue.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1. To review and consider the responses to the consultation.
- 3.2. To proceed to the next stage and issue a statutory notice to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024.
- 3.3. Based on the feedback received during the consultation, this report recommends the council makes the following commitments:
 - 3.3.1. To provide early, dedicated, professional support as part of a comprehensive needs led transition plan for pupils with Education, Health, and Care plans to support all aspects of transition. Additional resources will be allocated to the SEND team to work with individual children and their parents/carers to support their transition should the proposal proceed.
 - 3.3.2. To facilitate a parent/carer group with representatives from both primary schools as part of the transition process and bringing the two school communities together.
 - 3.3.3. Officers will work with the parent/carer group and school staff to mitigate the risks of air pollution through developing safer walking routes to school.
 - 3.3.4. Dedicated HR resources will be provided to support any staff impacted by the proposed amalgamation.
 - 3.3.5. To provide additional capacity to the schools to support this process should the proposal proceed.
- 3.4. A draft statutory outline statutory notice is attached as Appendix E.

4. Introduction

- 4.1. Birth rates in Islington have reduced significantly and this decline is projected to continue. This is leading to falling rolls and a high level of surplus capacity in Islington's primary schools with vacancies in reception of 25% in October 2023. This has increased from 20% in October 2022.
- 4.2. The School Organisation Plan sets out our approach to confidently manage this surplus capacity in our schools to ensure the best outcomes for our children and young people and the long-term sustainability of our schools. The plan sets the strategic direction for pupil place planning across the borough and has been developed alongside the Education Plan. It ensures that the principles applied to managing our school estate reflect our corporate and political commitment to driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools and supports the delivery of a quality educational experience for all children and young people through a diverse curriculum offer.
- 4.3. The Local Authority has a duty to ensure that sufficient schools are available at primary and secondary stages of education in the local area and for children with special educational needs. Decisions to change the organisation of Community and Voluntary

aided schools are made by the council, and for academies, by the Secretary of State, advised by the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC).

- 4.4. Reducing the number of school places in a planned way will support schools to manage change within their national funding formula allocations. Department for Education (DfE) guidance on school closures includes a presumption not to close. Therefore, all options have been exhausted to avoid school closure but when there is no alternative, long-term option, this does have to be considered.
- 4.5. The specific proposals of the second phase of the School Organisation Plan agreed by Executive on 19 October 2023 were to: launch an informal consultation on a proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, a separate informal consultation on the amalgamation of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, and a consultation on reducing the Published Admission Numbers (PAN) for Drayton Park, Prior Weston, Rotherfield and Tufnell Park Primary Schools.
- 4.6. An informal consultation on the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools took place from 15 November to 20 December 2023. This report provides the detail of the consultation and the responses to the consultation.

5. The Proposal

- 5.1. The consultation focused on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024.
- 5.2. School places are planned by dividing Islington into six different planning areas. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are in Planning Area 2, Hornsey. Hornsey has the highest levels of surplus capacity in the borough with 32% vacancies in reception as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: the number of vacancies by planning area

Vacancies by planning area for October 2023	No. of places available	Vacancies	Vacancy rate
Planning Area 1: Holloway	465	108	23%
Planning Area 2: Hornsey	465	150	32%
Planning Area 3: Highbury	360	62	17%
Planning Area 4: Barnsbury	245	74	30%
Planning Area 5: Canonbury	340	72	21%
Planning Area 6: Finsbury	300	70	23%
Totals	2,175	536	25%

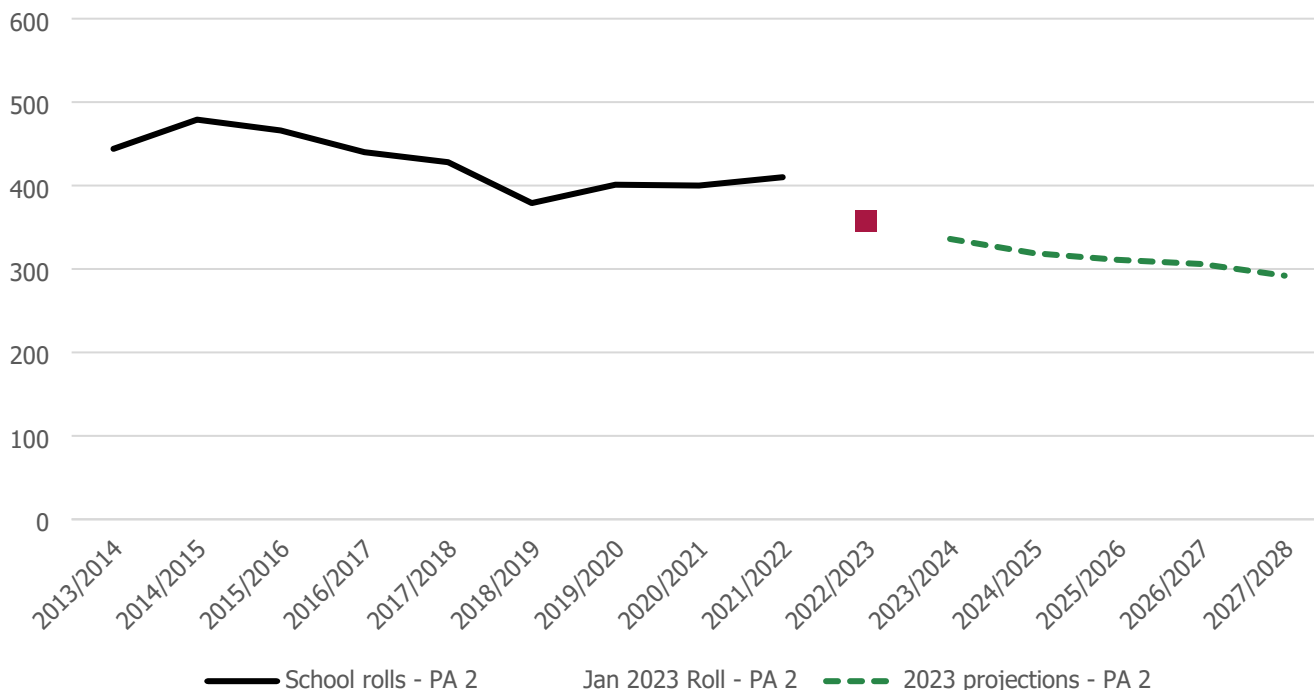
5.3. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are the two community schools with the highest number of spare places in the Hornsey area as shown in table 2. Only Pooles Park Primary School and Whitehall Park Primary School have higher vacancy rates, but as these schools are converting to an academy and are an academy respectively, we do not have the power to close or alter these schools.

Table 2: Spare places by school in the Hornsey Planning area

School Name	Published Admission Number for Reception	Number of places taken in Reception (October 2023)	Percentage vacancy in Reception (October 2023)	Total number of pupils from Reception to Year 6
Ashmount	60	60	0%	378
Christ the King RC	45	34	24%	243
Duncombe	60	29	52%	313
Grafton	60	60	0%	399
Montem	60	28	53%	270
Pakeman	45	35	22%	272
Pooles Park	45	16	64%	143
St Marks CE	30	30	0%	190
Whitehall Park (Academy)	60	23	62%	245
Total	465	315	32%	2,542

5.4. Roll projections for the Hornsey Planning Area show an overall reduction in pupil numbers since 2014-15. This trend is expected to continue, with a further reduction projected each year in the coming years with expected numbers in Reception in this planning area dipping below 300 by 2027-2028.

Chart 1: Roll projections for Planning Area 2 - Hornsey, Reception year



- 5.5. Montem and Duncombe are both based in large Victorian school buildings and have both experienced a significant roll drop in recent years. Without more pupils being admitted, they will not be viable in the medium to longer term.
- 5.6. Montem and Duncombe are situated just over half a mile apart and within walking distance from each other. By amalgamating the schools, we can bring together the strengths of both, whilst significantly improving their long-term financial viability.
- 5.7. By operating from one site, the amalgamated school will have lower running costs, and due to the size of the buildings, can accommodate all existing pupils and operate as a two-form entry school, with bulge classes for the larger higher year groups.
- 5.8. Amalgamation will ensure all existing pupils from the school that is closed are automatically moved to the other site. This significantly reduces the risk of any child not having a school place in September 2024.
- 5.9. The Local Authority completed a feasibility study in advance of the consultation period to determine which school we would propose to close and which we would propose as the site of the amalgamated school. This considered and scored factors around four categories:
- 5.9.1. Buildings and site condition – both sites are suitable for an amalgamated school and can accommodate the required pupil numbers
 - 5.9.2. Financial position and running costs – Both schools were in deficit. Duncombe is now projected to be in surplus this financial year. Duncombe has lower running costs in comparison with Montem.
 - 5.9.3. Location – more pupils from both schools live within 1km of the Duncombe site and there are more neighbouring schools near Montem

- 5.9.4. Air quality and congestion – air quality is better at Duncombe and congestion is less as the site is on a school street
- 5.10. There was no weighting on educational attainment within the feasibility study, as both schools are judged ‘good’ by Ofsted. Amalgamation will ensure that both schools’ culture, teaching practices, and policies can be incorporated into the amalgamated school. However, consideration was given to the quality of education, educational outcomes across both schools.
- 5.11. Based on the outcomes of the feasibility study, we are recommending that the amalgamated school operate from the Duncombe site and keep the Duncombe name.
- 5.12. We recommend that the amalgamated school be on the Duncombe site because:
- 5.12.1. more existing pupils from both schools live closer to the Duncombe site
 - 5.12.2. there are fewer schools nearby to Duncombe. If Duncombe school were to close, there would be less choice for parents in the local area with only one other school within 500m. There are four other schools within 500m of Montem.
 - 5.12.3. the Duncombe site is already on a school street whereas Montem’s location means a school street is not possible and the air quality is better in the Duncombe area and has lower Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels.
- 5.13. The recommendation based on the findings from the feasibility study and the considerations within it is that the amalgamated school is located on the Duncombe site, retaining the Duncombe name and Ofsted number. The rationale underpinning this recommendation is that although both schools currently have deficits, the financial position at Duncombe is projected to improve, meaning that the newly amalgamated school would start in a better financial position, this would safeguard the financial position of the school and help to secure the school’s long-term future.
- 5.14. A redacted version of the feasibility study that expands on the rationale underpinning the recommendations within this report is attached as Appendix C.

6. The Consultation

6.1. The consultation process

- 6.1.1. An informal consultation was undertaken from 15 November to 20 December 2023 on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools in line with the statutory guidance on Opening and closing maintained schools. The consultation document is at Appendix A.
- 6.1.2. Translated versions of the consultation document were provided in Arabic, Bengali, Somali, and Turkish.
- 6.1.3. All documentation was shared with statutory consultees including local schools, admission authorities, MPs, and other interested organisations. All the documentation was published online at a dedicated webpage. The consultation was reported on in the local press.

6.1.4. Seven meetings were held for parent and carers, including a meeting with interpreters, and a public meeting for the wider community.

Table 3: Consultation Meetings

Date	Location	Audience	Approximate number of participants
15 November 2023	Montem Primary School	Parents and Carers	>100
16 November 2023	Duncombe Primary School	Parents and Carers	26
21 November 2023	Montem Primary School	Parents and Carers	>100
22 November 2023	Duncombe Primary School	Parents and Carers	2
23 November 2023	Montem Primary School	Parents and Carers	>100
24 November 2023	Duncombe Primary School	Parents and Carers	6
29 November 2023	Montem Primary School	Parents and Carers (with interpreters)	27
12 December 2023	Arts and Media School Islington	Local community	35

6.1.5. Over 400 people attended the parent and community meetings where they asked questions and fed back their views and concerns.

6.1.6. A redacted version of the feasibility study which determined the site of the proposed amalgamated school was published on the consultation webpage on 19 December. This was provided for information purposes only and did not form part of the consultation documentation.

- 6.1.7. 786 responses¹ were received to the online consultation questionnaire.
- 6.1.8. Respondents to the questionnaire could make additional comments. 590 respondents chose to leave additional comments.
- 6.1.9. Respondents were also invited to submit their comments by email to a dedicated mailbox. Eight comments were received by email.
- 6.1.10. The Trade Unions provided a joint response from four trade unions to the consultation.

6.2. Main themes from the consultation

- 6.2.1. 786 responses were received to the online consultation questionnaire.
- 6.2.2. Respondents were asked to select an option that described who they were. 436 respondents (55% of the total respondents) said they were parents of children at Duncombe or Montem Primary Schools. 84 respondents (11%) said they were staff members and 13 (2%) were governors. The remaining 253 respondents (32%) selected 'Other'. 24 of the respondents said they were a pupil at Duncombe or Montem Primary School in their comments.
- 6.2.3. Respondents were asked whether they had children at either school. 162 said they had children at Duncombe and 310 said they had children at Montem, in total this represents 60% of the total responses.
- 6.2.4. Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement "I agree with the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School". Of the total respondents, 20% either definitely or somewhat agreed, 3% neither agreed or disagreed, 4% somewhat disagreed, and 71% definitely disagreed. 1% skipped this question.
- 6.2.5. Of the 310 respondents that said they currently had children at Montem, 4% either definitely or somewhat agreed, 2% neither agreed or disagreed, 4% somewhat disagreed, and 90% definitely disagreed.
- 6.2.6. Of the 162 respondents that said they currently had children at Duncombe, 66% either definitely or somewhat agreed, 6% neither agreed or disagreed, 6% somewhat disagreed, and 22% definitely disagreed.
- 6.2.7. A report on the responses to the consultation is provided at Appendix B.
- 6.2.8. The main themes from the consultation comments and meetings and our responses to them are set out as follows:

¹ The number of responses does not necessarily equate to the number of people submitting a response. We did not require users to register to complete the questionnaire and as such it was possible for an individual to submit more than one response

6.2.9. Alternative Resource Provision (ARP) and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) [86 comments]

6.2.9.1. 75 responses raised concerns about the number of children with SEND at Montem Primary School and how they would be supported to move to another school. Many were concerned about how a change of routine could disrupt learning and how children with SEND would cope with change. There were also concerns that the timeline is not sufficient to prepare the children. They also spoke highly about the SEND provision at Montem, including the sensory rooms. Some were concerned about how the school would manage an increase in children with Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Plans and if children would be disadvantaged by reduced capacity. They questioned why the Local Authority was proposing to amalgamate two schools with very high levels of children with SEND. 11 respondents specifically raised the ARP at Montem and their concerns about the impact closure would have on children who benefit from this provision. The impact on children with SEND and the implications for the ARP was also raised at the consultation meetings on 15, 21, and 23 November and 12 December.

6.2.9.2. **Response:** Across Islington primary schools, approximately 16% of pupils were identified as requiring SEN Support in January 2023. This indicates they have some special educational need, but do not meet the threshold for an EHC Plan. 5% of Islington primary school pupils have an EHC Plan. At Montem, 17% of pupils receive SEN support and around 9% have an EHC Plan. The level of SEN support at Montem is slightly higher than the Islington average and is 4% higher for children with an EHC Plan. It is therefore essential that additional support is provided for these children if the proposal to amalgamate progresses. This support is detailed within a comprehensive transition plan to support all pupils, should the amalgamation proceed, including detailed actions for SEN support and EHC Plans. Additional resource will be allocated to support a needs led approach to ensure that each child has a smooth transition. The proportion of children with SEN support at Duncombe is 16.5% and with an EHC Plan is 6%, this is similar to the ratio of children with SEN needs at Montem. By combining both schools, through the amalgamation, should it proceed, the number of pupils will potentially double and therefore the percentage of children with SEN support and EHC Plans at the newly amalgamated school would remain at a similar percentage. The ARP at Montem gives mainstream children access to specialist support when they need it. Careful consideration will be given to the individual needs of children accessing this support to ensure that when it is relocated the provision meets the needs of children well. Duncombe Primary School does not currently have an ARP. There is a sensory room and skilled staff who support mainstream children with SEN when they require additional help. There is a statutory duty to ensure that all children with additional needs are fully supported, the staffing structure of the newly amalgamated school would draw from the expertise across both schools to ensure that there is a sufficient level of support to meet the needs of all children. A robust transition plan has been drafted for implementation should the proposal progress, this plan will support all children, including those with SEN and EHC Plans. Additional resource has been

identified to support the implementation of this plan should the amalgamation proceed.

6.2.10. Attainment [45 comments]

6.2.10.1. Respondents asked why attainment, quality of education, and educational outcomes had not been considered when forming the proposal. They cited the most recent attainment results which indicate that more children are performing better at Montem than at Duncombe. Respondents are concerned that the quality of education would be affected if all children are moved to Duncombe. Participants also raised this at the consultation meetings on 15, 16, and 21 November and 12 December.

6.2.10.2. **Response:** The proposal is to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary schools, rather than the closure of one school, to ensure that the amalgamated school benefits from the strengths of both schools. The quality of education is good at both schools and so this is not a differentiating factor between them. Officers completed a comparative analysis of outcomes at key stages between the two schools which demonstrates that in Phonics and EYFS, Duncombe's outcomes are higher. At Key Stage 1, their outcomes are aligned. The combined data at Key Stage 2 shows Montem performing above Duncombe. The data comparison shows different areas of strength across both schools. Both Ofsted reports are good, and Duncombe is outstanding in the area of personal development. We are confident that the quality of education would not be negatively impacted by this proposal and by creating a viable two-form entry school, we will ensure the amalgamated school offers the best educational outcomes for all new and existing pupils.

6.2.11. Class sizes and Capacity [37 comments]

6.2.11.1. Respondents raised concerns about how all children will be accommodated in the amalgamated school and whether children will be taught in classes larger than 30 pupils. They also were concerned that the proposed site of the amalgamated school (Duncombe) would not be large enough and whether outside space, including the playground, would be suitable. These points were also raised at the consultation meetings on 15, 16, 21 and 29 November.

6.2.11.2. **Response:** No class sizes in any school will be larger than 30 pupils. Should this proposal proceed, the amalgamated school will be a two-form entry school, which means two classes of 30 children in each year group. Where year groups are larger than 60 pupils, we will also arrange for additional classes, either as a third class or a mixed class across different year groups. Ultimately, all pupils will be in classes of no more than 30. In terms of capacity, both Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are designed to be two-form entry schools and exceed government requirements on the minimum size required for a two-form entry school. Duncombe has enough classrooms to accommodate all children (20) should all existing pupils remain at the amalgamated school.

6.2.12. Air Quality and traffic [33 comments]

6.2.12.1. Some respondents supported the proposal as Duncombe is on a school street which is better for safety at drop-off and pick-up and improves air quality at the school. They gave anecdotal examples of their children with asthma and other

health conditions which was improved by the school street programme at Duncombe. Others suggested that the difference in air quality at Duncombe and Montem is negligible at 1-3 µg/m³, plus the access routes to Duncombe meant children are exposed to high levels of pollution and sound when walking to the school. They are concerned what impact this would have on children with SEND, including those with autism.

6.2.12.2. **Response:** Duncombe is located on a school street, whereas Montem is situated on a busy junction preventing the ability to create a school street at this site. This means Duncombe is safer, and the air quality is significantly better than the air quality at Montem. Across all schools in Islington, the average air pollution level for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was 22µg/m³. The average result for Duncombe in 2021 was lower than the average at 19µg/m³ whereas at Montem it is higher at 26 µg/m³. The SEND transition plan will consider the impact of all changes to children.

6.2.13. Feasibility study [31 comments]

6.2.13.1. Respondents questioned the feasibility study and believed it to be flawed due to the recommendation that Duncombe Primary be the site of the amalgamated school. They believe the feasibility study should have considered attainment, SEND, and safeguarding and should have been shared publicly. Participants at the consultation meetings on 23 and 29 November asked for a copy of the feasibility study.

6.2.13.2. **Response:** Both Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are judged 'good' by Ofsted and achieve similar outcomes for pupils. The purpose of the feasibility study was to determine which site to host the amalgamated school based on the buildings and site condition, the financial position and running costs, location, and air quality and congestion. Both schools were scored against each of the criteria for evaluation within the feasibility study. The study determined that: both sites are suitable for an amalgamated school and can accommodate the required pupil numbers; both schools are in deficit but Duncombe is projected to be in surplus this financial year and has lower running costs than Montem; more pupils from both schools live within 1km of the Duncombe site; there are more neighbouring schools near Montem with available places; the air quality is better and there is less congestion at Duncombe. It is for these reasons that we are proposing Duncombe as the site of the amalgamated school. Consideration on attainment and SEND are referred to in other parts of this report. We have referenced the SEND transition plan that will support a needs led approach to every child identified with SEN. Educational outcomes were reviewed across both schools and strengths were identified in both. A redacted version of the feasibility study has now been published and is included as Appendix C.

6.2.14. Timescale [24 comments]

6.2.14.1. Respondents questioned the timing of the proposal and argued that it did not give enough time for parents to consider their options or for staff to look for other jobs. They were also concerned that if the proposal is approved in April, this would leave only one term to implement the proposal which would involve a staffing restructure and the transition of Montem pupils to another school. They did not think this was sufficient time. Some asked if this would mean that staff

would be expected to work over the summer holidays to complete the amalgamation. Parents, carers, and community members also raised the timescale at the consultation meetings and were concerned that the proposed timeline does not give sufficient time for staff to apply for other jobs.

6.2.14.2. **Response:** The timing of the proposal is in keeping with DfE statutory guidelines around opening and closing maintained schools that the local authority must operate within. Consideration was given to extending the timeline for implementation to 2025, however this would have a negative impact on the financial viability of both schools. Parents / Carers would be likely to withdraw their children and seek alternative education should the amalgamation be prolonged owing to the instability that this would create. Staff are likely to seek secure alternative options for employment during this extended period. This would lead to reduced children and reduced staffing numbers adding to the financial vulnerability of both schools that would impact on the quality of education and children's wellbeing.

6.2.15. Transition support and wellbeing [20 comments]

6.2.15.1. Respondents raised concerns about the impact the amalgamation would have on children's wellbeing. This included concerns about transitioning to another school site, having new children in individual classes, and the impact, changes may have on extra-curricular activities. Concerns about transition and what support would be provided to pupils was raised at the consultation meetings on 15, 16, and 23 November.

6.2.15.2. **Response:** Based on the feedback received, we will ensure that additional resource is provided to support the transition of pupils from Montem to Duncombe - or another Islington school (if that is what parents / carers choose) – and to support pupils at Duncombe who will also be impacted by the proposal. This will include a SEND Transition Plan for those children with SEND or an EHC Plan.

6.2.16. Federation [19 comments]

6.2.16.1. 17 respondents raised concerns about what impact the proposal would have on the Edventure Collaborative; the federation Montem Primary School is currently in with Drayton Park Primary School. They wanted to understand what would happen to the federation and what impact it would have on any surplus or deficit held by the federation. Two emails were also received about this, and it was raised at the consultation meetings on 21 and 23 November and 12 December.

6.2.16.2. **Response:** Should the proposal proceed, it would have an impact on Drayton Park School as it would be the only school in the Edventure Collaborative Federation and therefore the Edventure Collaborative Federation would need to be dissolved. This would mean Drayton Park would no longer be part of this federation and new governance arrangements would need to be established. Any change to the Federation would only happen after the final decision has been made and before the new school year in September 2024. When two or more schools federate, this means they share a single governing body. By law, they remain individual schools and continue to receive individual budgets and how that is managed is determined by the governing body.

6.2.17. Pooles Park [20 comments]

6.2.17.1. Respondents asked why the Local Authority was not proposing to close Pooles Park school instead, that was judged 'inadequate' by Ofsted in 2022. Some recognised that the Local Authority was unable to close Pooles Park following an academy order. Respondents suggested that the council challenge the decision by the Department for Education to issue an academy order for Pooles Park. This was also raised at the consultation meetings on 15, 16, 21, 23 and 24 November.

6.2.17.2. **Response:** A proposal was made in 2023 to close Pooles Park Primary School, which has the most vacancies in the planning area (62%). However, following an 'inadequate' judgement from Ofsted, the Department for Education issued an academy order and subsequently appointed an academy sponsor, The Bridge London Trust, to run this school. When an academy sponsor is identified by the DfE, the local authority is unable to propose closure. It is therefore, no longer possible to proceed with the proposal to close Pooles Park school. With a surplus capacity of 32% across the Hornsey locality area, it is necessary to take action as this creates financial vulnerability for the schools that is not sustainable. The Local Authority has challenged the decision taken by the DfE to support the academisation of Pooles Park and is awaiting the decision.

6.2.18. Samuel Rhodes School [19 comments]

6.2.18.1. 17 respondents asked what impact closure would have on Samuel Rhodes Primary School, which shares a building with Montem Primary School. Participants at the consultation meetings on 15, 21 and 29 November and 12 December also asked this question.

6.2.18.2. **Response:** This proposal is considering an amalgamation of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools specifically. Samuel Rhodes Primary is located on the top floor of the Montem school site. Prior to this proposal, consideration had been given to the best long-term location for Samuel Rhodes Primary owing to the specific requirements of the children placed there and the suitability of the current site. Officers continue to work with the headteacher of Samuel Rhodes Primary on how to best support the needs of each child on a needs led basis.

6.2.19. Amalgamation [18 comments]

6.2.19.1. Respondents raised concerns about the rationale of the proposal and why amalgamating other schools had not been considered. They also questioned how the proposal could be described as an amalgamation when it appeared to be a takeover and an amalgamation in 'name only' because the amalgamated school would keep Duncombe's name, site, and governing board. Respondents wanted reassurance and guarantees that Montem's staff would be given equal opportunity to staffing positions. Some suggested it would make more sense for Duncombe to close and Montem used as the site for the amalgamated school as it is part of a federation with Drayton Park. These points were also raised by participants at the consultation meetings on 21 November and 12 December.

6.2.19.2. **Response:** We are proposing an amalgamation of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, rather than closure of one of the schools because an amalgamation guarantees a place at the newly amalgamated school for all

pupils from both schools and ringfences staff to roles within the newly amalgamated school. This will ensure that the amalgamated school keeps the strengths of both schools. The recommendation is that the amalgamated school keep the Duncombe name and Ofsted number because the financial position at Duncombe is more secure than Montem. This would mean that the newly amalgamated school opens in a more secure financial position, which will secure a viable, long-term future. Based on the feedback received, officers will recommend to the Duncombe Primary School governing board to keep vacancies open for representatives from Montem Primary School. A further recommendation will be that a joint parent group is established with representatives from both schools. All staff will be given the same opportunities to apply for roles within the newly amalgamated school.

6.2.20. Travel times [13 comments]

6.2.20.1. 13 respondents said they were concerned about the increase in travel time by moving from Montem to Duncombe and the impact this would have on children. This was also raised at the consultation meetings on 15, 16, 21, 23 and 29 November.

6.2.20.2. **Response:** Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are less than half-a-mile apart and data indicates that all existing pupils at both schools live within the Department for Education's maximum distance from home to school of two miles. However, help will be provided for any child that needs additional support for increased journey time and will also support those parents who think another school would be more suitable for their child.

6.2.21. Leadership [12 comments]

6.2.21.1. 12 respondents mentioned the leadership of both schools, and either raised concerns about the current leadership or were concerned that the proposal did not include a proposed leadership structure. Respondents also asked about the governance arrangements for the amalgamated school.

6.2.21.2. **Response:** At this stage, we cannot comment on the staffing structure or leadership arrangements for the amalgamated school as this can only be determined should a formal proposal be published.

6.2.22. Accessibility [7 comments]

6.2.22.1. Related to the ARP and SEND, some respondents raised the practical point of building accessibility, and specifically that Montem has lift access to all floors and Duncombe does not. They are concerned what impact this would have on disabled children. This was also raised at the consultation meetings on 29 November and 12 December.

6.2.22.2. **Response:** Whilst Montem does have a lift to access all floors, there are other factors which are detailed within the feasibility study which mean Duncombe is a more desirable option as the site for the amalgamated school. These include more children from across both schools being closer to Duncombe than Montem and also that Duncombe is located on a school street rather than a busy road. Should the proposal proceed, accessibility improvements will be made to the Duncombe site.

6.2.23. School name [7 comments]

6.2.23.1. Some respondents suggested that the school should have a new name and the amalgamation is an opportunity for this.

6.2.23.2. **Response:** Under statutory guidance, we cannot give the amalgamated school a new name as this would be considered a new school rather than an amalgamated school where the same Ofsted registration number will apply. Instead, the governing body can change the name of the school and may want to consider this should the proposal proceed.

6.2.24. Long-term plans [5 comments]

6.2.24.1. Five respondents asked about the long-term plans for the school site with suggestions including turning the school into a hospital or as a SEND school, including as the site for an expanded Samuel Rhodes school. Some asked if the building would be turned into accommodation and if so, whether the impact on local demand for school places had been considered. This was also raised at the consultation meeting on 16 November.

6.2.24.2. **Response:** Should the proposal proceed, we would seek to retain the Montem site for other educational or community purposes. We cannot determine this until a formal proposal has been issued when we can complete a full study. Current roll projections are based on all known building developments in the local area. The School Organisation Plan is working on the basis that our school estate remains resilient should demand increase in the much longer term, and this proposal will result in a two-form entry school on a site that has capacity for additional bulge classes as required.

6.2.25. Staff options [6 comments]

6.2.25.1. Some respondents left comments asking about how staff will be affected by the amalgamation and what options were available to them. They wanted reassurances around staff redundancies. Parents, carers, and community members at the consultation meetings were concerned that the proposed timeline does not give sufficient time for staff to apply for other jobs.

6.2.25.2. **Response:** We appreciate that more information would be welcomed by staff and parents in relation to the future of staff and that this proposal has created uncertainty for staff. However, it is too early to say as a formal staff consultation can only take place if the decision is taken by the council's Executive to agree the proposal. We will, however, seek to protect employment as far as possible for staff currently working at Duncombe and Montem Primary schools.

6.2.26. Parental choice [5 comments]

6.2.26.1. Five respondents said that they had chosen to send their children to Montem despite living closer to Duncombe because of the reputation of Duncombe. At the consultation meeting on 29 November, parents asked if they could choose to send their children to another school.

6.2.26.2. **Response:** Should the proposal proceed, all existing pupils at Montem will automatically be offered a place Duncombe Primary School. However, support

will be made available to any parent who wishes to transfer their child to another Islington school.

6.2.27. Safeguarding [4 comments]

6.2.27.1. Four respondents raised safeguarding concerns related to a historical issue. It was also raised at several consultation meetings.

6.2.27.2. **Response:** We take safeguarding extremely seriously. This was an issue that pre-dates the current leadership of the school and was comprehensively dealt with at the time. We do not have any concerns about safeguarding and the safety of children at Duncombe Primary School.

6.2.28. School uniform [3 comments]

6.2.28.1. Three respondents mentioned school uniforms: one suggested that the school should have a new uniform to create a new school identity; one suggested the uniform should remain the same to save parents money; and one asked how parents were expected to afford purchasing a new uniform.

6.2.28.2. **Response:** School uniform policy is determined by the governing body. We understand that parents are concerned about any additional costs of purchasing new uniform, and where possible will seek to provide additional funding to mitigate this.

6.2.29. Community cohesion [2 comments]

6.2.29.1. Two respondents raised concerns about community cohesion and the impact amalgamating the two schools will have on gang-related activity.

6.2.29.2. **Response:** Although there are historical issues, we are not aware of any current issues.

6.2.30. Funding [1 comment]

6.2.30.1. One respondent said they believe the proposal is the only way to guarantee sufficient funding for the school. A participant also asked at the consultation meeting on 15 November if Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools were the only schools in deficit. Another participant at the meeting on 22 November recognised that amalgamation was the only way to create long-term certainty and ensure the amalgamated school had more resources. The public meeting on 12 December included a discussion about both schools' financial positions, the financial modelling used to justify the proposal, and the impact amalgamation would have on their financial position.

6.2.30.2. **Response:** The proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools is to secure financial viability of the amalgamated school and reduce the fixed running costs of the amalgamated school as it will operate from one site. Existing pupil numbers will mean that the school will operate as a two-form entry school at capacity. Funding is based on pupil numbers, and this will therefore ensure the long-term financial viability of the school.

6.2.31. Equality Impact Assessment [1 comment]

6.2.31.1. One respondent said that the proposal had no equality impact assessment which is a legal duty on all public bodies and should consider the disproportionate impact this proposal will have on children with disabilities. This was also raised by a participant at the consultation meeting on 21 November.

6.2.31.2. **Response:** An equality impact assessment was produced alongside the proposal and approved by Islington's Executive. Further equality impact assessments will be completed and updated should the proposal proceed to the next stage. The assessment includes analysis of the risks for individual groups, and how these risks will be mitigated. A second Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is appended to this report.

6.2.32. EYFS [1 comment]

6.2.32.1. One respondent asked about the Early Years Foundation Stage Provision (nursery and under-tuos) and whether this would continue at the amalgamated school.

6.2.32.2. **Response:** At this stage, it is too early to determine the structure or arrangements for the amalgamated school. However, we would be determined to ensure that existing educational provision remains in place at the amalgamated school.

6.2.33. Response from the Edventure Collaborative

6.2.33.1. A formal response was received from the Edventure Collaborative governing board which set out their reasons for why they disagree with the proposal. These were: they considered the feasibility study to be flawed, that the amalgamation is in name only, and the timescales for the amalgamation put vulnerable children at risk. Their proposed solutions were to: redo the feasibility study according to Islington's own published principles in the School Organisation Plan, recommend a genuine amalgamation, and extend the timescale for amalgamating the schools.

6.2.33.2. **Response:** The purpose of the feasibility study was to determine which site to host the amalgamated school based on the buildings and site condition, the financial position and running costs, location, and air quality and congestion. Both schools were scored by a panel of officers with different areas of expertise and the study determined that Duncombe Primary School would be the site of the amalgamated school. A redacted version of the feasibility study has now been published and is included as Appendix C. The local authority operates within the DfE statutory guidance 'Opening and Closing Maintained Schools' January 2023 where the process to amalgamate is set out clearly. Technically amalgamation does mean the closure of one school but it brings about the benefits from both schools whereas a closure does not require staff to be ringfenced from both schools and therefore can not be seen to draw from the expertise within both. We are proposing an amalgamation of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools to ensure that the amalgamated school keeps the strengths of both schools. A recommendation will be made to the Duncombe Primary School governing board that they keep vacancies open for

representatives from Montem Primary School. We will also recommend that both schools establish a joint parent group to ensure the amalgamation involves stakeholders from both schools. We are recommending that the amalgamation proceed on 31 August 2024 as proposed and is not extended because any extension will present significant financial and reputational risks and prolong the period of uncertainty for the school community. We will provide additional resource to support the transition of pupils from Montem to Duncombe, and to support all pupils, including those with SEND or an EHC Plan. Completing the amalgamation by 31 August will safeguard the financial position of the school and help secure the school's long-term future.

6.2.34. YouTube video from Year 6

6.2.34.1. A Year 6 class created and shared a video outlining their views on the proposal: [A message to Islington Council Oak Class \(youtube.com\)](#).

6.2.34.2. **Response:** The contents of the video are noted and each point is addressed elsewhere in the responses.

7. The next steps

7.1. Based on the feedback received during the consultation we recommend that the Executive agree to issue a statutory notice of a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024.

7.2. If agreed, we will issue a formal statutory notice in accordance with the prescribed process. A draft outline statutory notice is included as Appendix E. A four-week formal representation period will follow once the full notice is published.

7.3. The timeline recommended to proceed with the next stage is set out in table 4.

Table 4: Timeline for next steps

Stage	Process and time required
Issue statutory notices	Following consideration of this report by Executive formal publication of notices stating council's intent to implement proposals
Formal Consultation	Four-week statutory representation period if the proposal is agreed to take place from 19 February to 18 March.
Determination	Executive to consider public report of the response received during the representation period.
Implementation	August 2024

7.4. Impacts and risks

- 7.4.1. Islington has a statutory responsibility to manage and make appropriate offers of education, within a reasonable distance, to all children affected by changes at their schools. We need to do this in a way that safeguarded access to high quality education especially for vulnerable pupils and communities and those pupils with special educational needs.
- 7.4.2. We will identify the needs of the existing cohort at both schools, especially for those pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and identify appropriate mitigation to ensure that the right levels of support are in place and aid a smooth transition. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed and is at Appendix D.
- 7.4.3. The feedback from the consultation has highlighted key risks around the proposed timeline for the implementation of the proposal. If the proposal is agreed in April 2024 for implementation in September 2024. Work will be carried out to transfer all existing pupils, complete a staffing reorganisation, and for Montem to dissolve its existing federation arrangements. This risk has been fully considered and is balanced against the implications of an extended implementation date of September 2025 that would create prolonged financial vulnerability for both schools ultimately impacting on children and staff's wellbeing.
- 7.4.4. The proposed timeline presents risk due to the high number of children with SEND and EHCPs who will require additional support with transition to another school site, or with new children joining existing class groups. This risk will be mitigated through the implementation of a needs led SEND transition plan ensuring all children are supported.

8. Implications

8.1. Financial Implications

- 8.1.1. It is becoming increasingly difficult for schools to remain financially viable when pupil numbers are falling as most school funding is pupil-based in line with the School's National Funding Formula. Therefore, as pupil numbers decline, schools receive less funding. Per pupil funding in Islington is on average £5,700 depending on the characteristics of its pupils.
- 8.1.2. Individual school balances stood at £6.291m at the end of 2022-23, with 15 schools in deficit. School balances are forecast to reduce further over the course of this financial year, where more schools are projected to be in deficit. School balances in Islington have been in decline since 2018-19 when they stood at £11.732m. The main driver of declining school balances is falling pupil numbers alongside increasing cost pressures such as energy costs and pay.
- 8.1.3. Schools that are in deficit or are expecting to go into deficit are required to complete deficit recovery plans to bring their budget back into balance and eliminate their deficit within three years. This is becoming increasingly challenging for schools in the light of falling pupil numbers and increasing cost pressures and is a national issue.
- 8.1.4. If a school closes, the local authority meets the cost of any deficit balance from the General Fund, if the local authority does not retain contingency funds from the schools' block funding. Islington does not retain these funds. In the event of academisation,

there are two scenarios: for convertor academies (those that voluntarily convert) the deficit is repaid to the local authority by the DfE and recouped from the academy; for sponsored academies (forced conversion due to the school being assessed as inadequate) the deficit remains with the local authority to be paid from the General Fund.

- 8.1.5. Duncombe primary school began 2023-24 expecting to end the financial year with a -£130k deficit, however, current projections now indicate a £40k surplus, which would equate to a £170k in-year cost reduction compared to the original forecast. Based on the three year budget plans, however, the school is forecasting to re-enter a significant cumulative deficit in 2024-25, which will increase by the end of 2025-26 if nothing changes.
- 8.1.6. Based on the quarter 3 budget monitoring submitted by Montem primary, the school is projecting to end 2023-24 with a -£65k cumulative deficit. This indicates a £100k cost reduction when compared to the school's ratified budget of a -£167k deficit. Based on the three year budget plan the school is presently projecting to remain in deficit over the three-year budget planning period, ending 2025-26 with a significant cumulative deficit if nothing changes.

8.2. Legal Implications

- 8.2.1. Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 requires local authorities to provide sufficient schools for primary and secondary education in their area.
- 8.2.2. The Education and Inspections Act 2006, the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, the statutory guidance 'Opening and closing maintained schools' (January 2023), sets out the procedure for closure of schools.
- 8.2.3. The first stage consultation and the proposals set out in this report comply with the above legislation and guidance. The outline draft statutory notice at Appendix E will require completion in accordance with the Regulations and Guidance set out above.
- 8.2.4. In addition to the public sector equality duty, discussed below, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the statutory guidance 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years' (January 2015) sets out responsibilities the council have towards children with special educational needs and disabilities. The proposed SEND transition plan will need to ensure that the council continue to meet these responsibilities and ensure the continuous provision of SEN support and the participation of children and parents in the decision making about their individual support and local provision.

