

Consultation on the future of Pooles Park Primary School

28 April to 26 May 2023

Please give us your views on our proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School on 31 December 2023.

Give your views by completing our consultation online at www.islington.gov.uk/pooles-park

You can also email poolespark@islington.gov.uk

You must submit your response by **11.59pm on Friday, 26 May 2023**.

Summary of the proposal

- Pooles Park school doesn't have enough children in each class, and is in financial deficit
- We are proposing to close Pooles Park school on 31 December 2023
- We will offer all Pooles Park pupils a place at another nearby good Islington School
- Islington Council will support the school, parents, and children throughout the transition

Introduction

Islington Council is seeking the views of parents and carers, staff, the local community, and other interested groups on its proposal to close Pooles Park Primary school.

Across London, because of a falling birth rate and changes to the local population, pupil numbers are falling, and Islington is no exception. Schools with fewer pupils get less government funding, which risks their long-term future and the quality of education. 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.

Because of this, we are proposing to **close Pooles Park Primary school on 31 December 2023**.

This four-week consultation gives information about why we have made this proposal and asks your views about it.

We welcome your views 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 statutory process to close the school at its meeting on 22 June 2023.

Please read this information carefully and respond to our short questionnaire before the closing date of **26 May 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.

School funding is decided by 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.

Ofsted has judged more than 90 per cent of Islington schools to be 'good' or 'outstanding' which reflects the quality of education in Islington. Performance at each key stage (Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Post-16) is typically in line with national averages or better.

There are several good schools nearby with empty spaces and by closing Pooles Park, children can access a good local school and ensure those schools are secure with enough pupils for the future.

Ofsted inspection

Ofsted inspected Pooles Park in November 2022 although there were some positive comments in their report - like pupils enjoy coming to school - the overall judgement was inadequate and placed the school in special measures.

Ofsted's report commented on the quality of education and the curriculum, and this means pupils leave with lower outcomes than they should, and they may find it more difficult to catch up when they start Secondary School.

When Ofsted judges a school to be inadequate, the Department for Education (DfE) issues an Academy Order and invites applications from academy sponsors – known as Multi-Academy Trusts (MAT) – to take over the school.

The DfE has issued an Academy Order for Pooles Park school, and the Regional Director is currently considering applications from interested MATs.

If the Regional Director finds a suitable MAT to take over the school, she will convert Pooles Park into an Academy and the school will **not** close.

If a suitable MAT is not identified, the Secretary of State may revoke the Academy Order but only in exceptional circumstances. This would need to happen before Pooles Park could close.

We are proposing to close Pooles Park school because it doesn't have enough pupils.

Pooles Park is currently a community school managed by Islington Council, so we are proceeding with this consultation on our proposal to close the school.

Pupil projections and numbers in the planning area

We plan for school places by dividing Islington into six different planning areas. Pooles Park Primary School is in Planning Area 2 (Hornsey). Hornsey has one of the highest levels of surplus capacity in Islington, with 23% in Reception and 26% from Reception to Year 6.

The pupil number projections show that pupil numbers are predicted to decrease further in this planning area and across Islington.

First preferences show how many parents choose a school as their first choice for their children starting in Reception. First preferences in the Hornsey area for admission in September 2023 are at their lowest level at 62% of available places, which is nine per cent lower than the previous year.

The number of pupils at Pooles Park

Pooles Park has the lowest number of pupils of all the schools in the Hornsey area. 56% of places in Reception are unused and 55% from Reception to Year 6 are unused. This means that all year groups are less than half-full. Based on current offers for admission to Reception in September 2023 this continues to be the case.

Table 1: Spare places in Hornsey area, and Pooles Park

Area	Spare places in current Reception (%)	Spare places across all current year groups (%)	Expected spare reception places based on all preference offers for September 2023
Hornsey planning area	23%	26%	33%
Pooles Park Primary School	56%	55%	53%

The number of pupils has fallen over the last five years and this is projected to continue.

Table 2: Pooles Park Primary School Number of children each year (based on October census)

Year	Nursery	Reception	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	TOTAL
2022	14	20	26	29	26	25	28	28	196
2021	14	29	27	30	18	28	30	37	213
2020	15	30	32	19	36	32	40	48	252
2019	13	32	20	40	32	41	52	52	282
2018	18	24	50	38	41	56	50	42	319

The 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.

Smaller schools – like Pooles Park – are particularly vulnerable to changes in pupil numbers as they have less flexibility to group classes of 30 children.

Pooles Park is currently projecting a deficit budget in 2023-24.

The proposal

We are proposing to close Pooles Park school on 31 December 2023.

Pooles Park primary school has many spare school places, with pupil numbers set to fall further still in the coming years. As a result, Pooles Park is already experiencing budget deficits. This is because school funding is mostly set by the number of pupils, and the fewer pupils a school has, the less money it has to run the school. This ultimately affects the quality of education pupils receive, which risks their longer-term futures.

What happens if the school closes?

We understand that this creates a period of uncertainty and concern for parents and the local community, as many have a strong connection to the school.

If Pooles Park school closes, all existing pupils will need to move to another school.

We will guarantee a place at another local Islington school for all pupils. Ofsted has rated all other local Islington schools as 'good'.

Islington Council will work closely with the school to help ensure a smooth transition for all pupils. We will identify the additional needs of all children, starting with those with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP), to ensure they have the additional support they need at their new school. We will also provide face-to-face support to any parent or carer who needs help with completing an admissions application.

Because other schools have spare places, it will be possible for groups of children and even whole year groups to move together to another nearby school. We can help arrange that if parents wish to do this.

We will provide more information about how we will support moving to another school should the proposal be agreed.

There will be no changes this school year.

Any pupil currently in Year 6 will complete their primary schooling at Pooles Park.

The timelines

Informal consultation: 26 April to 26 May 2023

We will publish this consultation document and hold face to face consultation sessions with parents, staff, and the wider community. We will accept responses to the proposals by 26 May 2023.

Council decision on informal consultation: 22 June 2023

The council Executive will consider all responses to the consultation and then at its public meeting on 22 June, it will decide whether to proceed with a formal proposal to close the school. If this happens there will be a second stage consultation that will run for four weeks in the Summer.

Final Decision: 7 September 2023

The final decision would be made by the council Executive at its meeting on 7 September. If approved, Pooles Park school would close on 31 December 2023.

How to give your views

Give your views by completing our online consultation form at www.islington.gov.uk/pooles-park

You can also email poolespark@islington.gov.uk

You must submit your response by **11.59pm on Friday, 26 May 2023**.