

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	26 March 2024

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

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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

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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.

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 then moved to the next stage of the process, and Islington Council issued a formal proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools on 27 February. Then followed a four-week representation period during which anyone could submit any comments or objections to the proposal.

We received 15 comments in the representation period. Three comments were in support of the proposal due to the rationale of the proposal, the location of Montem, and because of their experience of Montem School. 12 comments were opposed to the proposal and raised concerns about the impact on children with SEND or based in the Additionally Resourced Provision (ARP) based at Montem, the impact on staff, and spoke highly of their experience at Montem, including attainment results and pastoral support from the school. They also raised concerns about the long-term viability of other schools in the area, and if children will face another school closure.

The proposal will affect the ARP based at Montem, which will need to move to a new location, and the Edventure Collaborative which would need to be dissolved and a new governing board established for Drayton Park Primary School.

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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.

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. By amalgamating Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools we can better ensure the school's long-term viability.

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%

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%

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

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%
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.</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>Both schools have children with a social worker, or who are children looked after. These children may be particularly affected by the closure as they transition to another school.</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> <p>Our Children in Need, Children Looked After, and Bright Futures (early help) services have contacted all children with a social worker or who are known to those services and are enrolled at either Duncombe or Montem to offer any additional support needed.</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 representation period if the council intends to propose closure or amalgamation.

The first stage informal consultation ran from 15 November to 20 December 2023 during which any person could give their views on the proposal to amalgamate Duncombe and Montem Primary Schools. The feedback from this consultation was then considered by the council's Executive who then decided to proceed to the next step to issue a formal proposal. The formal statutory notice was issued on 27 February 2024 and a further four-week representation period followed when anyone can submit their views.

Now that this representation period has ended, the Executive will now 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
Our Children in Need, Children Looked After, and Bright Futures (Early Help) services will support all children known to	Safeguarding and Family Support	Ongoing

Action	Responsible team or officer	Deadline
those services, including all children with a social worker		

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>	26 March 2024
Fairness and Equality Team	Eloise Hall	E.Hall	28 March 2024
Director or Head of Service	Alison Cramer	A Cramer	27 March 2024