8.3. Environmental Implications and contribution to achieving a net zero carbon Islington by 2030

- 8.3.1. Islington Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019, committing the council to work towards making Islington net zero carbon by 2030. A 10-year Net Zero Carbon Strategy, with action plans, was adopted by the Executive in November 2020. The implementation of the School Organisation Plan 2022-25 will be progressed in a manner that aligns with and supports the delivery of the council's ambitions for creating a clean and green Islington. Key environmental implications that the school organisation plan impact is:

- 8.3.1.1. **Improving the energy efficiency and reducing the level of carbon emissions of all buildings and infrastructure:** schools form a crucial element of our non-residential buildings and infrastructure net zero carbon workstream given their number, size, and distribution across the borough. Decarbonisation Feasibility Studies have already been completed for 22 of our schools with a further 14 taking place during 2022-23. The impact on the environment and the findings from these decarbonisation reports will be fully considered in developing plans, and where there are falling rolls in making better use of the spare capacity thereby optimising energy efficiency.
- 8.3.1.2. **Reducing emissions in the borough from transport:** Schools again can play their part in delivering on this priority. In proposing specific measures as part of school organisation planning, the implications on school journey distances, school streets and potential changes to vehicle journey numbers will be fully considered in consultation with schools and key stake holders.

8.4. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.4.1. The council must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations, between those who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it (section 149 Equality Act 2010). The council has a duty to have due regard to the need to remove or minimise disadvantages, take steps to meet needs, in particular steps to take account of disabled persons' disabilities, and encourage people to participate in public life. The council must have due regard to the need to tackle prejudice and promote understanding.
- 8.4.2. A revised Equalities Impact Assessment was completed on 21 December and is included as Appendix D.

9. Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

- 9.1. This report recommends that the Executive agree to issue a statutory notice on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary schools on 31 August 2024, by closing Montem Primary School and keeping the Duncombe name and Ofsted number.
- 9.2. There was a high-level engagement with the first stage consultation process, with 778 respondents completing the online consultation questionnaire and over 400 people attending the consultation meetings.
- 9.3. The main themes emerging from the consultation were concerns that the amalgamation would impact negatively on children with SEND and that the proposed timeframe for implementing the proposal was too short, with not enough time for an adequate staffing reorganisation, or to adequately support children with transitioning from one school site to the other.
- 9.4. The proposal will also affect the Edventure Collaborative which would need to be dissolved and a new governing board established for Drayton Park Primary School.
- 9.5. We are recommending that the proposal proceed with an implementation date of 31 August 2024 due to the financial risks of a delay and to reduce the period of uncertainty a longer timeframe would cause.

- 9.6. Whilst we recognise and responded to the concerns raised by the proposal, the council must take assertive action to reduce the surplus capacity in the local area, and to support the financial viability of the school estate to ensure children have access to quality education. We will provide additional resource to support the transition, including a SEND transition plan for those children with special educational needs or an EHC Plan. We will also recommend the schools convene a parent group to support the transition.
- 9.7. We will support children and families on a case-by-case basis. Where children have and EHC Plan, we will need to amend and review those plans based on the change of school location. We do not anticipate any systemic challenges to this work.
- 9.8. Issuing a formal proposal will provide certainty and allow preparatory work for implementing the amalgamation to move forward, including completing a staffing organisation plan and staffing consultation, curriculum planning, and delivery of the SEND transition plan.

10. Appendices

- Appendix A – Consultation document on the Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools
- Appendix B – Analysis of responses to the Public consultation
- Appendix C – Redacted Feasibility Study
- Appendix D – Equalities Impact Assessment
- Appendix E - Proposed outline statutory notice
- Appendix F – Individual responses – **Exempt from publication (exemption 2: Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual)**

Final report clearance:

Authorised by: Executive Member for Children, Young People, and Families

Date: 30 January 2024

Report Author: Sarah Callaghan, Director of Learning and Culture

Tel: 020 7527 5753

Email: sarah.callaghan@islington.gov.uk

Financial Implications Author: Tracy Shaw, Assistant Director of Finance, Children's

Email: tracy.shaw@islington.gov.uk

Legal Implications Author: Rob Willis, Chief Corporate and Commercial Litigation Lawyer

Email: robert.willis@islington.gov.uk

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Informal Consultation on the future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools

15 November – 20 December 2023

Your views are invited on our proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024 and keep the Montem school site for other education and community uses.

Give your views by completing our consultation online at www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/duncombe-and-montem

You can also email your views to schoolconsult@islington.gov.uk

You must submit your response by **20 December 2023**.

Summary of the proposal

- Islington Council is proposing to amalgamate – or merge - Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School into one school due to falling pupil numbers and subsequent decrease in government funding
- If we proceed, the amalgamation will happen on 31 August 2024, with the school retaining the name Duncombe Primary School and operating from the existing Duncombe site
- All existing pupils at Montem would be automatically transferred to Duncombe Primary School, but we will support parents who wish to transfer their children to another school
- We are seeking your views on this proposal
- No decision has been made with a final decision made in April 2024 at the earliest

Introduction

Islington Council is seeking the views of parents and carers, staff, the local community, and other interested groups on its proposal to amalgamate, or merge, Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School into one school.

Across London, because of a falling birth rate and changes to the local population, pupil numbers are falling, and Islington is no exception. We want to ensure a sustainable future for our schools, and excellent education for our children so that they have the best start in life.

Schools with fewer pupils get less government funding which risks their long-term future and the quality of education. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools both have falling pupil numbers. Because of this, we are proposing to amalgamate Montem Primary School into Duncombe Primary School which will bring together the identities and strengths of both schools under one roof and one name.

The amalgamation would mean these schools merging to operate from a single site, enabling them to make the best use of the staff expertise whilst securing the merged school's financial future. We are proposing that the school be called Duncombe Primary School and be on the existing Duncombe site.

By amalgamating, we can automatically move all existing pupils to Duncombe school meaning children at Montem won't have to apply for another school place.

This consultation gives information about why we have made this proposal and asks your views about it. We welcome your feedback on the proposal and will consider all views put forward during the consultation period.

Islington Council's Executive will decide whether to proceed with the proposal at its meeting on 8 February 2024. If it does decide to proceed, there will be a further period, known as the representation period, during which interested groups can express their views, before the Executive makes a final decision on the proposal in April 2024 at the earliest. The earliest date the amalgamation will take place is 1 September 2024.

Please read this information carefully and respond to our short survey before the closing date of **20 December 2023**.

Background

Islington Council is committed to putting children first and driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools. We have set out our mission in our Education Plan to ensure that every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school. We will equip and empower every child and young person who attends our schools and education settings with the learning and skills for life and the future world of work.

The amount of money a school receives is linked to how many pupils are in each class. As classes get smaller, the less money the school has. This can eventually affect the quality of children's education as schools have less money to spend on staff and resources. We need to manage this situation to ensure every child goes to a good school with a healthy budget.

When considering what action to take to reduce spare places we also consider other information about schools including the quality of education, their financial position, and the local context.

The proposal

We are proposing to amalgamate Montem Primary school into Duncombe Primary School on 31 August 2024 so that we can:

- make the best use of existing staff expertise across both schools
- guarantee a place for all existing pupils
- ensure the amalgamated school is financially viable in the long-term

Technically, based on Department for Education guidance, this is a closure of one school. However, in practice, the proposal would see Montem School join Duncombe School so that the strong community identity of both schools would not be lost.

This proposal would therefore allow both schools to continue together as one amalgamated school.

The amalgamated school will have space for 60 pupils in each new year group from September 2024 and with a total capacity of 585 from reception through to year 6 so that all existing pupils have a school place.

Should the proposal go ahead, all existing pupils at Montem Primary School would continue their education at Duncombe Primary School along with their classmates.

There will be no changes this school year.

Any pupil currently in Year 6 at Montem will complete their primary schooling at Montem Primary School.

Pupil projections and numbers

We plan for school places by dividing Islington into six different planning areas. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are in Planning Area 2: Hornsey.

Hornsey planning area

Hornsey is the area with the highest vacancy rate in Islington. Schools operate most efficiently when full or nearly full and any surplus places should be kept to a minimum.

In October 2022, there were vacancies of 23% in reception classes in this planning area, and in September this year, this increased to 32%. This figure is above both the Department for Education's recommendation of a 5% vacancy rate and the 10% vacancy rate used by most local authorities across London.

Pupil numbers are expected to decrease further in this planning area and across Islington.

Table 1: the number of vacancies by planning area

Vacancies by planning area for September 2023 based on offers	No. of places available	Vacancies	Vacancy rate
Planning Area 1: Holloway	465	108	23%
Planning Area 2: Hornsey	465	150	32%
Planning Area 3: Highbury	360	62	17%
Planning Area 4: Barnsbury	245	74	30%
Planning Area 5: Canonbury	340	72	21%
Planning Area 6: Finsbury	300	70	23%
Totals	2,175	536	25%

The number of pupils at Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools

Montem and Duncombe are both based in large school buildings designed to accommodate more pupils than they currently have. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools both have a vacancy rate of over 50% in reception.

Numbers at both schools have been falling. Table 2 shows the total pupil numbers at both schools from 2019 to 2023.

Table 2: Pupil numbers at Duncombe and Montem from Reception to Year 6 at October census each year

School	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Duncombe	359	355	353	340	313
Montem	310	280	271	262	270

School funding

School funding from central government is based on the number of pupils in school at the start of a new academic year.

For every unused place in an Islington primary school, the school is missing out on an average of £5,500 a year which has an impact on staffing and resources at the school.

A school with unused places is still required to fund the same level of fixed costs as a full school including the maintenance and operation of school buildings.

Duncombe and Montem schools both have high levels of spare school places, with pupil numbers set to reduce further. As a result, both schools are expected to experience budget deficits in the future. If we do not take action, this could lead to a decline in the quality of education for pupils at both schools. Amalgamating the schools will mean that there is then only one set of running costs, presenting significant savings.

Options considered

Amalgamation

One way to improve this situation is to amalgamate the schools so that all pupils are at one school. Both the Duncombe and Montem buildings can accommodate the number of children currently at both schools.

Table 3 shows the expected numbers in each year group in September next year, and how the combined total could be accommodated in one school.

Table 3: Projected Numbers for Amalgamated School in September 2024

School	R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Duncombe	28	29	43	47	59	49	39
Montem	27	28	45	41	46	30	36
Combined total	55	57	88	88	105	79	75

By bringing together both schools, we can also ensure the culture, learning methods, and school policies from both form part of the amalgamated school.

Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)

Each school must publish the maximum number of pupils it can expect. This is called the Published Admission Number - or PAN. Another way to manage falling pupil numbers is to reduce the PAN at Duncombe and Montem.

Duncombe has a PAN of two-forms (60 pupils in each year group) and Montem is due to reduce to a 1.5 form entry PAN (45 pupils in each year group) in September 2024.

Reducing the PAN of each school further to a one-form entry (30 pupils) is not a viable solution, as the schools would not have sufficient funding to pay for the running costs of the large buildings. Doing this would also lead to a higher level of deficit budgets in the future. This is because smaller, one-form entry schools are particularly vulnerable to changes in pupil numbers as they have less flexibility to group classes of 30 children.

Only by amalgamating can we be confident that there will be sufficient pupils in each year group to ensure there will be a healthy budget for a combined school.

What the amalgamated school will look like

The proposal is for the amalgamated school to be established in September 2024.

Montem and Duncombe Schools are an important part of the lives of the children and families who attend the schools, of the staff and of the local community. That is why we are proposing to expand Duncombe school in the higher year groups to make sure that the experience of pupils at Montem continues at a different site as both schools are brought together.

The headteachers of both Duncombe and Montem schools will work together with the Local Authority to plan the arrangements for the proposed amalgamated school, should the proposals be agreed.

The delivery of an excellent educational experience and making careful arrangements to support the transition would be at the heart of the planning. We know that the staff at both schools are highly regarded by parents and pupils alike and that they will want some reassurance about the future of staff. A formal staff consultation can only take place if a decision were to be taken by the council's Executive to agree the proposal and it is too early to offer certainty regarding future staffing arrangements. We will, however, seek to protect employment as far as possible for staff currently working at Duncombe and Montem.

Journey times

Many pupils live close to both schools and we hope it will not change their travel plans. More than 70 per cent of current pupils live within 1 km of Duncombe school, meaning most journeys are approximately a 10-minute walk.

Should any individual pupils live further away, or not want to make the alternative journey, we will support any application to move to an alternative school.

The Edventure Collaborative

Montem Primary School is part of the Edventure Collaborative federation along with Drayton Park Primary School.

Should this proposal proceed, the Edventure Collaborative Federation would only have one school left within it and would need to be dissolved. This would mean Drayton Park would no longer be part of this federation and new governance arrangements would need to be established.

Any change to the Federation would happen after the final decision has been made and before the new school year in September 2024.

The timelines

Informal consultation: 15 November – 20 December 2023

We will publish this consultation document and hold face to face consultation sessions with parents, staff, and the wider community.

Council decision on informal consultation: 8 February 2024

The council Executive will consider all responses to the consultation and then at its public meeting on 8 February 2024, it will decide whether to proceed with a formal proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools.

Representation Period: spring 2024

If the Executive decides to proceed with a formal proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, there will be a second stage consultation that will run for four weeks in the spring.

Final Decision: April 2024

The final decision would be made by the council Executive at its meeting in April 2024.

If approved, the changes will be in place for the start of the school term in September 2024.

How to give your views

Give your views by completing our online consultation form at www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/duncombe-and-montem

You must submit your response by 5pm on 20 December 2023.

Consultation on the future of Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School

SURVEY RESPONSE REPORT

15 November 2023 - 20 December 2023

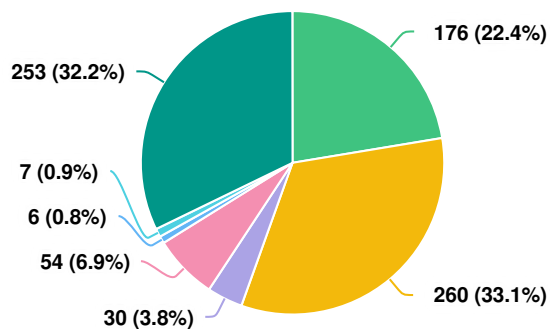
PROJECT NAME:

Consultation on the future of Duncombe Primary School and Montem
Primary School



SURVEY QUESTIONS

Q1 | What best describes you?

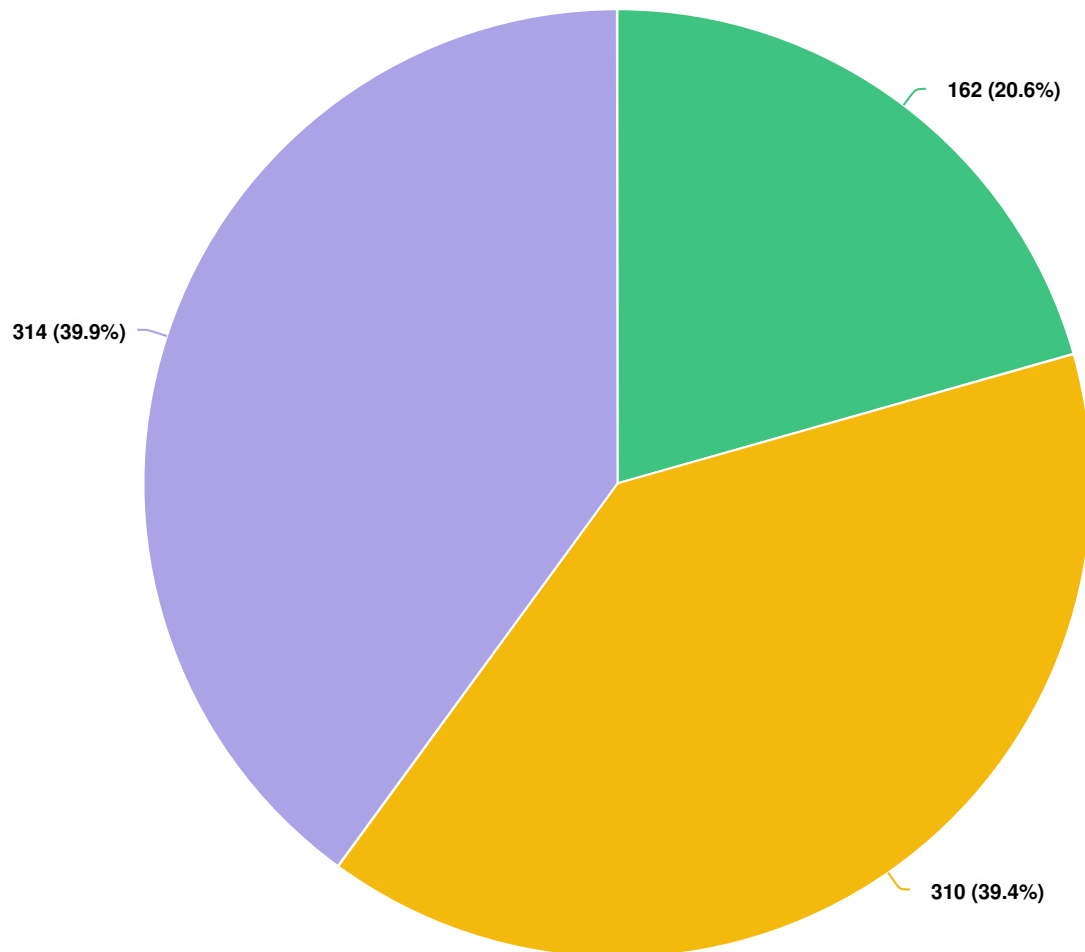


Question options

- Parent or carer of a child at Duncombe Primary School
- Parent or carer of a child at Montem Primary School
- Staff member from Duncombe Primary School
- Staff member from Montem Primary School
- School Governor on Duncombe Primary School governing board
- School Governor on Montem Primary School governing board
- Other (please specify)

Mandatory Question (786 response(s))
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q2 Do you have any children who currently attend either school?

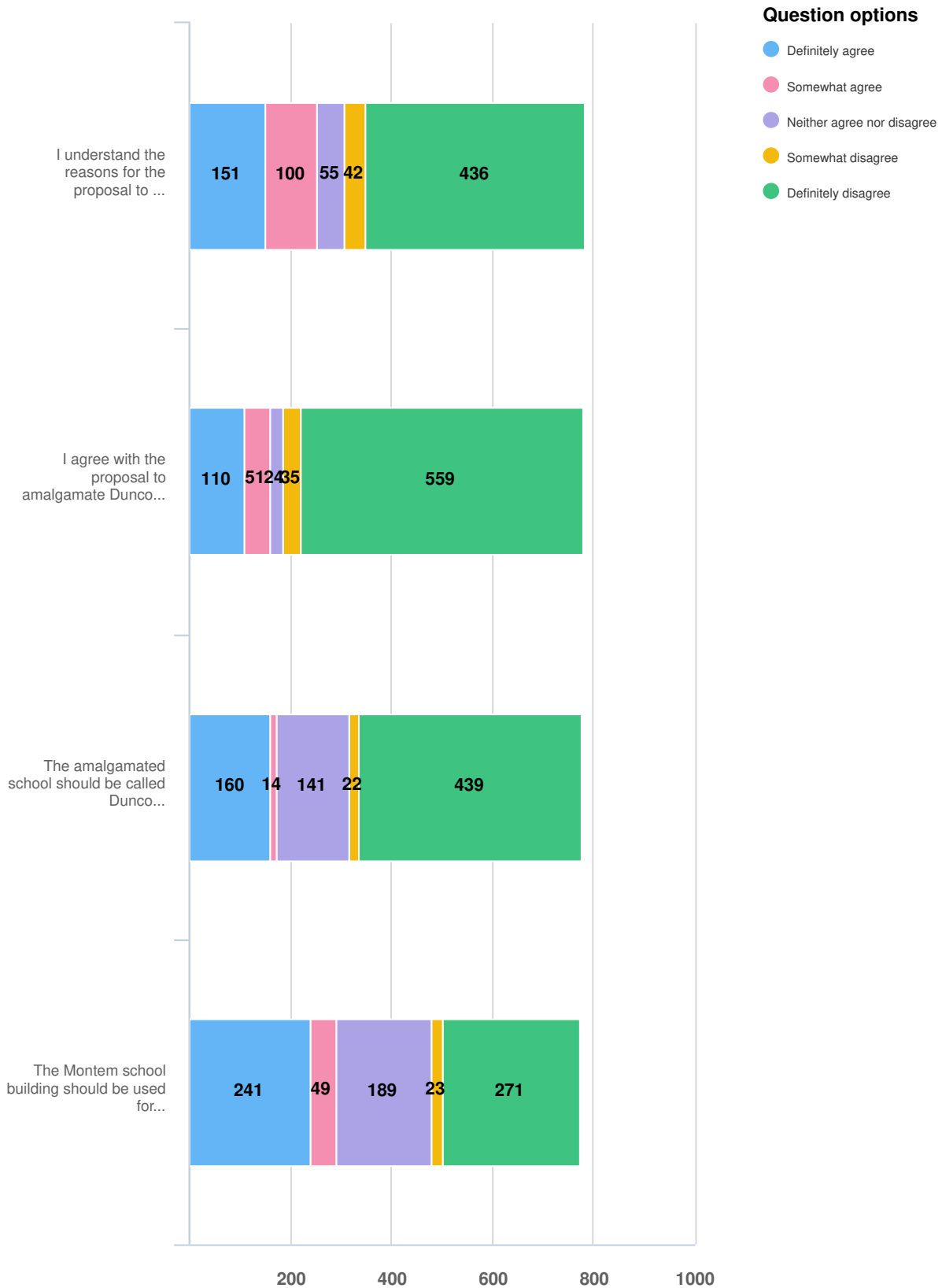


Question options

- Yes - at Duncombe Primary School
- Yes - at Montem Primary School
- No

Mandatory Question (786 response(s))
Question type: Radio Button Question

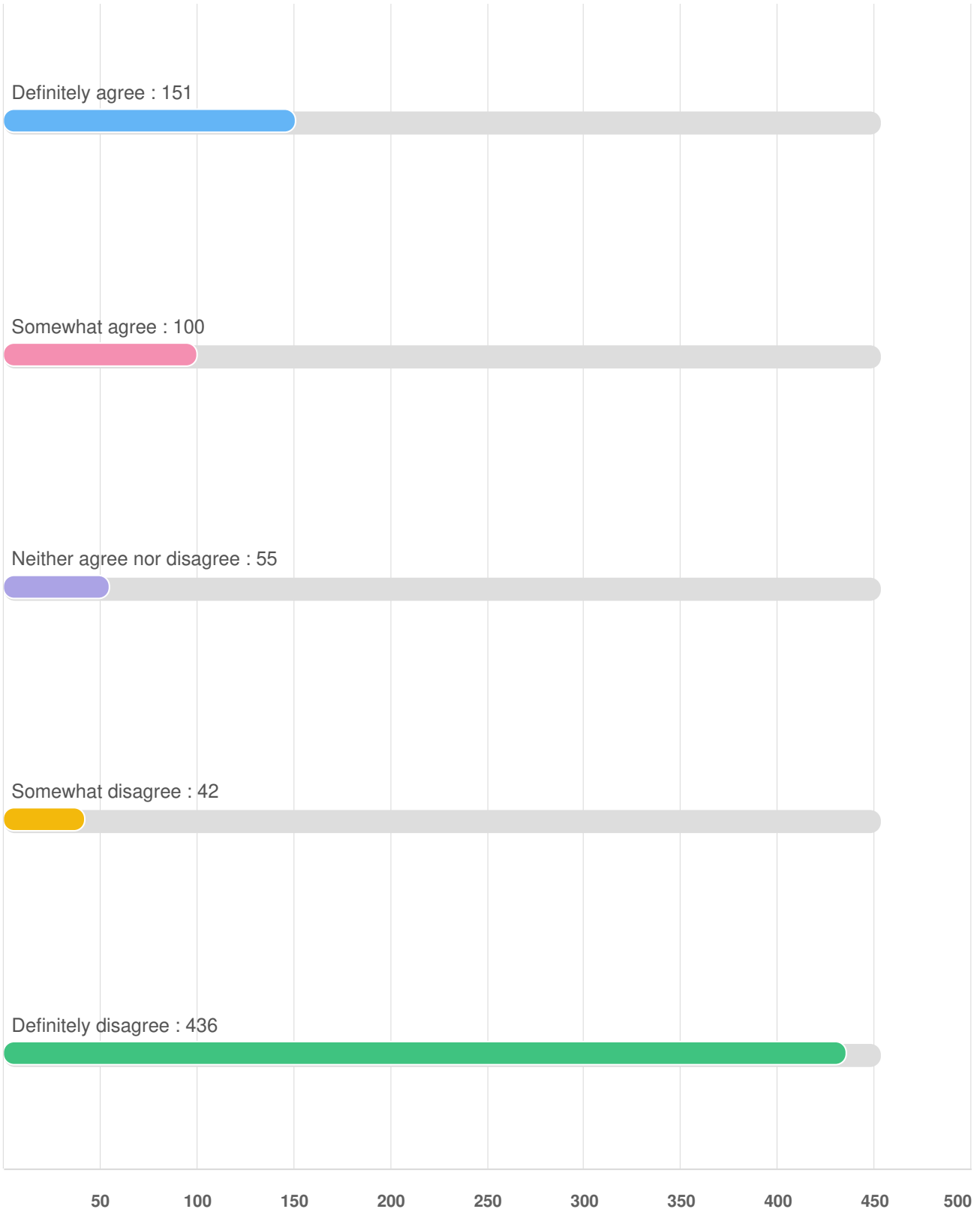
Q3 Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:



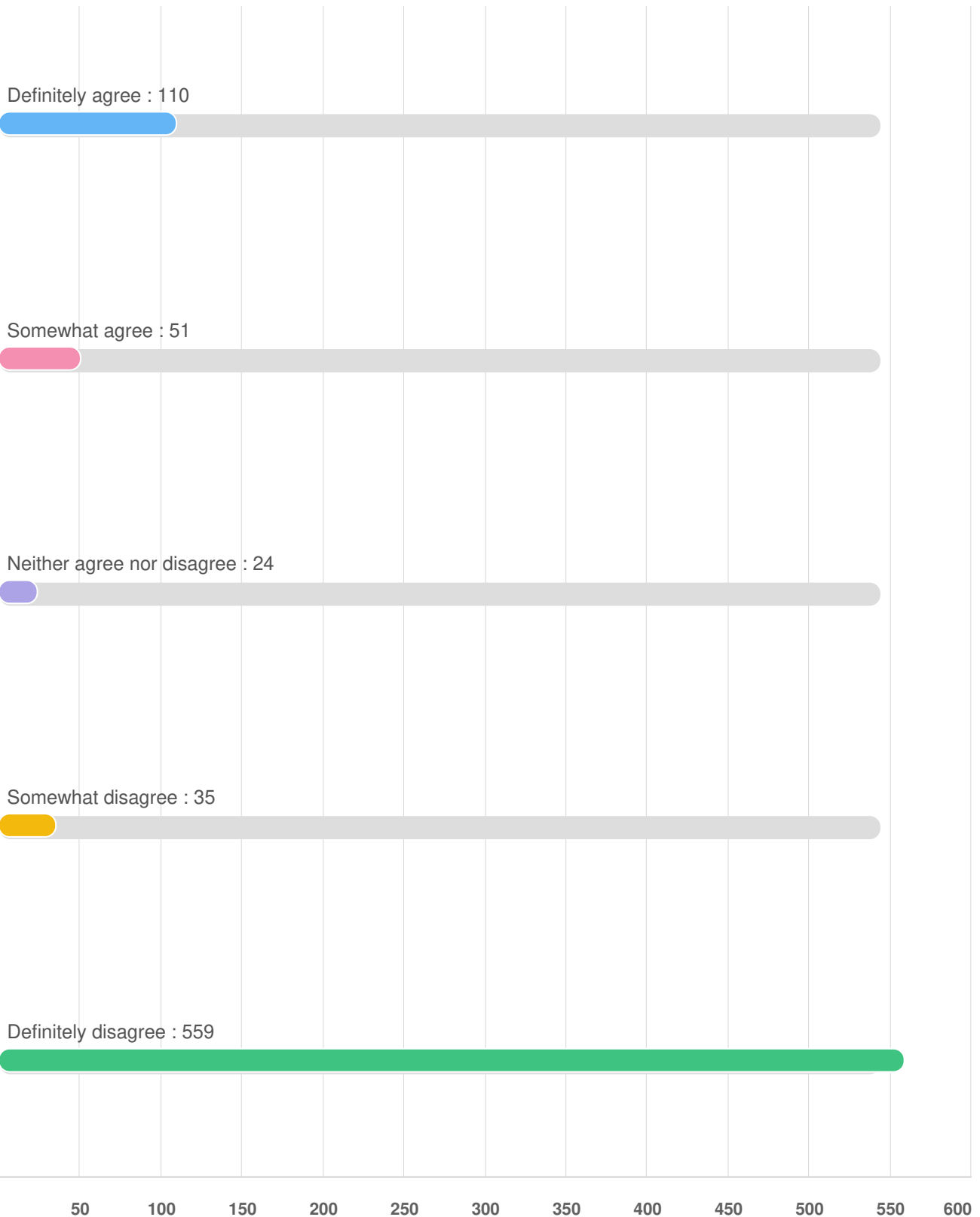
Optional question (785 response(s), 1 skipped)
Question type: Likert Question

Q3 | Please rate how much you agree with the following statements:

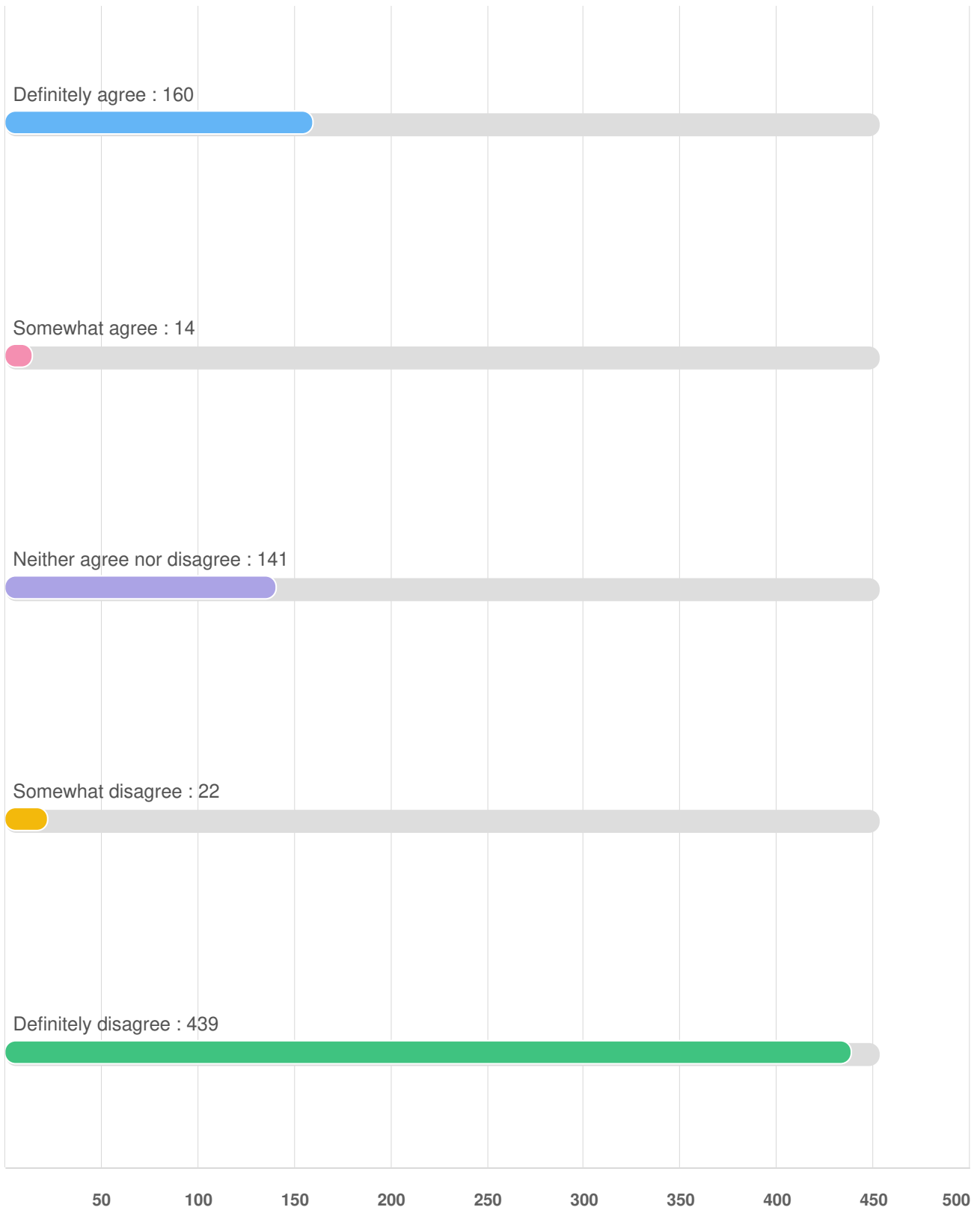
I understand the reasons for the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School



I agree with the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School

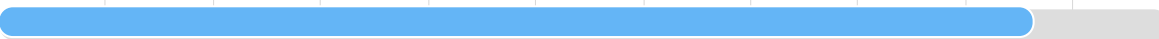


The amalgamated school should be called Duncombe Primary School



The Montem school building should be used for education and community services

Definitely agree : 241



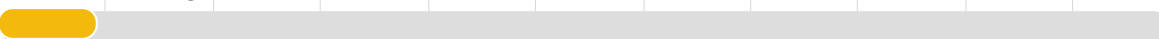
Somewhat agree : 49



Neither agree nor disagree : 189



Somewhat disagree : 23

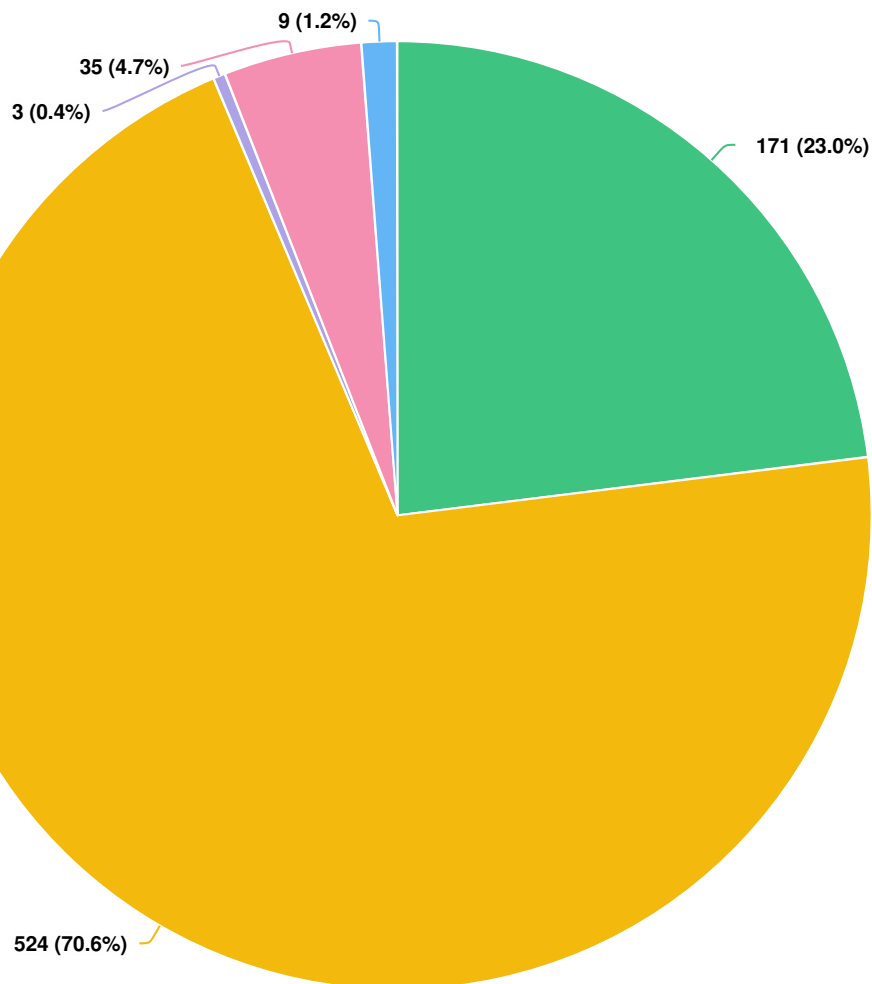


Definitely disagree : 271



25 50 75 100 125 150 175 200 225 250 275 300

Q4 Gender

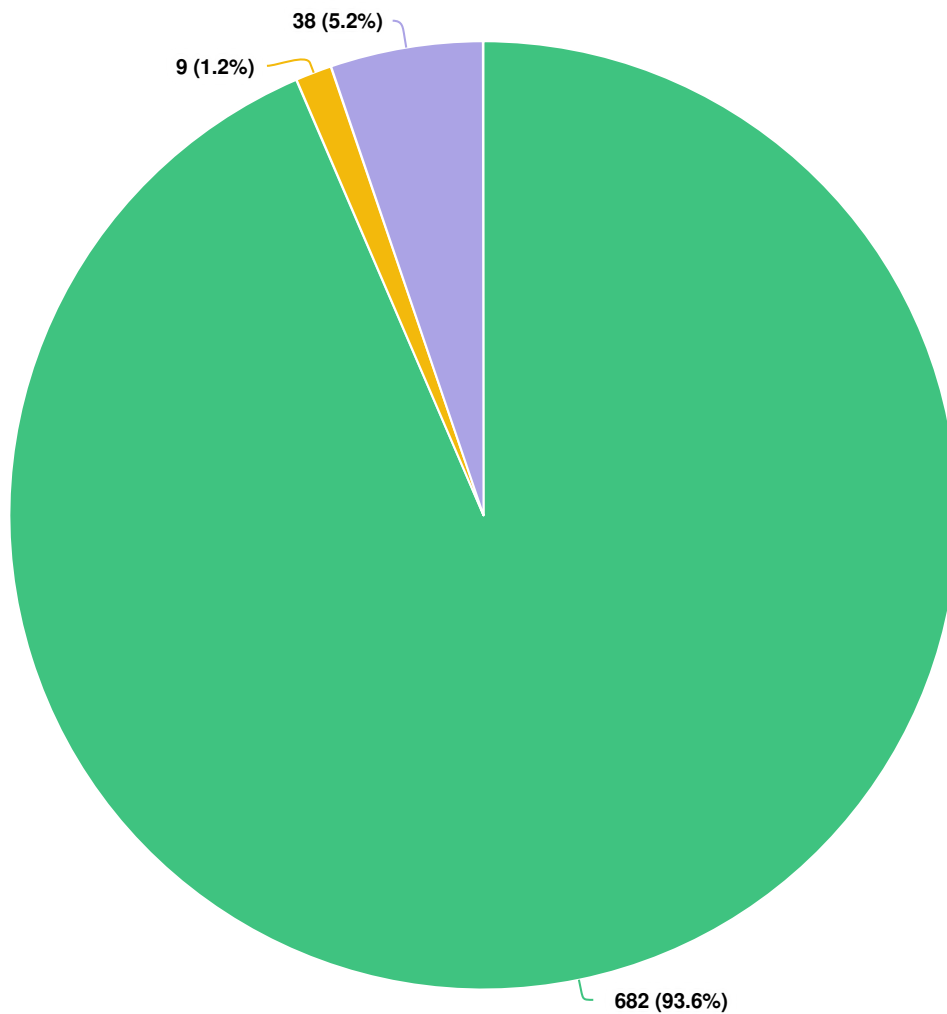


Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Prefer not to say
- Non-binary
- Woman
- Man

Optional question (742 response(s), 44 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q5 Do you consider yourself to be trans or to have a trans history?

