

Appendix B - Analysis of responses to the public consultation on the future of Pooles Park Primary School

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. This appendix provides a summary of the analysis of the public response to the consultation on the future of Pooles Park Primary School in the London Borough of Islington.

2. Public consultation

- 2.1. The public consultation ran from Friday, 28 April to Monday, 5 June 2023.
- 2.2. An overview of the proposal was [provided online](#) along with a link to an online questionnaire.
- 2.3. The proposal was translated to Arabic, Dari, Pashto, Somali and Spanish, as requested by parents and carers.
- 2.4. The proposal questions were translated to Arabic, Somali, Spanish and Turkish as requested by the school, and a meeting with Arabic, Somali, Spanish and Turkish interpreters arranged at the school.
- 2.5. The consultation was extended from an initial closing date of 28 May to 5 June ahead of the meeting with interpreters to allow more time for parents and carers to submit a response following that meeting.
- 2.6. During the consultation period, the School Support and Information Services team organised:
 - 2.6.1. five parent/carers consultation meetings (including one with four interpreters)
 - 2.6.2. four staff meetings

2.6.3. one community meeting at Islington Town Hall

2.7. Each meeting followed the same format, with council officers presenting the proposal and then allowing for time for questions and comments from attendees.

2.8. Respondents were also invited to submit comments to a dedicated mailbox (poolespark@islington.gov.uk).

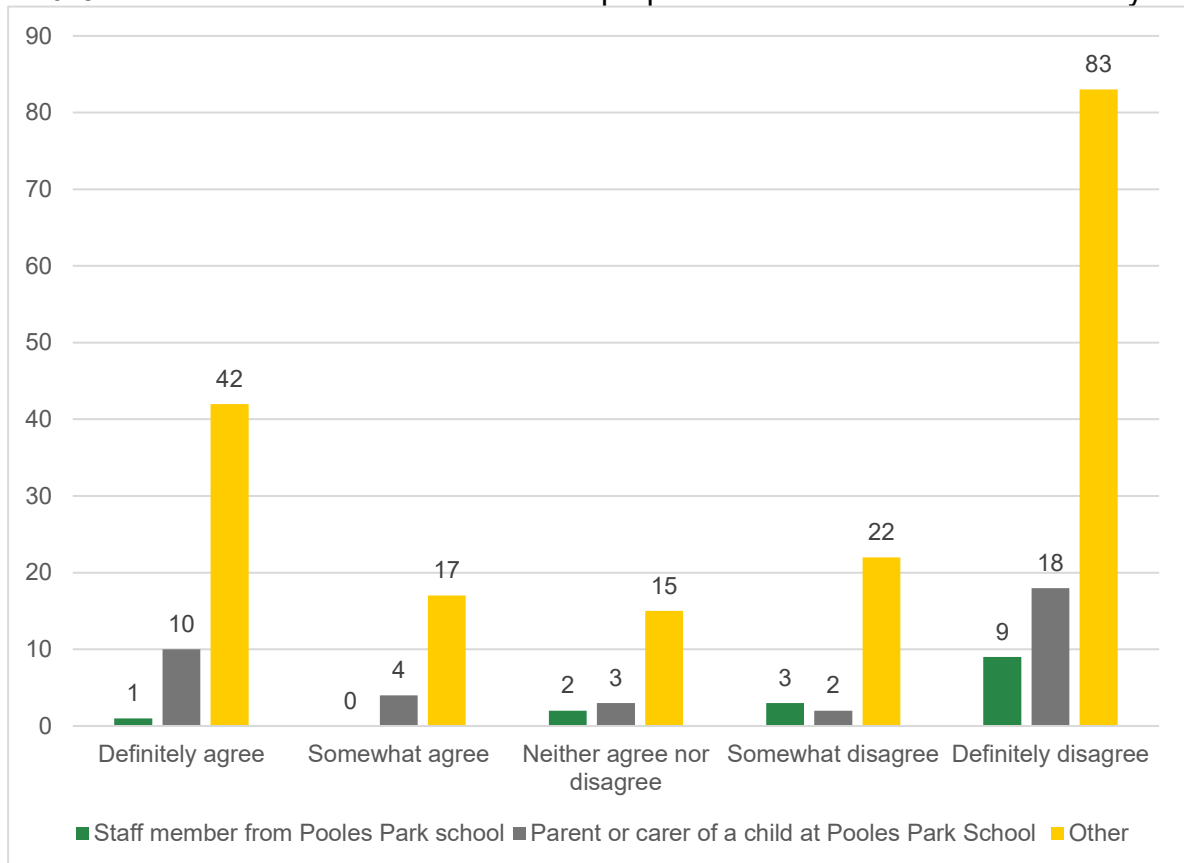
3. Responses to the consultation

3.1. The online questionnaire had **231 responses**. All questions in the questionnaire were optional, so not all totals for individual questions will match this total.

3.2. We asked respondents to select an option that described who they were. 37 respondents (16% of the total respondents) said they were parents of children at Pooles Park Primary School and 6% said they were staff members. Most selected 'other'.

