



# Consultation on the future of Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School

**7 November – 12 December 2023**

Please give us your views on our proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024.

Give your views by completing our consultation online at [www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/blessed-sacrament](http://www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/blessed-sacrament)

You can also email your views to [schoolconsult@islington.gov.uk](mailto:schoolconsult@islington.gov.uk)

You must submit your response by **12 December 2023**.

## Summary of the proposal

- Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School doesn't have enough children in each class
- We are proposing to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024
- We will offer all Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School pupils a place at another nearby good Islington School, including other Roman Catholic Primary schools
- 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 Blessed Sacrament RC 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 Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024.**

This 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 11 January 2024.

Please read this information carefully and respond to our short survey before the closing date of **12 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 close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024.

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School has many spare school places, with pupil numbers set to fall further still in the coming years.

As a result, Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School will receive reduced funding. This is because 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.

# Pupil projections and numbers

We plan for school places by dividing Islington into six different planning areas. Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is in Planning Area 4: Barnsbury.

## Barnsbury Planning Area

Barnsbury has one of the highest levels of surplus capacity in Islington, with vacancies of 29% in Reception and 31% across all school years. In other words, almost one in three places are not taken at schools in the local area. 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%
<b>Planning Area 4: Barnsbury</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>30%</b>
Planning Area 5: Canonbury	340	72	21%
Planning Area 6: Finsbury	300	70	23%
<b>Totals</b>	<b>2,175</b>	<b>536</b>	<b>25%</b>

Each school must publish the maximum number of pupils it can expect. This is called the Published Admission Number - or PAN. The minimum number this can be is 30 for each year group, meaning the school is a one-form entry school.

Table 2 shows the PAN for each school in the Barnsbury planning area, including Blessed Sacrament, and the number of pupils in Reception, based on the provisional returns for the October 2023 School Census.

**Table 2:** Spare places by school in the Barnsbury Planning area

School Name	Published Admission Number for Reception	Number of places taken in Reception (September 2023)	Percentage vacancy in Reception (September 2023)	Total number of pupils from Reception to Year 6
<b>Blessed Sacrament</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>76</b>
Laycock	50	36	28%	254
St Andrews	30	22	27%	172
Thornhill	60	60	0%	415
Vittoria	45	20	56%	220
Winton	30	27	10%	191
<b>Total for the planning area</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>1,328</b>

The 2023 School Roll Projections predicted there would be 1,358 pupils on roll at schools in the planning area in 2023/24, so the provisional October Census data indicates that there are 30 fewer pupils attending schools in Barnsbury than expected - equivalent to one full class.. This is an 8% fall on the roll numbers from the January 2023 Census, compared to the 5% fall that was projected. The School Roll Projections are forecasting the roll numbers for Planning Area 4 (Barnsbury) will continue to fall across the next five years, with falls of between 3% and 6% a year.

## The number of pupils at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School

Blessed Sacrament has the lowest number of pupils in Islington. From Reception to Year 6 the school has 210 places but only 76 pupils, meaning 64% of places aren't filled. Table 3 shows the number of pupils in each year group, based on provisional data from October 2023.

**Table 3:** number of pupils at Blessed Sacrament by year group (October 2023)

Year Group	Nursery	R	1	2	3	4	5	6
Number of Pupils	3	6	9	8	13	9	19	12

These figures represent an 18% fall in pupil numbers since October 2022.

We must take action to address these falling numbers and to ensure that all children can continue to go to financially secure and viable schools.

At some schools, we can consider reducing the PAN. Unfortunately, this is not an option we can consider at Blessed Sacrament as it is already a one-form entry school with a PAN of 30.

## 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.

Smaller schools – like Blessed Sacrament – are particularly vulnerable to changes in pupil numbers.

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 Blessed Sacrament RC Primary 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 and will also support parents to secure a place for their child at another Roman Catholic school if this is their preference.**

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 if the proposal is agreed.

**There will be no changes this school year.**

Any pupil currently in Year 6 will complete their primary schooling at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School.



## Consultation timeline

### Informal consultation: 7 November – 12 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: 11 January 2024

The council Executive will consider all responses to the consultation and then at its public meeting on 11 January 2024, 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 spring.

### Final Decision: Spring 2024

The final decision would be made by the council Executive at its meeting in March. If approved, Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School would close on 31 July 2024.

## How to give your views

Give your views by completing our online consultation form at [www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/blessed-sacrament](http://www.letstalk.islington.gov.uk/blessed-sacrament)

You must submit your response by 12 December 2023.