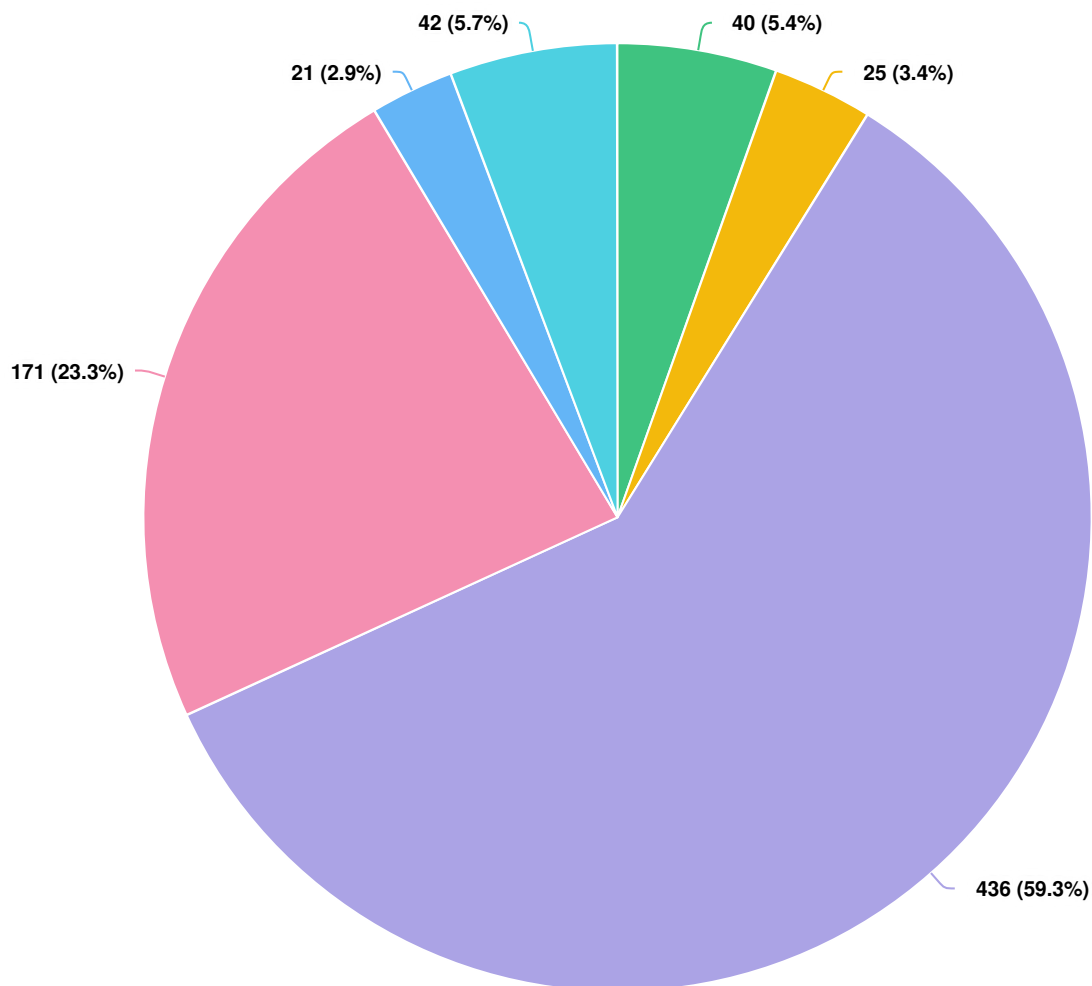


Question options

- Prefer not to say
- Yes
- No

Optional question (729 response(s), 57 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q6 Age

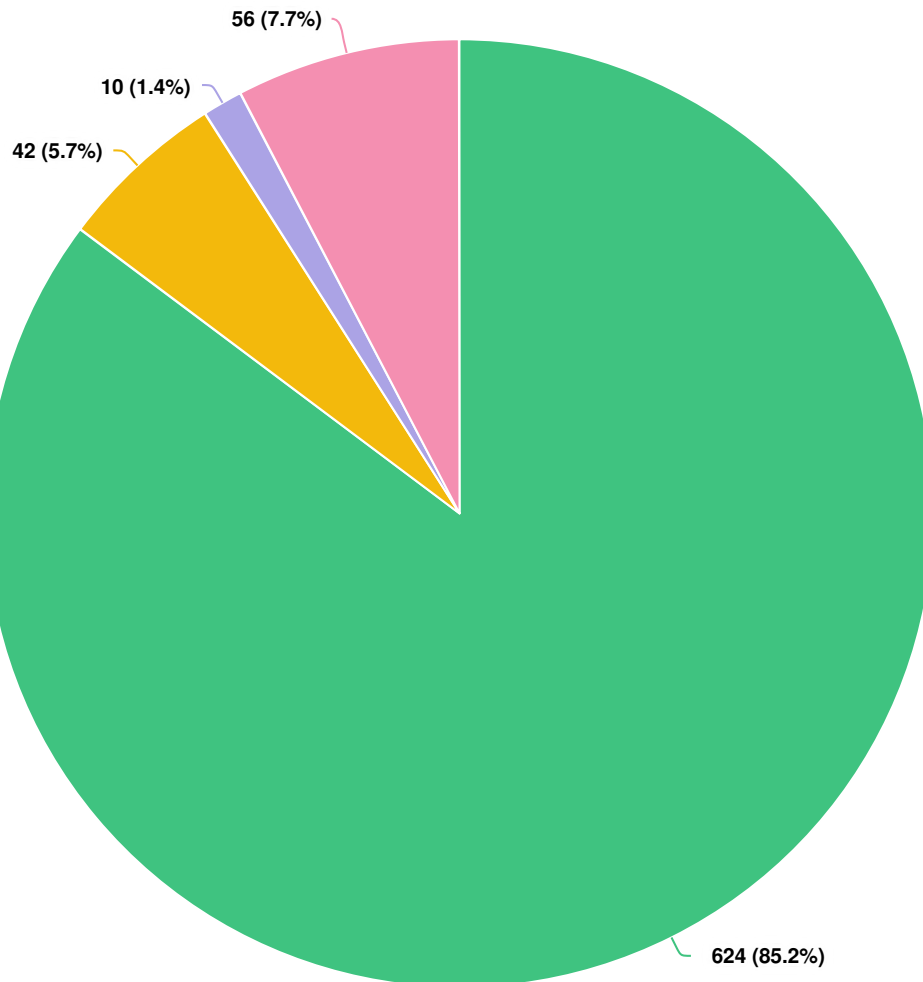


Question options

- Prefer not to say
- 65+
- 45-65
- 25-44
- 16-24
- Under 16

Optional question (735 response(s), 51 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q7 | Do you have any physical or mental health conditions, impairments or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?



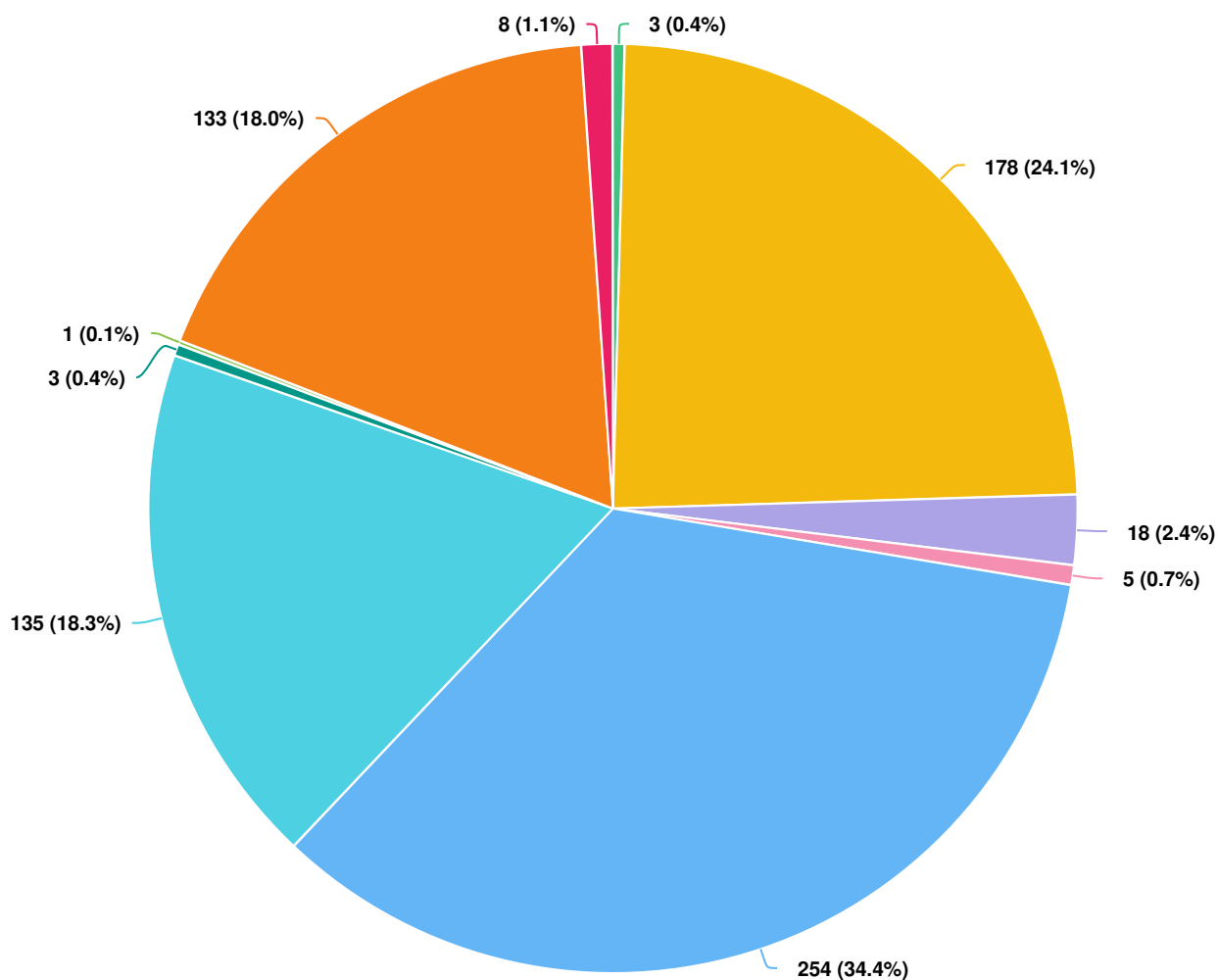
Question options

● Prefer not to say ● Don't know ● Yes ● No

Optional question (732 response(s), 54 skipped)

Question type: Radio Button Question

Q8 Religion or Belief

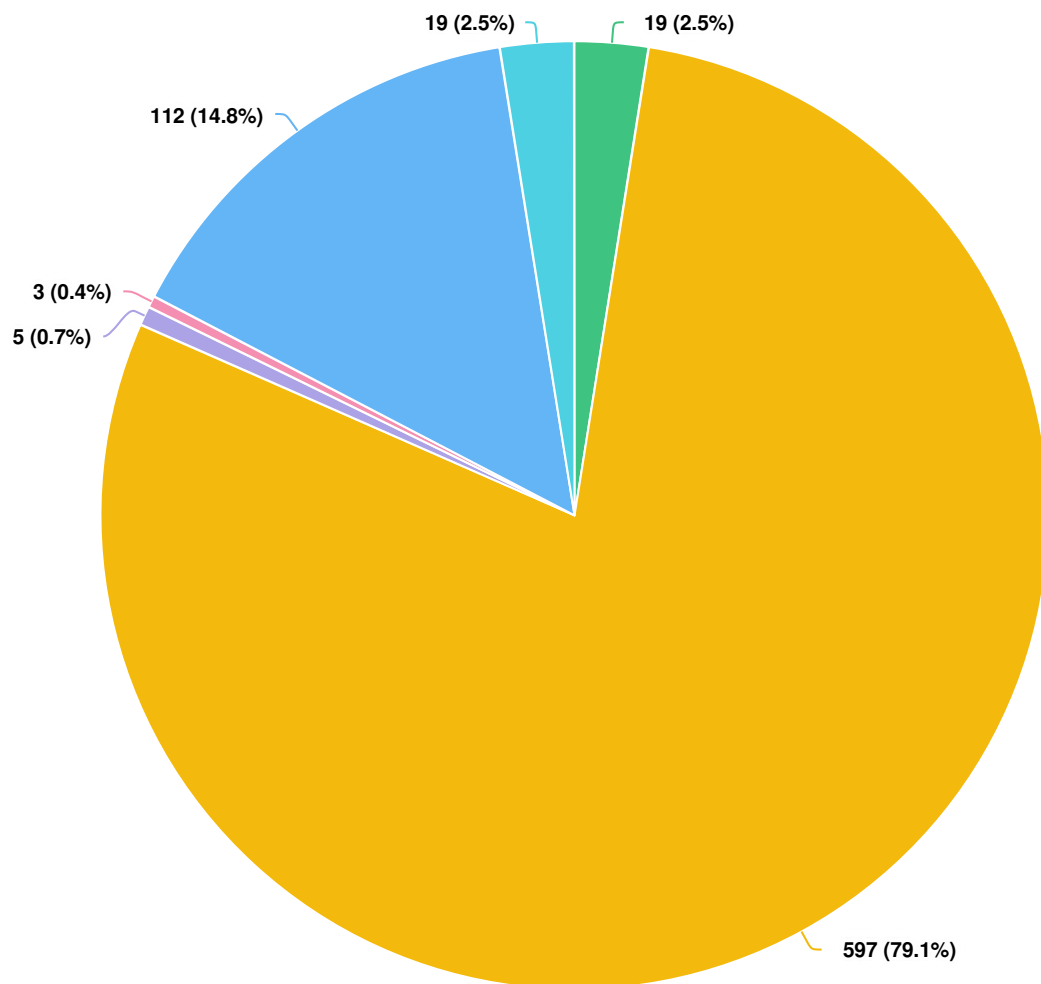


Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Prefer not to say
- Sikh
- Rastafarian
- No religion
- Muslim
- Jewish
- Hindu
- Christian
- Buddhist

Optional question (738 response(s), 48 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q9 Sexual orientation

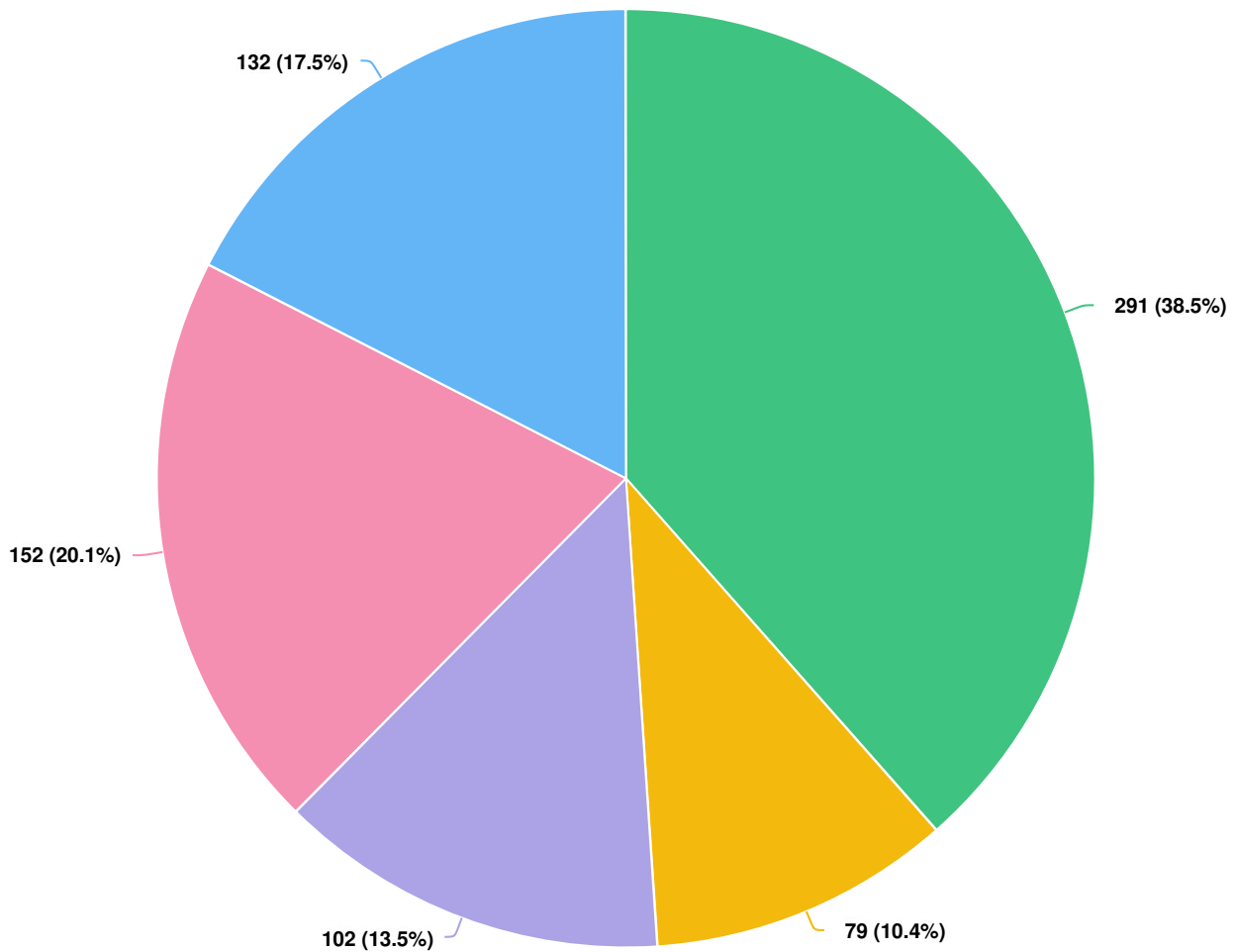


Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Prefer not to say
- Lesbian
- Gay
- Heterosexual/Straight
- Bisexual

Optional question (755 response(s), 31 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q10 | Ethnicity

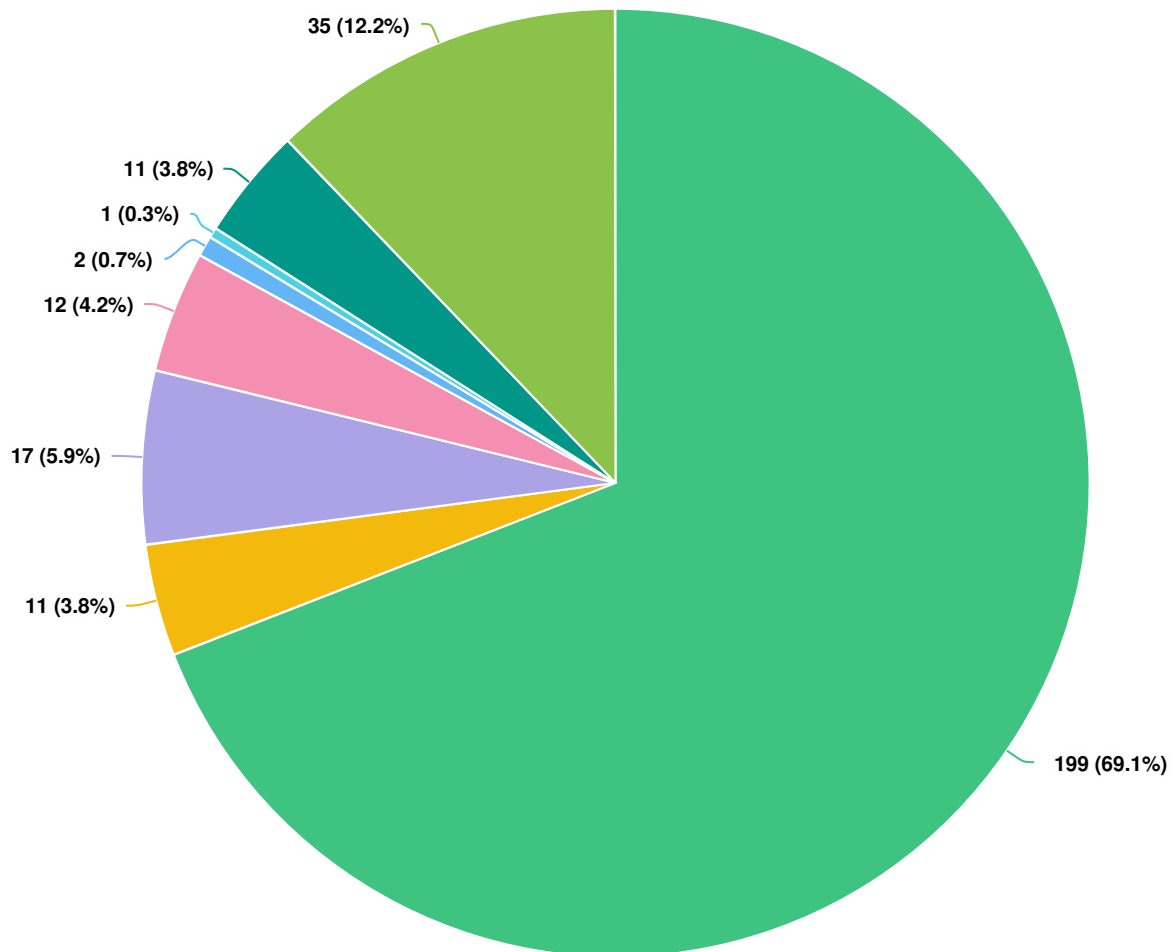


Question options

- Other Ethnic group
- Black or Black British
- Asian or Asian British
- Mixed
- White

Optional question (756 response(s), 30 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q11 | White

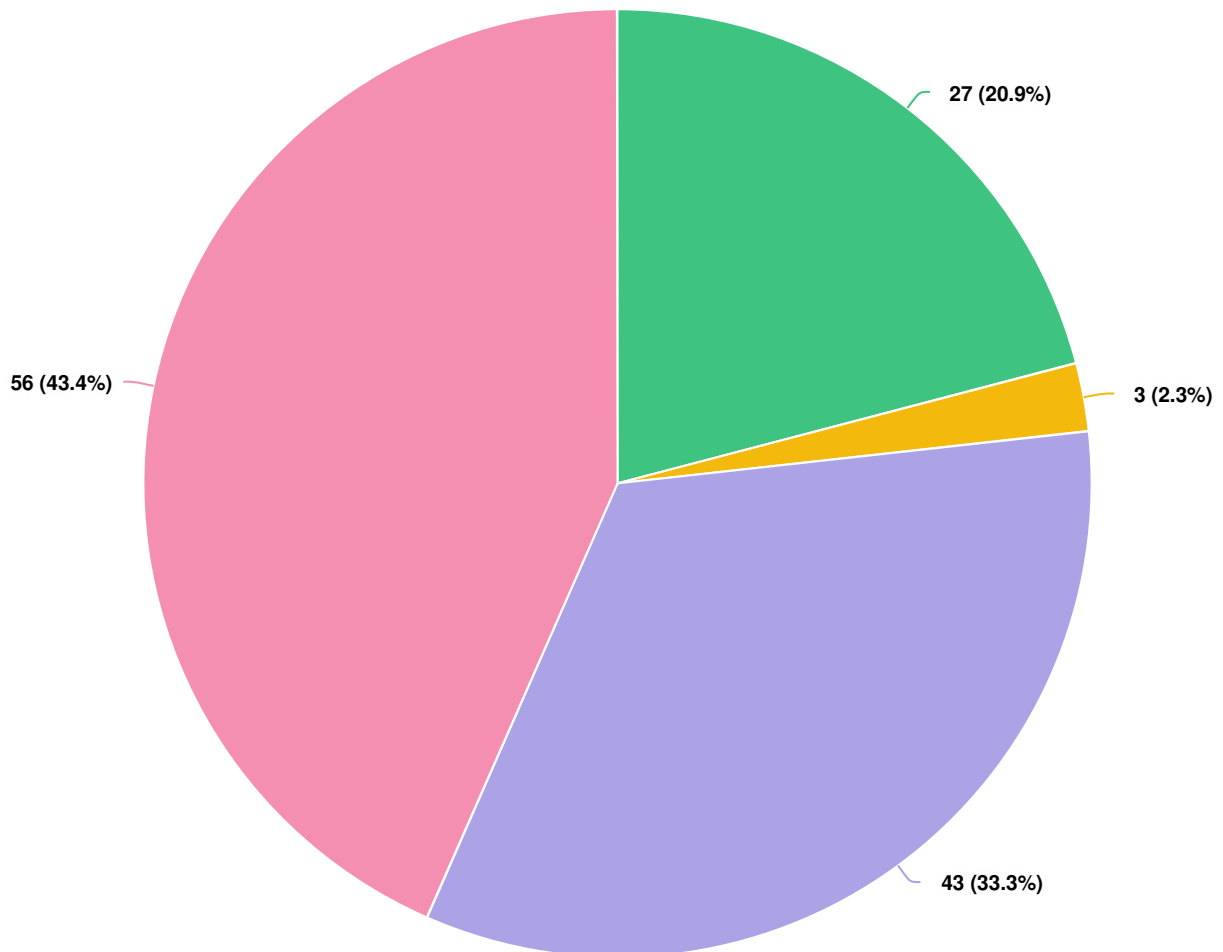


Question options

- Other (please specify)
- Prefer not to say
- Gypsy/Traveller
- Kurdish
- Greek/Greek Cypriot
- Turkish/Turkish Cypriot
- Irish
- British

Optional question (288 response(s), 498 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q12 | Other Ethnic groups

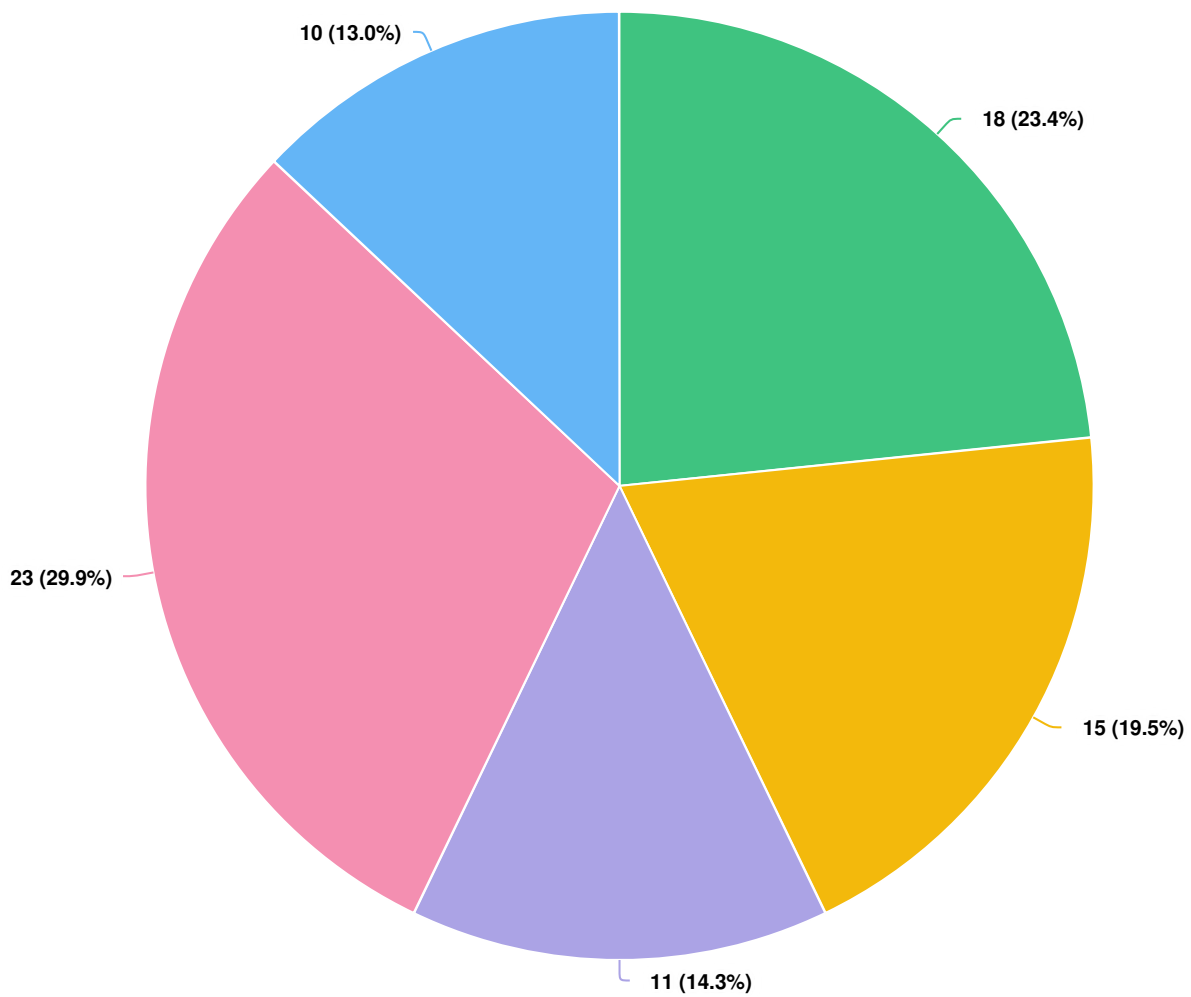


Question options

- Any other background
- Prefer not to say
- Latin American
- Arab

Optional question (129 response(s), 657 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q13 Mixed

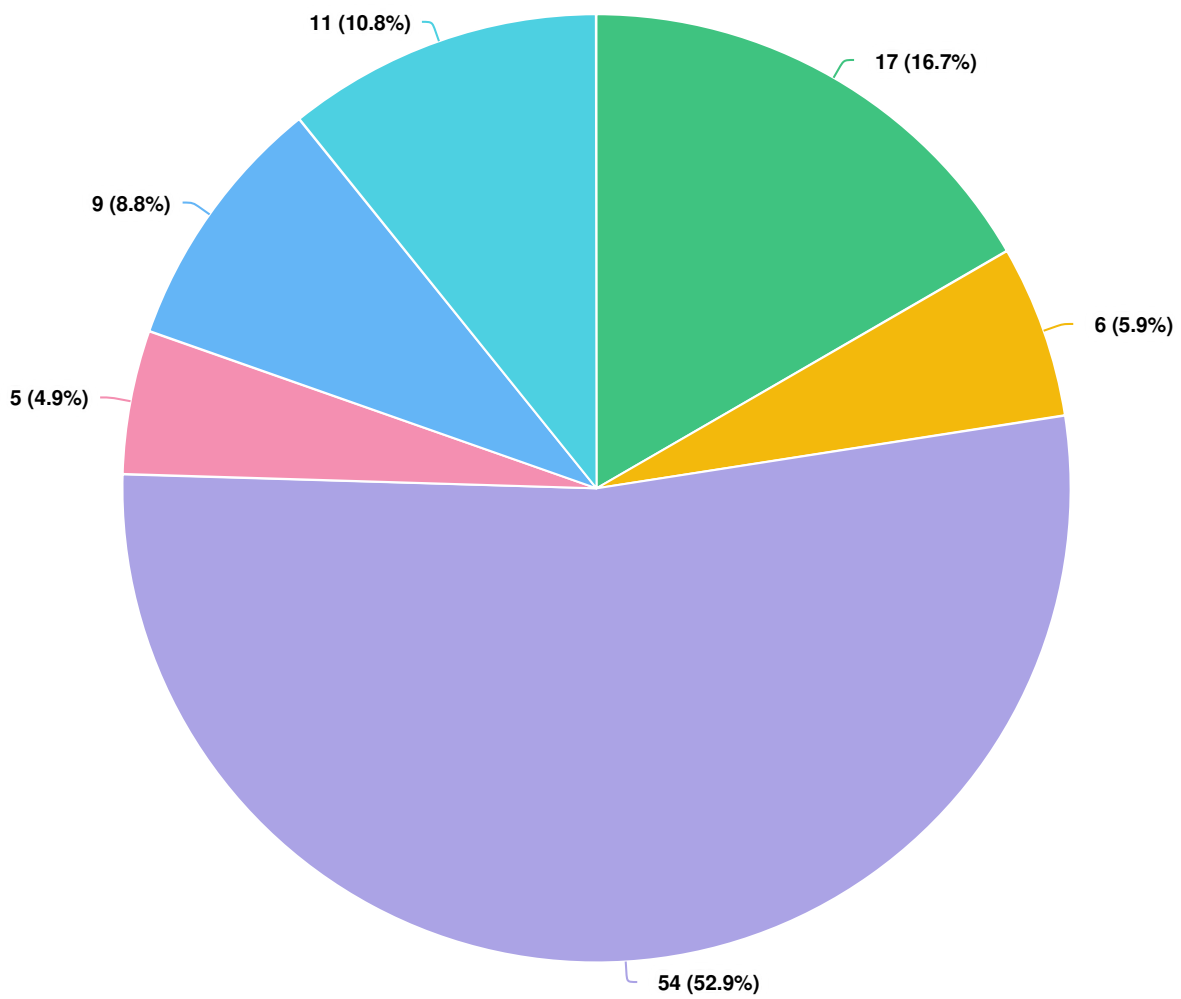


Question options

- Any other Mixed background
- Prefer not to say
- White and Asian
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African

Optional question (77 response(s), 709 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

Q14 Asian or Asian British



Question options

- Any other Asian background
- Prefer not to say
- Chinese
- Bangladeshi
- Pakistani
- Indian

Optional question (102 response(s), 684 skipped)
Question type: Radio Button Question

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REDACTED

Feasibility Study on the Closure or Amalgamation of Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School

November 2023

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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1. This paper evaluates the impact of any proposed closure or amalgamation of Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School.
- 2.2. This proposal is being considered due to the very significant decline in pupil numbers in the Hornsey Planning Area, combined with issue of an academy order for Pooles Park Primary school preventing its closure.
- 2.3. In October 2022, there was a surplus capacity of 23% in reception in this planning area, and the October Census 2023 shows this has increased to a surplus capacity of 33%.
- 2.4. Duncombe and Montem Primary School have vacancy rates of 57% and 53% in Reception respectively. Although the Department for Education (DfE) recommends that local authorities maintain surplus capacity at approximately 5%, along with a number of other London boroughs, we are of the view that a vacancy rate of up to 10% is a reasonable assumption as it provides the flexibility to respond to sudden changes in the school age population. The vacancy rate in this area is considerably more than this.
- 2.5. The feasibility paper assesses many factors about both schools which we have summarised into four categories:
 - **Buildings and site condition** – both sites are suitable for an amalgamated school and can accommodate the required pupil numbers
 - **Financial position and running costs** – Both schools were in deficit. Duncombe is now projected to be in surplus this financial year. Duncombe is cheaper to run compared to Montem.
 - **Location** – more pupils from both schools live within 1km of the Duncombe site and there are more neighbouring schools near Montem
 - **Air quality and congestion** – air quality is better at Duncombe and congestion is less as the site is on a school street
- 2.6. Our recommendation is that we consult on a proposal to amalgamate Montem and Duncombe Primary on the Duncombe site and keep the Duncombe name and Ofsted number.
- 2.7. We do not recommend that either school be closed rather than “technically” closed for amalgamation purposes. Direct school closure only, and not amalgamation, would create a significant risk that the displaced pupils will not have a school place after the school has closed; or they would apply to schools out of borough further reducing pupils attending community schools; and staff would not have fair employment opportunities.

- 2.8. Amalgamation will mitigate these risks as we can automatically transfer all displaced pupils to the amalgamated school and support only those parents who chose to transfer to another school.
- 2.9. By amalgamating, we can also ring-fence all posts in the proposed enlarged amalgamated school's staffing structure to staff in both schools, presenting equal opportunity for staff from both schools.
- 2.10. Amalgamation will enable us to bring together and retain the strengths of both schools, including their good Ofsted ratings and pedagogical practices. Both schools are rated "good" by Ofsted and provide a good quality of education for their pupils.
- 2.11. Finally, amalgamation will better secure the long-term financial future of the schools as they will combine pupils, therefore reducing their overall surplus capacity whilst operating from one site will reduce their running costs.
- 2.12. We recommend that the amalgamated school be on the Duncombe site because:
 - 2.12.1. more existing pupils live closer to this school site.
 - 2.12.2. there are fewer schools nearby to Duncombe. If Duncombe school were to close, there would be less choice for parents in the local area with only one other school within 500m. There are four other schools within 500m of Montem.
 - 2.12.3. the Duncombe site is already on a school street whereas Montem's location means a school street is not possible and the air quality is better in the Duncombe area and has lower Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) levels.
- 2.13. We recommend that the amalgamated school keep the Duncombe name and Ofsted number because this would ensure the amalgamated school will not start with an enhanced deficit which would safeguard the financial position of the school and help secure the school's long-term future.
- 2.14. Keeping the same name on the same site also reduces confusion and maintains name recognition.
- 2.15. Montem is in a hard federation with Drayton Park primary school, which means this proposal will have an impact on the federation itself and shared functions and resources between Montem and Drayton Park. It will be important to ensure the many strengths of the federation benefit the amalgamated school should the proposal proceed. However, due to the very high financial deficit of Drayton Park primary school it is not recommended that the amalgamated school be federated with Drayton Park in order that the governors can focus on the leadership and governance of the amalgamated school only and not also be responsible for managing the significant financial issues of Drayton Park.


3. Context

- 3.1. In Islington, we are committed to driving educational excellence through inclusive and sustainable schools. However, like most of London, many Islington schools are impacted by falling rolls with vacancies in reception at primary at 24% in September 2023.
- 3.2. Our approach to tackling falling rolls supports our corporate objectives for a more equal borough. Where children and young people attend a school with ongoing reducing numbers, the quality of their educational experience is compromised.
- 3.3. Our corporate commitment set out in our Education Plan is that by 2030 every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school. The School Organisation Plan is a key pillar to achieving this.
- 3.4. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are in the Hornsey area and is the area with the highest vacancy rate in Islington. In October 2022, there was a surplus capacity of 23% in reception in this planning area, and the October 2023 Census shows this has increased to a surplus capacity of 33%.
- 3.5. We previously consulted on a proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School which is also in the Hornsey area. However, this school has recently received an academisation order following an inadequate Ofsted judgement and is therefore due to convert to an academy.
- 3.6. Duncombe and Montem Primary School both have a vacancy rate of over 50% in Reception. Schools operate most efficiently when full or nearly full and any surplus places should be kept to a minimum. Although the Department for Education (DfE) recommends that local authorities maintain surplus capacity at approximately 5%, along with a number of other London boroughs, we are of the view that a vacancy rate of up to 10% is a reasonable assumption as it provides the flexibility to respond to sudden changes in the school age population. Both schools are much higher than this.
- 3.7. Montem and Duncombe are both based in large Victorian school buildings designed for more pupils than they currently accommodate. Both schools have had deficit budgets for several years and both have experienced a significant fall in rolls in recent years. Montem and Duncombe are situated just over half a mile apart and within walking distance from each other.
- 3.8. This level of vacancies has implications on the long-term financial viability of both schools and the quality of the educational experience they can offer for children as the number of pupils at a school drives the level of funding received by a school.
- 3.9. Lower pupil numbers mean less funding which affects staffing that then impacts the diversity of the curriculum offer.
- 3.10. The School Organisation Plan sets out our strategy for managing school places over the next three years. Reducing the number of school places in a planned way will support schools to manage change within their funding.
- 3.11. The School Organisation Plan sets out various options to reduce surplus capacity at our schools:

- Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)
 - Maximise the pupil numbers
 - Make better use of spare building capacity
 - Including children with SEND
 - Collaboration and Federation to achieve economies of scale
- 3.12. After all these options have been considered and a school is still predicting surplus capacity and a financial deficit as a result, amalgamation of schools or closing an individual school is considered.
- 3.13. When amalgamating a school, we must follow [statutory guidelines](#) for when it is possible to close a school, which includes when it is no longer considered viable.
- 3.14. Duncombe and Montem schools are in danger of becoming not viable, as they both have surplus places and no predicted increase in demand in the medium to long-term.
- 3.15. We believe amalgamating Duncombe and Montem – in effect closing one and enlarging the other – will ensure their long-term viability.
- 3.16. Amalgamating the two schools would bring together the strengths of both and enable us to maximise the large Victorian site of one of the two schools.
- 3.17. The proposal would be for a single amalgamated two-form Entry school with capacity for three-forms of entry in higher year groups to ensure that every child currently attending both schools will be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school.
- 3.18. This feasibility study will assess the best site for the amalgamated school and makes a recommendation accordingly.