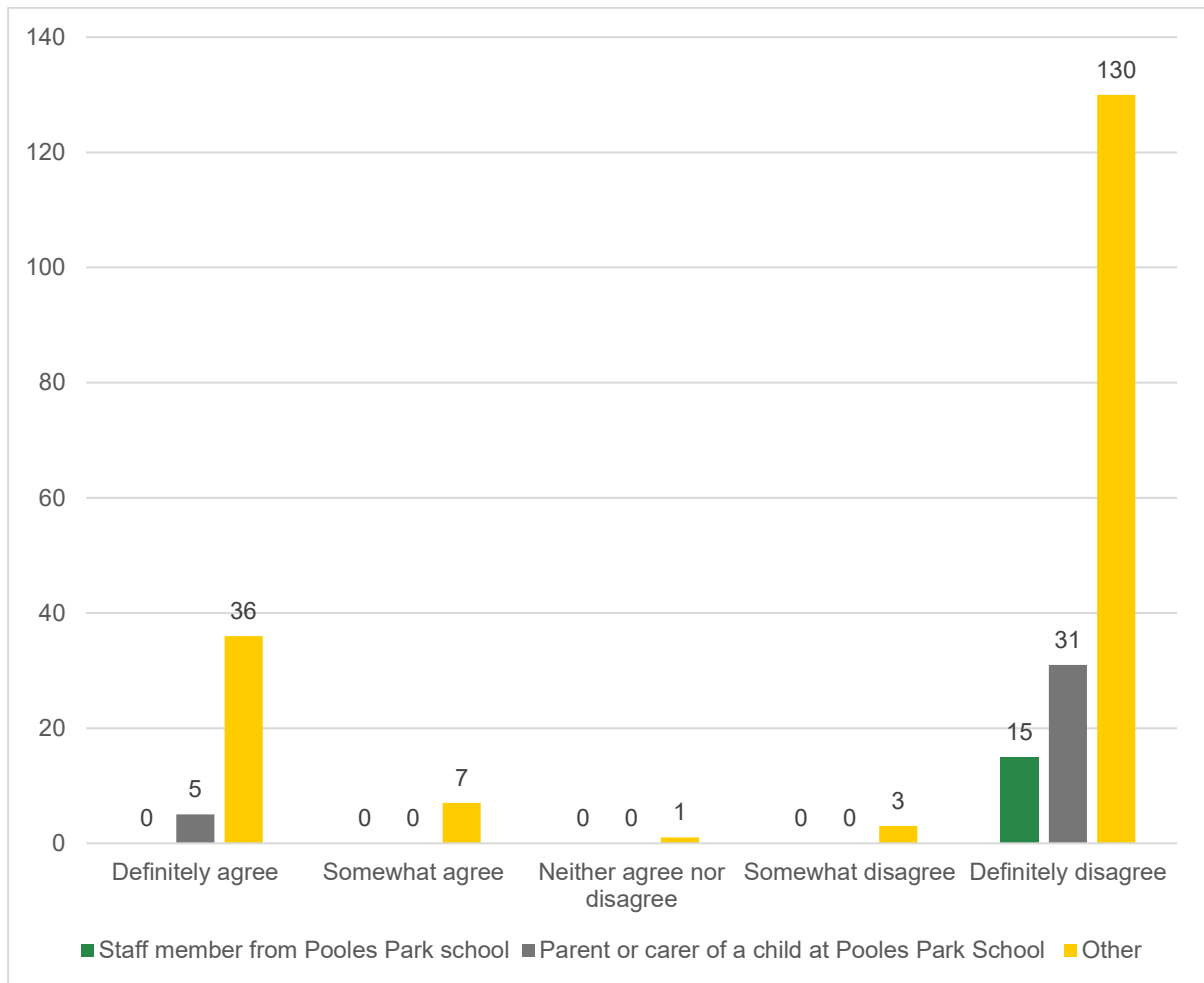
3.3. Chart 1 shows a breakdown of responses to how many respondents agreed with the statement: "I understand the reasons for the proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School". 10 parents and carers definitely agreed, and 18 parents/carers definitely disagreed.

3.4. **Chart 1:** I understand the reasons for the proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School



3.5. Chart 2 shows a breakdown of responses to how many respondents agreed with the statement: "I agree with the proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School". Five parents/carers definitely agreed with the proposal and 31 parents/carers definitely disagreed.

3.6. **Chart 2:** I agree with the proposal to close Pooles Park Primary School



4. Summary of questions, comments, and concerns

- 4.1. Respondents to the questionnaire were able to make additional comments. 139 respondents chose to leave additional comments. 62% of the comments were negative (opposed to the proposal), 19% were neutral and 13% were in support of the proposal.
- 4.2. We also invited respondents to send their comments to us by email to a dedicated mailbox. Three people emailed their comments, including one on behalf of 133 signatories to a petition and one submitting a presentation on the benefits of the school and garden to the community.
- 4.3. 83 people attended the stakeholder meetings¹ where they asked questions and fed back their views and concerns.
- 4.4. The table groups feedback received by theme showing a summary of written comments and verbal feedback at the stakeholder meetings.

