

# 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 discontinue Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School
Reference number (if applicable)	N/A
Service Area	Children's Services
Date assessment completed	16 February 2024

Before completing the EQIA please read the guidance and FAQs. For further help and advice please contact [equalities@islington.gov.uk](mailto: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 school's 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 close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024.

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

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is in the south of the borough in the Caledonian ward and is the smallest primary school in Islington, having been significantly impacted by falling rolls over several years.

Blessed Sacrament is directly next door to Vittoria primary school which recently amalgamated with Copenhagen Primary School. Even after this amalgamation, there remains a surplus capacity of 30% in the local area, meaning three in ten seats in classes are not taken.

Blessed Sacrament has the lowest number of pupils on roll in both the local area and in Islington overall. Based on the October 2023 census, from Reception to Year 6 there are 76 pupils, against 210 places, giving an overall surplus capacity of 64%. Reducing the PAN is not a possibility as the school is already a one-form entry school.

When closing a school, we must follow statutory guidelines ([Opening and closing maintained schools \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)). 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.

Blessed Sacrament meets the criteria as it has surplus capacity that can be absorbed elsewhere, there is no projected demand in the long term and as such, the school is no longer considered viable.

The first stage to closing a school is to complete an informal consultation. We ran an informal consultation from 7 November to 12 December 2023. This was published on our consultation site, [Let's Talk Islington](#), and translated versions of the proposal were provided in Ahmaric and Turkish. We held seven meetings for parents and carers and members of the local community.

Unfortunately, the school and Roman Catholic Diocese did not support or cooperate with the consultation and meetings did not take place at the school. Instead, we organised meetings at nearby venues, including NRC Medical School (Half-Moon Crescent) and the Lewis Carroll Children's Library (Copenhagen Street). We also wrote directly to parents to share information about the proposal to them, with a link to the web page.

96 people responded to the online consultation and 10 people attended the consultation meetings.

Most respondents to the consultation disagreed with the proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School: 31% 'definitely' or 'somewhat' agreed, 67% 'definitely' or 'somewhat'

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disagreed and 2% neither agreed, or disagreed with the proposal. When filtering the responses to include only parents and carers from the school, 12% 'definitely' agreed with the proposal and 88% 'somewhat' or 'definitely' disagreed.

The level of opposition to the proposal was expected given the nature of the proposal, nevertheless, we maintain that closing the school is in the best interests of the school community and especially the pupils. By closing the school, we will reduce capacity in the area and ensure the financial and long-term viability of other schools in the local area. Further, we know that there are three other Roman Catholic schools with vacancies that are under 1.5 miles away from Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School and closing the school will not detrimentally impact parental choice where faith is a deciding factor.

Based on the feedback from this consultation, we recommended that the proposal move to the next stage and that Islington issue a formal proposal to close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School along with three commitments:

1. To offer individual support to pupils and their families with transition from the point a decision is taken through to the settling into a new school
2. To work with local headteachers of nearby Islington schools, including Islington Roman Catholic primary schools, to provide support to the school and its families. There are places available for every child at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School in nearby Islington schools, all of which would provide this support should the proposal to close proceed.
3. To separately offer to all parents of current Year 5 pupils the option to move this class in bulk to another school, either to join another Year 6 class in September 2024 or as a separate bulge class in another school. This is because this is the largest year group at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School and will have only one year of primary schooling left. Moving them together as a group would mitigate the impact of their transition ahead of a further transition when they move to Secondary School.

This proposal was published on 18 January 2024 at our consultation website, Let's Talk Islington, along with a statement setting out how copies of the proposal could be obtained, how anybody can object to, or comment on the proposal, the dates for the representation period, and the address to which objections or comments should be submitted. We also published a brief notice containing the website address of the full proposal in the Islington Gazette on 18 January and the Islington Tribune on 19 January.

The Representation period ran for four weeks, from 18 January to 15 February 2024 inclusive. We received five representations during this period, including a response on behalf the Diocese of Westminster.

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The respondents raised concerns about the cost of new school uniforms; the long-term plan for the school buildings; the impact the transition would have on the existing Year 5 group; the impact on staff; the impact on all children's mental health; parental choice following the closure of a Roman Catholic school; and consideration of attainment.

Now that the representation period has ended, the final stage in the statutory process for closing a school is to make a final decision. The decision maker can: reject the proposal; approve the proposal without modification; approve the proposal with such modifications as they think desirable; or approve the proposal, with or without modification, subject to certain conditions being met.