4. Feedback from Schools and Stakeholders

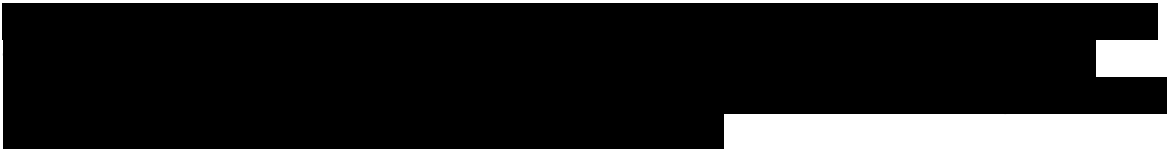
- 4.1. The schools raised several areas of concern which we have summarised into themes to ensure we have a full and transparent view of the impact of any potential changes.
- 4.2. **Reliability of roll projection data** – data has been unreliable in the past, and inner-London numbers do fluctuate, and may not necessarily capture future policy housing policy changes or potential building developments. This could mean any closure or amalgamation is not the right decision for the long term as it limits local capacity to accommodate any potential pupil increases.
- 4.3. **Vacated school site being taken over by a new school** – if permission is sought from the Department for Education to dispose of a school site, it could then be taken over by an Academy Trust who can open a new school on the site.
- 4.4. **Complexity of one school being in a Federation with another school and the other not** – this means they have different governance and staffing structures and what impact this would have on any organisational staffing changes.
- 4.5. **Impact on the existing federation** – if the school in an existing federation is closed, what impact would this have.
- 4.6. **Managing larger pupil numbers in higher year groups** – from Year 2 upwards, a combined school would exceed two forms of entry.

- 
- 4.8. **Loss of pupils** – uncertainty caused by making any proposed change could lead to a further decrease in pupil numbers.
 - 4.9. **Impact on other provision** – one school has an ARP and a special school co-located on site which would be impacted by these changes.
 - 4.10. **Transparent decision-making process** – concern that the decision-making process may not be transparent.

5. Buildings and site condition

5.1. Buildings and Accommodation

5.1.1. Montem School

- 5.1.1.1. Montem school is a Victorian built school currently accommodating a 2 FE primary school with plans to operate as a 1.5FE school from September 2024. The school includes a nursery and 2-year-old classes.
- 5.1.1.2. The main school block also accommodates Samuel Rhodes Special Primary school (SRS) on the top floor who also have one SEN room on the ground floor for pupils who cannot easily access the top floor.
- 5.1.1.3. 
- 5.1.1.4. The school also accommodates on Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) on the ground floor in the main block to support children with Autistic Spectrum Conditions. This is a borough-wide resource, and children are placed there by the Local Authority. Location of the ARP requires a whole school approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 5.1.1.5. The school is situated directly off Hornsey Road (A103) and close by the junction with Seven Sisters Road (A503). The Andover Estate is close by. The building is Grade II listed.
- 5.1.1.6. The overall site area is 5,060 m² and this main school Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) is large at 4,162m². The building is configured over a ground and three upper floors with a basement and three mezzanine levels. There are two platform lifts in the building. The main lift covers to the fourth level with a further lift serving upward to Samuel Rhodes school on the top floor.
- 5.1.1.7. The ground floor houses the nursery, reception, and the ARP service all with direct access to the external play areas as well as a hall and admin space. The upper floors include classrooms, large specialist rooms (music, art, library), small and large group rooms and staff facilities, storage etc. There are two additional halls located on the first and second levels as well as the community hall in the smaller block. The dining room and kitchen are on the first floor though some pupils eat on the ground floor and the top floor necessitating transport of food using the lifts.
- 5.1.1.8. In total, there are 22 large classroom spaces excluding the art, music, library and 3 large group rooms. Assuming SRS school were to vacate the top floor, the building could comfortably accommodate the amalgamated school. Some changes of space

usage and minor building adaptations may be required during the initial years when there would be three-form entry requirement at the older year groups.

5.1.1.10. The external areas are a reasonable size and accommodate:

- Traditional discrete playground areas and rubberised soft play areas
- A small roof terrace play area
- a fenced in artificial grass football pitch area to the front of the school
- Small-planted areas and some trees

5.1.1.11. It is likely some investment in the external areas would be required to support the amalgamation, but this would not be extensive.

5.1.2. Duncombe School

5.1.2.1. Duncombe school is also a Victorian built school accommodating a 2FE primary school with two nursery classes and a 2-year-old class. There are several smaller ancillary single-storey blocks on the site.

5.1.2.2. The school is situated off Sussex Way, part of the block between Sussex Way and the Hornsey Road (A103). Directly adjacent is the small Sussex Way Gardens and close by is Elthorne Park. The Elthorne Estate is a short walk away.

5.1.2.3. Adjacent to the school and accessible from the school grounds is a large four-storey Victorian end of terrace house with potential for five bedrooms. This was previously the premises managers accommodation, and it is now used by the school as classrooms and meeting rooms including a confidential meeting room shared with partner agencies. The school has previously indicated that the house is no longer required. Alternative uses are being investigated

Amalgamation of the schools onto the Duncombe site may require a review of this to determine the potential to continue to use the house as a school resource.

5.1.2.4. The overall site area is circa 4,000m² and the main school Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) is large at 3,016m². The building is configured over a ground and two upper floors with a basement and two mezzanine levels. There is currently no lift in the building.

- 5.1.2.5. The ground floor has six large class spaces and a large nursery space that could be partitioned further. The two upper floors have each six full size classrooms; two currently configured as an Art room and ICT room plus a library and large learning space. The mezzanine levels can also accommodate a further three learning spaces. There are three hall spaces one on each main floor with the kitchen and dining room (hall) on the ground floor. Staff facilities and administration and storage spaces are dispersed throughout the building.
- 5.1.2.6. In total there are 20 large class spaces excluding the library and learning spaces, the premises manager's house and the potential to partition the large nursery area further. The building and site could accommodate the amalgamated school with adjustments to facilitate the 3FE in the higher year groups.
- 5.1.2.7. The external areas are a good size and accommodate:
- A large KS1 playground to the front recently modernised
 - Separate EYS spaces for two-year-olds, nursery and reception
 - Two KS2 play areas; one currently for yrs 5 and 6 including an all weather football pitch and a yr 3 and 4 playground to the back.
 - Soft landscaping and trees on-site and pond area
- 5.1.2.8. The school has invested in improvements to the KS1 and reception playgrounds and have plans for further investment in the KS2 and early years play areas. It is likely some investment in the external areas would be required to support the amalgamation but this would not be extensive.

5.1.3. Summary

- 5.1.4. Both schools are large 2FE Victorian buildings and both have the potential to accommodate the amalgamated school. Some change of use of spaces and potential adaptations to spaces may be required, particularly to support the 3FE's in the older year groups on amalgamation. It is worth noting that were a new 2FE primary school with 2 nursery classes to be built on either site then the DfE area guidelines for primary schools would specify and fund a school with an internal GIFA of order of 2,677m². Although configured differently to a modern build, both buildings exceed this space, and Montem has a significantly larger GIFA.
- 5.1.5. Duncombe is situated on a quieter street with better configured external spaces, an adjacent garden space and a short distance from a park. Montem is on a busy main route, the Hornsey Road with less attractive external spaces and further from any park facilities. Montem has lift access to main floors ensuring the school is accessible to all, Duncombe does not have lift access.

5.2. Suitability to deliver existing and likely expansion of ARP provision

- 5.2.1. **Montem school building** already incorporates an ARP on the ground floor. This ARP could immediately expand into the adjacent vacated SRS SEN space. Further expansion would be possible in future years as the 3FE year groups leave the school or by utilising the ground floor community space and/or the premises managers flat once this became vacant.
- 5.2.2. The **Duncombe school building** has potential for a SEND facility/ARP on the ground floor with access to an outside courtyard area and there is also a sensory room located in the infant playground area. Once the 3FE's year groups gradually leave the school additional options for further expansion of the ARP would be available.

5.3. Building condition and maintenance

- 5.3.1. Table 1 shows the level of investment required to maintain the schools over a one- to five-year timescale following recent assessments of the condition of both schools:

Table 1: level of investment required

Maintenance	Priority 1 (Y1)	Priority 2 (Y2)	Priority 3 (Yrs 3 - 5)	Total Years 1 - 5
Duncombe	£64,567.67	£68,894.51	£357,586.58	£491,048.76
Montem	£ -	£292,533.00	£140,457.00	£432,990.00

- 5.3.2. The figures have been obtained from condition reports carried out by external building surveyors. The latest condition report for Montem was received in 2022, while the latest available report for Duncombe is 2018.
- 5.3.3. In recent years, Islington Council has completed several capital projects at Montem Primary school including:
- Replacement of the two old platform lifts with new models during the Summer of 2023
 - Works to the heating systems in advance of final commissioning of a connection to the adjacent National Grid substation to facilitate the delivery of waste heat from the substation to the school - 2022/23

- Repairs and refurbishment to the Northwest elevation windows/brickwork and the enclosed canopy windows 2020/21
- Upgrades to ventilation systems in the kitchen - 2020/21
- Boiler Replacement- 2016/17

5.3.4. Works will be required to refurbish and repair the remaining window elevations at Montem. These works were put on hold pending confirmation of Islington's school's decarbonisation programme and scope of works. Double glazing of windows will be a requirement to support the introduction of heat pumps at the school and the original planned window works included refurbishment and repairs but not double glazing. The windows are being assessed to identify the urgency to progress with this work. Were Montem to be the site of the amalgamated school this supporting capital investment would be required which would increase the capital costs.

5.3.5. In recent years, Islington Council completed these capital works at Duncombe:

- Upgrades to ventilation systems in the kitchen in - 2022/23
- Funding of roof repair works following leaks – 2022/23
- Boiler Replacement - 2018/19
- Duncombe school already has double glazing in the main building

5.3.6. Maintenance and repair works are delegated to schools and so additional repairs and maintenance tasks will have been undertaken at both schools.

5.3.7. In summary, the capital and maintenance investment required at both schools over a five-year horizon is similar with higher amounts in the initial years at Montem and later years at Duncombe. It should be noted that the Duncombe costs relate to maintenance of the existing facilities and would not cover the significant capital investment that would be required to install a lift in the school. Likewise, double-glazing costs for windows at Montem are not included.

5.4. Energy and Decarbonisation

5.4.1. Energy Rating and Use

5.4.2. The current energy performance operational rating (DEC) for both sites is:

- Montem School: D
- Duncombe School: C

5.5. Decarbonisation and Local Heat Network

5.5.1. Decarbonisation of the council's schools forms a key element of the overall net zero carbon programme. Islington Council is working towards decarbonising schools by 2030 in line with the council's net zero carbon strategy.

5.5.2. Since 2022, LBI has completed decarbonisation feasibility studies for community schools and funding has been received for two implementation projects to-date; the installation of an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) at one primary school and the installation of a Ground Source Heat Pump at a special school site where major redevelopment works are underway.

5.5.3. The decarbonisation studies in general recommend changing from gas boiler heating to ASHPs with required supporting building fabric improvements such as double glazing, roof and wall insulation and the provision of energy efficiency measures such as solar panels and LED lighting. The phasing of the programme across schools is primarily driven by the age of the main boiler and as both Montem (~7yrs) and Duncombe (~5yrs) have relatively newer boilers we would anticipate both schools would be to the back end of the programme, later this decade.

5.5.4. The approach to decarbonising older Victorian buildings, such as Montem and Duncombe, will be complex as significant building fabric improvements will be required to ensure the ASHPs operate efficiently. In particular, double-glazing is advised. Duncombe school currently has window double glazing in the main block and two smaller blocks. However, the condition and robustness of the windows will need to be reviewed closer to the timescale for decarbonisation. Montem school does not have double glazing and as a Grade 2 listed building there may be planning issues around achieving this, which may impact on the decarbonisation solution.

5.5.5. It should be noted that the S106 commitments of a National Grid (NG) station development project close to Montem school required that a connection be provided between the substation and school networks to supply waste heat to the school. Infrastructure works were undertaken in previous years at the school to support this, but due to delays in the completion of the substation and the adjacent housing development project, followed by further COVID delays, this connection is not yet operational. Work has been ongoing this past year to carry out necessary upgrades

to commission the connection as well as to put a legal heat supply agreement in place between the parties.

- 5.5.6. The terms of the S106 require waste heat to be delivered free for the first five years and at 10% below the agreed market rate thereafter. This will not provide all the heat required by the school but should assist in reducing the school's energy bills in future years. It should be noted that this connection has now been delayed further due to maintenance issues at the NG substation. However, in principle, this heat source should be available to Montem school going forward.

5.6. Potential alternatives for site use

5.7. Educational Usage

- 5.7.1. Our intention would be to utilise the vacated site for other educational related purposes. There would be implications in terms of school land disposal were this not to be the case.
- 5.7.2. The longer-term usage of the vacated school following the Phase 1 school reorganisation (the Half-Moon crescent education site) may impact on the determination of the usage of the Phase 2 vacated site. With two sites in consideration for longer term occupancy from September 2024 careful analysis of the optimum location for known education requirements will be necessary.
- 5.7.3. Both Montem and Duncombe school buildings are large meaning the vacated school would potentially need to accommodate multiple user groups leading to significant works to reconfigure the spaces, improve accessibility, segregate access and implement any necessary safeguarding controls between the different groups.
- 5.7.4. The types of education usage that could be envisaged at the vacated school site include:
- Additional capacity for SEND provision, where pupil numbers are growing though this may be limited somewhat due to the planned nearby special academy
 - Additional provision for the New River College Pupil Referral Unit. The New River College provision for pupils with Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs is currently decanted at the Half-moon crescent education site while their permanent base is being redeveloped. The NRC will be trialling new services and expanding services at this site in line with the LBI SEND Strategy and national SEND and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan. The longer term site for these expanded services is to be determined but the vacated phase 2 reorganisation site could be an option for these services.
 - Nursery/ early years provision

- Other education and children's related council services
- Education related companies or charities
- Provision of decant space for other schools where developments are occurring including during the decarbonisation work's programme

5.7.5. While both school sites could be used for alternative educational usage the Montem site has DDA access and is also potentially better served in terms of transport links.

5.8. Other Development Potential

5.8.1. In the longer term should all or part of the vacated site be surplus to educational requirements then the site may offer alternative development opportunities; subject to school land disposal requirements.

5.8.2. In this regard Duncombe is close by the Elthorne Estate and Montem is close by the Andover Estate therefore both sites could offer potential to contribute to the council's priority of providing good quality affordable housing for residents in the borough.

5.8.3. However, both schools are Victorian builds so obtaining planning permission to demolish either in order to develop housing may present challenges. In this regard Montem, a Grade 2 listed building would require listed building consent for any proposed changes. The sale of the building/site to accommodate private residences may be the most likely scenario were this site to be freed for development.

6. Financial position and running costs

6.1. Current financial position

6.1.1. Duncombe

6.1.1.1. Duncombe closed 2022-23 financial year in a cumulative deficit of -£276k. The ratified budget submitted in May 2023 for the three financial years ending in 2025-26 indicated the school would end 2023-24 with a reduced cumulative deficit of -£130k; an in-year surplus of £146k.

6.1.1.2. Furthermore, based on the submitted ratified budget, the position was set to worsen by the end of 2025-26 with a cumulative deficit of -£447k

6.1.1.3. The current financial position of the school has considerably improved with the projected outturn for 2023-24 reporting a cumulative surplus of £39k; meaning the school is reporting generated in-year savings equivalent to £169k.

6.1.1.4. It should be noted that the current Headteacher inherited an unknown deficit during 2019-20 where the school has undergone several staffing organisational changes and reduced spend to control and reduce the deficit in accordance with the regulations set out within the Scheme for Financing Schools.

6.1.1.5. Despite the improved financial position, based on the ratified budgets and current government funding, it is likely that the school will return to a cumulative deficit by the end of the third year, 2025-26.

6.1.2. Montem

6.1.2.1. Montem closed 2022-23 financial year in a cumulative deficit of -£111k. The ratified budget submitted in May 2023 for the three financial years ending in 2025-26 indicated the school would end 2023-24 with an increased cumulative deficit of -£167k; an in-year deficit of -£56k.

6.1.2.2. Furthermore, based on the submitted ratified budget, the position was set to worsen by the end of 2025-26 with a cumulative deficit of -£446k

6.1.2.3. The current financial position of the school has remained static with the projected outturn for 2023-24 reporting a cumulative deficit of -£169k; a movement of -£2k when compared to the budget and indicating no significant change across the three financial years.

6.2. Site running costs

6.2.1. Using the latest benchmarking data available which shows data up to and including 2021-22, both schools have been measured against the preceding three-year average (2019-2022). The following indicators have been taken into consideration; gas; electricity and water; and national non-domestic rates (NNDR).

6.2.2. Duncombe

- Gas; electricity and water: The three-year average equates to £36k a year
- NNDR: equates to £63.6k a year

6.2.3. Montem

- Gas; electricity and water: The three-year average equates to £52k a year
- NNDR: equates to £63.7k a year

6.3. Financial improvement plan

6.3.1. Duncombe

6.3.1.1. Despite the improved financial position, based on the ratified budgets and current government funding, it is likely that the school will return to a cumulative deficit by the end of the third year, 2025-26.

6.3.2. Montem

6.3.2.1. The school is currently unable to demonstrate a balanced budget by the end of the financial planning period, 2025-26. The school are developing budget scenarios in which to reduce the deficit.

6.3.2.2. In accordance with the Scheme for Financing Schools regulations, all Islington schools are required to submit budget reforecasts for financial years 2024-25 and 2025-26. This process will determine the latest position schools are anticipating to be at the end of the financial planning period. This will include updated Deficit Recovery plans to demonstrate each school's financial viability.

6.4. Financial outcome from delivery of the programme

The proposal provides an opportunity to create an amalgamated school with a balanced budget.

7. Location

7.1. Geographical location with nearest schools by distance

- 7.1.1. Based on the official reference points for each school, as used by School Admissions, there is only one primary school within 500m of Duncombe Primary School, as the crow flies – St Mark's.
- 7.1.2. Eight other Islington primary schools are located more than 500m but within 1km of Duncombe. Apart from Montem, these are: Christ the King, Ashmount, St John's Upper Holloway, Yerbury, Pooles Park, Whitehall Park and Grafton.
- 7.1.3. There are four primary schools within 500m of Montem Primary School – Pakeman, Grafton, Pooles Park and St Mark's.
- 7.1.4. There are another three primary schools located more than 500m but within 1km of Montem – Christ the King, Duncombe and Ambler.

7.2. Mapping of pupil home addresses

- 7.2.1. According to the Autumn 2023 census, more than 80 per cent of pupils at Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools attend the school that is closest to their home address.
- 7.2.2. More of the existing pupils at Montem and Duncombe live closer to the Duncombe site than Montem, with over 70 per cent within 1km of Duncombe school, compared to 61 per cent within 1km of Montem.
- 7.2.3. See Appendix 1 for maps plotting the location of each pupil.

7.3. Transport links

- 7.3.1. There are several bus stops very close to Duncombe school on Hornsey Road for the 91 (Crouch End – Trafalgar Square) and 210 (Finsbury Park – Brent Cross) bus routes. Bus stops for the 41 bus (Archway – Tottenham Hale) can be found a couple of hundred metres to the north along Hornsey Road. Slightly further away, Holloway Road is serviced by several other bus routes – the 17 (Archway – London Bridge), 43 (Friern Barnet – London Bridge) and 263 (Barnet Hospital – Highbury Barn).
- 7.3.2. The nearest train station to Duncombe is Upper Holloway, an eight minute walk away. Upper Holloway is on the London Overground network.
- 7.3.3. The nearest London Underground station to Duncombe is Archway, on the Northern line, which is about a 15-minute walk from the school.

- 7.3.4. Montem is situated close to a number of bus stops along Hornsey Road and Seven Sisters Road. These cover the following bus routes: 4 (Archway - Blackfriars), 29 (Lordship Lane – Trafalgar Square), 91 (Tottenham – Trafalgar Square), 153 (Finsbury Park – Liverpool Street), 253 (Hackney Central - Euston), 254 (Aldgate – Caledonian Road), and 259 (Edmonton Green – Pentonville Road).
- 7.3.5. The nearest London Underground station to Montem as the crow flies is Arsenal station on the Piccadilly line. However, due to the layout of the roads, it would take 22 minutes to walk to Arsenal. Finsbury Park is quicker to walk to, taking just 12 minutes. Finsbury Park is on the Victoria and Piccadilly lines and is part of the Thameslink and Great Northern rail networks. Montem is also within a mile of Holloway Road on the Piccadilly line and Upper Holloway station on the Overground.
- 7.3.6. All the walking times in the section above are based on estimates from Google Maps, with half a mile taking 12 minutes to walk.

7.4. Housing plan roadmap

- 7.4.1. Islington commission the GLA to produce our School Roll Projections. These are updated annually to meet the requirements of the DfE's statutory School Capacity Survey data collection. The GLA produce an overarching population model, which we then have the option of adjusting using the latest data on housing developments each year. Islington takes up this option each year, supplying the GLA with updates on the number of new properties that are due to be developed each year in the future, and confirming the number that have been completed in previous years. This information is provided at ward level. Therefore, our School Roll Projections always considers the latest housing development plans.

8. Air quality and congestion

8.1. Pollution

- 8.1.1. Since 2018, Islington Council has been measuring air pollution using diffusion tubes at all of the schools in the borough. The latest results available are for 2021. Across all schools, the average air pollution level for Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂) was 22µg/m³. The average result for Duncombe in 2021 was lower than the average at 19µg/m³, a fall from 29µg/m³ in 2018. In 2018, Montem had one of the highest levels of NO₂ at 40 µg/m³. However, since 2018 the average for Montem has fallen by a third to 26 µg/m³ in 2021.
- 8.1.2. From March 2019, Duncombe has been part of the School Street Scheme. This is where a road with a school temporarily closes to become a pedestrian and cycle zone during the school's opening and closing times. By temporarily closing roads outside schools this will help to reduce congestion and pollution at the school gates as well as make it easier and safer for children to get to and from school.
- 8.1.3. Due to the location of Montem, it is not possible to introduce traditional School Street measures. In early 2023, a public consultation was held to deliver improvements to the environment outside Montem and Samuel Rhodes Primary Schools on Hornsey Road. Improvements were planned because of this consultation, including new trees and low-level planting beds, installing cycle parking, and widening the pavement outside the school. A new cycleway from the junction of Seven Sisters Road to the pedestrian crossing outside Montem and Samuel Rhodes Primary Schools was also proposed. Works began at the end of July and at the time of writing are ongoing.

8.2. Congestion

- 8.2.1. The School Street Scheme in place at Duncombe closes the road outside the school during the school's opening and closing times to reduce congestion.
- 8.2.2. The improvements being put in place outside Montem school also aim to reduce congestion by encouraging alternative methods of getting to the school.

9. Equality Impact Assessment

9.1. Summary findings from Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1.1. Both schools have a high-level of free school meal eligibility at around 55% which is higher than the borough average of 41%.
- 9.1.2. Both schools have a significantly high-level of children with English as an Additional Language (over 65%) which is much higher than the borough average.
- 9.1.3. White-Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean, Black-African and Other Ethnic Groups are statistically significantly over-represented at Duncombe.
- 9.1.4. White-Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-African and Other Ethnic Groups are statistically significantly over-represented at Montem.
- 9.1.5. There is a significant risk of disproportional impact on disadvantaged groups following any closure or amalgamation. This will need to be carefully assessed for the two school communities to ensure that the proposal does not disadvantage communities further and provides a strong viable school for the future of the communities impacted. Close working with both schools will be critical to mitigate and monitor this risk. Both schools have great strengths and expertise in bringing communities together and delivering strong outcomes for children that will be essential in this process.
- 9.1.6. An amalgamation would better mitigate the risk of disproportional impact because all pupils will be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school, and parents will not need to take any actions to continue their children's education in a good community school. An amalgamation secures the school places for all and families will be supported throughout the process. Further, amalgamation provides the opportunity for pupils to stay with their friends and familiar staff.
- 9.1.7. As set out in section in section 7, there are another four community schools within 500m of Montem primary school. It would therefore be possible to further support those pupils and families who live to the South of Montem to attend an alternative good community school, should the Duncombe site be too far for any families who do not want to travel.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

11. Risks and concerns

- 11.1. The schools themselves have identified some risks and concerns and there are others that we must consider before proposing an amalgamation or closure.
- 11.2. **Reliability of roll projection data** – the schools are concerned that data has been unreliable in the past, and inner-London numbers do fluctuate, and may not necessarily capture future policy housing policy changes or potential building developments. Whilst this is a real risk, existing pupil numbers are falling and are already not high enough. Our School Roll Projections always consider the latest housing development plans, and all analysis indicates that pupil numbers will continue to fall. Nevertheless, should pupil numbers unexpectedly increase, these could be accommodated in the amalgamated school, or in one of the other schools in the planning area, which all have surplus capacity.
- 11.3. **The future location of Samuel Rhodes Special Primary school.** If Montem school was to close following amalgamation with Duncombe Primary school, Samuel Rhodes would need to move to a new location, and this needs to be considered alongside any timetable for the amalgamation.
- 11.4. **Vacated school site being taken over by a new school** – schools are concerned that if Islington seeks permission from the Department for Education to dispose of a school site, it could then be taken over by an Academy Trust who can open a new school on the site. Our intention would be to utilise the vacated site for other educational related purposes and would not seek to dispose of the site.
- 11.5. **Complexity of one school being in a Federation with another school and the other not** – the schools have raised this concern as the schools have different governance and staffing structures and it is not clear what impact this would have on any organisational staffing changes. Should the proposal to amalgamate proceed as proposed staff at both Montem and Duncombe would then be subject to the same staffing consultation related to any organisational change and have equal opportunity in the process.
- 11.6. **Impact on the existing federation** – should the proposal to amalgamate proceed as recommended, the Edventure Federation would be dissolved as it would only have one school left within it.
- 11.7. **Managing larger pupil numbers in higher year groups** – from Year 2 upwards, a combined school would exceed two forms of entry and the amalgamated school would need a plan to manage this. Based on current pupil numbers, the amalgamated school would need to have 19 classrooms to accommodate all existing pupils. Both schools have sufficient classrooms and capacity to accommodate this. Both schools have leadership and teaching expertise to run a curriculum across 3 going to 2 Form Entry school.

11.8.



- 11.9. **Loss of pupils** – there is a real concern that the uncertainty caused by making any proposed change could lead to a further decrease in pupil numbers. This is a real risk and needs to be considered. We will ensure that all interested parties are aware that no changes will happen in the current academic year.
- 11.10. **Impact on staff** – the schools are very concerned about the impact on staff well-being and mental health and the risk of losing good teachers during a period of uncertainty. The Local Authority will work on a plan with the leadership of the two schools to ensure a good level of support that works in each school's context is provided to both staff groups.
- 11.11. **How will a structure and design be developed for the proposed amalgamated school without a clear leadership structure** – it will be challenging to deliver a school design and organisational structure and manage the organisational change process without a defined and established leadership for the proposed school. There is no single overarching body or posts across both schools.
- 11.12. **Impact on other provision** – one school has an ARP and a special school co-located on site which would be impacted by these changes.
- 11.13. **Transparent decision-making process** – the schools raised concerns that the decision-making process may not be transparent. Each stage of the process can only proceed with approval from Islington's Executive and following an informal consultation and a representation period after any formal proposal is made. All parents, staff, pupils and any other interested party will have the opportunity to input into the consultation and representation period and we will arrange parent and community meetings where residents can question senior staff and Councillors.
- 11.14. A full risk analysis will be conducted should the proposal move forward.

12. Factors underpinning the recommendation

Key factors from the feasibility study were extracted and scored to inform the recommendation on which school site and which school name should be proposed for the amalgamated school. A panel of officers discussed and scored the factors for each school as set out in the table below.

Category	Number	Criteria	Duncombe Score	Montem Score
A. Building site and condition	A1	School has capacity to accommodate 420 pupils from R to Y6	3	3
A. Building site and condition	A2	School has capacity to accommodate existing pupil numbers from nursery up.	1	2
A. Building site and condition		School site meets minimum Gross Internal Floor Area (GIFA) requirement of 2,677 square metres for a two-form entry school with two nursery classes	2	3
A. Building site and condition		School has 20 individual classrooms	2	3

A. Building site and condition		School site has lift to all floors	0	1
A. Building site and condition		Building has double-glazing on all windows	1	0
B. Financial position and running costs		Ratified budget in May 2023 indicates school will end 2023-2024 with an in-year surplus	2	0
B. Financial Position and running costs		Ratified budget in May 2023 indicates school will end 2025-2026 with a surplus	0	0
C. Financial Position and running costs		EPC rating of E (minimum rating for commercial let)	2	2
D. Location		Percentage of Duncombe and Montem pupils that live within 1km of school site (<50%=0; 50-60=1;60-70=2;>70=3)	3	2
C. Location		School is only school in local area, with fewer than three other schools within	3	0

		500m of school location		
D. Air quality and congestion		Nitrogen Dioxide (NO ₂) levels are in top quartile of all Islington schools for the lowest annual mean readings (between 17 and 20µg m ⁻³)	2	0
E. Ofsted		Ofsted rating of 'good'	2	2
Total			23	18

The scoring key:

0	The school does not meet the criteria
1	The school partially meets the criteria
2	The school meets the criteria in full
3	The school exceeds the criteria

13. Recommendation

13.1.1. Based on the feasibility study, our recommendation is that we consult on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on the Duncombe site and keep the Duncombe name and Ofsted number.

13.1.2. We do not believe closure of either school would be in the best interests of the children or school communities. Closing one school creates a significant risk that the displaced pupils may not have a school place after the school is closed, as we are not permitted

to automatically enrol pupils in another school. Closure of one school would also result in one staff group being made redundant.

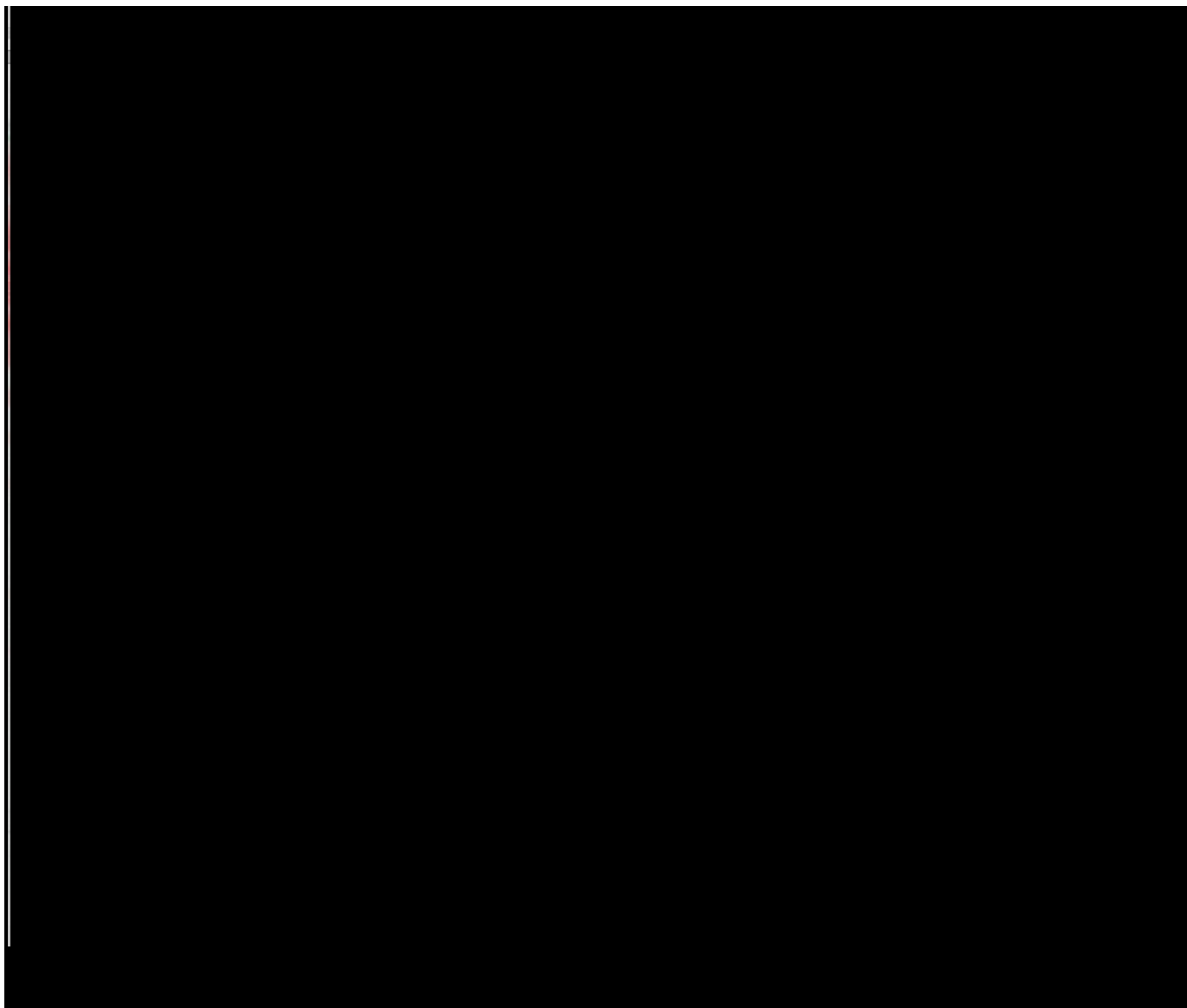
- 13.1.3. We are recommending an amalgamation due to the high levels of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils attending both schools. Amalgamation will ensure all existing pupils will be guaranteed a place at the amalgamated school and will not be required to apply for another school place.
- 13.1.4. Amalgamation will also bring benefits to staff at both schools whose roles will be ring-fenced, and their culture and teaching practices included in the amalgamated school. Montem leadership and staff have expertise of working across two schools and the delivery of a flexible curriculum model that will support the delivery of a multi-form-entry school.
- 13.1.5. We are recommending the Duncombe site for the amalgamated school because of these key factors:
- More pupils from both schools live nearest to Duncombe
 - Air pollution and traffic congestion is lower in the Duncombe area
 - Montem has more neighbouring schools than Duncombe meaning there are more alternative options for any parent with children currently at Montem who may not want to travel to Duncombe, compared to the options for parents with children at Duncombe
- 13.1.6. We are recommending that the proposal includes keeping the Duncombe school name and Ofsted number as this would ensure the newly amalgamated school will not start with an enhanced deficit at the point of amalgamation. This would safeguard the financial position of the school and help secure the school's long-term future. At the point of amalgamation, the deficit budget of the closing school would revert to the Local Authority. By technically closing Montem which has a projected deficit, this would provide a more secure start for the amalgamated school as it would start without a deficit budget.

Appendix 1: pupil residences

Duncombe Pupil residences based on January 2023 school census

Legend

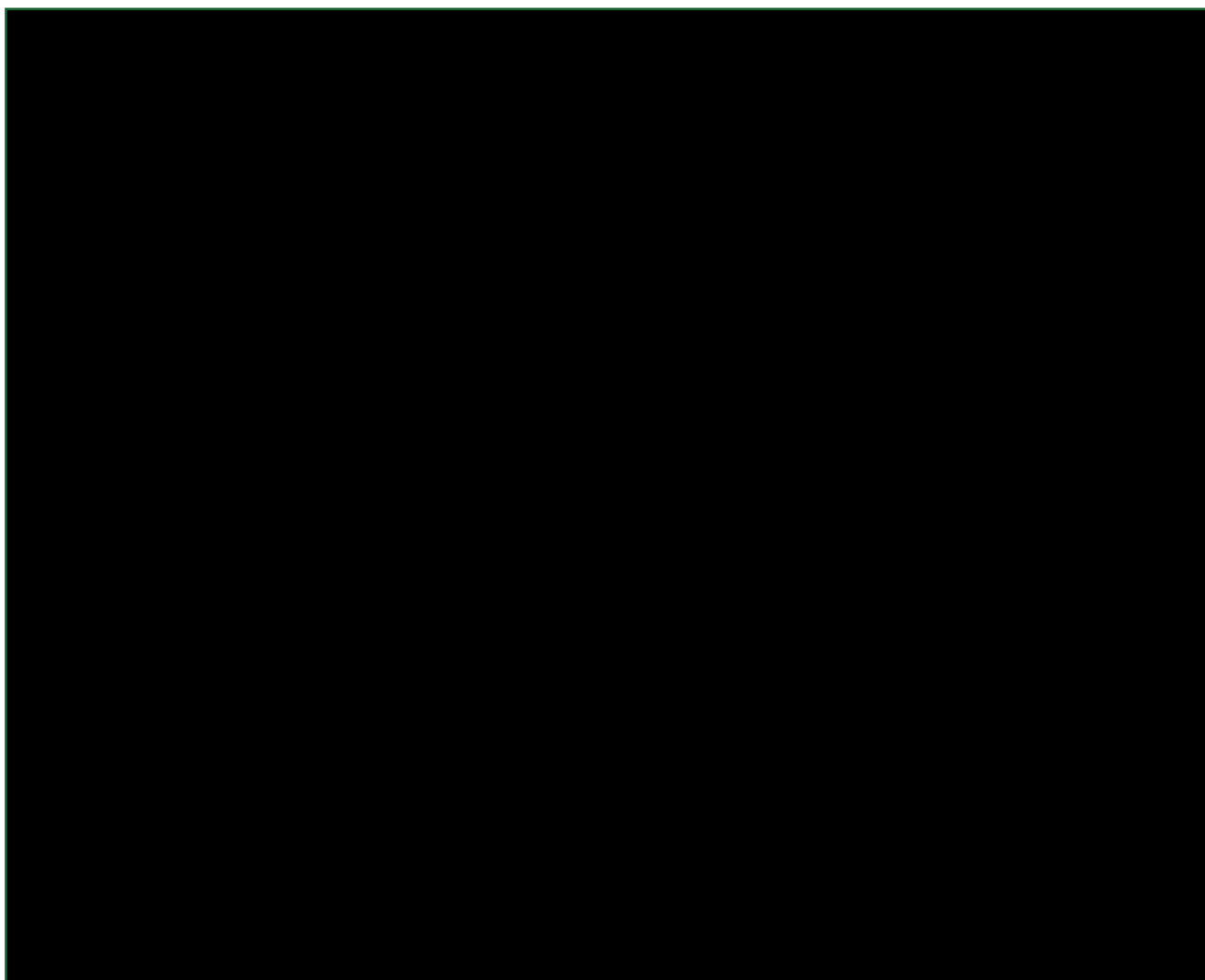
- Duncombe School
- Pupil residence (size of circle relates to number of pupils) Islington boundary
- Other LAs boundaries



Montem Pupil residences based on January 2023 school census

Legend

- Montem School
- Pupil residence (size of circle relates to number of pupils) Islington boundary
- Other LAs boundaries



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Appendix 1D

Equalities Impact Assessment: Full Assessment

Before completing this form, you should have completed an Equalities Screening Tool and had sign off from your Head of Service and the Fairness and Equality Team.

This Equality Impact Assessment should be completed where the Screening Tool identifies a potentially negative impact on one or more specific groups, but it can also be used to highlight positive impacts.

Summary of proposal

Name of proposal	Statutory Proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools
Reference number (if applicable)	N/A
Service Area	Children's Services
Date assessment completed	21 December 2023

Before completing the EQIA please read the guidance and FAQs. For further help and advice please contact equalities@islington.gov.uk.

1. Please provide a summary of the proposal.

Please provide:

- Context on how the service currently operates (if relevant) and the scope of suggested changes
- The intended beneficiaries and outcomes of the proposal
- Reference to any savings or income generation

Across Islington, many schools are impacted by falling rolls with vacancies in reception at primary at 25% in October 2023.

This level of vacancies has implications on the financial viability of the schools longer term and the quality of the educational experience for children as the number of pupils attending the school drives the level of funding received by a school.

Lower pupil numbers mean less funding which affects staffing that then impacts the diversity of the curriculum offer

The School Organisation Plan sets out our strategy for managing school places over the next three years and describes:

1. the context of falling rolls leading to a high level of surplus school places
2. the principles for managing places
3. the current organisation of Islington's education provision
4. the options to reduce surplus places in primary schools and maximise the use of the school estate

Reducing the number of school places in a planned way will support schools to manage change within their funding.

The intended outcome of our school organisation plan is to achieve our ambition that every child has a good local school place to achieve their best outcomes. We expect all schools to be viable and provide a high quality of education so that every child in Islington has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school.

The School Organisation Plan sets out various options to reduce surplus capacity at our schools:

- Reduce the Published Admission Number (PAN)
- Maximise the pupil numbers
- Make better use of spare building capacity
- Including children with SEND
- Collaboration and Federation to achieve economies of scale

After all these options have been considered to reduce surplus capacity and the school continues to have a surplus, we are forced to consider amalgamating schools or closing an individual school.