¹ Some participants attended more than one event

4.5. Summary of comments and feedback

Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One respondent asked if the school community were given other forums for responding to the consultation in addition to the online form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant asked that the informal consultation be extended to account for parents who do not understand the proposal A participant requested that should the proposal proceed to the next stage, printed notifications about the proposal be shared with all residents in the local planning area and the Finsbury ward
Band stand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One respondent asked about the future of the band stand, a memorial to a former pupil 	
Consultation process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some respondents questioned the validity of the data in the proposal and suggested it was out of date Others criticised how the consultation was announced, including the methods for informing staff and parents and the local school community The petition signatories said that many parents couldn't engage with the consultation because interpreters were not provided for all first languages spoken by parents and interpreters were only provided for the last meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant asked about other options to the proposal and what evidence was needed to not close the school A participant asked when the decision was made to propose closure A participant suggested that it was bizarre that the proposers and the decision makers were the same people
Faith school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One respondent asked the council to consider converting the school to a faith school particularly an Islamic one which would serve the local community 	N/A

Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
Financial deficit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A respondent asked if the financial issues were due to the operating costs of a large building and if part of the building be used or funded another way • A few respondents suggested that the proposal is motivated by a desire to sell the site to developers and/or to raise funds for the council • Several respondents recognised how the school was no longer financially viable due to the operating costs and falling pupil numbers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant asked if the school had a three-year plan for getting out of deficit • A participant suggested that a shortfall of 107 children in reception across the planning area would only lead to £600,000 shortfall and they didn't understand why this meant the school was not financially viable • A participant asked if other schools in financial deficit are also at threat of being closed • A participant asked what would happen to the solar panels on the roof of the school
New pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A local resident what would happen to those due to start at the Pooles Park nursery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant wanted to know what would happen to those pupils who are due to start the school in September • A participant raised concerns about what would happen if pupil numbers in the local area increased and closing the school meant there wasn't enough capacity
Ofsted judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respondents said they didn't agree with the Ofsted judgement and that they thought this had influenced the proposal to close the school • Some felt that the Ofsted judgement didn't account for the COVID pandemic and the impact this has had on staff and pupils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants felt that the Ofsted judgement and other data like exam results don't reflect the other strengths and values of the school • A participant asked why Ofsted had rated the school inadequate • Participants spoke strongly about the outcomes for children at the school which go beyond attainment outcomes and are more about value-added outcomes

Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The petition signatories said they did not agree with our view on outcomes for children, which are based on educational outcomes Others recognised that the inadequate judgement coupled with declining pupil numbers meant the proposal was reasonable Some respondents criticised the support Islington had provided to the Pooles Park leadership and how this lack of support had contributed to the Ofsted rating Many respondents were hopeful that academisation would save the school Others recognised that academisation would not reverse the declining pupil numbers and opposed academisation because there are surplus places in the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants also challenged the school's attendance figures and suggested these didn't account for factors like local deprivation, domestic abuse, and drug addiction A participant asked if the local authority had looked at the number of former pupils that have gone to university A participant wanted to know about which multi-academy trusts had expressed an interest in the school and the process around this, including the Department for Education's role, and if a decision on academisation would impact on this proposal moving forward A participant asked about the Interim Executive Board appointed by the council A participant was concerned that the proposal had panicked parents who might now apply to other schools, which would undermine the academisation process
Process for moving school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A local resident asked if sibling groups could be moved together to another nearby school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant asked if they can decide what other school their child will go to Another asked what transition arrangements would be in place for children A participant asked if there would be enough places in other schools if all children stayed in Pooles Park school until December A parent was concerned that moving school's might affect their child's behaviour

Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
Pupil Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two respondents asked if amalgamation or federation had been considered rather than closure • Another compared pupil numbers to other local schools and asked how these schools were able to operate with low numbers • Some respondents recognised that there were too many local school places and not enough pupils to fill them • Others questioned why the school couldn't continue to operate with smaller class sizes, which is beneficial to children and if exceptions could be made to funding to keep the school open • One respondent was concerned about how the other schools in the area can cope with a large influx of new pupils from Pooles Park should it close • Another respondent suggested that Islington Council increase the amount of social housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants asked why numbers were falling and if other schools are closing because of falling pupil numbers • A participant asked why the council hadn't acted sooner when the data has long shown declining numbers • Others wanted to know why Pooles Park specifically had been selected for closure • A participant wanted to know what would happen if the school doesn't close, and does this mean another school would have to close because of pupil numbers • A participant asked why pupils from the other schools in the planning area couldn't be moved to this school • A participant said that this was an opportunity to have a smaller school with high pupil to teacher ratio for children with high needs. They asked whether this had been considered and why the local authority wasn't fighting for more money to support children • A participant asked if projected pupil numbers included new building developments in the local area • A participant asked if amalgamation with another local school had been considered • A participant asked if pupil numbers included data on the number of children with SEND or living in domestic refuge • A participant said that they thought smaller class sizes were better for children