We are recommending that the Executive approve the proposal and close Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School on 31 July 2024. In addition to the three commitments already made in the proposal, based on the comments received, we recommend an additional modification to support parents with the cost of new school uniforms:

4. To offer financial support to all parents with the cost of purchasing new uniform for their children in their new school.

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. Closing Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School will ensure other local schools are better placed for the longer-term as local capacity is reduced to align better with existing and projected pupil numbers.

The intended beneficiaries of this proposal are pupils attending Islington schools who will be offered places in an alternative good and sustainable local 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 staff at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School.

The proposal will change where current Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School pupils attend school, potentially leading to stress and anxiety for pupils and families. As of October 2023, there are 76 pupils at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School and there is enough capacity in nearby schools for these pupils to be transferred, including as whole year groups.

The proposal would also impact on staff currently working at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School as it will lead to staff redundancies. The annual School Workforce Census indicates that in November 2022 there are 17 staff working at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School (13.35 Full Time Equivalent (FTE)) which includes both teachers and support staff.

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

Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School has a similar proportion of male and female students to the primary borough average (49% female, 51% male).

	Blessed Sacrament	Islington Primaries
Male	57% (43)	51%
Female	43% (33)	49%

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

#### Free School Meal eligibility

Across all Islington primary schools, 43.9% of pupils were eligible for Free School Meals (FSM) in October 2023. Islington tends to have relatively high levels of FSM eligibility compared to other boroughs, with the third highest proportion of primary pupils eligible in the country in most recent comparator figures (for January 2023).

At 58%, the proportion of children eligible for FSM at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is significantly higher than the borough average.

	Blessed Sacrament	Islington Primaries
% FSM eligible	57.9% (44)	43.9%

#### Special Educational Needs

Across Islington primary schools, 17.3% of pupils were at the Special Educational Needs (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). 5.5% of Islington primary school pupils had an EHCP. Therefore, 22.8% of Islington primary school pupils were known to have Special Educational Needs. At 33%, the number of children with SEN at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is higher than the borough average, although the proportion with an EHCP was lower than the borough average.

	Blessed Sacrament	Islington Primaries
SEN Support	30.3% (23)	17.3%
EHCP	2.6% (2)	5.5%

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

Total SEN	32.9% (25)	22.8%
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## English as an Additional Language

39.5% of Islington's primary school pupils had English as an Additional Language (EAL) in October 2023. The proportion of children with EAL at Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School is level with the borough average.

	Blessed Sacrament	Islington Primaries
% EAL	39.5% (30)	39.5%

## Ethnicity

As at January 2023, out of 100 pupils in all year groups:

	Blessed Sacrament	Islington Primaries
White-British	28.0% (28)	26.2%
White-Turkish	4.0% (4)	4.0%
White-Other	8.0% (8)	13.7%
Kurdish	0.0% (0)	0.7%
Asian-Bangladeshi	1.0% (1)	5.3%
Asian-Other	0.0% (0)	1.9%
Black-Caribbean	4.0% (4)	4.2%
Black-African	36.0% (36)	14.6%
Black-Other	1.0% (1)	1.7%
Mixed - White & Black-Caribbean	9.0% (9)	4.2%
Mixed-Other	5.0% (5)	15.2%
Chinese	0.0% (0)	1.5%
Other	4.0% (4)	6.4%
Not stated / refused	0.0% (0)	1.4%

## Pupil residence

The pupils on roll at Blessed Sacrament, as at October 2023, are predominantly from the Barnsbury and Caledonian wards within Islington.

## Religion

Data on religion is not collected in the School Census. In the current reception and in the offers for September 2023, Blessed Sacrament has had no offers based on Faith Criteria.



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

This is the only catholic primary school in Islington where this is the case. Across the seven catholic primary schools overall, 43% of offers for September 2023 are based on Faith criteria.