We are proposing to amalgamate Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School.

Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools are in the Hornsey area which is the area with the highest vacancy rate in Islington. In October 2022, there was a surplus capacity of 23% in

Please provide:

- Context on how the service currently operates (if relevant) and the scope of suggested changes
- The intended beneficiaries and outcomes of the proposal
- Reference to any savings or income generation

reception in the Hornsey planning area, which increased to a surplus capacity of 32% in October 2023.

Montem and Duncombe are both based in large Victorian school buildings designed for more pupils than they currently accommodate. Both schools have had deficit budgets for several years.

Both schools have experienced a significant roll drop in recent years, and without more pupils will not be financially sustainable in the longer-term.

Montem and Duncombe are situated just over half a mile apart and within walking distance from each other.

When closing a school, we must follow statutory guidelines ([Opening and closing maintained schools](#)). The statutory guidance sets out the following criteria for closing a school:

- there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils
- there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term
- it has been judged inadequate by Ofsted
- it is no longer considered viable.

Duncombe and Montem schools are both in danger of becoming not viable as they have surplus places and no predicted increase in demand in the medium to long-term.

We believe amalgamating Duncombe and Montem – in effect closing Montem Primary School – will ensure their long-term viability.

Amalgamating the two schools would bring together the strengths of both and enable us to maximise Duncombe's large Victorian site.

We are proposing that Duncombe remain a two-form entry school with capacity for three-forms of entry in higher year groups to ensure that every child currently attending both schools will be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school.

A full feasibility study was completed to determine which of the two sites would be the best option for the amalgamated school based on a range of factors including buildings, their location and impact on pupils and families given the walking distance to the school for pupils. Both schools were scored by separate officers and the study determined that:

- both sites are suitable for an amalgamated school and can accommodate the required pupil numbers
- both schools are in deficit but Duncombe is now projected to be in surplus this financial year and is cheaper to run than Montem
- more pupils from both schools live within 1km of the Duncombe site and there are more neighbouring schools near Montem
- the air quality is better at and there is less congestion at Duncombe

Please provide:

- Context on how the service currently operates (if relevant) and the scope of suggested changes
- The intended beneficiaries and outcomes of the proposal
- Reference to any savings or income generation

It is for these reasons that we are proposing Duncombe as the site of the amalgamated school.

The first stage to the proposal was to complete an informal consultation which we ran for five weeks from 15 November to 20 December 2023. This asked for comments and views on a proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 31 August 2024.

The proposal was published on our consultation site, [Let's Talk Islington](#), and translated versions of the proposal were provided in Arabic, Bengali, Somali, and Turkish. We held seven meetings for parents and carers and a public meeting members of the local community. Respondents were also invited to send comments and questions to a dedicated mailbox, schoolconsult@islington.gov.uk.

We received 786 responses to the online consultation and eight comments by email. Over 400 attended the parent and carers meetings at Duncombe and Montem and the community meeting held at Arts and Media School.

We are recommending that the proposal move to the next stage and that Islington Council issue a formal proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools.

There was a high-level engagement with the first stage consultation process, with 778 respondents completing the online consultation questionnaire and over 400 people attending the consultation meetings.

75% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the proposal. The main themes emerging from the consultation were concerns that the amalgamation appeared to be a takeover of one school over the other and that the proposed timeframe for implementing the proposal was too short, with not enough time for an adequate staffing reorganisation, or to adequately support children with transitioning from one school site to the other.

The proposal will also affect the Edventure Collaborative which would need to be dissolved and a new governing board established for Drayton Park Primary School.

We are recommending that the proposal proceed with an implementation date of 31 August 2024 due to the financial risks of a delay and to reduce the period of uncertainty a longer timeframe would cause.

Whilst we understand the anxiety caused by the proposal and the opposition to it, we must take immediate action to reduce the surplus capacity in the local area, and to tackle the growing deficit budgets. We will provide additional resource to support the transition, including a SEND transition plan for those children with special educational needs or an EHC Plan. We will also recommend the schools convene a parent group to support the transition.

We will endeavour to offer individual support to children and families on a case-by-case basis. Where children have an EHC Plan, we will need to amend and review those plans based on the change of school location. We do not anticipate any systemic challenges to this work.

Please provide:

- Context on how the service currently operates (if relevant) and the scope of suggested changes
- The intended beneficiaries and outcomes of the proposal
- Reference to any savings or income generation

Issuing a formal proposal will provide certainty and allow preparatory work for implementing the amalgamation to move forward, including completing a staffing organisation plan and staffing consultation, curriculum planning, and delivery of the SEND transition plan.

The intended outcome of this proposal is to achieve our ambition that every child has a good local school place to achieve their best outcomes. We expect all schools to be viable and provide a high quality of education so that every child in Islington has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school.

The intended beneficiaries of this proposal are the current and future pupils at Duncombe and Montem who will all be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school.

2. What impact will this change have on different groups of people?

Please consider:

- Whether the impact will predominantly be external or internal, or both?
- Who will be impacted – residents, service users, local communities, staff, or others?
- Broadly what will the impact be – reduced access to facilities or disruptions to journeys for example?

The impact will be predominantly external, impacting on pupils, parents and carers and school staff at Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools.

The proposal will change where current and future pupils from Montem Primary School attend school, potentially leading to stress and anxiety for pupils and families. The proposal would also impact on staff currently working at Duncombe and Montem Primary schools as it would potentially lead to staff redundancies. Some staff at Drayton Park Primary School (which is in a federation with Montem Primary School) may also be affected by this proposal.

The latest available information from the annual School Workforce Census indicates that in November 2022 there were:

- 54 staff working at Duncombe Primary School (46.17 FTE)
- 46 staff working at Montem Primary School (34.59 FTE)

These figures include both teachers and support staff.

The proposal is likely to have an impact on staff. Should Duncombe and Montem amalgamate, there would be a staffing review and redundancies could be possible.

If the formal proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools proceeds, our Schools' HR team will support both schools with a staffing reorganisation process including a separate staffing consultation. Schools HR will support all staff during the consultation and in the event of any redundancies. This will include group workshops with staff – such as interview preparation and CV-writing workshops - and individual one-on-one sessions as required.

The proposals will impact pupils at Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools as only the Duncombe site will remain in use, meaning pupils from Montem will need to relocate to another. At the October 2023 census, Montem had 325 pupils on roll from Nursery to Year 6 and Duncombe 344 pupils. The pupils at Duncombe will also be affected by the proposal as new pupils will move to their school and class groups may need to be re-configured.

The proposal will not impact our legal duty to ensure that every child has a school place, which will be maintained within close distance for all affected pupils.

Our Education Plan sets out our mission that, by 2030 every child, whatever their background, has the same opportunity and ambition to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school. Schools operate most efficiently when full or nearly full and any surplus places should be kept to a minimum to ensure the financial viability of schools and the ability of schools to provide a high quality, broad and balanced curriculum. This proposal supports the delivery of this objective.

3. What impact will this change have on people with protected characteristics and/or from disadvantaged groups?

This section of the assessment looks in detail at the likely impacts of the proposed changes on different sections of our diverse community.

3A. What data have you used to assess impacts?

Please provide:

- Details of the evidence used to assess impacts on people with protected characteristics and from disadvantaged groups (see guidance for help)
- A breakdown of service user demographics where possible
- Brief interpretation of findings

All the equalities data listed in this section is taken from the October 2023 School Census, apart from the ethnicity information, which is only collected once a year on the January School Census.

Gender

Duncombe and Montem both have a similar proportion of male and female students to the primary borough average (49% female, 51% male).

	Islington Primaries	Duncombe	Montem
Male	51.3%	51.2%	51.7%
Female	48.7%	48.8%	48.3%

Please provide:

- Details of the evidence used to assess impacts on people with protected characteristics and from disadvantaged groups (see guidance for help)
- A breakdown of service user demographics where possible
- Brief interpretation of findings

Data on gender reassignment is not collected in the School Census.

Free School Meal eligibility

Across all Islington primary schools, 41.9% of pupils were eligible for Free School Meals as at October 2023. Islington tends to have relatively high levels of Free School Meal eligibility compared to other boroughs, with the third highest proportion of primary pupils eligible in the country in most recent comparator figures (based on January 2023 data). Duncombe and Montem both have higher levels of Free School Meal eligibility than the Islington average.

	Islington Primaries	Duncombe	Montem
% FSM eligible	41.9%	54.9%	58.2%

Special Educational Needs

Across Islington primary schools, 16.6% of pupils were at the SEN Support level of provision in October 2023. This indicates they have some special educational need, but do not meet the threshold for an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP). 5.0% of Islington primary school pupils had an EHCP. Therefore, 21.3% of Islington primary school pupils were known to have Special Educational Needs. Duncombe and Montem both have higher proportions of pupils with Special Educational Needs than the Islington average. The table shows percentages based on all classes, including nursery.

	Islington Primaries	Duncombe	Montem
SEN Support	16.6%	16.6% (57)	17.2% (56)
EHCP	5.0%	6.1% (21)	7.7% (25)
Total SEN	21.5%	22.7%	24.9%

English as an Additional Language

39.4% of Islington's primary school pupils had English as an Additional Language (EAL) in October 2023. Duncombe and Montem both had significantly higher proportions of pupils with EAL than the Islington average.

	Islington Primaries	Duncombe	Montem
% EAL	39.4%	65.5%	75.1%

Ethnicity

- Compared to the average across all Islington primary schools:

	Islington Primaries	Duncombe	Montem
White-British	26.2%	11.3%	7.0%
White-Turkish	4.0%	9.3%	10.2%
White-Other	13.7%	10.3%	11.5%
Kurdish	0.7%	0.3%	0.3%

Please provide:

- Details of the evidence used to assess impacts on people with protected characteristics and from disadvantaged groups (see guidance for help)
- A breakdown of service user demographics where possible
- Brief interpretation of findings

Asian-Bangladeshi	5.3%	8.2%	9.6%
Asian-Other	1.9%	1.5%	1.9%
Black-Caribbean	4.2%	7.2%	3.8%
Black-African	14.6%	24.2%	28.0%
Black-Other	1.7%	1.3%	1.6%
Mixed - White & Black-Caribbean	4.2%	6.2%	4.1%
Mixed-Other	15.2%	9.8%	12.1%
Chinese	1.5%	0.0%	0.6%
Other	6.4%	10.3%	9.2%
Not stated / refused	1.4%	0.3%	0.0%

Pupil residence

- The pupils on roll at Duncombe are predominantly from the Hillrise and Tollington wards within Islington.
- The pupils on roll at Montem are predominantly from the Finsbury Park and Tollington wards within Islington.

Religion

Data on religion is not collected in the School Census.

3B: Assess the impacts on people with protected characteristics and from disadvantaged groups in the table below.

Please first select whether the potential impact is positive, neutral, or negative and then provide details of the impacts and any mitigations or positive actions you will put in place.

Please use the following definitions as a guide:

Neutral – The proposal has no impact on people with the identified protected characteristics

Positive – The proposal has a beneficial and desirable impact on people with the identified protected characteristics

Negative – The proposal has a negative and undesirable impact on people with the identified protected characteristics

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
Age	Positive and negative	<p>The intended beneficiaries of the proposals are pupils from Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, who will receive a broad and balanced curriculum in a sustainable high-quality school.</p> <p>There may be considerable stress and anxiety for pupils and their families who are required to move school and for those who will have new children joining their school and existing classes.</p>	All pupils at Duncombe and Montem will be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school.

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
Disability (include carers)	Negative	<p>As with all pupils, any change can cause anxiety and this can be a particular issue for pupils with SEND and their families, particularly those with Autism who represent 52% of children and young people with SEND in Islington.</p> <p>A recent study by the National Autistic Society (2022) found that 47% of autistic people fall into the severe anxiety category based on GAD-7 diagnostic criteria (measure for assessing generalised anxiety disorder).</p> <p>We don't anticipate the proposals will have a significant impact on carers as both schools are less than half-a-mile apart.</p>	<p>Montem has Additionally Resourced Provision for pupils with SEND. This would need to be re-provisioned at another school and children moved accordingly. This will impact approximately eight children.</p> <p>The SEND team will work with individual children and their parents/carers to support their transition, and additional resource will be provided to create the capacity for this support.</p>

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
Race or ethnicity	Positive and Negative	<p>Due to the low number of pupils from some ethnic groups at a school level, some of the differences between the ethnic breakdowns for a school and the overall breakdown of all primary schools are not statistically different.</p> <p>The following ethnic groups are statistically significantly over-represented at Duncombe and Montem compared to the borough overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White-Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-Caribbean, Black-African and Other Ethnic Groups at Duncombe • White-Turkish/Turkish-Cypriot, Asian-Bangladeshi, Black-African and Other Ethnic Groups at Montem <p>The following ethnic groups are statistically significantly under-represented at Duncombe and Montem compared to the borough overall:</p>	<p>We mitigated this by offering in-person meetings at all schools and sharing the proposal with parents directly and translating the proposal document into the most common second languages. We also arranged a dedicated meeting for parents with Bengali, Somali, and Turkish interpreters.</p> <p>The amalgamation could help to strengthen community bonds, as two school communities are brought together.</p>

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White-British and Mixed-Other at Duncombe • White-British at Montem <p>As all schools have a particularly high percentage of pupils with English as an Additional Language, it is likely that a considerable proportion of parents would also not have English as their first language. This may form a barrier when informing parents about the changes.</p>	
Religion or belief (include no faith)	Neutral	Duncombe and Montem are non-religious schools.	Duncombe school welcomes students from diverse communities and faiths.

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
Gender and gender reassignment (male, female, or non-binary)	Neutral	There should not be any difference in the impact on different genders. All affected schools and neighbouring schools are mixed gender.	
Maternity or pregnancy	Neutral	Any staff who are pregnant or on parental leave may be excluded from any consultation including any staffing consultation.	We will ensure any staff on parental leave or any other leave are fully informed of the proposal and given the opportunity to participate in all and any staff consultations. This will be managed by our HR services in consultation with the school leadership teams.

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
Sex and sexual orientation	Neutral		
Marriage or civil partnership	Neutral		

Characteristic or group	Positive/Neutral/Negative	What are the positive and/or negative impacts?	How will potential benefits be enhanced or negative impacts be eliminated or reduced?
<p>Other - deprivation</p> <p>(e.g. people living in poverty, looked after children, people who are homeless or refugees)</p>	<p>Neutral</p>	<p>All affected schools have relatively high levels of Free School Meal eligibility, which is higher than the borough average.</p>	<p>Pupils will be guaranteed a place in the amalgamated school and supported with any application to move to another Islington primary school.</p>

4. How do you plan to mitigate negative impacts?

Please provide:

- An outline of actions and the expected outcomes
- Any governance and funding which will support these actions if relevant

All pupils will have continued access to Ofsted rated 'Good' local provision following the amalgamation.

Current surplus places within all Islington Primary School planning areas mean that future pupils will continue to have access to local provision and that the provision will be more sustainable in the longer term by reducing the excessive surplus places.

The SEND team will work with any family whose child with special educational needs may be affected by these proposals. The team will further consider with the family and those who support the child any additional supports that might need to be put in place to support transition. Full consideration will be given to travel, friendship groups and any particular access needs.

The School Admissions team will offer open surgeries and individual sessions at the school to provide advice to families who will be affected by these proposals. Full consideration will be given to travel, friendship groups and any access needs in considering alternative schools for pupils.

These surgeries will be arranged with the school to consider any groups who may be impacted differently, for example translation or interpreters will be arranged for those for whom English is an additional language. These meetings will be arranged on request and following discussions with the schools.

The School Admissions Team will also liaise directly with Children's Social Care to ensure that any Child In Need, Looked After Child or child with a protection plan is given full support from their allocated Social Worker to ensure they understand processes to be followed, and to support visits.

There are many Social, Emotional and Mental Health services already operating with the school that may be affected by these proposals. These include the School Wellbeing Service and CAMHS in Schools, as well as the pastoral care in place at each school. These services will be informed of any change so they can ensure support can be targeted at this school, where pupils may have increased anxiety around the changes.

These arrangements will be kept under review by the School Organisation Project team that will be overseeing all aspects of any transition, including for example premises, staffing and transfer of records.

5. Please provide details of your consultation and/or engagement plans.

Please provide:

- Details of what steps you have taken or plan to take to consult or engage the whole community or specific groups affected by the proposal
- Who has been or will be consulted or engaged with
- Methods used or that will be used to engage or consult
- Key findings or feedback (if completed)

To implement any significant change to a school, or as is described in regulations as a 'prescribed alteration,' the relevant authority (Local Authority, Governing Body/Diocese, Trust, or Foundation) is required to complete a statutory consultation process.

This includes both an informal consultation/listening period and then a formal statutory consultation period if the council intends to propose closure or amalgamation.

The first stage is an informal consultation which ran from 15 November to 20 December 2023. Any person could their views on the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools. The feedback from this consultation is now being considered by the council's Executive who will then decide whether to proceed to the next step to issue a formal proposal.

Should they choose to proceed, the Executive will issue a formal statutory notice on the proposal and there will then be a further four-week consultation period when anyone can submit their views.

At the end of this consultation period, the Executive will decide whether to implement the proposal, amend the proposal, or withdraw the proposal.

6. Once the proposal has been implemented, how will impacts be monitored and reviewed?

Please provide details in the table below.

Action	Responsible team or officer	Deadline
We will communicate with and provide support to schools that displaced pupils move to, to ensure pupils are settling in and offer any additional support as required	Learning and Achievement	Ongoing

Please send the completed EQIA to equalities@islington.gov.uk for quality checking by the Fairness and Equality Team. All Equality Impact Assessments must be attached with any report to a decision-making board and should be made publicly available on request.

This Equality Impact Assessment has been completed in accordance with the guidance and using appropriate evidence.

Member	Name	Signed	Date
Staff member completing this form	Matthew Beevor	<i>Matthew Beevor</i>	21 December 2023
Fairness and Equality Team	Charlton Brown	C C Brown	24/01/2024
Director or Head of Service	Alison Cramer	A Cramer	24/01/2024

Appendix 1E

Statutory Proposal to Amalgamate Duncombe Primary School and Montem Primary School

Notice is given, in accordance with Section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (as amended by the Education Act 2011) and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, that Islington Council intends to discontinue Montem Primary School on 31 August 2024.

- **Name, address, and category of school proposed to be discontinued:** Montem Primary School, Hornsey Road, Finsbury Park, Islington N7 7QT
- **Date on which it is proposed to close the school:** 31 August 2024

Reason for closure of Montem Primary School

The proposal is due to a fall in pupil numbers and the associated impact on the future viability of the school. Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools have been acutely impacted by reduced pupil demand in the area.

The school organisation proposal is to amalgamate (merge) Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools, bringing together the identities and strengths of both schools under one roof.

The amalgamation would mean these schools merging to operate from a single site, enabling them to make the best use of the staff expertise, while securing the merged school's financial future.

Under the proposal, Duncombe Primary School would remain a two-form entry school. A maximum of 60 pupils would be admitted to Reception classes in the merged school from September 2024. All existing children would be offered a place within the merged school.

This notice is an extract from the full proposal, details of which are published online at <https://www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/duncombe-and-montem>

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this proposal, any person may object or make comments on the proposal by:

Email: schoolconsult@islington.gov.uk

Post: Duncombe and Montem Proposal, Compton Room, Laycock Centre, Laycock Street, London N1 1TH

The closing date for responses is **Thursday, 21 March at 11.59pm**.

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NOTICE OF CALL-IN

Decisions made by the Executive, a committee of the Executive, or an officer with delegated authority from the Executive, will come into force and be implemented on the expiry of 3 working days after publication of the decision.

If Members of the Council wish the decision to be reviewed by the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee, a notice of call in must be received by the Monitoring Officer (or an officer in Democratic Services on their behalf) no later than 5.00 pm, 3 working days after the date of the publication of the decision. The deadline for call-in will be specified when the decision notice is published.

The standing orders relating to call-in are available at Procedure Rule 66 of the Council's Constitution.

NOTICES OF CALL-IN MUST:

- 1) BE SIGNED BY AT LEAST FIVE MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**
- 2) GIVE REASONS FOR THE CALL-IN**
- 3) PROPOSE A POSITIVE OR ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION**

Completed forms should be submitted to democracy@islington.gov.uk

When forms are submitted by email, each councillor signing the form must submit an email to confirm their support for the call-in.

DATE OF EXECUTIVE MEETING OR OFFICER DECISION: Tuesday 13th February

REPORT TITLE: Proposal on the Future of Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools

1. REASONS FOR CALL- IN OF DECISION (if you believe that the decision is outside the policy or budget framework, you must make this clear and say why you believe this is so):

We believe the decision should be reconsidered for the following factors:

- The impacts of this decision on Drayton Park School have not been adequately considered.
- Parents at Drayton Park School have not been adequately consulted.
- The needs of SEND students at Montem have not been adequately considered.
- The implications of this decision have wider ramifications for schools across the borough.
- Student numbers and financial pressures need considering in the round, rather than taking out

At item 6 the consultation is addressed.

6.1.4 table 3 consultation meetings shows that no meetings were held with parents at Drayton Park school despite the catastrophic financial impact on Drayton Park by dissolving the federation with Montem.

At 6.2.16 the Federation is briefly addressed.

There is clearly a serious financial impact on Drayton Park School stemming from the dissolution of the Edventure federation between Montem and Drayton Park schools.

This impact is not fully addressed in the paper and the consultation was held with parents of Montem and Duncombe Schools and not Drayton Park.

6.2.9.2. SEN Provision

Parents are rightly concerned about the loss of SEN provision. Montem has provided highly regarded support and education for SEN pupils. Parents and guardians have deep concerns over whether Duncombe can provide the same level of support. SEN provision is under strain across the borough, the loss of an Additional Resource Provision (ARP) will not help.

6.2.33 edventure response

The response at 6.2.33.2 fails to address the knock on effect for schools in Highbury in particular the children, staff, governors and whole school community at Drayton Park. We believe that the impact on Drayton Park needs to be fully worked through before a decision is taken to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem.

We wish to call in this decision to ensure the council takes a holistic approach to addressing the serious crisis in over provision of school places across the borough.

We believe this decision to amalgamate Montem and Duncombe Schools ignores the "domino effect" on other schools both financially and in terms of school places and the

decision needs to be deferred until a plan for other schools impacted by this decision and support for affected staff governors and parents is put in place.

Taking this decision in isolation leaves too many serious questions about the sustainability and viability of other schools and risks setting off an unplanned domino effect across other schools.

2. PROPOSALS FOR A POSITIVE OR ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION:

We wish to call in this decision to ensure the council takes a holistic approach to addressing the serious crisis in over provision of school places across the borough.

We believe this decision to amalgamate Montem and Duncombe Schools ignores the "domino effect" on other schools both financially and in terms of school places and the decision needs to be deferred until a plan for other schools impacted by this decision and support for affected children, staff governors and parents is put in place.

Taking this decision in isolation leaves too many serious questions about the sustainability and viability of other schools and risks setting off an unplanned domino effect across other schools.

In Hackney an independent body reviewed the proposals. This should be considered here.

Please print and sign your name below:

NAME	SIGNATURE
(1) COUNCILLOR Benali Hamdache	REDACTED
(2) COUNCILLOR Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong	REDACTED
(3) COUNCILLOR Caroline Russell	REDACTED

<p>(4) COUNCILLOR</p> <p>Matt Nathan</p>	<p>REDACTED</p>
<p>(5) COUNCILLOR</p> <p>Asima Shaikh</p>	<p>REDACTED</p>

Date and time: Friday 9th February 13:00

When completed, this form should be submitted to Democratic Services no later than 5.00 pm on the third day following publication of the decision notice.

Once a valid notice of call-in is received, the decision-taker, Chief Executive and relevant Chief Officer will be notified. If the request for the call-in states that the reason for it is that the decision is outside the budget or policy framework, refer it to the Monitoring Officer who shall decide whether this is the case.

Decisions that are called in will be referred to the next scheduled meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee for consideration (or the Children’s Services Scrutiny Committee, if the decision relates to education functions).

NB – The call in procedure set out above shall not apply where the decision being taken by the Executive or a Corporate Director is urgent ie if any delay likely to be caused by the call in process would seriously prejudice the Council’s or the public interest and it is not practicable to convene a relevant meeting of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee, within the Access to Information Rules in the Constitution.

Clarification provided to supplement Call-in form text on the proposed positive or additional course of action

1. To begin a whole borough approach to reviewing school places and integrate Phase 2 of the school organisation plan with Phase 3 so that a planned approach can be taken to school places across the borough rather than taking decisions immediately without investigating and consulting on the consequences of early closures
2. Directly include Drayton Park school within the consultation process and review whether defederation is necessary
3. An independent body to review the proposals and the evidence base

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Lead Member Annual Report

2023/24

Cllr Michelline Ngongo, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

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INTRODUCTION



Over a number of years, there have been significant improvements in early years, social care and youth services. Many of our services are judged as good or outstanding through external quality and improvement challenge organisations such as Ofsted.

However, Islington's population of children and families is changing. Islington is expected to see a decrease in the under 5s population whilst experiencing an increase in the number of older school-aged children. This is compounded by factors such as falling birth rates, falling EU migration, the impact of Covid in terms of a potential net loss of families to the wider region and the continuing impact of the cost-of-living crisis and Covid which have aggravated inequalities. We have seen a year-on-year increase in the number of school-aged children and young people identified with SEND, particularly those who have an Education Health and Care Plan.

This is likely to impact the quality of life for children and their families, as well as the potential for children's services to provide the help and support they may need.

Page 3

Islington is still one of the most deprived local authorities in London with one of the highest levels of child poverty in the country.

The impact of welfare reforms and lack of affordable secure housing can increase the numbers of children living in poverty and at risk of difficult childhood experiences. This affects increased demand for early help and children's social care services.



The changing population and challenges facing both the families and the council has shaped a stark demand for children's services. More can also be done to make sure that children and young people in Islington start well in life. Despite the current and future local and national challenges, I want us to keep on challenging ourselves to unlock every opportunity possible to benefit our children, young people and their families.



Key statutory roles and legislation

There are approximately 200 statutory duties covering children's services

- Children Act 1989 and 2004
- Childcare Act 2006
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Children and Social Work Act 2017
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012
- Education Act 2011 and 2002

Statutory roles:

- Lead Member for Children
- Director of Children's Services

Children's services is an interconnected system of support to children, young people and their families



Education, training and employment

- Schools
- School improvement
- School admissions and organisation
- School governance and finance
- Support for vulnerable pupils inc SEND



Early Years and Childcare

- Children's centres
- Private, voluntary and independent early learning and childcare settings



Early help, safeguarding and social care

- Family Information Service
- Children's Services Contact Team
- Bright Start and Bright Futures Family Support
- Children in Need
- Corporate Parenting inc fostering and adoption
- Disabled children



Health and wellbeing

- Children's mental health – SEMH inc CAMHS
- Adventure playgrounds
- Universal health services – midwifery, health visiting, paediatricians, speech and language therapy



Adolescence and Youth

- Culture
- Youth work and youth hubs
- Targeted Youth Support
- Youth justice



Strategy, quality improvement and partnerships

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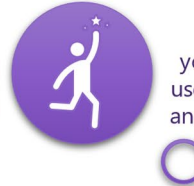
Many of the council's services for children, young people and their families are delivered in partnership with other organisations such as the NHS, schools, the Metropolitan Police, probation services and the community and voluntary sector.

My role and responsibilities as a Lead Member for Children is set out in law. As a member of the Council Executive, I have political responsibility for the leadership, strategy, and effectiveness of Islington's children's services. I have a key role in defining the local vision and setting political priorities for children's services within the broader political context of the Council.

I am responsible for ensuring that the needs of all children and young people in Islington, including the most disadvantaged and vulnerable, and their families and carers, are addressed. To do this, I must work closely with other local partners to improve the outcomes and well-being of children and young people. I must also have regard to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and ensure that children and young people are involved in the development and delivery of local services. Finally, I am required to provide strong, strategic leadership and support and challenge to the Corporate Director of Children's Services and relevant members of their senior team as appropriate. Together, we have strong foundations and values that relentlessly pursue equity and excellence for our children and their families. The journey towards this must continue.

Children aged 0 to 18 in receipt of an early help service with the aim of avoiding escalation into statutory services ● Children in Need including in need of help and protection ● Families with multiple and complex needs ● Children Looked After by the council ● Care-experienced young people ● Islington parents, parents-to-be, foster carers, adopters and special guardians ● Young unpaid carers aged under 16 ● Vulnerable adolescents aged 10 and over ● Victims of violence against women and girls ● Young people subject to statutory YOS interventions and court orders

Over **71,000** children and young people aged 0 to 24 years old
Over **22,000** households with dependent children



Islington is home to a wonderful mix of children, young people and families. It can be a fantastic place to grow up in but it is also challenging.

Children with a long-term health condition ● Children and young people with a social, emotional or mental health need ● Children and young people with disabilities ● Children with statements or an Education, Health and Care Plan

Children and young people who go to an early years, childcare or education setting / school ● Children and young people who live, go to school or visit Islington and use services to develop skills for personal growth, creativity and relationships e.g. play, youth provision, arts and culture

2030: A CHILD-FRIENDLY ISLINGTON

We are determined to ensure that by 2030, Islington is a place where all children and young people are rooted in a community where they feel safe, can thrive and are able to be part of and lead change.

We and our partners will put in place the building blocks for our children and families to build resilience. Our children will start well from conception, thrive by five, and develop and progress to adulthood well, to be ready for life by 21 in safe, healthy, nurturing and families. We will develop a child-friendly borough for our children to live and grow up in.

We will do this by working with partners and communities to design and deliver approaches that equip our children and families with the tools they need to grow. We will make sure the way we design and deliver services gives support to those who need it the most and in doing so, tackles inequality.



What Islington will feel like for residents

- Children will feel safe in the community, will keep physically active and eat healthily, which will all promote good mental health.
- Every child, including the most disadvantaged and whatever their background or ability, will have the same opportunities and ambitions beginning in early years to reach their educational potential in a good Islington school.
- All children and young people who attend our education settings will be well-equipped and empowered with the necessary learning and skills for life for their future in the world of work.
- Children, adolescents, and young people are kept safe across Islington through effective safeguarding, including preventative and violence reduction arrangements which respond to both familial and extra-familial harm. There will also be a focus on early identification and escalation of concerns.
- Young adults, particularly those we are corporate parents for and those with disabilities, transition well to and/or live healthy, independent, and fulfilled lives with strong networks.

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION TOWARDS A CHILD-FRIENDLY ISLINGTON

Resilient children and families

What this means: The resilience of children, young people and families is strengthened through system-wide approaches with local partners to intervene early and prevent problems from escalating.

Challenges

- Islington is expected to see a decrease in the under 5s population. However, it is estimated that there will be an increase in the number of older school children particularly the 15 to 19 years olds.
- Projection data indicates that a lower number of births for Islington residents is likely to remain a trend in Islington.
- The continuing impact of the cost-of-living crisis, welfare reforms and the 2019 Covid pandemic have aggravated inequalities. This is likely to impact the quality of life for children and their families and also the potential for local authorities' children's services to provide the help and support they may need.
- Islington has a high outcome for early help with approximately 10% of early help cases being referred to children's social care.
- Between 2018 and 2022, adults experiencing domestic abuse, poor mental health and/or substance misuse, remain among the most common reasons why children come to the attention of children's services.

2023/24: Key achievements

- Our collaborative partnership early childhood offer (Bright Start) is embedded so families can access Start for Life (0-2) services within Family Hubs across three localities and they benefit from the four Bright Start Strategy pledges.
- Year 2 of the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme delivered so that our family help and support is developing into a seamless integrated offer of support for all families delivered through a family hub model, with tailored support for those need it most. Two family hub sites have been launched with the final site ready to launch in 2024/25.
- Child-Friendly Community: Together with other organisations in Islington, the characteristics and framework has been scoped to create a child and youth friendly Islington where the voices, needs, priorities, and the rights of children play an integral part in our policies and programmes, as well as being involved in the decision-making process.
- There has been increased promotion of our offer in Adventure playgrounds across the borough in recent times in order to make sure that more parents are aware of how they can ensure that their children access this service. It is a priority of the service to ensure that this promotion continues, as the adventure playgrounds have the capacity and there is an increased level of need of children in the borough due to a variety of social factors.
- There are new tenants for Platform Youth space whilst we also ensure that young people in the north continue to benefit from a strong and cohesive youth offer.
- Some of the young people have taken some time to fully reengage with the youth spaces since the pandemic commenced. As these young people become more comfortable in living with Covid as a common condition/virus, more of them have returned to the youth clubs. In addition, some of the young people using the youth clubs have 'aged out' and have been replaced by a newer and younger cohort. Promotion of the youth hubs will also continue in order to ensure that the number of participants continues to increase steadily.

2024/25: Future plans

- Widening the impact of Baby-Friendly Islington and a follow up reassessment with UNICEF BFI
- Three Family Hubs Locality Networks to support everyone who works with children and families, including non-children's services teams and the community and voluntary sector, can collaborate on supporting children in local areas
- Lead Members and senior officers for health, environment, community safety, communities and inclusive economy will work with young people to own, shape, and lead a child-friendly initiative in their areas so that everyone makes child-friendly a reality within their work
- Subject to notification from the Department for Education, we will be considering how to reshape our family help and support offer to be ready for new statutory responsibilities from the national Children's Social Care Review.

Lifelong learning, skills and enrichment

What this means: Children, young people and their families are empowered with the learning and skills for life, work and the future of work supported by a high quality and high performing, inclusive education and skills system.

Challenges

- Falling rolls is a pressing issue and is leading to a decline in funding for some schools.
 - There is a complex interplay of factors which impacts on the demand for formal childcare. The interaction between these factors has changed over time and depend on a range of personal and household characteristics. There is a need for a resilient model for early years childcare which ensures minimal vacancies, minimal 'waiting list time' and maximum occupancy.
 - Nationally, the rise in absenteeism among pupils has been startling and seen to be one of the most damaging legacies of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The demand for SEND services has changed over time, with numbers rising each year since 2016. The reasons for this increase in demand are complex but likely to include improved identification of need – particularly in the area of sensory processing, increased complexity of need in all areas, increased levels of poverty impacting on family health and wellbeing and pressure on school budgets. We are also seeing the effects of the COVID pandemic, particularly on the mental health of the population and the development of communication and social younger children

2023/24: Key achievements

- We are proud to have a high percentage of good and outstanding schools in Islington. Schools are allocated an Islington Professional Partner (IPP) who have been providing external advice and support in preparation for Ofsted inspections. A programme of School Improvement Groups (SIG) also supplements the work of the Islington Professional Partners and provides the strategic oversight of the school improvement work being provided to the schools so that all strands of support are aligned and focused on the priorities required to secure good judgements at each setting's next Ofsted inspection.
- We have implemented a reshaped approach to supporting school attendance. We have met with schools to identify specific groups for targeted support. Support has been prioritised for schools where attendance is most impacted.
- A model for school catering has been explored and developed
- Phase 2 of the School Organisation Plan delivered to manage school places and support financial viability of schools
- The potential for remodelling the current subsidised childcare offer to better meet the needs of parents and carers and support the financial sustainability of nurseries through full occupancy, considering the national expansion of childcare for under 3s, has been explored
- Collaborative working arrangements have been strengthened between education settings and other services to deliver the Education Plan's six priorities which aims to develop a sustainable school system and drive educational excellence for all children
- We have taken forward the SEND Strategy and continued to explore collaborative partnership working arrangements so that these can be strengthened for children and young people with SEND. All our specialist providers are good or outstanding, and we are ranked in the top 10% (11th highest) of all LAs nationally for the proportion of schools graded good or outstanding by Ofsted across all schools.
- We successfully piloted three Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) for children with ASC in mainstream primary schools, supported by additional SEND Capital, with much learning. The further development of our ARP programme is currently under review to enable us to reflect with parents and schools on our shifting context.

2024/25: Future plans

- A relentless focus on attendance, facilitating collaboration between schools, other council services and the community
- Implementing an agreed approach to school catering
- Implementing the School Organisation Plan so that we have financial viable schools and good school places for our population of children and young people
- Implementing a childcare offer that continues to better meet the needs of parents and carers together
- Looking for more ways to improve co-production and collaboration with SEND parents, children and young people.

Care, support, and safeguarding

What this means: Children, adolescents and young people are kept safe through effective safeguarding, preventative and violence reduction arrangements which respond to familial and extra-familial harm, early identification and reduce escalation of concerns

Challenges

- Since the start of the 2023/24 financial year, there has been an average of 1,110 contacts each month. The view of the service is that the rise this year reflects the impact of the pandemic and the current economic crisis that result in increased stress factors family experience. The view of the service is also that contacts made are appropriate and families receive early help services or social care services where needed.
- Between 2018 and 2022, the rates of children looked after by the Council and care leavers were consistently higher than the Inner London and London average respectively.
- The number of children who are the subject of a child protection plan appears broadly in line with the needs of children in Islington. Care proceedings and children needing to be looked after has also reduced, leading to more emphasis on supporting children at risk of significant harm at home with their family, wherever safe to do so

2023/24: Key achievements

- Overall, the numbers of children looked after by the council has reduced with these children remaining supported at home or with family members. The teams continue to audit this to check that the decisions not to look after some children are correct and safe.
- We have a strong understanding of the quality of social work practice in Islington, informed and assured by robust practice data, twice yearly practice weeks, regular audit activity, a social work health check, feedback from families and external scrutiny provided by Ofsted.
- The Exploitation and Missing team continue to prioritise quality assuring the service's response to young people who are missing or away from placement without authorisation. This work includes professional training, daily reviewing of missing episodes, collating missing briefings for senior managers, and chairing the strategy meetings when a young person is missing.
- We are shaping much of the pan-London regional commissioning work to ensure children and young people with complex needs have timely access to health and social care, including placement services. This will help us to better identify the 'hard to place' older age cohort of young people presenting as children looked after or with complex SEND, who combine mental health and behavioural issues and rapidly trial and evaluate initiatives for working with them.
- It is important to me that young people aged 10-17 triaged well to divert them away from the criminal justice system. Targeted Youth Support and the partnership continue to focus on early intervention and diversion through effective Triage delivery. This ensures that relevant young people receive an appropriate, well-balanced and suitable tailored level of support that addresses their needs. The aim is to prevent any further escalation in their circumstances and behaviours.

2024/25: Future plans

- Ensuring we are inspection-ready for the next Ofsted and HMIP inspections on children's social care and youth justice
- Continued and enhanced focus on attendance and attainment of children in need, children in need of protection and children requiring early help services from the Virtual School, Learning and Achievement department and Safeguarding and Family Support department
- Review of the Edge of Care Service for Adolescents and those 0-11 years old.
- Expansion of Adolescent Support and Intervention Project with adolescent females at risk of Child Sexual Exploitation and Child Criminal Exploitation.

Progressing well to adulthood, independent and fulfilled lives

What this means: Young adults, particularly those whom we are corporate parents for, those with disabilities, women and girls transition well to and/or live healthy, independent and fulfilled lives with strong networks

Challenges

- Transition into adulthood and adult services for young people with SEND, in care or in need of safeguarding is key for the following reasons:
 - Young people entering adulthood can experience a 'cliff-edge' in terms of support.
 - Adolescents may experience a range of risks and harms, and so may require a distinctive safeguarding response.
- Harm, and its effects, do not stop at the age of 18.
- Many of the environmental and structural factors that increase a child's vulnerability persist into adulthood, resulting in unmet needs and costly later interventions.
- The children's and adults' systems, including safeguarding, are arguably conceptually and procedurally different, and governed by different statutory frameworks, which can make the transition to adulthood harder for young people facing ongoing risk or vulnerability

2023/24: Key achievements

- We have established a refreshed transitions approach between children's services and adult social care for young people with a health and/or social care need and their families to have the best experience possible when they transition from children's to adult social care services.
- The development and creation of new partnerships within the Council and key organisations such as the NHS, London Metropolitan University, Ayming, Arsenal in the community & Element that deliver targeted interventions and programmes for young people
- Embedding the Lifelong Corporate parenting approach across the council:
 - Council wide scheme around work experience, apprenticeships and jobs has been developed to create more opportunities for care experienced young people
 - 72% of 19–21-year-old care experienced young people are engaged in Education, Employment or Training and increase of 12%
 - 60 care experienced young people moved into their own permanent accommodation. Islington's housing by back scheme has created 20 additional homes for our care experienced young people. Wrap around support is being set up to support their transition into adult life.
 - Care experienced young people post 25 will receive additional support from Housing if needed to support their tenancy. No care experienced young person will be made intentionally homeless. This has included work with Housing Association providers who are committed to this principle as well.
 - Implementation of the Unnecessary Criminalisation of Children looked After with a localised joint protocol with the police. In 22/23 5 (3%) of children looked after for more than a year were convicted of an offence a reduction of 4%.
 - Becoming part of the Care Leavers Covenant in order to secure more opportunities for care experienced young people.
 - Through social value exploration with contracts the council has secured furniture for care experienced young people..