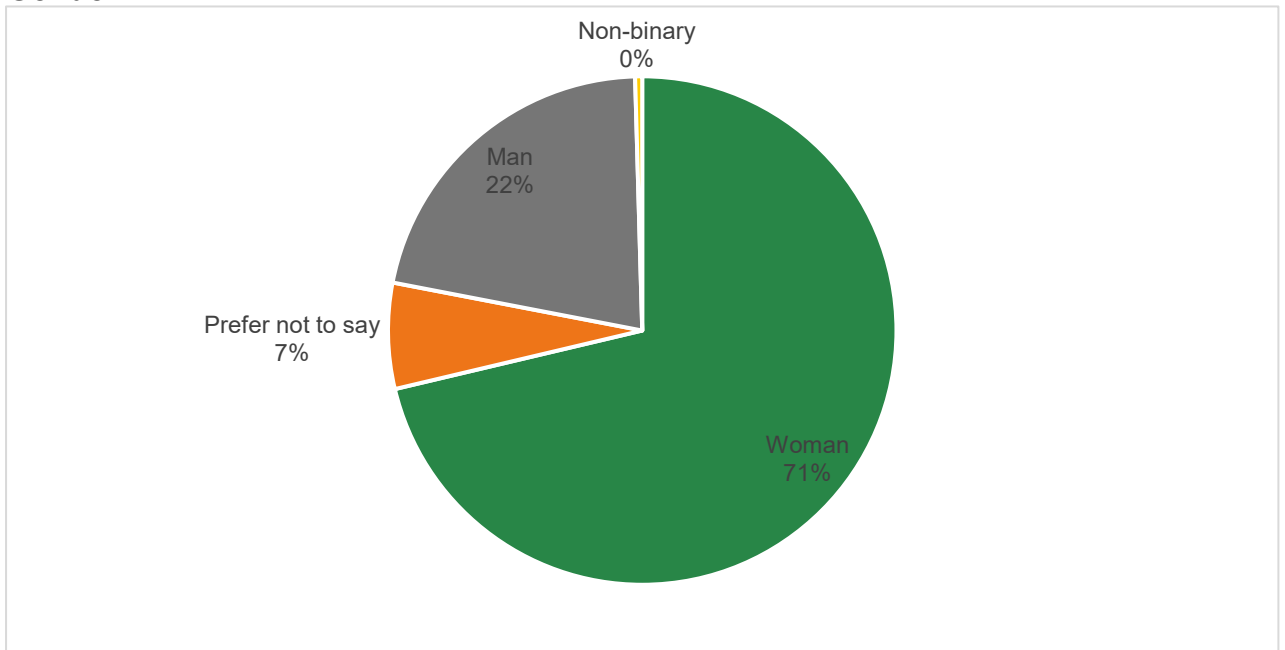
Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
School Garden and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many respondents spoke positively about the school's community garden and the impact this has on children's wellbeing • Some former pupils spoke of their positive experiences of the garden, including the skills and confidence the garden gave them • Respondents explained that the garden was a welcome resource for many children who had no access to any other outdoor space and the garden was the main reason for choosing Pooles Park for their children • Some spoke of the educational benefits of the garden, including how children learn about the environment, how to grow food and how insects pollinate vegetables • Others highlighted how many residents volunteer in the garden which includes maintaining a vegetable garden and that the garden has won multiple Islington in Bloom awards • The petition signatories asked for an official written undertaking that the garden will remain a community resource should the school close • Signatories argued that closing another school would be better, as Pooles Park is not on a polluted road and the 'garden school' would be a benefit for other children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A participant asked what plan was in place for the community garden should the school close • Participants at the community meeting spoke passionately about the community garden and the educational and mental health and wellbeing benefits the garden brings to pupils • They expressed how important the garden was as part of pupils' daily education: something that would be lost if the school was closed • The garden is a unique asset and no other school has anything like it – participants were concerned that pupils would move to another school that was 'a concrete jungle' • Participants also spoke about how Pooles Park was on the of the few schools away from a main road, which meant it was safer and children were less exposed to pollution • Participants were concerned about the impact moving schools would have on children's mental health
SEND support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some respondents commented positively on the support their children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants explained in detail the benefits the community garden had for children with SEND

Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
	<p>(SEND) had received from Pooles Park and the positive outcomes of this support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Others said the support for SEND children at Pooles Park was inadequate and suggested that children who have additional needs would be better served at another school Some were concerned about transition arrangements for children with SEND A respondent suggested that the school be redesigned to accommodate good provision for children with SEND at a lower cost than building a new school or expanding other existing schools 	
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respondents spoke highly of their experience of the school staff and the pastoral support they have provided to children Some were concerned about future employment opportunities for staff and hoped they would be retained in another Islington school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant asked what documented protocol do we have in place to transfer the school's knowledge base to other schools
The school site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The petition signatories expressly stated their support for a school to remain on the site and that if the school does close they are concerned that the land will be sought after by property developers Signatories asked that if homes are built on the site that all homes are for social housing and affordable homes, with zero luxury homes. They also asked that all parents whose children attended Pooles Park school in 2023 who are currently on the housing waiting list are given first choice/refusal or any homes built on the site. Signatories offered the example of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A participant asked if part of the school building could be used for something else to raise funds for the school