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 Blessed Sacrament RC Primary School, 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.</p>	<p>Pupils from Blessed Sacrament will be offered a school place at a nearby good school that has long term financial sustainability for all primary aged pupils. This includes the newly amalgamated Vittoria school.</p> <p>Neighbouring schools, including Vittoria, have a high level of surplus capacity and it will be possible to offer the option for all pupils to move together as whole classes and groups.</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?
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 <a href="#">National Autistic Society</a> (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 there are available alternative places at neighbouring schools within an appropriate distance (less than 1.5 miles).</p>	<p>An initial assessment of children with EHC Plans shows that their needs can be met at neighbouring schools. The SEND team will work with individual children and their parents/carers to support their transition, including identifying a tailored list of alternative schools suitable to the child's needs as set out in their plans if necessary.</p>

Race or ethnicity	<p>Positive and Negative</p>	<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 <b>over-represented</b> at Blessed Sacrament compared to the borough overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-White &amp; Black Caribbean</li> </ul> <p>The following ethnic groups are statistically significantly <b>under-represented</b> at Blessed Sacrament compared to the borough overall:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed-Other</li> </ul> <p>Like most Islington schools, Blessed Sacrament has a 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>	<p>We mitigated this by offering in-person meetings for parents and carers and shared information about the proposal with parents through direct mail and translated the proposal document into the most common second languages (Amharic and Turkish) on the consultation website.</p> <p>We also wrote directly to all parents when we issued the formal proposal and organised two meetings at the Lewis Carroll Children’s Library to answer any questions or concerns parents/carers had.</p>
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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?
Religion or belief (include no faith)	Neutral	Blessed Sacrament RC Primary school is a Roman Catholic school that is part of the Westminster Diocese. Closing the school will limit parental choice in the area.	The neighbouring schools welcome students from diverse communities and faiths. There are also vacancies at other Roman Catholic schools in the borough. For example, St John Evangelist is less than one mile away and had a capacity of 18 per cent in Reception in October 2023 and St Peter and St Paul (1.5 miles away) has a capacity of 15 per cent. Please note, however, that in 2022 and 2023, no offers in Reception were made at Blessed Sacrament based on Faith criterion.
Gender and gender reassignment (male, female, or non-binary)	Neutral	There should not be any difference in the impact on different genders. The school is mixed gender.	

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?
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 school's closure and given the opportunity to participate in all and any staff meetings and support workshops. This will be managed by our HR services in consultation with the school leadership team.

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>Blessed Sacrament has relatively high levels of Free School Meal eligibility, which is higher than the borough average.</p> <p>The mapping of pupils' home residences shows that most pupils live within 500m of the school site.</p> <p>There are three nearby primary schools within 500m of Blessed Sacrament, and six other catholic schools in the borough, ranging from 1km (St John Evangelist) to almost 4km (St Joseph's) away.</p>	<p>Pupils will be offered places in alternative good and sustainable local schools.</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 current pupils from Blessed Sacrament will be offered a place in a nearby school rated as 'Good'.

Separately, we will offer the parents/carers of the current Year 5 group, the option to move collectively to another school, or to facilitate another school to establish a 'bulge' class for this group.

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. This includes provision in other local Roman Catholic Primary schools, meaning parental choice will not be impacted by this closure.

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 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 school.

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

Please provide:

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

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)

It is a statutory requirement to consult any parties the proposer thinks appropriate before publishing a proposal to close a school. In accordance with this requirement, we ran an informal consultation on this proposal from 7 November to 15 December 2023.

The statutory process then requires for the proposer to publish a statutory proposal within 12 months of the initial consultation period. We published a statutory proposal on 18 January 2024 at our consultation website, Let's Talk Islington, along with a statement setting out how copies of the proposal could be obtained, how anybody can object to, or comment on the proposal, the dates for the representation period, and the address to which objections or comments should be submitted. We also published a brief notice containing the website address of the full proposal in the Islington Gazette on 18 January and the Islington Tribune on 19 January. The Representation period ran for four weeks, from 18 January to 15 February 2024 inclusive.

Now that the representation period has ended, the final stage in the statutory process for closing a school is to make a final decision. The decision maker can: reject the proposal; approve the proposal without modification; approve the proposal with such modifications as

Please provide:

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- Key findings or feedback (if completed)

they think desirable; or approve the proposal, with or without modification, subject to certain conditions being met

## 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
We will offer support to the Roman Catholic Diocese to ensure other Roman Catholic schools in Islington are financially viable	Learning and Achievement	Ongoing

Please send the completed EQIA to [equalities@islington.gov.uk](mailto: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	MATTHEW BEEVOR	16 February 2024
Fairness and Equality Team	Monika Milewska	Monika Milewska	19 February 2024
Director or Head of Service			