2024/25: Future plans

- Consideration of a proposal for care experienced young people to be a protected characteristic
- Lifelong Corporate Parenting task and finish group to consider Islington becoming a foster friendly council and mental health support for care experienced young people
- Further embedding the Lifelong Corporate parenting approach across the council and establishing this across partners.
- All care experienced young people receiving free prescriptions from March 2024.
- Further embedding social value approaches through all contracts the Council has, including free wi-fi for care experienced young people in their own accommodation.

Educational Attainment and other Outcomes in 2023

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

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ISLINGTON



For a more equal future

Agenda Item B3

Key Findings 2023

- Educational attainment in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has **improved** on 2022 outcomes but remains just below National and Inner London figures.
- Key Stage 1 Expected Standard and Greater Depth outcomes were **better than national** for reading, writing, and maths. Greater Depth outcomes also **exceeded** Inner London. Expected Standard for maths was in-line with Inner London, whilst Reading and Writing were just below.
- Key Stage 2 outcomes **exceeded** National across most indicators with only Expected Standard for writing just below. When compared with Inner London, reading, writing, maths and combined outcomes were broadly in-line whilst Greater Depth across all measures were below Inner London.
- Rates of absence and persistent absence have increased across the Primary sector despite a decrease in both measures, nationally when compared with 2022.

Key Findings 2023

- Pupils achieving a *standard* pass (Grade 4 – 9) was in-line with National figures and **above** National for those pupils attaining a *strong* pass (Grade 5 – 9) in English and Maths. Both indicators were lower when compared with Inner London figures.
- The number of Electively Home Educated (EHE) pupils has increased to over 300 for the first time in 2023.
- At KS5, students across Islington performed **better** across vocational qualifications when compared with National and Inner London figures. The % of students achieving 3 A*-A grades at A-level was below Inner London and National.
- The % of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) **fell** to 4.5% from 4.7% in 2022 and 4.8% in 2021. This was **lower** than the National figure but higher than Inner London.
- 96% of all school settings in Islington are rated as either Good or Outstanding. This compares with a National figure of 88% and is an improvement on pre-pandemic outcomes.

Key Findings 2023

- Primary school permanent exclusions and suspensions **decreased** slightly from 2022, although both indicators are **higher** than National and Inner London.
- Secondary school absence and persistent absence have **increased** on 2022 and are **above** Inner London and National.
- Permanent exclusions across Islington secondary schools have increased slightly on 2022 but remain **below** provisional National figures. The suspension rate has **reduced** from 2022 and for the first time since 2015, is **lower** than the provisional National figure for 2023.
- The Islington Key Stage 4 Attainment 8 score was **above** National but below Inner London. The Progress 8 score for all pupils was in-line with National but lower than Inner London.
- Black-Caribbean and Mixed-White & Black-Caribbean pupils have lower levels of attainment than the Islington average at Key Stages 2 & 4. We know these pupils also have relatively low levels of attendance, and low attendance has an impact on attainment.

Educational Attainment in 2023 – Headlines and Priorities

This report provides an overview of educational attainment and outcomes in Islington. We aim to ensure our schools are places where all young people can learn and thrive. We have set out an ambitious Education Plan for 2023 to 2030 and achieving our ambitions requires great teachers and leaders, outstanding schools, and a seamless, high-quality experience for young people from early years to adulthood. and other vulnerabilities. Results at Key Stage 4 represent a return to pre-pandemic times and with the grading of examinations returning to 2019 levels, the environment for schools remains challenging. The pandemic has exacerbated inequalities in pupil outcomes and its effects are still being felt, with the disadvantage gap at its widest in a decade nationally and pupil absences remaining stubbornly high. Narrowing disadvantage gaps will be a firm focus for the years ahead, with greater targeted support needed to counter persistent inequalities. There is still much to celebrate in this report as school leaders continue to champion young people across Islington, many coming from some of the most disadvantaged environments across London.

Early Years and Primary (Under 4–11)

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There are wide variations in outcomes between the ethnic groups at the Early Years Foundation Stage. At Key Stage 1 writing has been most adversely affected since 2019 levels. Performance both nationally and in Islington dropped by 9% points

- At KS2, Islington **outperformed** their national peers across all subjects in 2023
- Pupils with SEN achieved well at KS2.

Secondary and Post 16 (aged 12-16+)

- Attainment 8 (A8) was **above** National and 0.8% **higher** than 2019 outcomes.
- Variations between schools and disadvantaged A8 outcomes remain a focus in tackling inequality.
- The Progress 8 achievement gap between FSM and Non-FSM is below national but at 0.5 represents a half-grade lower than expected progress from KS2 and is an area of focus.
- The NEET figure at 4.5% shows a **third year falling** trend.

Strategic Priorities

- To improve attendance and reduce persistent absence.
- To reduce the number of suspensions across the secondary sector.
- To reduce the achievement gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils and targeted groups
- Increase take-up of Islington's Free Early Education Entitlement (FEEE) for two, three and four-year-olds.

Areas for further development

- To reduce the variation of achievement outcomes across our primary and secondary schools.
- Through the Islington Professional Partner model, better understand the targeted support our schools require.
- At KS5 increase the proportion of students achieving the higher grades at A* to B.

Educational Attainment in 2023 compared to previous years

The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on schools in 2019/20 and 2020/21. In 2020 and 2021, the main summer series of exams for GCSEs, AS and A Levels (and their equivalents in Scotland) were cancelled because of the coronavirus pandemic. Instead, students received grades based on teacher or lecturer assessment.

Phonics, Key Stage 1 and 2 assessments were not completed in either year.

In 2020 and 2021 grades awarded via teacher and lecturer assessment were significantly higher, overall, than they had been in 2019. Therefore, the results for these years are not included in this report.

In 2022, a full series of exams took place. Exam boards set the grading for Key Stages 4 and 5 to reflect the mid-point between 2019 and 2021, so results in 2022 were higher than in 2021.

In 2023, grading largely returned to 'normal', so results were lower in 2023 than 2022 across the country.

The Early Years Foundation Stage was reformed in September 2021. As such, only 2022 and 2023 results are directly comparable.

Results across the country in the Phonics screening check and at Key Stage 1 fell in 2022 compared to pre-pandemic levels. It is understood that this reflects the impact of the disruption to children's learning as a result of the pandemic. The same is true for Key Stage 2, although there was an increase in attainment in Reading both in Islington and Nationally.

- Throughout this release, comparisons are made with 2022 and with 2019. The more meaningful comparison for GCSEs and A-levels is with 2019, the last year that summer exams were taken before the pandemic, as 2023 saw a return to pre-pandemic grading, with some protections.

	2019	2022	2023
EYFSP			
Good Level of Development	71	64.7	66.6
Phonics			
Year 1	84	77	79
By the end of Year 2	92	89	89
Key Stage 1			
Reading	76	72	70
Writing	72	65	63
Maths	78	71	73
Key Stage 2			
RWM	70	63	65
Reading	76	77	75
Writing	82	72	76
Maths	80	72	77
Key Stage 4			
Attainment 8 (average score)	45.8	49.9	46.7
Progress 8 (average score)	0.03	0.07	-0.03
Basics (English & Maths) 5+	42.3	52.7	46.8
Key Stage 5			
Average A level result	C	B-	C+
APS per entry (A level)	31.15	37.15	34.35

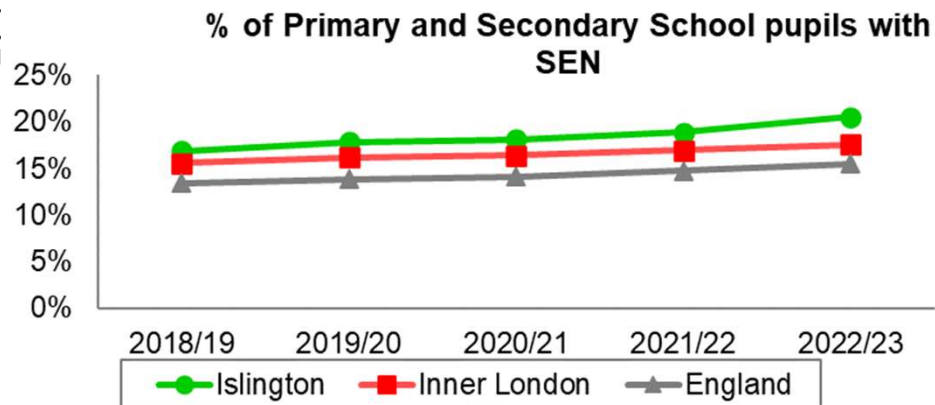
The Islington Context

Islington is a relatively small Inner London borough with the second highest population density in the country. Just under 25,000 attend schools in the borough, and just under 24,000 of these are attending state-funded schools. School rolls are now falling for both the primary and secondary phases. Pupils are from a relatively diverse range of ethnic backgrounds, with 74% of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, although the largest single ethnic group is White-British.

In 2022/23, Islington had the highest proportion of pupils with Special Educational Needs attending mainstream schools and Islington also had the highest proportion of pupils who were eligible for Free School Meals attending mainstream schools in the England. Nationally, these characteristics are associated with lower levels of attainment. Islington pupils from these groups have good levels of attainment compared to national averages. The aim, however, is for Islington pupils overall to achieve in line with or above the Inner London average.

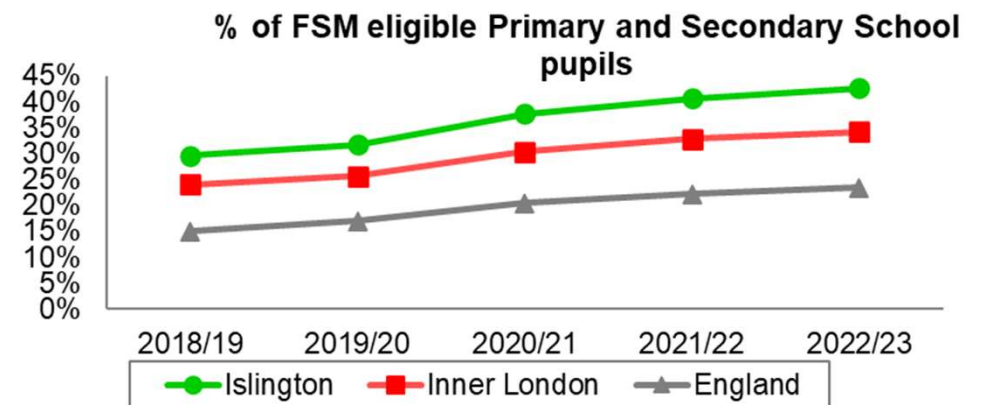
Special Educational Needs

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The proportion of pupils with SEN (i.e. with an Education, Health and Care Plan or at SEN Support) has been increasing in Islington and across England. In January 2023, Islington had the highest proportion of pupils in mainstream schools with SEN in the country, apart from City of London.

Free School Meal eligibility

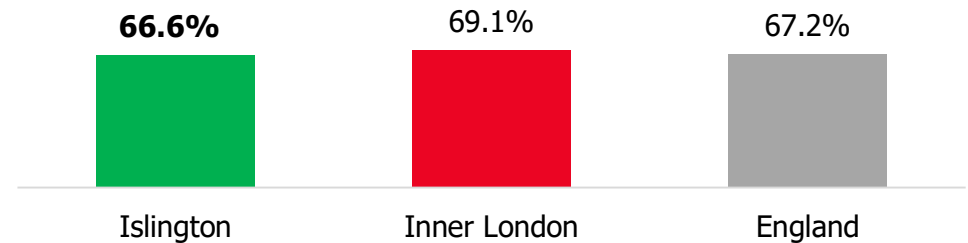


The proportion of primary and secondary school pupils who are eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) has been increasing in Islington and across England. In January 2023, Islington had the highest proportion of FSM eligible pupils in mainstream schools in the country.

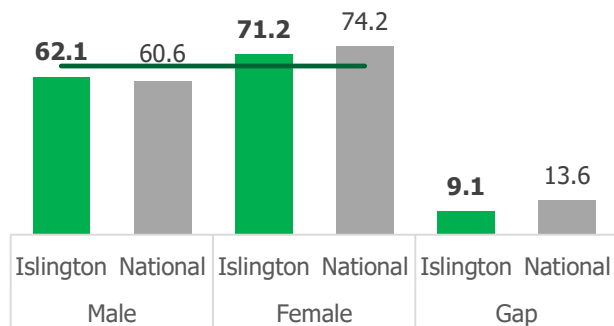
Early Years Foundation Stage

Children who achieve a Good Level of Development at the EYFS are regarded by the DfE as being 'school ready'. In 2023 in Islington 66.6% were school ready, which is slightly below the national figure and 2.5% points below Inner London. While the 2023 outturns are not directly comparable with the most recent 2019 outturns from before the Covid-19 pandemic, performance is lower than it was then across England. The pandemic has had an adverse impact on the education of many young people and overall outcomes have been lower in 2023 across all points of assessment in the primary phase.

% Achieving a Good Level of Development at the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2023



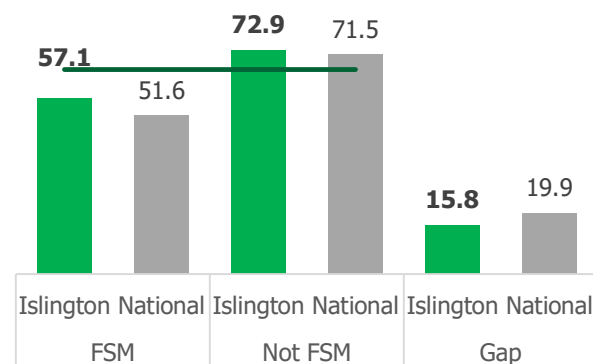
Gender



In Islington and nationally there is a gender gap at the EYFS. Locally it is 9.1% points, not as large as national (13.6%).

The gender gap is **smaller** in Islington in 2023 compared to 2022, while nationally there has been a 0.4% points increase. Closing the gender gap at the EYFS in future years will be a challenge as will closing the gap for these children as they reach the end of KS1.

Free School Meal (FSM) eligibility



In Islington and nationally there is a FSM gap at the EYFS. Locally it is 15.8% points, not as large as national (19.9%) but bigger than the gender gap.

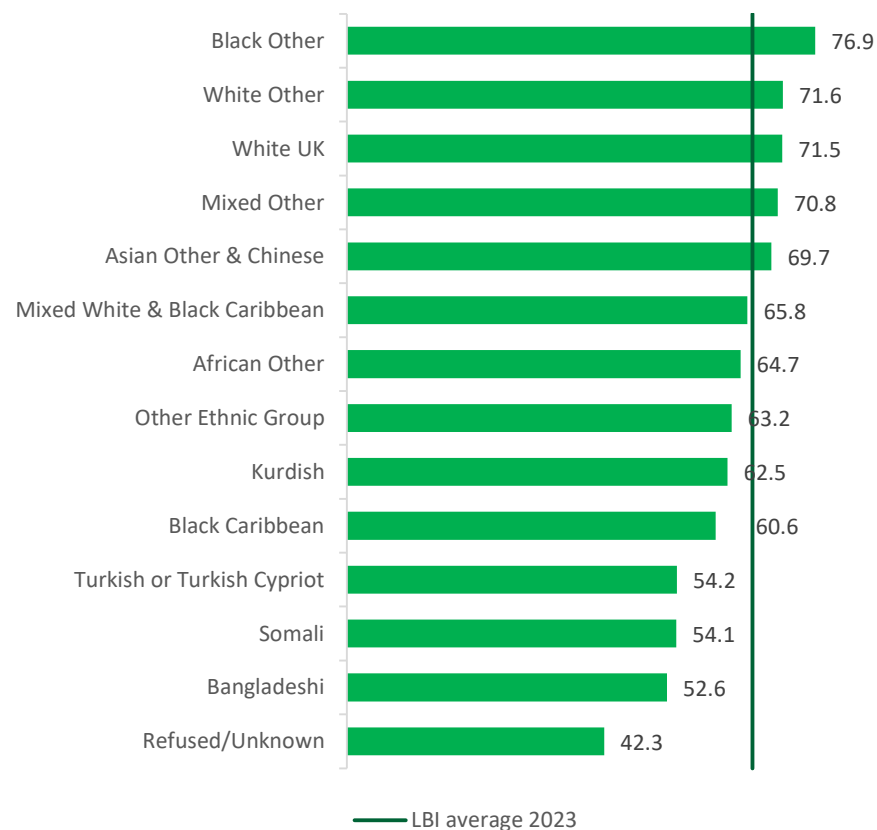
The FSM gap in 2023 is **smaller** than it was in 2022, which is a positive shift, however, there were still fewer children from poorer households who were school ready when starting KS1.

Early Years Foundation Stage

Islington wants to make sure that all young children get the best possible start to their education, yet there are wide variations in outcomes between the ethnic groups at the Early Years Foundation Stage. The highest performing ethnic groups at the Early Years Foundation Stage, in terms of achieving a Good Level of Development in 2023, were Black Other (76.9%), White Other (71.6%) and White UK (71.5%). Mixed Other (70.8%) and Asian Other & Chinese pupils (69.7%) also performed above the borough average of 66.6%. The lowest performing ethnic groups were Bangladeshi (52.6%), Somali (54.1%) and Turkish or Turkish Cypriot (54.2%).

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Ethnic Groups Performance



SEN Performance

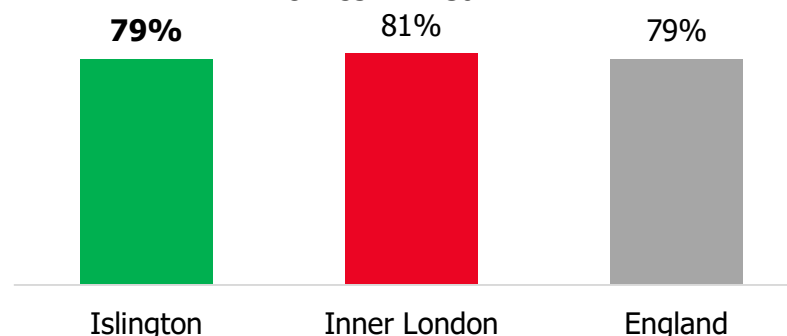
SEN Status	% achieving GLD		Gap in % Points
	Islington	National	
EHCP	5.2	3.8	1.4
SEN Support	32.9	24.3	8.6
All SEN	24.2	19.8	4.4
No SEN	76.1	74	2.1
All Pupils	66.6	67.2	-0.6

A **higher** proportion of pupils with SEN, both with an EHCP and with SEN Support, achieved a Good Level of Development in Islington compared to similar pupils nationally.

Phonics Screening Check (Year 1)

Children take the Phonics Screening Check in Year 1 and in 2023 in Islington 79% of children achieved the expected standard, the same as national and 2% points below Inner London. This cohort of children will have missed significant amounts of schooling due to the Covid-19 pandemic, when they were in nursery and Reception, and this is reflected in their overall performance which in Islington is 5% points lower compared to the outturns from 2019 but **higher** than last year by 2% points.

% Meeting the Expected Standard in Phonics in Year 1

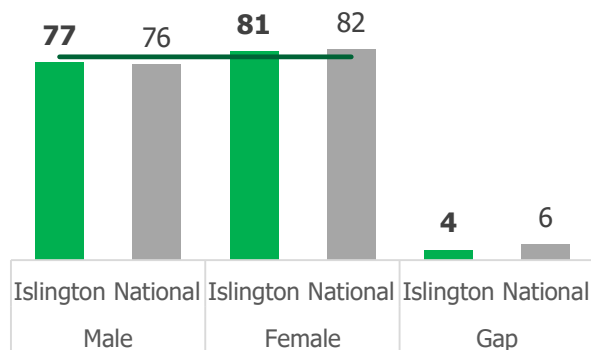


Phonics (Working At Expected)

	2019	2022	2023
Year 1	84	77	79
By the end of Year 2	92	89	89

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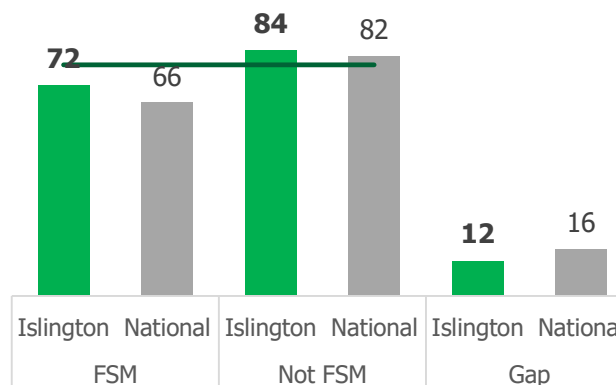
Gender



There is a gender gap in Phonics in Year 1 of 4% points in Islington and 6% points nationally with more girls achieving the standard.

A slightly **higher** proportion of boys passed Phonics in Year 1 in Islington, but a slightly lower proportion of girls did when compared to national.

Free School Meal eligibility



In Islington and nationally there is a FSM gap in Phonics. Locally it is 12% points, not as large as national (16%) but much bigger than the gender gap.

A **higher** proportion of FSM eligible pupils passed Phonics in Islington (72%) than did so nationally (66%).

Phonics Screening Check (Year 1)

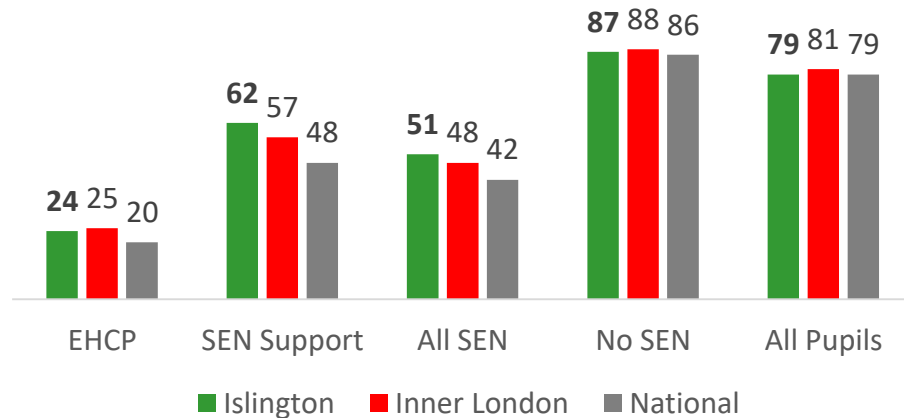
SEN Performance

A **higher proportion** of pupils with SEN, both with an EHCP and with SEN Support, met the expected standard in Islington compared to similar pupils nationally.

Islington SEN Support pupils in particular **outperformed** their peers, achieving 14 percentage points above England and 5 above Inner London.

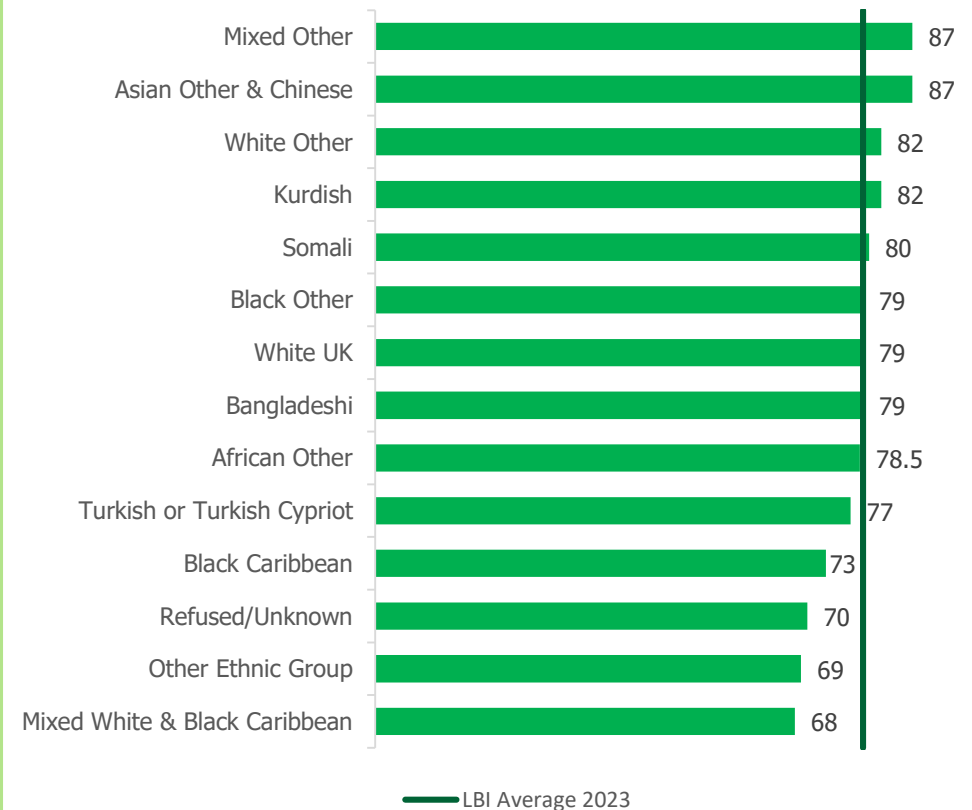
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Percentage Achieving Expected Standard in Phonics: Year 1



Ethnic Groups Performance

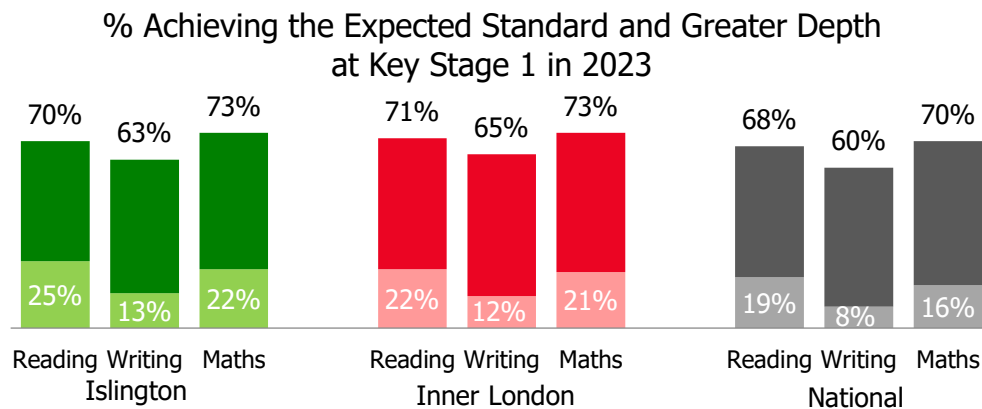
In 2023, Mixed Other and Asian Other and Chinese were the highest achieving groups in terms of meeting the expected standard in Phonics in Year 1 in Islington (both 87%). The lowest performing ethnic groups were Mixed White and Black Caribbean (68%), Other Ethnic Group (69%) and Black Caribbean (73%).



Key Stage 1

Children in Islington performed **better** than national at Key Stage 1 in 2023 and in line with Inner London in maths. This cohort of children will have experienced disruption to their education because of the Covid-19 pandemic during their first year in Key Stage 1.

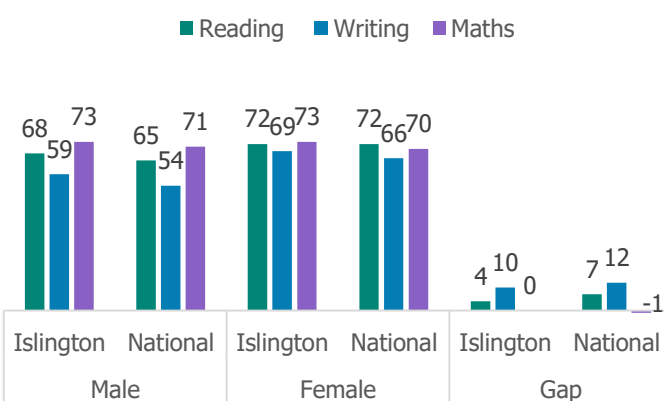
The subject most adversely affected by the pandemic was writing. Performance both nationally and in Islington dropped by 9% points compared with 2019. Islington pupils did **better** than last year in maths (+2% points) but fewer pupils achieved the expected standard in reading and writing (both -2% points).



Key Stage 1 EXS

	2019	2022	2023
Reading	76	72	70
Writing	72	65	63
Maths	78	71	73

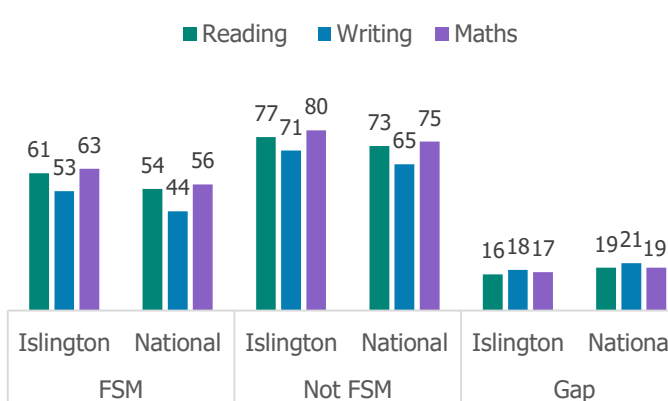
Gender



At KS1 there were gender gaps in favour of girls in reading and writing but no gap in maths in Islington. Nationally, boys did slightly better than girls in maths.

Boys and girls in Islington **outperformed** boys and girls nationally in all KS1 subjects except for in reading where the same proportion of girls achieved the expected standard. The gender performance gaps in Islington were **smaller** than national.

Free School Meal eligibility



Islington had FSM attainment gaps in all three KS1 subjects, but the gaps were not as large as national.

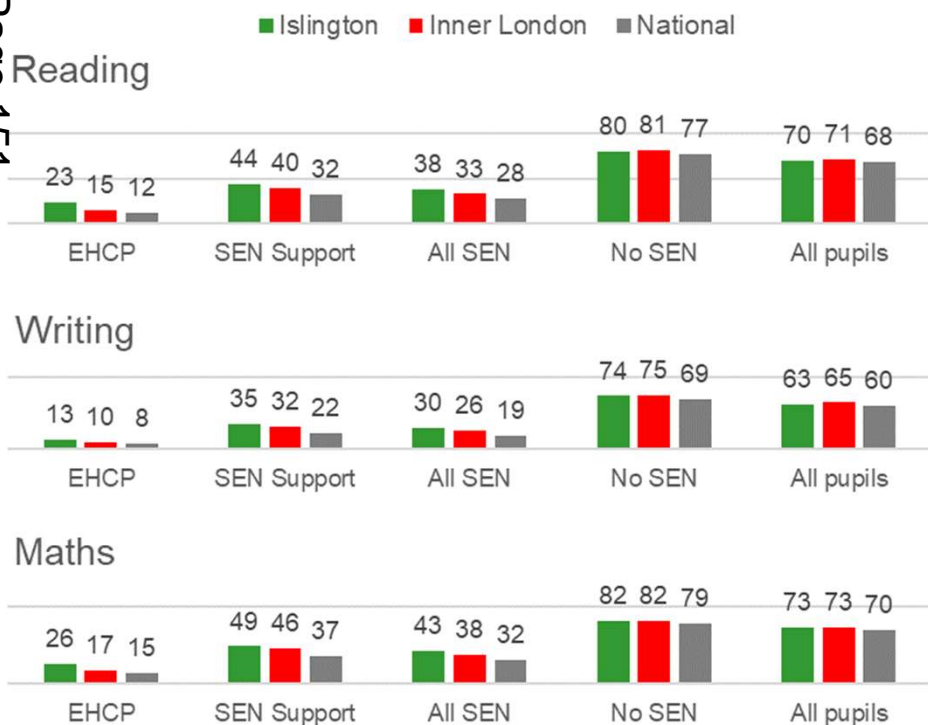
FSM eligible and non-eligible pupils in Islington **outperformed** similar pupils nationally in all three KS1 subjects in 2023.

KS1 Contextual Analysis

SEN Performance

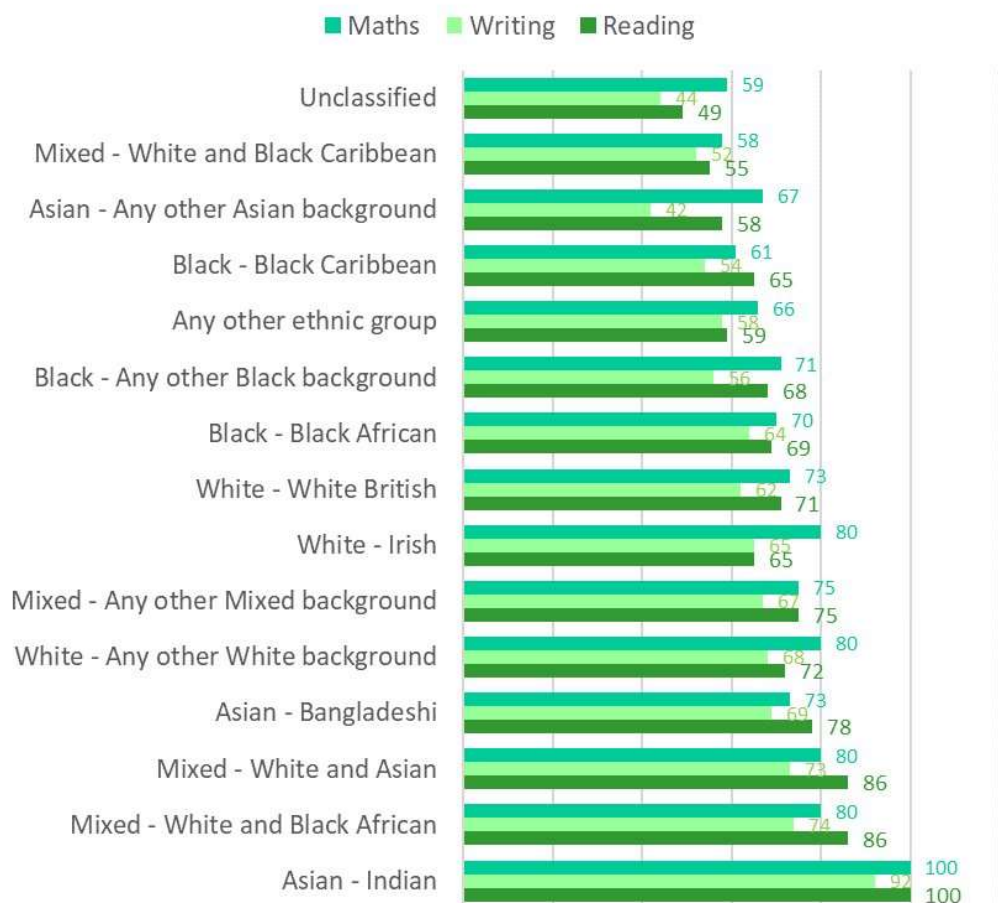
Islington KS1 pupils with EHCPs and SEN Support **outperformed** their peers in Reading, Writing and Maths. Islington pupils with No SEN were **above** national for all subjects, on par with Inner London in Maths, and slightly below Inner London in Reading and Writing. Islington had the **highest proportion of SEN pupils** of any LA in the country at KS1 (23.5%).

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KS1 Performance by Ethnicity

While pupils from some ethnic groups performed very well at KS1 in 2023, some groups achieved less well. The lowest performing groups were Mixed White & Black Caribbean, Asian Other and Black Caribbean. Ethnicity groups with fewer than 10 pupils have been removed from the chart below.

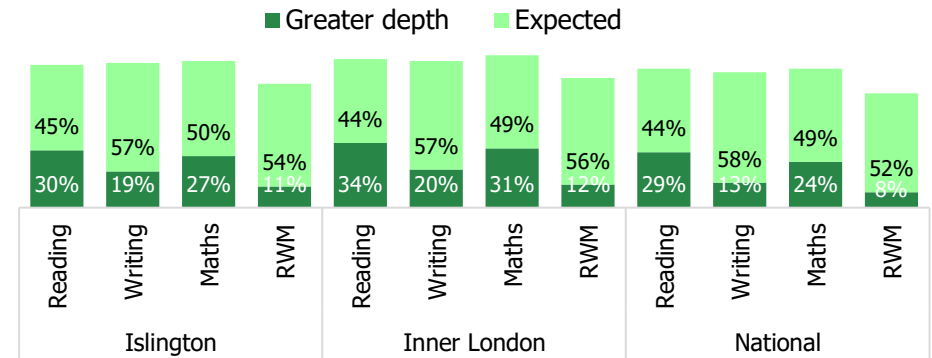


Key Stage 2

Children in Islington **outperformed** their national peers across all subjects at Key Stage 2 in 2023, although performance was below Inner London in all subjects.

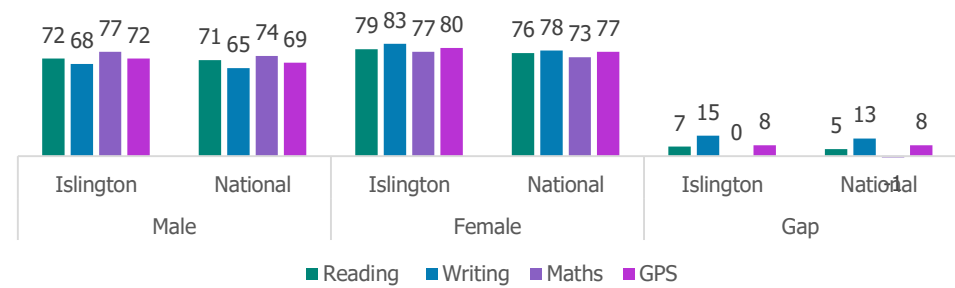
Performance in reading dropped by 2% points both nationally and in Islington. All other subjects have seen an **improvement** compared with 2022 results including a 2% points **increase** in the combined measure for reading, writing and maths.

% Achieving the Expected Standard and Greater Depth



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Gender

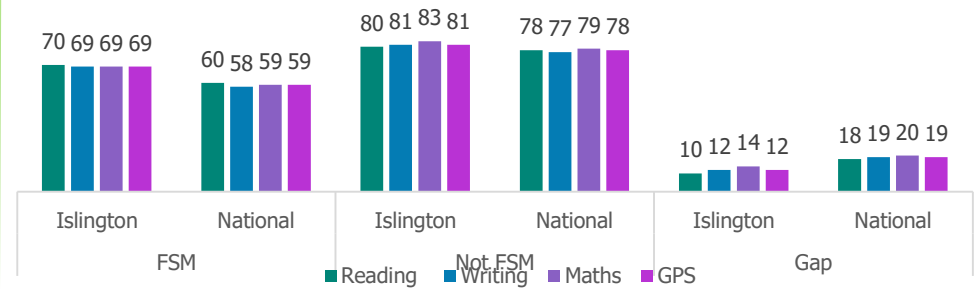


At KS2 in 2023 Islington had gender gaps in favour of girls in reading, writing and Grammar, Punctuation & Spelling (GPS). In maths an equal proportion of boys and girls achieved the expected standard. In 2023 Islington boys and girls **outperformed** their respective counterparts nationally in all subjects.

Key Stage 2

	2019	2022	2023
RWM	70	63	65
Reading	76	77	75
Writing	82	72	76
Maths	80	72	77

Free School Meal eligibility



Islington had FSM attainment gaps in all four KS2 subjects, but the gaps were not as large as national. FSM eligible and non-eligible pupils in Islington **outperformed** similar pupils nationally in all four KS2 subjects in 2023.