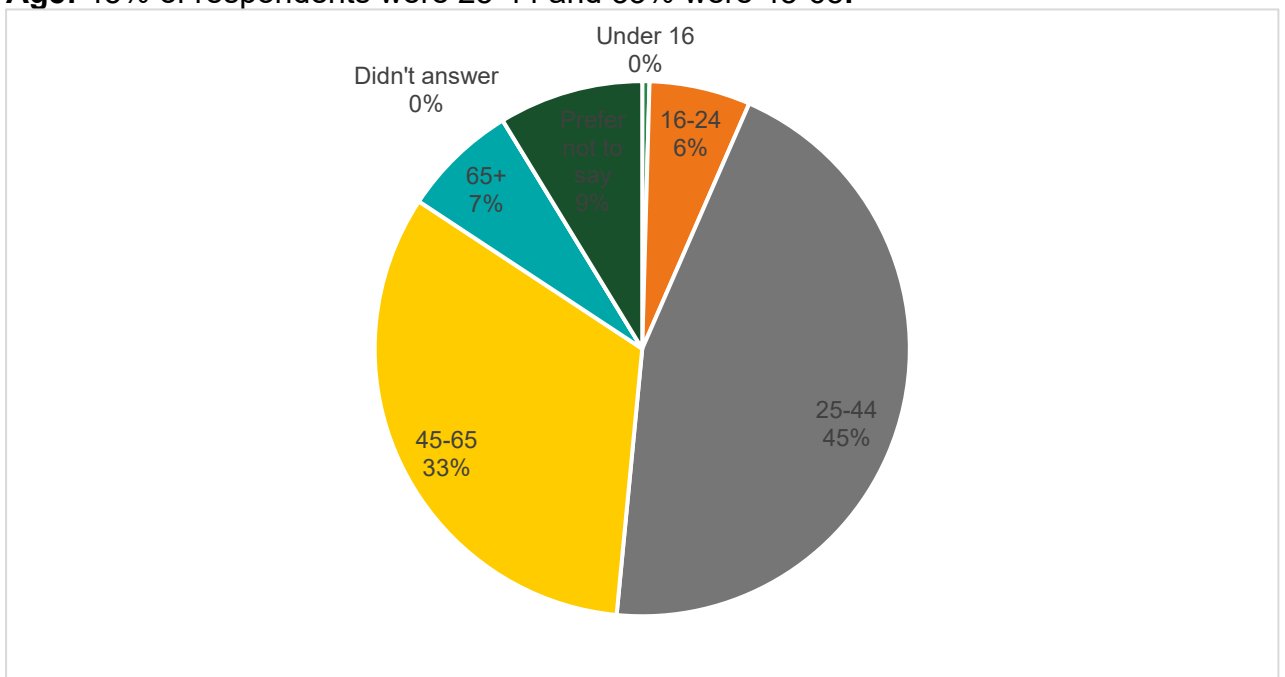
Theme	Summary of written comments	Summary of verbal comments
	<p>development on the former site of Stationers' Company's School in Hornsey, now known as Stationers' Park, and asked that the council commit to visiting this site before committing to any development on the Pooles Park site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• One respondent was concerned about the impact any new housing development would have on local parking and if any high-rise buildings would affect their view	