Key Stage 2 – Contextual Analysis

White UK FSM Eligible

Reading, Writing and Maths Combined

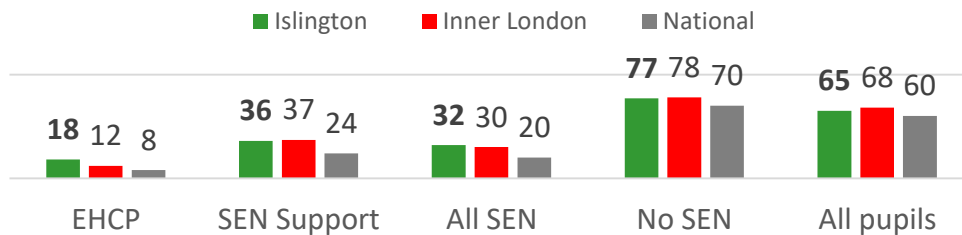
	Islington	National
White UK not eligible for FSM	75.2	65.5
White UK eligible for FSM	50.5	39.8
All Pupils	65	60
Gap (% points)	24.7	25.7

At KS2 a **higher proportion** of Islington White UK pupils eligible for FSM achieved at least the expected standard in RWM compared with national.

The gap between Islington White UK eligible and not eligible for FSM (24.7% points) has narrowed this year compared to last year (37.9% points).

SEN Performance

Percentage Achieving Expected Standard (EXS) in Reading, Writing and Maths at KS2



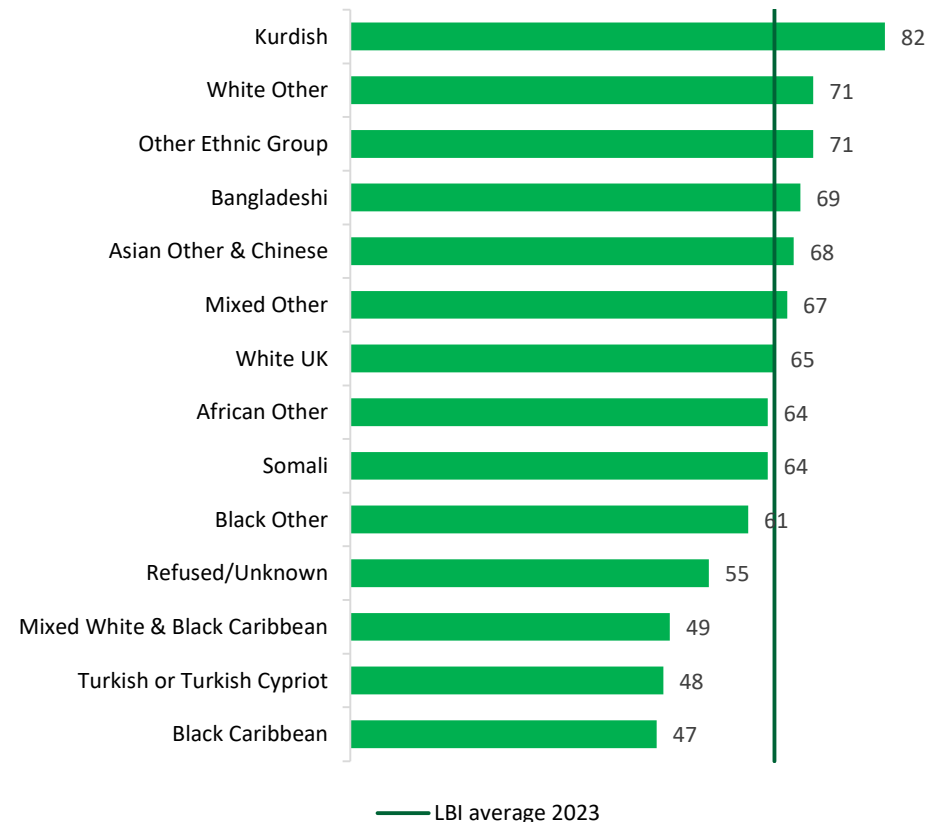
EHCP and All SEN Islington pupils **outperformed** their national and Inner London peers in Reading, Writing and Maths in 2023. EHCP pupils were 10 percentage points **above** national, while All SEN pupils were 12 points **above** national. SEN Support pupils were 12 percentage points **above** national and slightly below Inner London.

Islington had a higher proportion of All SEN pupils at KS2 (27%) than England (20%) and Inner London (22%).

Ethnic Groups Performance

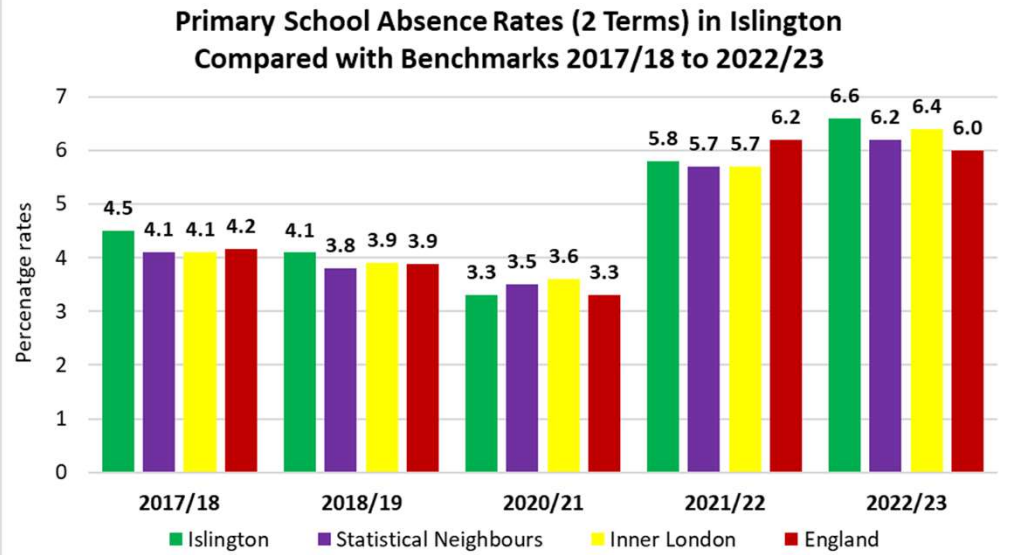
While pupils from some ethnic groups performed very well at KS2 in 2023, some groups had lower outcomes. The lowest performing groups were, Black Caribbean (47%), Turkish or Turkish Cypriot (48%) and Mixed White & Black Caribbean (49%).

% Achieving Reading, Writing and Maths Combined



Primary School Absence

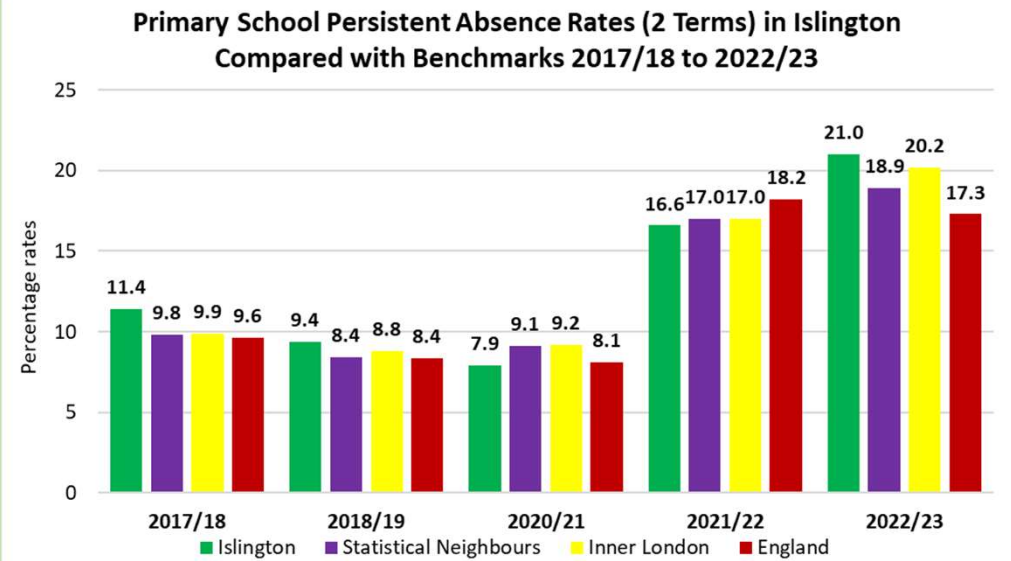
Absence related to Covid has been included as absence due to illness since April 2022. 2022/23 is the first full academic year when Covid-related absence was included in the absence statistics. Despite this, the England absence rate for primary schools fell, whilst Islington and our comparators increased. Islington primary schools had a higher absence rate than the comparator averages in 2022/23.



Persistent Absence

The proportion of primary pupils in Islington who were persistent absentees had been improving between 2017/18 and 2020/21. However, rates of persistent absenteeism more than doubled in Islington and nationally in 2021/22 when Covid-related absence started to be included in the statistics. Islington was in the **top quartile** in 2021/22.

In 2022/23, Islington primary schools had a higher rate of persistent absence than any of the comparator averages. Islington moved from the top quartile to bottom quartile on this measure.

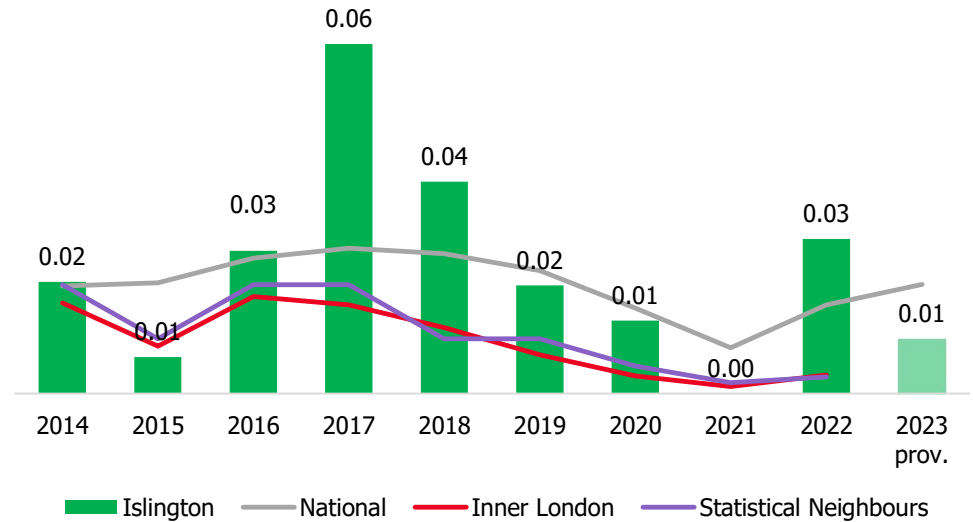


Primary School Exclusions and Suspensions

Permanent exclusions

The permanent exclusion rate in Islington primary schools had been higher than regional and national benchmarks in the two years preceding the pandemic. The rate then dropped to zero during the pandemic in 2021. The following year saw an increase in permanent exclusions, but the provisional 2023 figures show a **decline** in numbers again. The actual numbers of permanent exclusions are very small and in Islington a rate of 0.01 equates to one or two permanent exclusions.

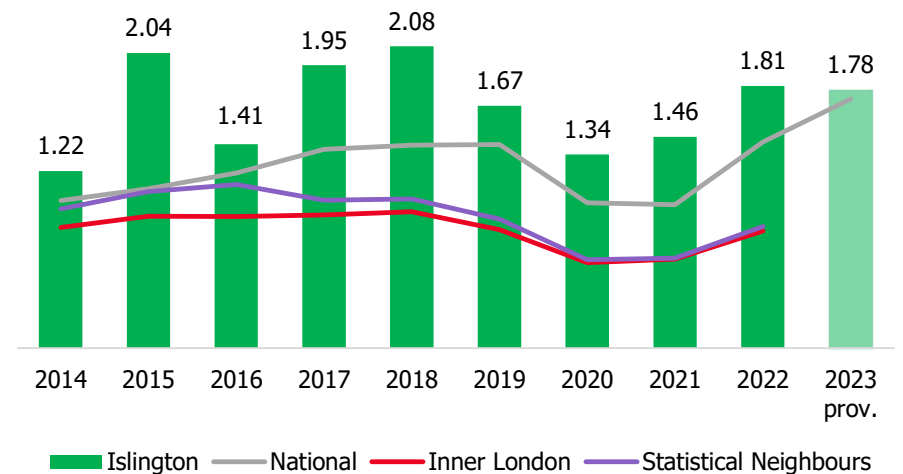
Primary **Permanent Exclusion** Rate from 2014 to 2023



Suspensions

Primary school suspension rates have tended to be higher in Islington compared to regional and national benchmarks. In recent years, the rate was lowest in 2020 (1.34). Having gone up for the following two years, the provisional 2023 figures indicate a slight **reduction** on the previous year.

Primary **Suspension** Rate from 2014 to 2023



Key Stage 4 – Attainment 8 and Progress 8

Pupils in Islington achieved a **higher** Attainment 8 Score than national, although their performance was below the Inner London score. Their score of 46.7 was 0.9 points **higher** than their pre-pandemic score in 2019.

Attainment 8 Average Score 2023



Progress 8 Score in 2023



Key Stage 4

Attainment 8 (average score)
Progress 8 (average score)
Basics (English & Maths) 5+

2019

45.8
0.03
42.3

2022

49.9
0.07
52.7

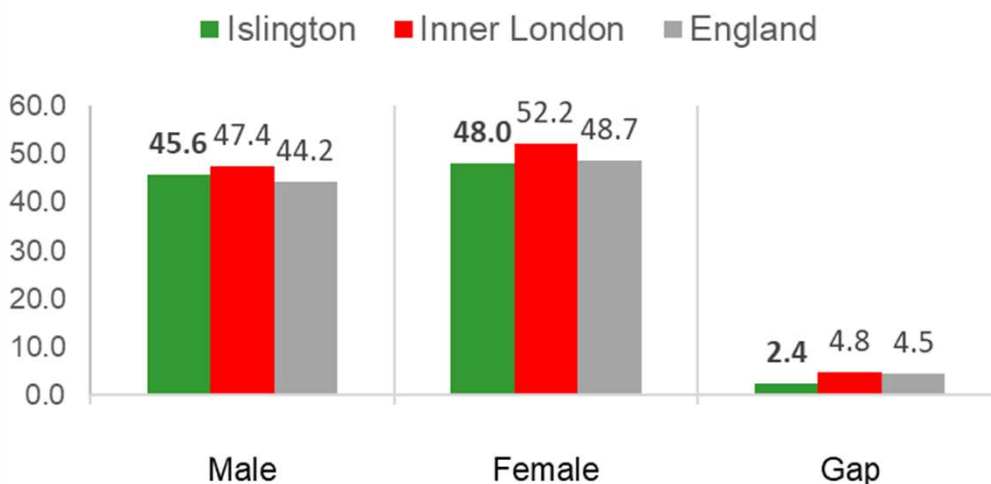
2023

46.7
-0.03
46.8

Pupils in Islington had a negative Progress 8 score which means they made less progress from Key Stage 2 than similar pupils nationally. Performance was not as high as the Inner London Progress 8 score.

Gender and Attainment 8

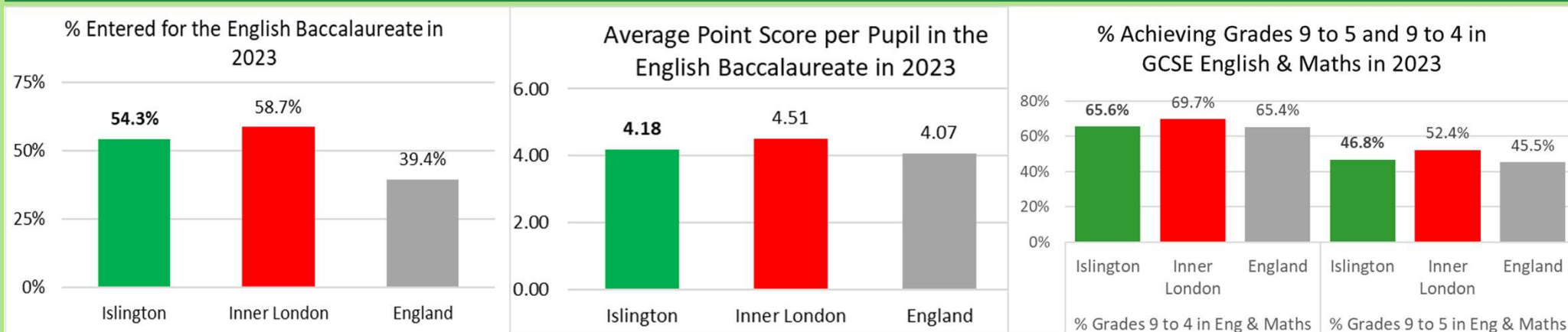
Attainment 8 Score by Gender in 2023



Gender Gap

The gender gap in Islington is slightly in favour of girls, but the gap is only 2.4 points, **better** than the national gap of 4.5 points. Boys in Islington achieved an Attainment 8 score of 45.6 points, 1.4 points **above** the national score for boys. Islington girls had a score of 48.0, 0.7 points below all girls nationally. The small gap at GCSE suggests that the gender gaps that emerge at earlier points of assessment, from as far back as the Early Years Foundation Stage, have been addressed by the time pupils get to Year 11.

Key Stage 4 – English Baccalaureate and English & Maths Performance



English Baccalaureate

Islington's schools entered a **higher** proportion of pupils for the English Baccalaureate* (Ebacc) than national, 54.3%, compared to 39.4%, although Islington's entry rate was lower than that for Inner London, at 58.7%. Islington's pupils achieved a **higher** average point score in the English Baccalaureate than the national average but it was below Inner London. Performance in the EBacc was **better** than the pre-pandemic performance in 2019.

English & Maths

The percentage of students from Islington who achieved a *standard* pass in English and Maths, with grades ranging from 9 to 4, was slightly **above** the national average. However, this pass rate was lower than that of Inner London. A **higher** proportion of Islington students secured a *strong* pass, with grades between 9 to 5, in English and Maths compared to the national average. The Inner London *strong* pass rate was also above Islington's.

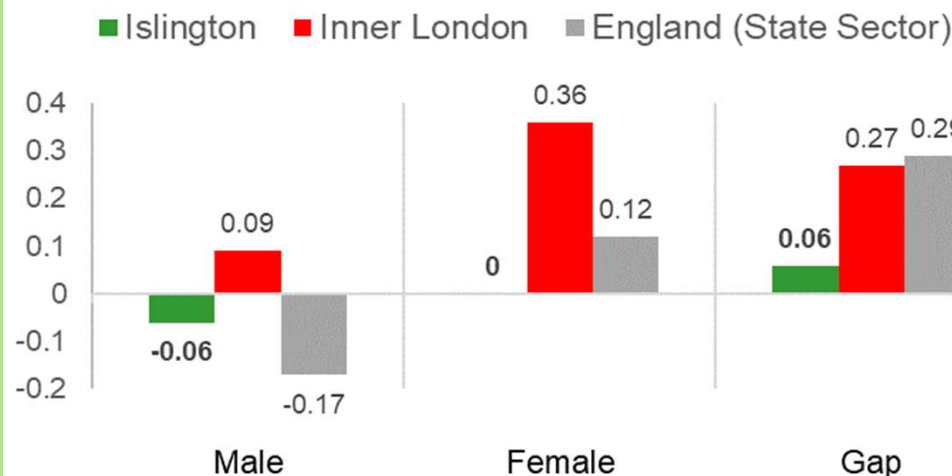
*The Ebacc is based on GCSE results in English language & literature, maths, the sciences, geography or history and a language.

Key Stage 4 – Contextual Analysis of Progress by Gender

Boys in Islington achieved a negative Progress 8 score of -0.06, which was **above** the negative score of -0.17 for boys nationally. Girls in Islington achieved a score of 0, which was below the national score for girls of 0.12.

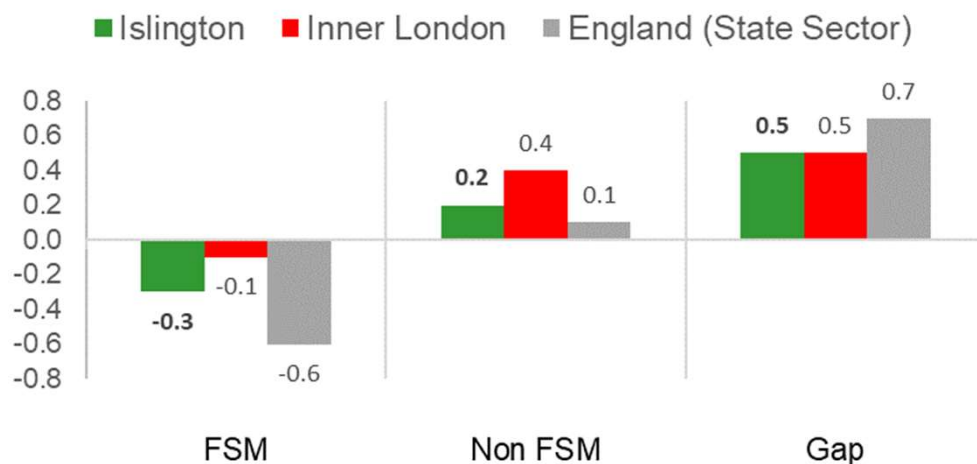
There is no significant gender progress gap in Islington, whereas the gender progress gap nationally is 0.29 in favour of girls. Boys and girls in Islington have, on average, made less progress between Key Stage 2 and 4 than pupils with similar starting points in Inner London.

Progress 8 Score by Gender in 2023



Progress and FSM

Progress 8 Score by FSM in 2023



Free School Meals Progress Gap

Pupils who are eligible for FSM have a negative Progress 8 score in Islington of -0.3 which is **better** than the negative national score of -0.6. Non-FSM eligible pupils in Islington achieved a positive score of 0.2, **better** than the national score of 0.1 for similar pupils. The Progress FSM attainment gap in Islington, at 0.5, is **smaller** than the national gap of 0.7, which indicates that FSM pupils in Islington perform **better** than their peers nationally, while there is still some scope to reduce the gap further in future years. Islington had the highest % of FSM eligible pupils in the 2023 Key Stage 4 cohort in the country.

Contextual Analysis

SEN Performance

SEN Status	Attainment 8 Score			Gap in Points	
	Islington	England	Inner London	England	Inner London
EHCP	11.8	14	16.8	-2.2	-5
SEN Support	36.2	33.3	39.4	2.9	-3.2
All SEN Pupils	29.9	28.1	32.8	1.8	-2.9
No SEN	51.6	50.2	53.9	1.4	-2.3
All Pupils	46.6	46.3	49.7	0.3	-3.1

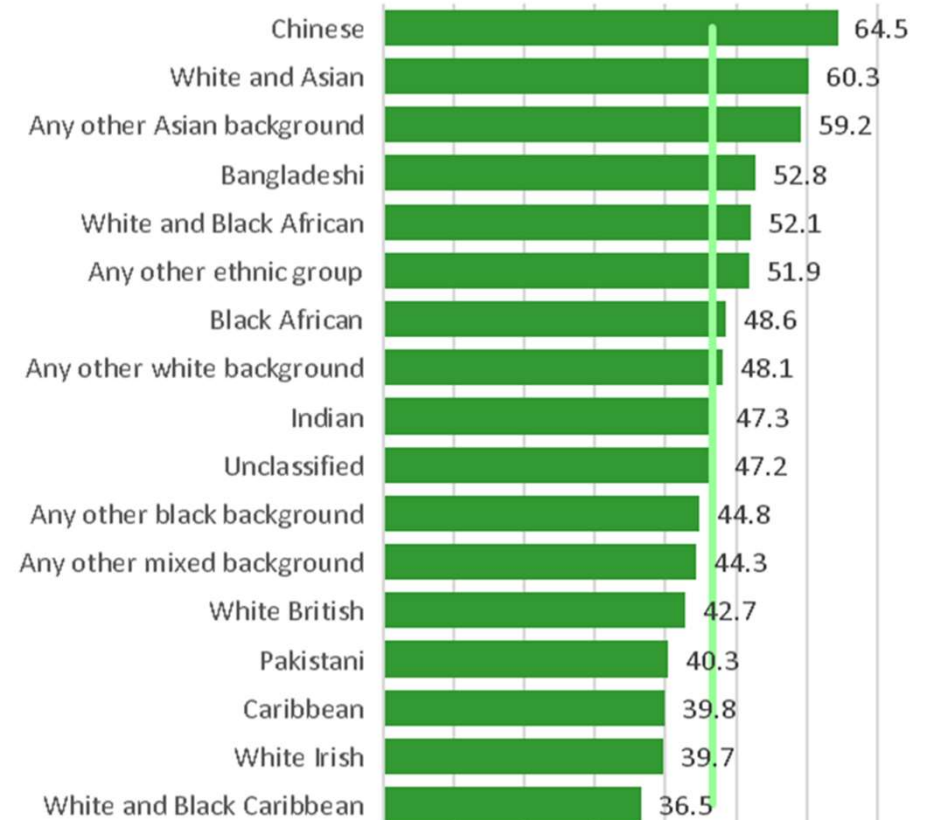
In Islington SEN Support pupils **outperformed** their national peers in their Attainment 8 scores in 2023, whereas pupils with an EHCP did not. However, all Islington's groups of pupils by SEN **outperformed** the national average progress score for their group. Islington's overall Progress 8 score is equal to the England score as Islington has higher proportions of SEN pupils. Despite the strong performance by Islington SEN pupils at Key Stage 4, Islington remains below the Inner London average scores for each SEN group.

SEN Status	Progress 8 Score			Gap in Points	
	Islington	England	Inner London	England	Inner London
EHCP	-1.07	-1.12	-0.83	0.05	-0.24
SEN Support	-0.42	-0.45	-0.17	0.03	-0.25
All SEN Pupils	-0.58	-0.62	-0.35	0.04	-0.23
No SEN	0.13	0.1	0.37	0.03	-0.24
All Pupils	-0.03	-0.03	0.23	0	-0.26

Ethnic Performance

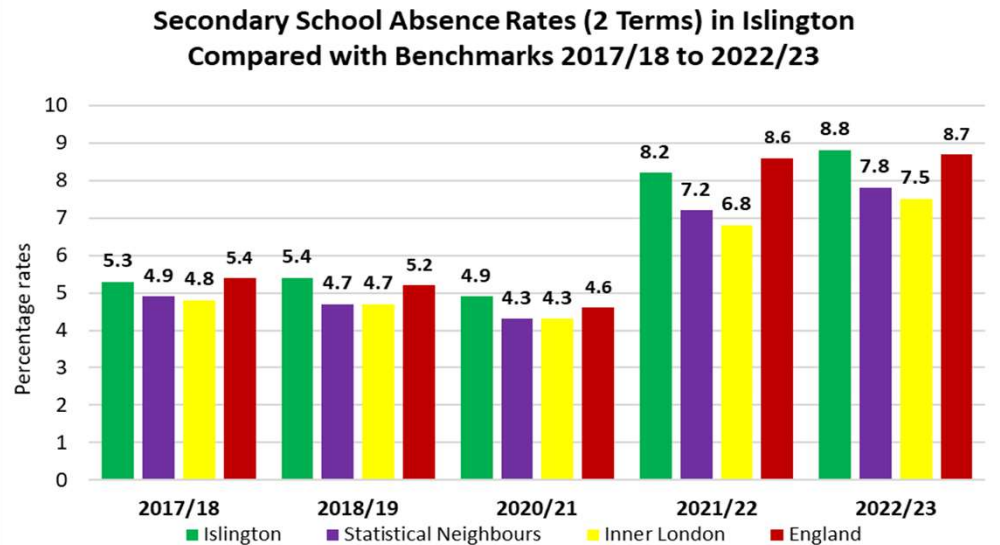
While pupils from some ethnic groups performed very well at KS4 in 2023, some groups achieved less well. The lowest performing groups were Mixed White & Black Caribbean (36.5), White Irish (39.7), Black Caribbean (39.8), Pakistani (40.3) and White British (42.7)

Average Attainment 8 Score by Ethnicity - 2023



Secondary School Absence

Absence rates increased quite dramatically in the Autumn and Spring terms of the 2021/22 school year. In 2022/23, Covid-related absence was included in the absence statistics for the first time, as absence due to illness. Despite this, absence in secondary schools only increased slightly. Islington was above each of the comparator averages in terms of secondary school absence levels.

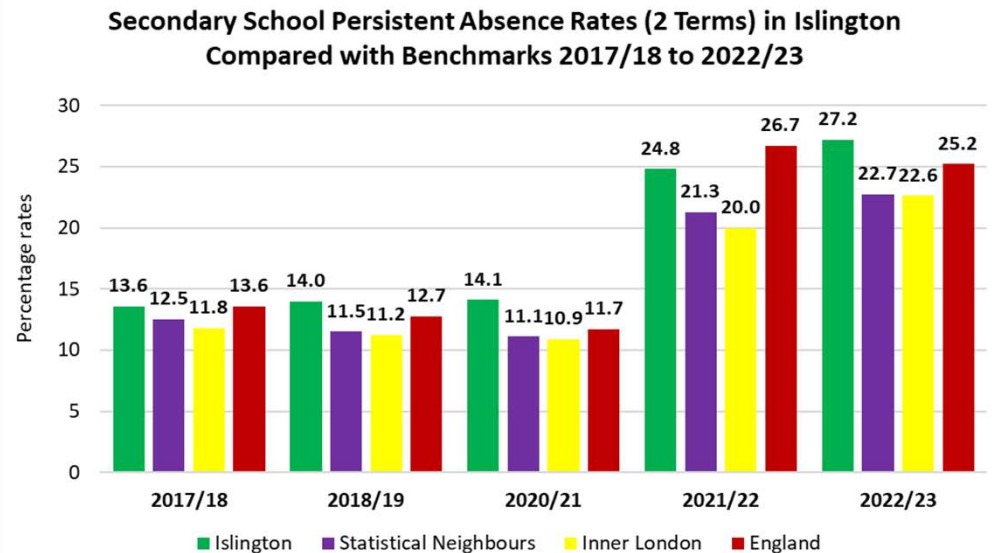


Persistent Absence

The secondary persistent absence rate was higher than benchmarks in the years before the Covid-19 pandemic, at around 13% to 14%. Persistent absence rates increased dramatically in Islington to 24.8% in 2021/22, although this was **better** than national at 26.7%.

Persistent absence in Islington's secondary schools increased again in 2022/23, to 27.2%, whilst the national average fell to 25.2%. Islington's rate was the highest in Inner London and Islington fell to just inside the bottom quartile, nationally.

Persistent Absence Data



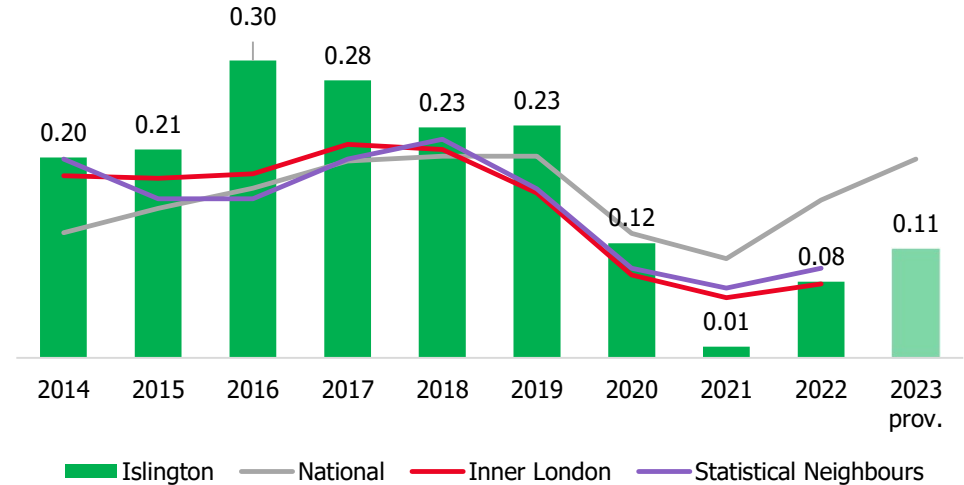
Secondary School Exclusions and Suspensions

Permanent exclusions

Historically, permanent exclusion rates have been variable in Islington secondary schools with rates higher locally than regional and national. Since 2020, the permanent exclusion rate in Islington secondary schools has been very low and better than regional and national benchmarks. While the provisional 2023 results show an upward trend, the rate is still **below** the provisional national average.

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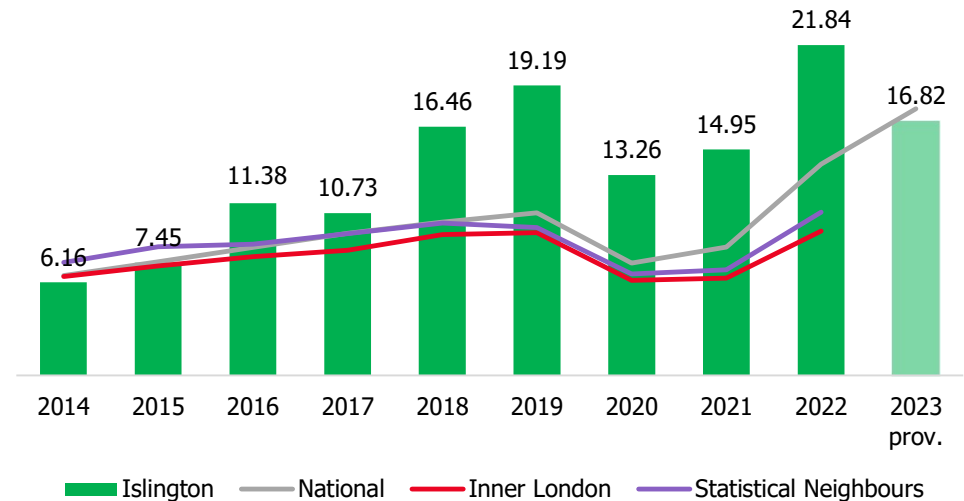
Secondary **Permanent Exclusion** Rate from 2014 to 2023



Suspensions

Secondary school suspension rates have tended to be higher in Islington compared to regional and national benchmarks since 2016. The rate was highest in 2022. The provisional 2023 figure shows a drop in the suspension rate to **below** the provisional national average.

Secondary **Suspension** Rate from 2014 to 2023



Elective Home Education (EHE)

Numbers in EHE

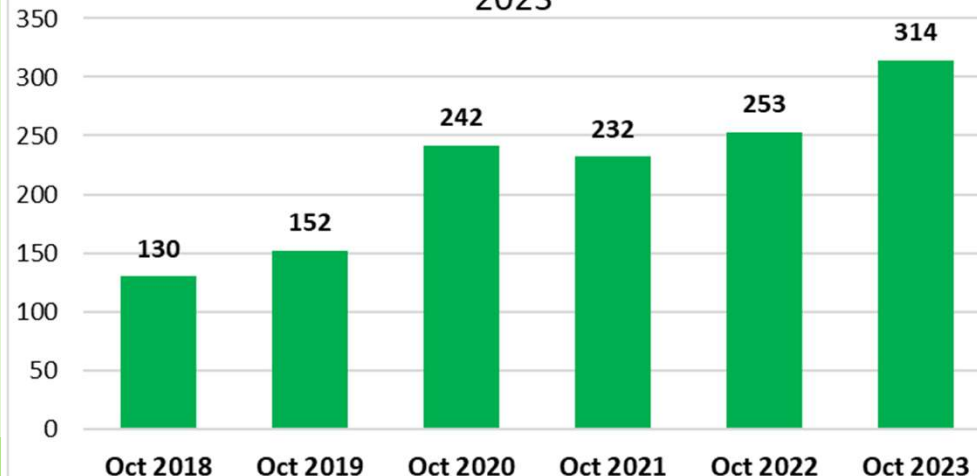
One of the early features of the Covid-19 pandemic was a rapid increase in the number of children being electively home educated. The numbers rose by 90 (+59%) from 152 in October 2019 to 242 in October 2020. After this initial spike, the total numbers settled down at a similar level over the next two years. However, the numbers have increased again in 2023 to a new peak of over 300.

LA level data is now published on EHE numbers. Compared to the resident population, Islington had 126 EHE pupils per 10,000 residents in Summer 2023, the 50th highest rate in the country.

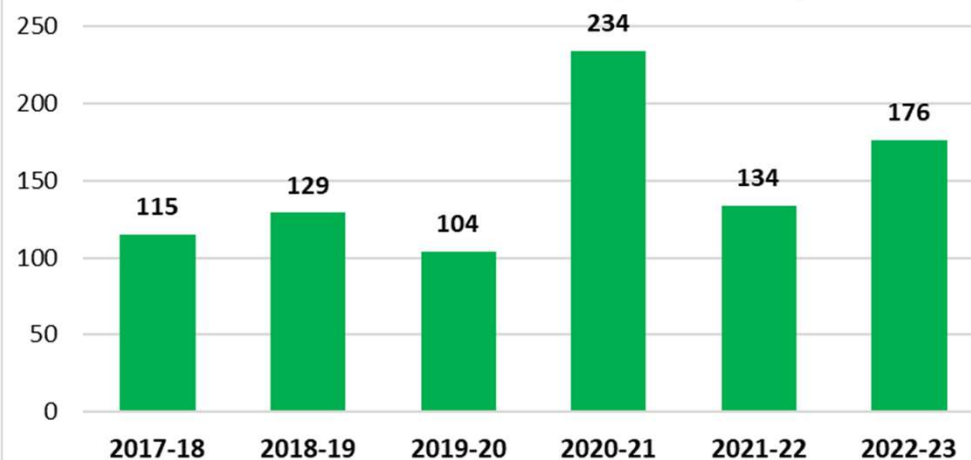
Formal Notifications made for EHE

The number of formal notifications for EHE had been broadly consistent from 2017/18 to 2019/20 but they rose significantly between 2019/20 and 2020/21. There was a drop in the number of notifications in 2021/22, but the number rose again in 2022/23 to the highest annual total outside of the main pandemic year of 2020/21.

Number of Children & Young People Being Electively Home Educated in Islington 2018 to 2023



Number of Formal Notifications made for Elective Home Education from 2017/18 to 2022/23

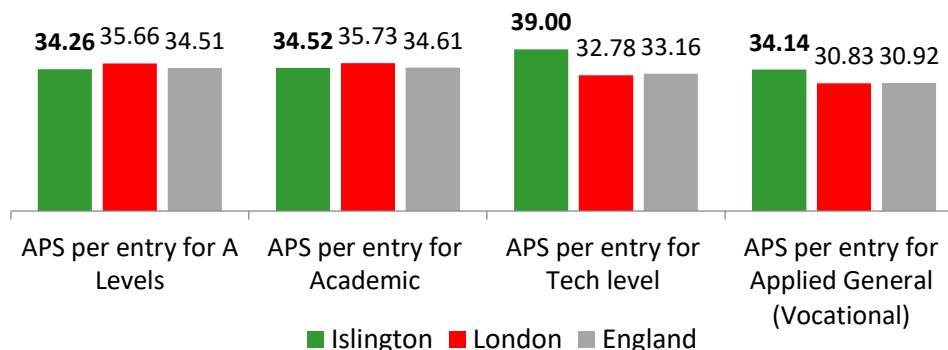


Key Stage 5

On the range of KS5 Average Points Score (APS) measures, students in Islington performed **better** than London and national on the more vocational qualification areas, including the Tech Level and Applied General measures.

Performance in Islington was lower than London and national on the overall A Level measure and the Academic A Level measure.

Key Stage 5 Performance in 2023



Key Stage 5	2019	2022	2023
Average A level result	C	B-	C+
APS per entry (A level)	31.15	37.15	34.35

% Achieving Higher A Level Grades

A Level Higher Grade Measures	2023	
	% achieving 3 A* to A Grades at A Level	% achieving ≥ AAB Grades at A Level
Islington	9.2%	15.0%
London	15.8%	25.3%
England	14.3%	23.3%

NB Islington has 6 secondary schools with sixth forms and a 7th opened its sixth form in Sep 2022. There is also one 16-18 free school.