5. Equalities data

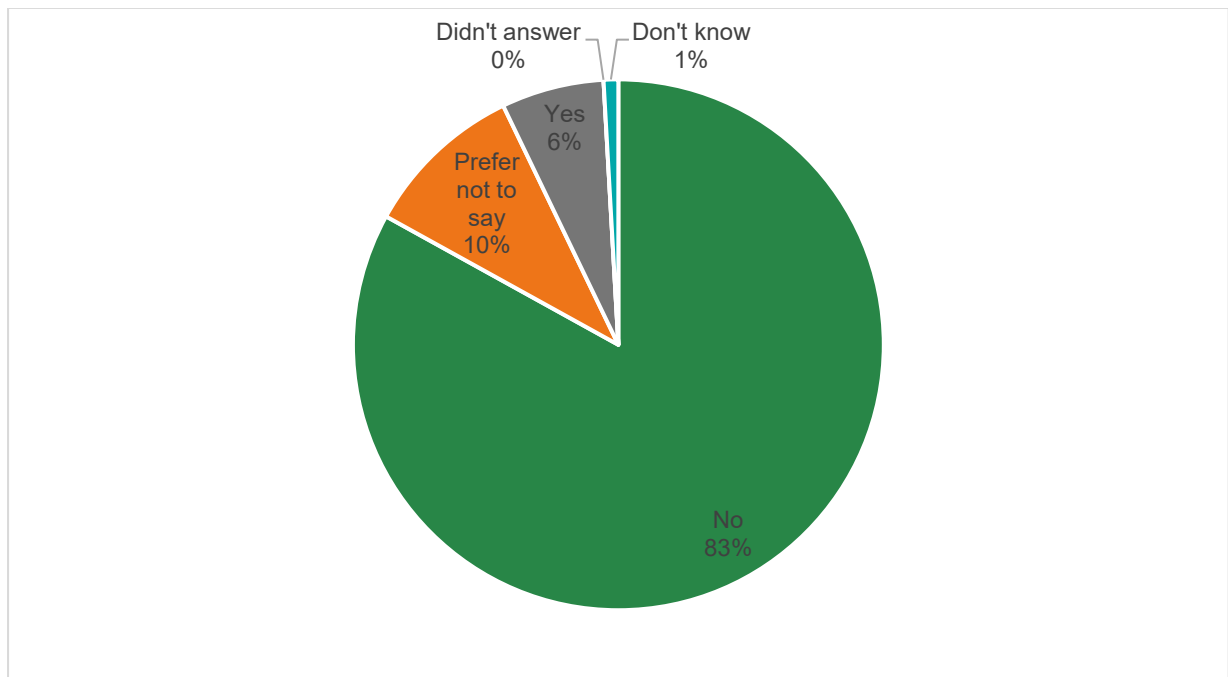
- 5.1. To understand which groups the consultation reached, and to help us identify if any groups are under-represented, we asked respondents to tell us about them. The charts show the breakdown of responses. We can compare this data to the information we know about the school and consider if additional work is needed to reach any under-represented groups should the proposal proceed to the next stage.
- 5.2. Please note that all these questions were optional, and respondents didn't have to answer them if they chose not to.
- 5.3. **Gender:** 71% of those who answered were women and 22% were men.



- 5.4. **Age:** 45% of respondents were 25-44 and 33% were 45-65.

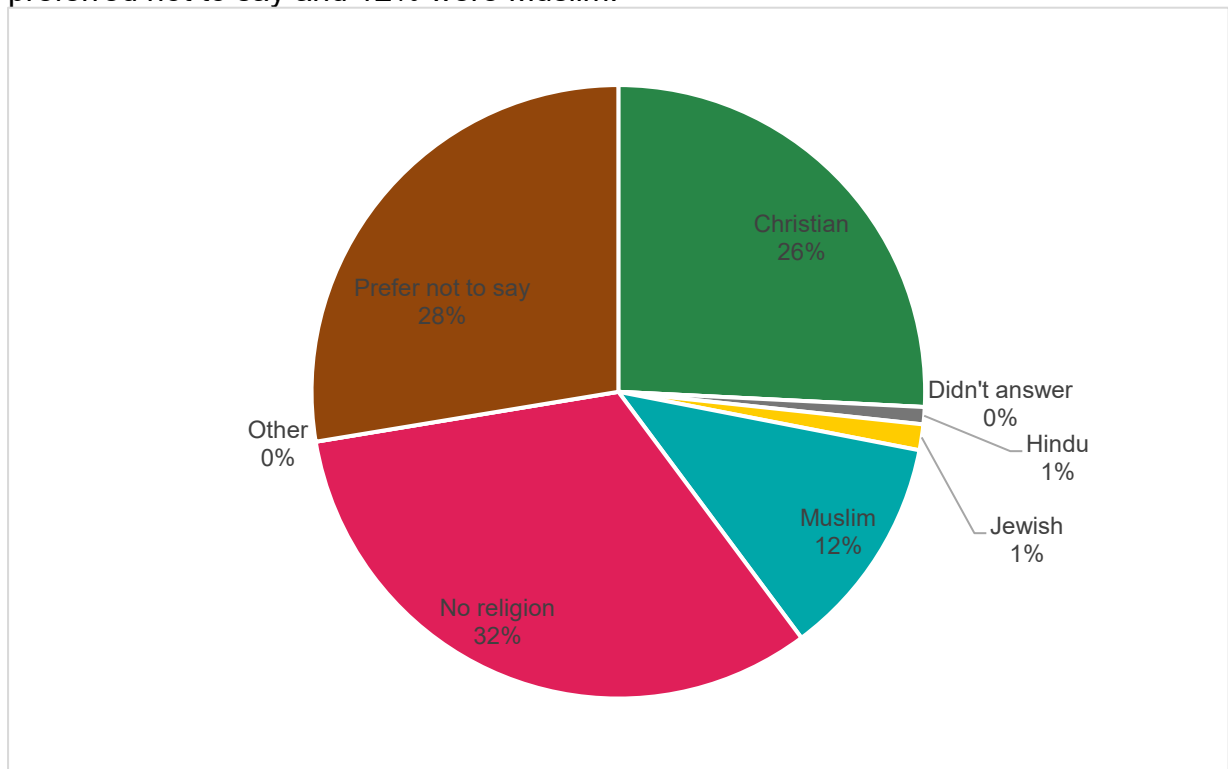


5.5. **Physical or mental health conditions:** 83% of respondents said 'no' to the question "do you have any physical or mental health conditions, impairments or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?"

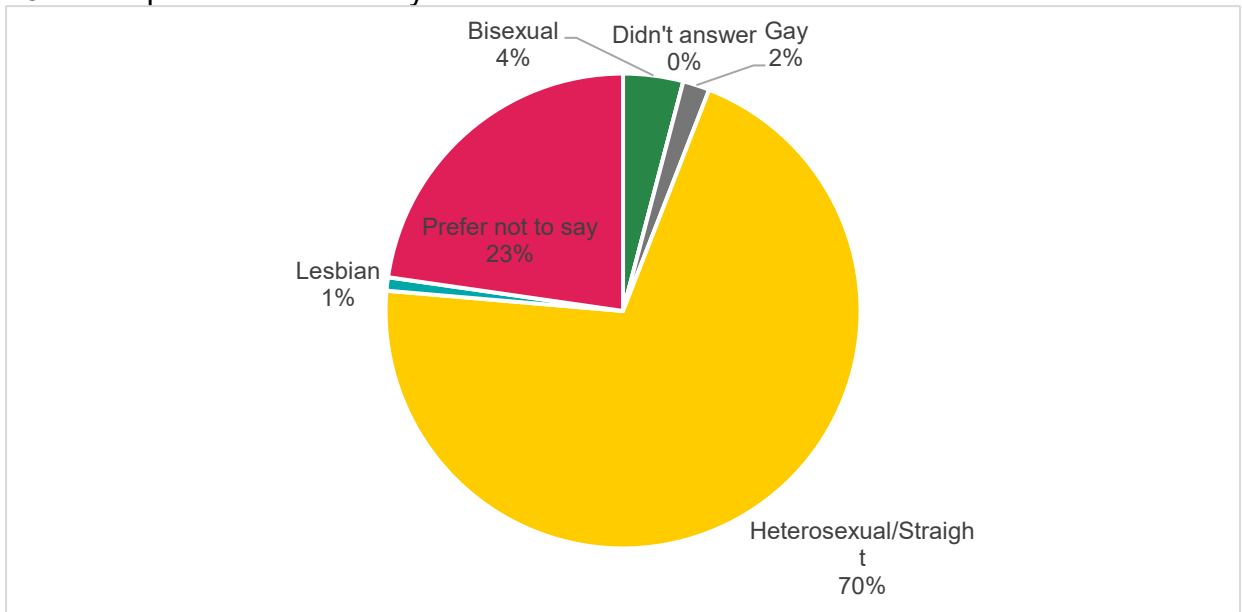


5.6.

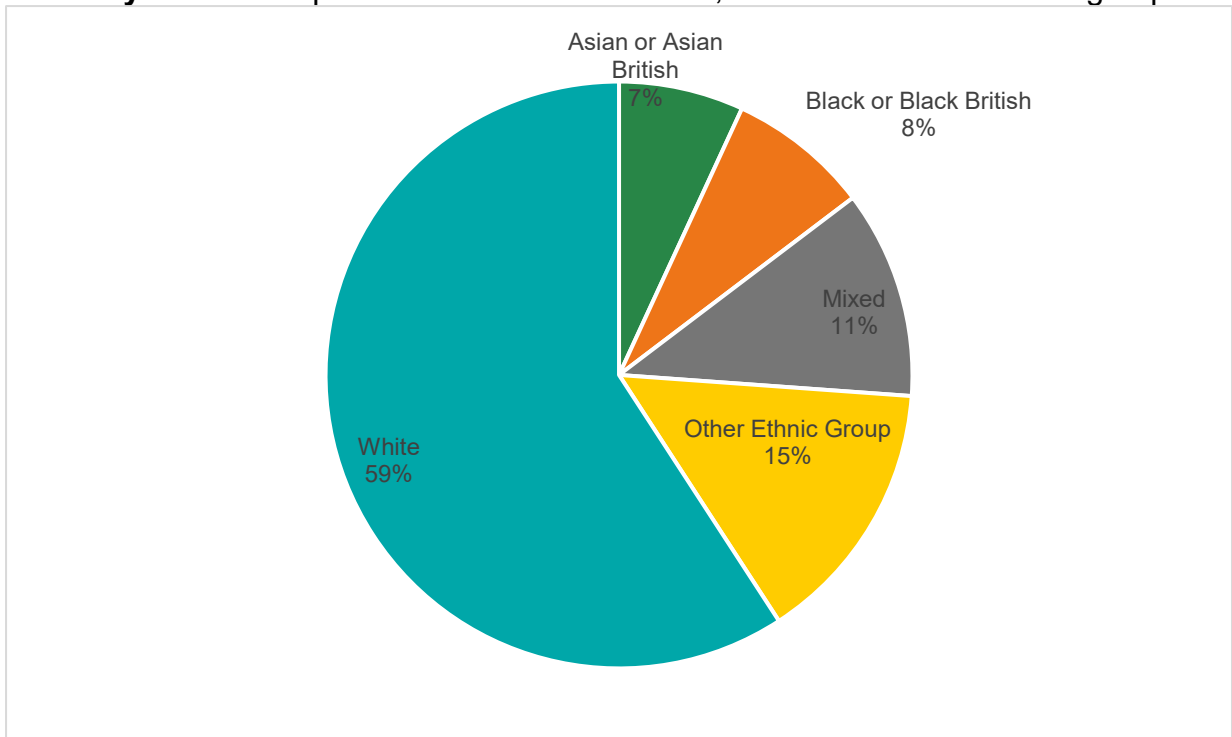
5.7. **Religion or belief:** 32% of respondents stated they had no religion, 26% Christian, 28% preferred not to say and 12% were Muslim.