Higher Grade Performance

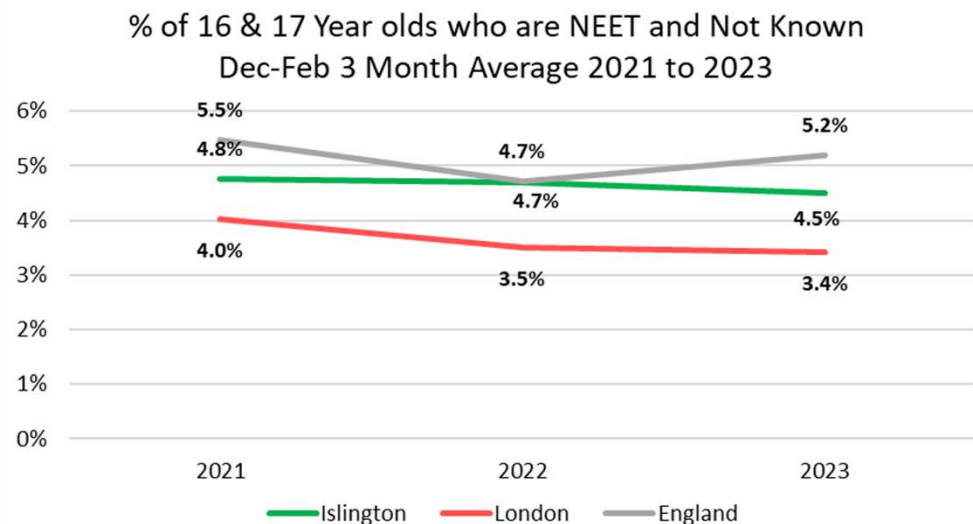
On the more challenging A Level measure, the % achieving 3 A* - A Grades, only 9.2% of Islington students achieved this measure, compared to over 15% in London and 14% nationally. On the % achieving ≥ AAB Grades at A Level, 15% of Islington students achieved this measure but again this level of performance was also noticeably below the London (25.3%) and national (23.3%) benchmarks. This will be likely to have impacted on the ability of many Islington students to access high tariff universities.

Post-16 – Year 11 Destinations and NEET/Unknown Scorecard

Under Raising Participation Age (RPA) Islington has a responsibility to ensure its residents continue to participate in education or training from when they finish Key Stage 4 at Year 11 until at least their 18th birthday, and to reduce the proportion of young people aged 16 and 17 not in education, employment or training after they leave the compulsory education phase.

2022 Year 11 School LEA	Year 11 total	In Learning	Employment w/o training	Other	NEET	Unknown
Islington	1569	97.3%	0.4%	0.0%	1.3%	1.0%
Camden	1651	97.9%	0.2%	0.1%	1.2%	0.6%
Hackney	2500	98.6%	0.2%	0.0%	1.0%	0.3%
Kensington & Chelsea	928	97.6%	0.2%	0.0%	1.6%	0.5%
Hambleth	2412	96.0%	0.4%	0.0%	1.3%	2.3%
Southwark	3045	97.5%	0.1%	0.0%	0.8%	1.5%
Wandsworth	2039	96.4%	0.3%	0.0%	2.3%	1.0%
Westminster	1832	98.0%	0.2%	0.0%	1.4%	0.4%
Central London	15976	97.4%	0.3%	0.0%	1.3%	1.1%

Destinations of Year 11 leavers are collected on 1 November in the year pupils left an Islington school. In 2022, 97.3% of young people from Islington schools and settings remained or continued 'In Learning' after completing Year 11. This was just below the Central London figure of 97.4%. The NEET rate, at 1.3% was in line with the Central London average, but the Unknown rate, at 1.0%, was slightly **better** than the rate of 1.1% across Central London.



The percentage of 16 and 17 year old residents who were NEET or in a 'not known' activity (Dec-Feb snapshot) was 4.5% in 2023, compared to 4.7% in 2022 and 4.8% in 2021.

The 2023 performance, at 4.5%, was **better** than national, at 5.2%, but not as good as the London average of 3.4%.

Quality of Provision

All young people in Islington should have access to a high quality school place whatever the phase or type of education. This section considers the schools and early years settings in Islington in terms of educational quality.

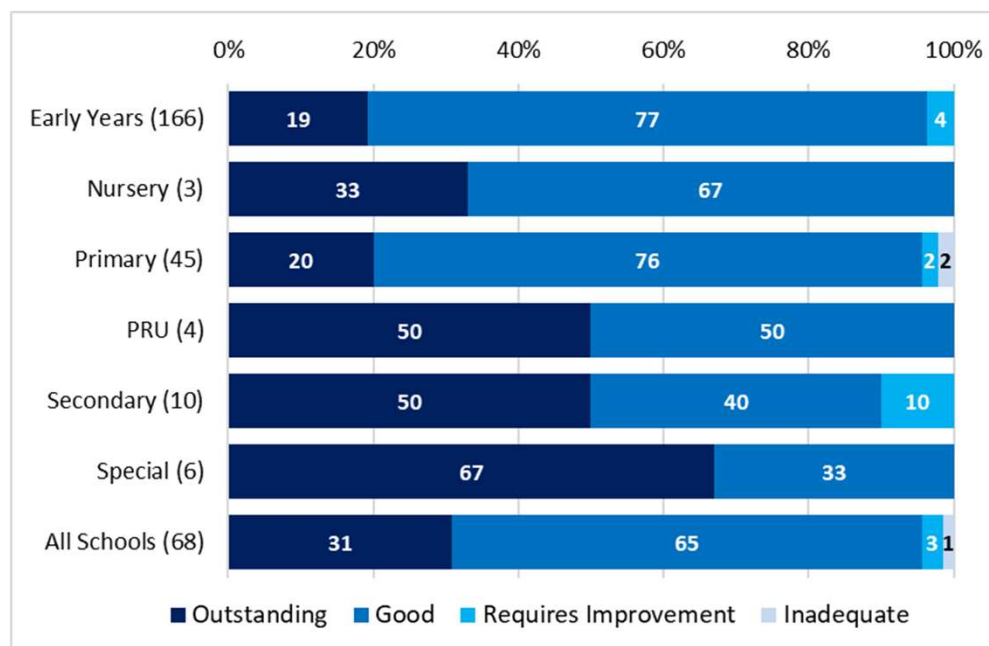
The vast majority of schools in Islington (96%) were rated as good or outstanding, as at the end of August 2023), an **improvement** of 5% points since 2019.

This includes:

- 100% of nursery schools were good or outstanding
- 96% of primary schools were good or outstanding
- 90% of secondary schools were good or outstanding
- 100% of special schools were good or outstanding
- 100% of pupil referral units (PRU) were good or outstanding

Further, 96% of early years settings were good or outstanding as at August 2023, which is in line with 96% across London but slightly below 97% nationally.

Nationally 89% of all schools were rated good or outstanding by Ofsted, as at August 2023. London region leads the way in terms of both pupil's educational outcomes and high quality school places, with 95% of schools rated as good or outstanding. Islington, at 96%, is ranked **19th** in England.



In Islington 90% of secondary schools are rated good or outstanding, compared to 92% in London and 82% nationally.

Since August 2019, Islington has **improved** its Ofsted profile, from 91% of all schools judged as good or outstanding then to 96% in August 2023.

Further Information

All of our profiles, as well as other data and outputs can be accessed on the Evidence Hub at: <https://www.islington.gov.uk/about-the-council/islington-evidence-and-statistics>

About this Data Pack

This data pack/profile was produced by Rachel Ivens, Performance Manager, Lina Castles, Data Analyst and Adam White, Head of Data & Performance, reviewed and approved for publication by Sarah Callaghan, Director of Learning & Achievement.

Contact: Adam White, adam.white@islington.gov.uk

We would also very much welcome your comments on these profiles and how they could better suit your individual or practice requirements, so please contact us with your ideas.

Children's Services

222 Upper Street N1 1XR

Report of: Corporate Director of Children's Service

Meeting of: Children's Service Scrutiny Committee

Date: 26 February 2024

Ward(s):

Subject: SEND Transitions update

1. Synopsis

- 1.1. In 2020-21, the Committee decided to focus on the ways in which the council supports children and young people with SEND and their families were supported through key changes in their lives (transitions).
- 1.2. In June 2022, the committee made 34 recommendations for ways that the experience of children and young people with SEND and their families could be improved. Some were general and other pertained to specific areas such as Communication and Education Health and Care Plans. Some recommendations were also specific to key transition points (Early Years to primary school, primary to secondary school and secondary school to the world of work or further education). The committee also made specific recommendations relating to children with SEND who are in the care of the local authority.
- 1.3. This report provides an update on progress against those recommendations.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. To note progress against the recommendations.

3. Background

- 3.1 Meeting the needs of children and young people with SEND and their families is a key priority across all agencies in the local area. This includes a commitment to improving outcomes and ensuring value for money.

- 3.2 Islington is one of the very few Local Authorities across the country to receive a positive SEND inspection in November 2021. Islington is recognised as having significant expertise within this area and, as such, receives funding from the DFE to support several other Local Authorities through the national SLIP programme.
- 3.3 As a partnership, services have worked tirelessly against a backdrop of significant increased demand to ensure the best recovery possible following the challenges of the global COVID pandemic in 2020/21. Our SEND Strategy 2022-27 was co-produced and published in October 2022, setting out the Council's vision and key priorities over the next five years for ensuring impact and improved outcomes and lived experiences of children and young people with SEND and their families. The SEND Strategy was agreed at Exec alongside the Education Plan, 'Putting Children First' and the School Organisation Plan recognising that to create welcoming inclusive schools, we must also work alongside our ambitions to drive educational excellence for all through. To achieve this, we need to build resilience into your school estate through the phased implementation of the School Organisation Plan.
- 3.4 Our ambition is for all children with SEND to have the right support at the right time in the right place. Delivery is supported by detailed implementation plans that focus on action to promote an inclusive and sustainable system.
- 3.5 Officers across all services, including our early years settings, schools and Post 16 establishments are working within a difficult financial climate and there are constraints across the whole system. We have a statutory duty not to exceed our financial allocation while at the same time committed to delivering our statutory duty to identify and meet SEND. As the number of children with complex needs continues to rise, and demand for services exceeds resources currently available in some areas, commissioners and leaders are faced with difficult challenges around how to work differently while maintaining high quality, ambitious and responsive services that are impactful and support improved outcomes.
- 3.6 Despite this challenging context, we remain confident that the energy and enthusiasm of leaders to improve early identification and provision, observed in our inspection of Nov 2021, will continue to result in positive change for children and young people with SEND and their families.
- 3.7 Work to improve transitions for children and young people with SEND has been an important contributor to improving their experience of the system, following the recommendations made by Children's Services Scrutiny Committee made in July 2022. Progress against those recommendations is detailed in the remainder of this report.
- 3.8 Our Local Offer website (co-produced with parents) is the go-to place for current information, advice and services for children with Special Educational Needs and / or disabilities: www.islington.gov.uk/localoffer (as required by statute). The information / detail referred to in many of the recommendations is contained here. We are constantly considering how we can better publicise the Local Offer as the go-to place for SEND information, and welcome support from members of the committee in using and promoting the site.

4. Progress against recommendations

Communication

- 1) **Navigating the EHCP process can be difficult for parents. To make things easier, Islington Council should:**

a) Provide a central point of contact (preferably a named individual) for the families of children with SEND to help co-ordinate interactions with the council and its partners and advocate for parents.

The school or nursery SENCO is the first point of contact for parents of children with SEND. A SEND Keyworker is now allocated to each family of a child who is receiving a statutory Education, Health, and Care assessment. Because of the rapid increase in the numbers of assessments and EHCP's, we have needed to review our structures and expand the Council's SEND team. There were unfortunately some gaps in service during this period of change, but the team is now fully staffed and functional.

The recently established Family Hubs bring together lots of different services for children and families to make a single 'front door,' making it easier for families to get the help they need at the right time. Family Hubs offer help and support to families from pregnancy up until age 25 for those with SEND.

The Council also commission [Islington SENDIAS](#) (Family Action) to provide impartial information, advice and support on SEND for parents/carers and children and young people aged up to 25, who live in Islington. They offer:

- Advice, information and support on education, health, and social care issues.
- Support for parents/carers and children/young people to express their views and wishes.
- Support at meetings with schools and the Local Authority.
- Help to complete Special Educational Needs and Disability related paperwork.
- Support around the Education Health Care plan process.
- Support with applying for disability related benefits.
- Signposting to other services.

Islington SENDIAS link with a range of organisations including the Islington SEND Parents Carers Forum to hold regular meetings, coffee morning and workshops helping to link families with advocates, and others who can help them to navigate and understand the systems.

b) work with families to develop a short guide on the local SEND system and the support that is available. The guide should include a summary of the EHCP process and timeline and should be available in different languages. It should be readily accessible online and in hard copy (at schools, libraries, GPs surgeries etc.)

The SEND Team worked with parent representatives to develop [leaflets](#) and a web-page - [Education, Health and Care Assessment – Parent Carers Guide](#) for the Local Offer Website, which carries the 'parent approved' badge.

The leaflets are also made available through schools, health and social care colleagues and SEND Keyworkers in hard copy and translated versions.

- 2) **Parents/carers struggle to find out what inclusive events are going on across the borough. The council should establish a digital events calendar of all related performances, SEND leisure activities, and SEND events in Islington.**

The Council's approach to listing events is to coordinate them through the Directories. The Family Information Service plays a key role in helping to ensure the information is accurate and inclusive. The directory includes the SEND Local Offer. See the online [Things to do Calendar](#), SEND category.

People can also sign up to get the latest news and updates from the council direct to their email inbox. ([Islington Council \(govdelivery.com\)](#))

We also have the [SEND Parent Parliament](#) which regularly sends information to over 2000 families of children with SEND. This can include significant events and activities.

- 3) **Each year there is a SENCO network day when primary and secondary SENCOs come together to share information. This is currently limited to Islington schools. Islington Council to consider inviting SENCOs in neighbouring boroughs.**

The Transition Conference is no longer limited to Islington schools; neighbouring secondary school expecting Islington children to join them in Year 7 are now also invited. Acland Burghley School – as our main out-borough receiving school – have attended for the last two years.

- 4) **An up-to-date list of contact details for all primary and secondary SENCOs should be maintained by Islington Council and shared with Islington SENCOs to encourage collaborative working.**

The Islington SENCO Network meets termly after school; coordinated by schools for schools, as well as sub-groups (e.g., secondary); it supports:

- Sharing good practice
- Keeping informed
- Sharing information and resources
- Developing materials and approaches

SENCO contact list is updated and circulated to SENCOs termly by the School Area SENCO, employed centrally.

In the last 6 months we have also piloted a South Locality Inclusion Hub to bring SENCOs, inclusion leads, attendance leads and safeguarding leads together to exchange

practice, ideas and challenges. This has been so successful, that we are now rolling out to the Central and North Locality Areas.

Education Health and Care Plans

- 5) **Islington Council do not require an Educational Psychologist report to be submitted with a request for an EHCP assessment. This is not widely known. The council should communicate this to families and schools thinking about submitting requests.**

See [Education information required by the LA to consider an EHC needs assessment request](#) on the Local Offer website.

The form for parents to use to request a EHC assessment does not require an EP report but does ask that the most recent report from an Educational Psychologist employed or commissioned by the Local Authority (if available) is submitted with the request for assessment.

The form for schools does expect that an Educational Psychologist employed or commissioned by the Local Authority will have seen the child within the last 6 months however, as part of 'ordinarily available provision', and asks for any relevant reports to be attached.

- 6) **Some parents/carers found EHCPs overly long and unwieldy with many strategies and interventions recommended. Every effort should be made to make sure EHCPs are concise and bespoke to individuals.**

The SEND Change Programme is a national programme to test and refine some of the changes the Government wants to make to the system for supporting children and young people with SEND. It is being delivered by twenty Change Partners across England and were pleased that Islington was invited to be one of twenty Change Partners in September of this year.

One of the things we have been asked to test is a new template for Education Health and Care Plans, designed to improve readability and focus. We are therefore currently working closely with families willing to be part of the test. We are due to report back to the DfE on this part of the programme in April.

- 7) **Some parents/carers found EHCPs difficult to understand. This is even more difficult for parents for whom English is not a first language. Islington Council should (i) make every effort to use simple, non-technical language and provide explanations of words/phrases not in common use and (ii) offer workshops to parents of children with EHCPs to explain the process and answer questions.**

The approach set out within our SEND Strategy is one of inclusive practice and so accessibility to support is central to this. We are aware that some communities need more support to ensure they get the right support at the right time and we are constantly refining the way we work with our parents and carers to ensure that we do

this appropriately. The chair of the Parent/Carer forum is a member of our SEND Partnership Board and champions parents and carers views to ensure we are routinely considering how we effectively engage with all families in an appropriate way.

See 6. above. See also '[Jargon Busting](#)' on the Local Offer.

Transition: from Early Years to Primary School

- 8) **To help identify children with SEND as early as possible Islington Council should establish a system to ensure any concerns raised by professionals before a child enters an early year's setting are shared with the Early Years SEND team/local authority so they could inform the relevant early years setting.**

A multi-disciplinary Early Identification Working Group meet regularly to prioritise children known to education, health and care services who may require additional support at transition – either through full statutory assessment or a support plan. The main challenge is with children not previously known to services and we are currently working with a group of Head teachers on a protocol to cover these circumstances.

- 9) **Primary schools sometimes receive no prior notice that a child with SEND is about to join. Sometimes information is provided but it is incomplete or provided very late. This makes it difficult for the receiving school to plan appropriately. The council should create a "transitions toolkit" to provide guidance to early years settings of what information about a child with SEND should be provided to the primary school the child is moving to. The toolkit should set out best practice in terms of what information should be provided, when and in what format.**

Children with SEND are supported across our Early Years provision by well trained staff, with advice and guidance from Area SENCOs, Educational Psychologists, CAHMS, Therapists and other support services.

There are also 36 specialist (additionally resourced) places across Early Years; early years providers can also apply for additional funding to put in place additional support for identified children.

Early years, the SEND Team and Health colleagues work closely together to identify those children who may have special educational needs that will require support over and above what is normally available, and therefore may need an Education Health and Care Plan to support them when they transfer to school through well-established multi-agency systems.

Transition is carefully planned and managed between the Early Years provider and destination school, with support from the Area SENCO Team. The team have published an Early Years Transition Toolkit which is shared annually with schools and Early Years settings. This toolkit includes guidance on exchange of information, visits and joint planning that fully involves parents and carers.

For those children who may require an Education Health and Care Plan, every effort is made to ensure this is in place before they transition to school so that the school has a clear understanding of needs, outcomes, and provision for that child as well as any Top-up funding assessed as necessary to support the delivery of the plan.

The school will always be consulted before they are named in a plan, but as for all cases, the local authority must comply with parental preference unless there is concrete evidence that this would not be compatible with the efficient use of resource or the education of others.

The rapid increase in the number and complexity of children with SEND in Early Years has led to more demand for specialist places at transition however, placing both immediate and longer-term implications for the local offer and available funding.

Transition: from Primary School to Secondary School

- 10) Similar to recommendation [7] above, there should be a “transitions toolkit” for children with SEND moving from primary to secondary school.

To support the transition process, we have also shared with primary schools in Islington the '[Transition Tool Box](#)' (Nurture UK) - designed to support children through the process by helping them to build the confidence and skills they need to ensure a smooth, successful transition to secondary school. It also provides parents and professionals working with young people with a range of resources for supporting children during this transition.

- 11) **Where parents and professionals had differing views on the type of secondary setting that would be best to meet the needs of a child with SEND, Islington Council and Islington primary schools should have a discussion with parents to manage expectations and minimise the risk of an unsuccessful transition.**

We have a dedicated SEND Keyworker who deals only with primary to secondary transfer and has direct communication with every family of a child in the transfer cohort each year. She is very experienced and presents information in an honest and open way. There is more work to do with some professional groups however to ensure that they understand the EHCP statutory framework and their role in providing advice on **need** rather than provision.

See also [Secondary Transfer for Children with SEND](#) on the Local Offer Website:

- 12) **Islington Council should ensure there is a consistent transition offer from secondary schools which should include: a) holding a meeting with the primary school SENCO, parents and the child, where appropriate; b) sending a member of staff to visit the child in their primary school; c) inviting the child to tour the secondary school and meet key staff; and d) providing age appropriate booklets including timetables and photographs of the school in advance of the child attending.**

Our Transition Good Practice guidance sets out expectations of schools. We have added the above process as a flow chart. Page 173

Transition: Secondary School to Education, Employment, Training Opportunities and Adult Services

- 13) Islington Council and Islington secondary schools should ensure that all partners work together to consistently begin joint planning of this important transition for children with SEND when the child is 14 years old.**

A Progression to Adulthood plan is in place, setting out a long-term vision for progression or adulthood for children and young people with SEND with needs defined in line with the four broad areas of need referenced in the SEND Code of Practice (Communication and interaction; Cognition and Learning; Social, emotional mental health; and Sensory and / or physical needs, which locally includes young people receiving continuing care services).

The purpose of the plan is to ensure all young people with SEND and their carers have sufficient information to make informed choices and understand their rights in relation to the Care Act; and Parents have access to a wide range of information in one place, to avoid them getting passed around the system and minimise the risk of delay.

Our Multi-Agency Preparation for Adulthood Protocol has been refreshed, and there are effective information sharing processes in place to support young people's transition to adulthood.

Processes are now in place to identify and track children at risk of NEET from year 11 onwards, leading to targeted interventions. We are now moving to 'Risk of NEET' screening at an earlier stage so that we can be more effective in managing down that risk. We will evaluate the impact of this work, particularly on those with SEND, during 2023/24.

A Project Officer has recently been appointed to manage an in-depth review of our Transition to Adulthood arrangements, informed by of the changing profile of need. Adult Services are also undertaking a Peer Review, which will also be considering ways of working with younger adults, including alternative life-long learning opportunities.

A social worker from the Transitions team should attend the annual review for any child with SEND who has a social worker, each young person from Year 9 remains an aspiration.

Since January 2024 Childrens Social Care have rolled out the SEND Transition Progression to Adulthood (PTA) Outcomes Framework across all assessments, plans and reviews to ensure that all Young People who have SEND and an EHCP aged 14+ years open to CSC are supported to identify their own PTA needs and outcomes and are supported to meet these and are reviewed regularly.

- 14) A social worker from the Transitions team should attend the annual review for any child with SEND who has a social worker, each young person from Year 9.**

See 13 above.

Social Workers and Family Support and Reviewing Practitioners supporting Children with SEND who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) are attending annual EHCP/Education Review meetings. There is a Children's Social Care SEND and EHCP practice guidance in place which sets out the practice standards for practitioners in Children's Social Care, including referring children with disabilities to Transition teams on their 17th birthday.

15) Islington Council should ensure there is an early screening process in place to identify those young people who do not meet the threshold for adult social services and begin working with families to devise a plan for how their needs will be met once they transition out of children's services.

An annual screening meeting with relevant services takes place in September of each year to consider the new Year 9 cohort along with any Year 11+ young people in their last year of education to ensure appropriate plans are in place.

The Disabled Children's Team are also developing a screening tool (pre-assessment) tool to indicate a young person's likelihood of eligibility for support from adult social care and where this suggests this is 'unlikely', sign post the young person and the family to universal services including Islington's Bright Lives.

Children's Social Care and Adult Social Care have created a Transition PTA Tracker and meet monthly to ensure that Care Act Eligible Young People are added to the tracker at 14 years and their progress to adulthood journey and referral and assessment is tracked.

We are also currently exploring the opportunity to create a Transitions Drop-in Service for Young People and their families to be delivered by partners across the SEND partnership.

16) The council should develop a specific strategy to support children transitioning from Pupil Referral Units and alternate provision into Education, Employment or Training opportunities.

New River College (NRC) is Islington's main Alternative Provision provider. The college operates from four sites as three separate Pupil Referral Units (Primary, Secondary, Medical, and the Whittington Hospital Class).

NRC are high performing compared to other AP providers and the positive trends in most areas are well established over several years. This covers attainment, attendance and progression, with some of the lowest NEETs across London. NRC are one of only two schools in Islington to receive a national Quality in Careers Standards Award.

Pupils are taught in small form groups of generally no more than six pupils, with a high ratio of support from specialist teachers, learning assistants and pastoral mentors. They access a broad and balanced personalised curriculum that includes a strong emphasis on literacy skills, personal development, academic subjects, and vocational courses.

The College aim to provide pupils with the tools and resources they need to make a positive transition, reintegrating into mainstream schools, or moving on to a specialist

education establishment that will meet their needs, or into post-16 education, employment, or training.

17) Islington Council should work with local colleges and with young people and their families to ensure that colleges are meeting the needs of young people with SEND and providing what is required by their EHCPs.

Ofsted told us when they visited in 2021 that: 'Leaders work effectively with colleges and post-16 providers. They ensure these settings have the information they need when pupils transfer from one phase to the next. Colleges praise the work of Islington SEND Team. This is because case officers know young people and their families very well...'

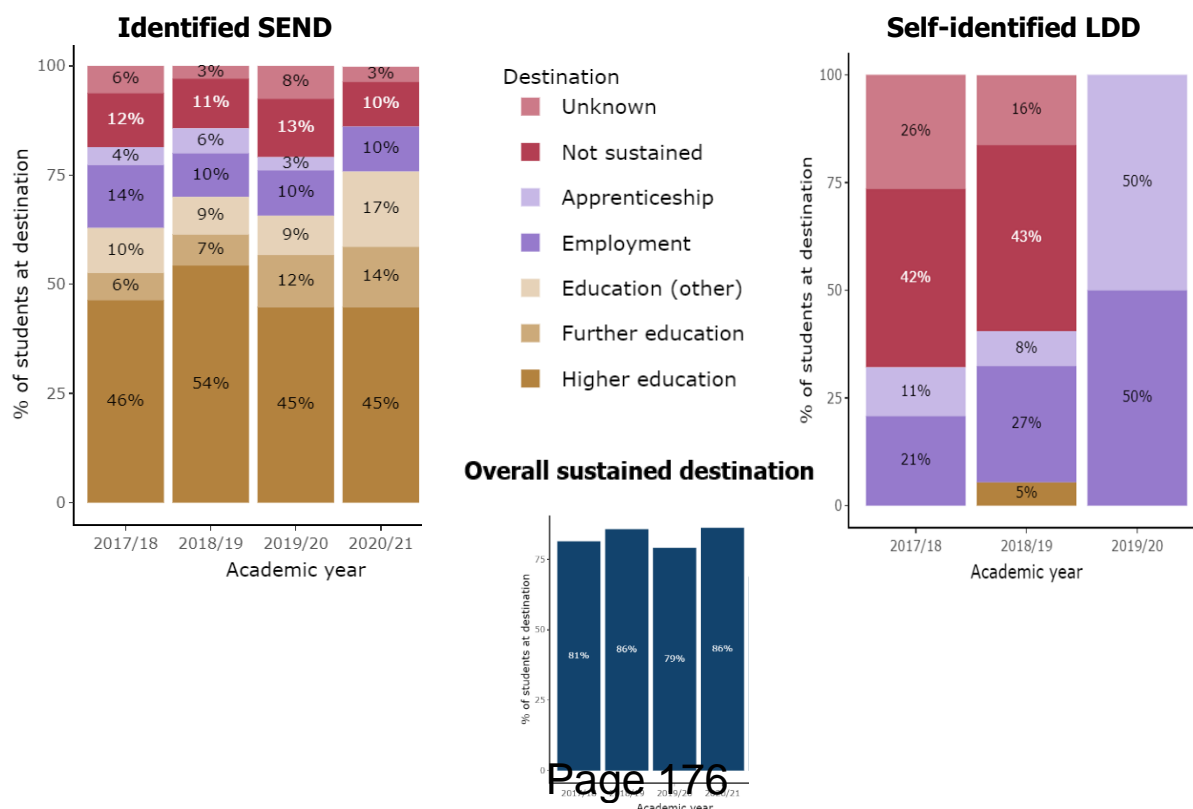
Our students attend over 20 different colleges, but we work collaboratively with the Capital City College group, who are setting up a Steering Group later this year, to which Islington is invited, to share best practice around SEND and especially pathways to employment.

18) Islington Council should undertake a longitudinal study at 1 year, 2 year and 5 years after a young person has been through the Progression to Adulthood programme to measure the long-term success of the programme.

We are doing this for a sample of ten cases. At the end of 1 year, all of the sample remained in education, employment or training.

The latest overall published shows the following:

% post 16-18 in employment, training or higher education for pupils identified with SEN or self-identified with learning difficulty or disability (LLDD)



19) Islington Council should consider becoming a Business Partner in Project SEARCH.

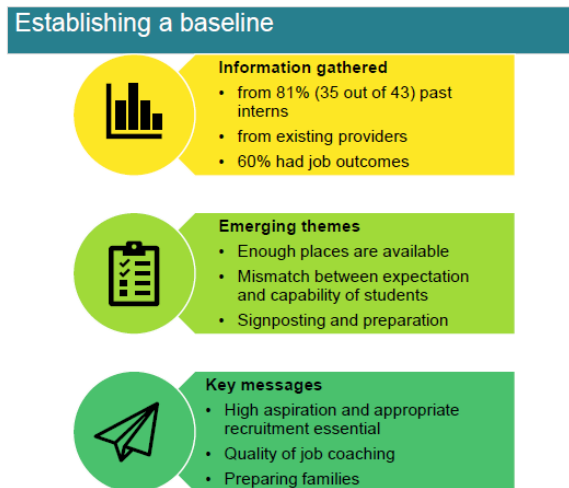
The Council has been involved with DFN Project Search since 2018 and was a key partner in establishing a Supported Internship programme at Moorfields Eye Hospital.

We work with a range of supported internships across the area and can refer people to 13 Supported Internships. Of these five are based on the DFN Project Search model.

This includes work to establish a Supported Internship across the Council and other Anchor Institutions. Different models / brands of Supported Internships including DFN Project Search are being evaluated and considered.

We worked with the National Development Team for Inclusion and other partners in 2022/23 to establish a baseline of our Supported Internship offer and work collaboratively to create an action plan. This included presenting to the Council as the largest employer in the Borough.

We continue to work with partners through the LD and Autism Employment Subgroup to develop our Supported Internship offer. and has worked collaboratively to create an action plan to increase the number of people accessing them.



12 young people have benefitted from Islington’s Independent Travel Training offer, and 27 from Supported Internships over the last 12 months. Since we began the Supported Internship programmes in 2018, 79 young people have been placed.

20) Members heard the council had a supported employment programme and as part of this disability-friendly jobs were created or found and a disability-friendly recruitment process was used to fill the roles. This had stalled during

lockdown as it was not possible to operate the programme virtually. The council should restart the programme post-covid.

The programme has restarted.

Transition: General

- 21) Islington Council should support schools to establish electronic databases to store reports prepared in respect of children with SEND. There should be a specified day each year when all such reports are transferred electronically to the receiving school.**

Safe electronic exchange a logistical challenge as schools use different systems and keep info in different forms etc. The established deadline for exchange is the last week of June, which is also the date of the Primary/Secondary Transition Conference. SENCO Network meetings are used to remind and support all schools to comply with this.

- 22) School admissions forms should ask parents/carers (i) whether a child has received additional support in their existing setting (ii) if so, what kind of support; and (iii) if an application for an EHCP has been made. This will help a receiving school to be better prepared to support incoming children with SEND.**

We are not allowed to do this by law ([School Admissions Code of Practice 2021](#)), Applying for places in the normal admissions round: para 2.4)

Admission authorities must not ask, or use supplementary forms that ask, for any of the following:

- a) any personal details about parents and families, such as maiden names, criminal convictions, marital, or financial status (including marriage certificates);
- b) the first language of parents or the child;
- c) details about parents' or a child's disabilities, special educational needs, or medical conditions;
- d) parents to agree to support the ethos of the school in a practical way;
- e) both parents to sign the form, or for the child to complete the form.

This is to avoid disability discrimination in any school admission.

Other

- 23) Islington Council should undertake an audit of school buildings, so that improvements to create a more SEND-supportive schools' estate in the borough can be planned and prioritised, as and when funding becomes available.**

This is currently underway as part of the current School Organisation programme of work. We have SEND capital funding available and will be targeting adaptation of physical space in mainstream schools – see 24) below.

- 24) **When any physical space intended for use by children and young people is being designed, commissioned, or refurbished, Islington Council should ensure that the space is as inclusive as possible.**

Our current SEND work programme includes adaptations to the physical environment; a Task Group of headteachers are working with advice from the Head of Education Asset Management and making use of available SEND Capital funding to ensure our schools can meet 21st Century SEND need.

- 25) **To embed inclusion, Islington Council should work with schools to ensure all teachers and not just SENCOs, understand attachment theory and trauma informed approaches.**

To date 35 schools have completed whole-school **iTIPS (Islington trauma-informed practices in schools)** training with a further 10 currently being supported.

- 26) **During the covid pandemic some services stopped visiting schools. All services should return to in-person delivery as soon as feasible.**

This has happened.

- 27) **On a visit to The Bridge it was noted that the swimming pool at Beacon High next door were not available to be used by students at The Bridge. The possibility of offering sessions to students the Bridge should be explored by Islington Council.**

The Bridge have access at agreed times to ensure suitable staffing.

Looked After Children

- 28) **Islington Council should produce local guidance outlining guiding principles it will use and that it will encourage other local authorities to subscribe to in respect of looked after children with EHCPs. Such local guidance should set out the circumstances in which Islington Council will retain responsibility for an EHCP in respect of a child who is moving to another authority.**

This is prescribed in law through the Belonging Regulations ([The Education \(Areas to which students and pupils belong\) Regulations 1996](#)). Difficulties can arise when professionals try to reinterpret or ignore these rules.

- 29) **Islington Council should consider whether EHCP screening should be undertaken for all young people entering care.**

The Virtual School become involved with young people when they become looked after and will straight away hold meeting and draw up a Personal Education Plan (PEP). PEP meetings are held 3 times a year and PEP is also updated 3 times a year. SEND is included in the PEP. The Virtual School maintain very close oversight of the educational needs of these young people.

- 30) **In relation to a child not in a stable placement, Islington Council should allocate an Islington mental health professional if appropriate, who will stay allocated until the child is in a stable placement.**

We have taken this up with Health colleagues who assure that continuity of staff is always a priority, including for those who may be looked after or have moved to a different address / school.

Islington Children Looked After Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) Clinicians support our children who are looked after in the Islington area, and if they are placed outside of Islington, ensure they refer on to CAMHS in their local area.

- 31) **Islington Council should roll out the Progression to Adulthood framework in Adult Services.**

This is now in discussion with adult social care and will be taken forward as part of the PTA programme task and finish groups as there would need to be complex system changes on the adult social care recording platform.

See 13 above.

Support for Families

- 32) **Members heard that there is currently one disability swim session per week at one swimming pool in Islington for children with SEND and their families. Islington Council should extend this model across all Islington swimming pools and leisure facilities such as trampoline parks, adventure playgrounds and encourage cinemas to provide viewings for SEND children and their families.**

See Local Offer. Disability Swim sessions are currently available at [Cally](#), [Archway](#) and Ironmonger Row pools. These are specifically timed sessions so that children who need hoist and other equipment / support with changing facilities can be supported by trained staff and access managed. All other pool staff are trained in disability awareness.

- 33) **Activities such as a disco or Christmas party for SEND children and parents should be arranged by Islington Council. There should also be events for adolescents and those to 25 years old with SEND, not just young children as EHCPs were in place until the age of 25.**

Centre 404 hold Friday Night Disco, which is well attended. See video link [here](#).

The Disabled Children's Service are currently reviewing the way we deliver and manage personal budgets for children with disabilities to introduce a new 'choice and control' model for families, so they have more flexibility over how they spend their budgets. This will promote more creativity encourage children and young people to access more personalised activities in the community.

The Disabled Childrens Service and Adult Social Care Service has set up a joint commissioning group to enable them to work together to begin joint commissioning new

services that can support children with disabilities who are transitioning through the use of their Personal Budgets.

34) **Consideration should be given by Islington Council to how to help families connect with each other especially fathers and siblings.**

SEND Parent and Carers Forum is very well attended, including by fathers. 'SEND Friends' at the Parent House are another well-attended group. Centre 404 have a sibling group every Monday for children aged 8-12 and on Wednesdays, the 'Aiming High' Club for young people aged 16-25. Information is available through the local offer. Officer attend parent group and school SEND group meetings and promote the Local Offer as the place to find more information about the services available.

The Disabled Childrens Consultation and Advice Team are now delivering a monthly drop service for global majority families where their child has SEND, which has been very successful in terms of improving accessibility for Asian and Black African families. Going forward we are planning to set up a drop-in group for fathers who have a child with a Disability. As part of the work of these groups we will be exploring how families can be supported to be more strength based and build relationships across families and friendship support networks.

35) **Members heard that in general, parents welcomed social care assessments to look at the needs of the whole family. However, consideration should be given to the wording of the form to ensure the form used was not the same as for child protection.**

The Disabled Childrens Team have their own bespoke needs assessment proforma, which also has a Supported Assessment Questionnaire (SAQ) embedded into it as well as a carers assessment. Embedding the SAQ and carers assessments into this assessment ensures that they are proportionate and focused on the needs of the child, as well as the impact on the parent / carer and the family.

The Disabled Childrens Service have also recently rolled out a new proportionate Children with Disabilities Personal Budget Annual Review for families who access a Personal Budget. This new proforma has brought together the annual review and assessment process to reduce the amount information we need to gather from families to continue to access a personal budget. This new form is more proportionate to the needs of families and less invasive for families as a process to engage with.

36) **Members were advised that the wording of the short breaks form currently referred to "severe and complex needs" which could prevent some entitled families from completing the form. Islington Council should therefore review the wording of the form.**

['Short breaks for carers of disabled children'](#), is the relevant guidance around short break entitlement, and members may be aware that 'The Islington Ruling' is specifically cited in this guidance in terms of eligibility criteria, ('Section 4 - Eligibility (and the Islington judgment)') following a High Court judgement in 2009. We must therefore be explicit in

the wording of all eligibility statements. We have raised your comments with legal services, but they confirm that the current wording is advisable.

The website information published about the Islington short breaks offer does mention severe and complex needs in relation to the targeted level of short breaks and remains appropriate. The Universal and Universal Plus levels do not however.

The assessment and referral form does not use that wording, and in practice families of children with lower level SEND needs do apply for short breaks using the referral and assessment tool available [here](#).

- 37) **Some Islington Council and Islington School SEND support groups had stopped meeting due to the Covid pandemic and where possible these groups should be restarted post-Covid.**

All pre-Covid groups are now fully operational.

- 38) **Members heard that there was a Camden transition pack and pathway Islington might be able to learn from. The Council should work with the Family Carers Action Group to produce transition packs including case studies of families of children with SEND who were willing to share their stories with other families of children with SEND. This would enable parents and carers to imagine future options for their child and help them gain knowledge from others who had been in similar situations. Work should also take place to distribute packs more widely.**

Regular termly meetings are held between the Camden Lead SEND link in schools and our SEND Support Team. This is creating opportunities for sharing good practice, training and resources including those supporting transition.

Background papers:

- None.

Final report clearance:

Signed by:

Corporate Director of Children's Services

Date: 14th February 2024

Report Author: Sarah Callaghan (Director of Learning and Achievement)

Tel:

Email: sarah.callaghan@islington.gov.uk

CHILDREN'S SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE SCRUTINY TOPICS AND WORK PROGRAMME

WORK PROGRAMME 2023/24

12 June 2023

1. Membership, Terms of Reference
2. Scrutiny Response Tracker
3. Scrutiny Topic and Draft Work Programme
4. Scrutiny Report

19 July 2023

1. Scrutiny Initiation Document (SID) & Introductory presentation.
2. School Reorganisation
3. Quarter 4 Performance Report

14 September 2023

1. Quarter 1 Performance Report
2. Child Protection Annual Report
3. Headline/Provisional School Results

31 October 2023

1. Attendance
2. Youth Justice Service Update/Youth Justice Plan

28 November 2023

1. Scrutiny Review – Witness Evidence
2. Early Years

15 January 2024

1. Bright Start and Families First for Children Pathfinder Programme Updates
2. School Place Planning
3. Quarter 2 Performance Report

26 February 2024

1. Scrutiny Review – Witness Evidence
2. Executive Member Report

3. School Results 2023
4. Scrutiny Review of SEN & Disabilities Transitions – 12-month update
(including update on Baseline Report for Supported Internships)

29 April 2024

1. Scrutiny Review – Draft Recommendations
2. Quarter 3 Performance Report
3. SACRE Annual Report