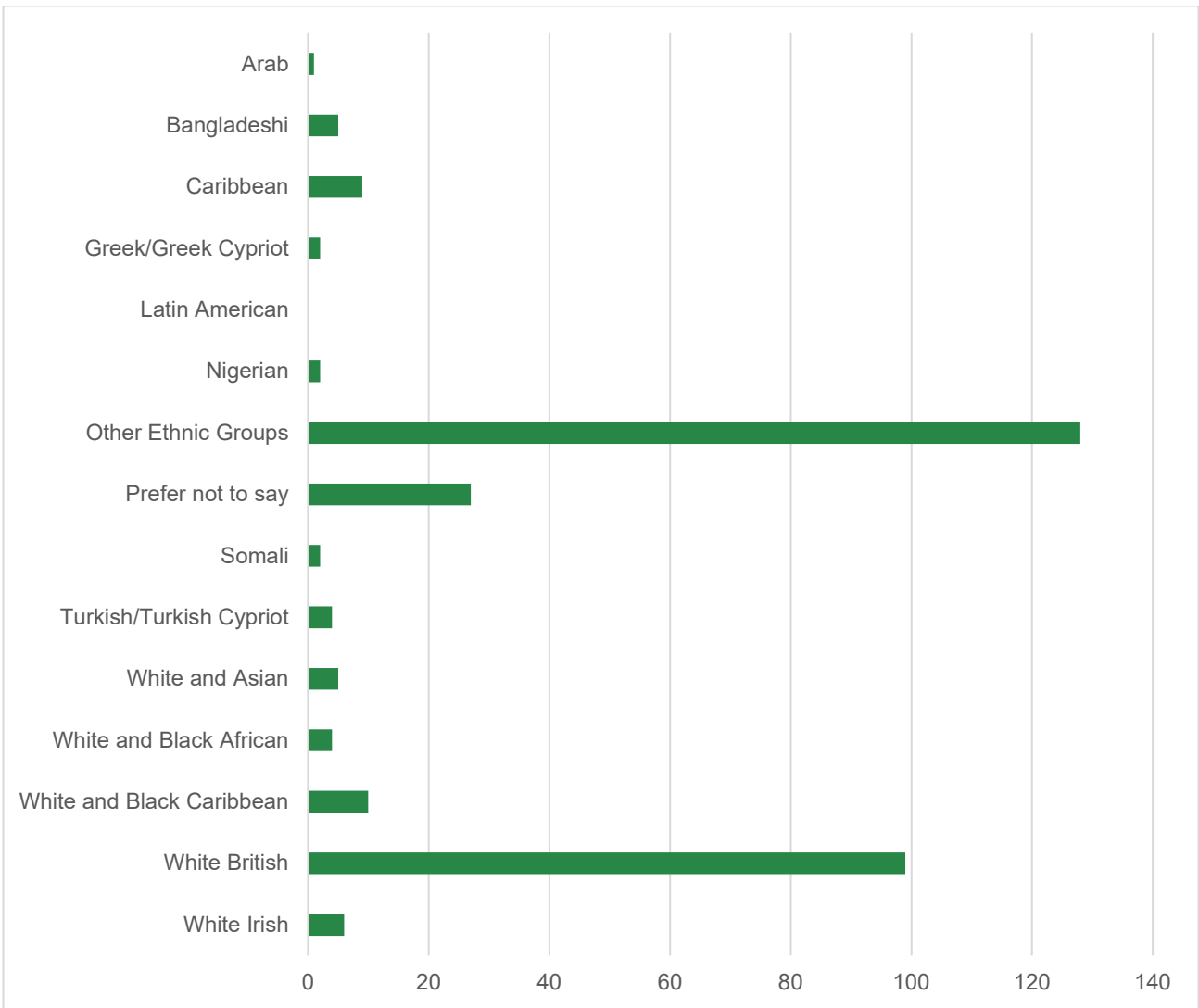


5.8. **Sexual orientation:** 70% of respondents identified as heterosexual/straight, followed by 23% who preferred not to say.



5.9. **Ethnicity:** 59% of respondents identified as White, and 15% as other ethnic groups.





5.10.