

Title: Consultation on the proposed closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools

Report for:
Item number: 17

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Ward(s) affected: Crouch End, Stroud Green, Hornsey and Highgate

**Report for Key/
Non Key Decision:** Key Decision

1 Describe the current issue under consideration

- 1.1 Following years of growth, the number of primary aged children joining Haringey primary schools has been in steady decline since 2014, a trend observed across London. Primary pupil rolls in Haringey have reduced by over 2,000 in just 5 years: 21,300 in 2019 to 19,100 in 2024 (January school census data) and pupil numbers are forecast to continue falling until at least 2028¹.
- 1.2 Both St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are substantive two form entry (fe) Voluntary Aided Catholic schools located at Oakington Way, London, N8 9EP. St Peter in Chains Infant School is federated with St Gildas' Junior school. Both schools have the same headteacher and governing body. Since 2019, the number of pupils on roll has dropped significantly at both schools. From April 2024, some year groups have been merged, and the governing body moved the infant school to the federation's junior school site on Oakington Way in September 2024.
- 1.3 Due to the sustained fall in rolls over several years, the local authority considers that the schools are no longer financially viable. The impact of falling rolls with fewer children creates serious challenges for school leaders and governing bodies. School funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll, and falling rolls equate to reduced funding. This has meant that more and more schools are now facing serious financial pressures after

¹ Data provided to us by the Great London Authority (GLA) and London Councils all point to a significant and sustained period of reduction in demand for reception places, which has implications for school budgets and standards. The fall in demand reflects the decline in the birth rate since 2012 and changes in migration patterns in London. Further information on Haringey's school roll projections can be found in our [2024 School Place Planning Report](#).

year-on-year decline to their roll resulting in schools such as St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools falling into financial deficit. This impacts on the efficient running of schools, financial stability, resilience and education standards.

- 1.4 The purpose of this report is to set out the reasons for consulting on the closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and to seek agreement from Council's Cabinet to commence consultation on this.

2 Cabinet Member Introduction

- 2.1 Every child and young person, wherever they live in our borough, deserves an excellent education and, as a Council, we are committed to supporting our schools to continue to deliver high-quality teaching, learning and support across Haringey.
- 2.2 We have some of the best performing primary schools in the country and we are immensely proud of the outcomes for our children and young people. In 2023, 73.2% of Haringey Early Years pupils achieved GLD (Good Level of Development), which was ranked 7th highest in the country (from the 152 local authorities). This year this has increased to 73.5%. 82% of Haringey Year 1 pupils achieved the phonics standard in 2023, ranking them 17th in the country and this year it has improved to 83.8%. This is a credit to our children, families, and schools, and we will continue to work in partnership with all our schools to raise standards and attainment.
- 2.3 In recent years, as widely reported, Haringey, like many other London local authority (LA) areas, has been experiencing a significant decrease in pupil numbers, which has caused some schools to face serious and irreversible financial and sustainability pressures. The critical London wide factors of lower birth rates; the cap on rent benefits; families leaving the capital as a result of the housing crisis; Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in a reduction in demand for primary school places in the borough which is no fault of the Council or our schools.
- 2.4 School leaders and the Council in recent years have been working to mitigate the risks that arise from falling rolls where schools fall into financial deficit. Haringey officers have been working with schools locally to progress a number of approaches, with a focus on preventing the escalation of risk to those in scope for potential closure or amalgamation. The approaches used so far include measures to reduce costs such as restructuring school staffing levels, reducing the amount of available support staff, limiting extracurricular activity such as school trips, 'vertical grouping' by combining different year groups in some schools, formally reducing and capping reception and in-year classes, and for some schools the need to agree financial deficit recovery plans with the local authority. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone in Haringey's educational system for their often, challenging work,

as we have worked through these existing decisions and now start to explore the even more difficult proposal outlined in this paper.

- 2.5 Data since 2012 shows an acute decline in demand for Catholic primary schools compared to non-faith schools in the borough. In 2012 the number of first place preferences for Catholic primary schools was 437. This has dropped to 182 by 2024, thus 2024 demand for Catholic primary school places represents only 42% of what it was in 2012. By contrast demand for non-Faith schools in Haringey in 2012 and 2024 was 2,313 and 2,142 respectively, 93% of the demand in 2012.
- 2.6 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient high quality school places for our children, and that places are planned effectively. This financial pressure has a significant impact on our schools and threatens the stability and quality of our education system. We must continue to ensure that every single child has access to an excellent education that allows them to fulfil their potential and achieve their ambitions. This is why we must now begin to consider the difficult option outlined in this report for St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools.
- 2.7 Significant concerns have been raised about the long-term sustainability in terms of the risks to the school's financial viability and its ability to attract pupils to the school. The latter is as a result of a declining birth rate and sharp falls in demand for Faith places across Haringey. For these reasons, I recommend to Cabinet that the Council consults on the option set out in this report.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 It is recommended that Cabinet agree to commence consultation on the closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools.
- 3.2 St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are substantive two-form entry (fe) Voluntary Aided Catholic Schools. The schools are located at Oakington Way, London, N8 9EP and sit within Planning Area 2 (PA2)² which incorporates the following wards: Crouch End, Highgate, Stroud Green and 80% of Hornsey and includes the following schools: Campsbourne Infants, Coleridge Primary, Highgate Primary, Rokesly Infants, St Aidan's, St Mary's CE Primary, St Michaels CE Primary N6, Stroud Green Primary and Weston Park Primary.
- 3.3 Due to a continued fall in demand for school places in PA2 and the fall in demand for local faith places, St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are currently both operating as 1 FE schools. From

² A school place planning area is a group of schools within a local authority that is used for assessing current and future pupil demand for school place provision. For the purposes of planning school places, Haringey is divided into five Planning Areas (PAs).

September 2019, after a noticeable decline in admissions, the schools reduced their PAN from 2fe to 1fe. From April 2024, some classes were merged, and the governing body moved the infant school to the federation's junior school site on Oakington Way in September 2024.

- 3.4 Over several years, the pupil roll at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools has significantly fallen. The 2017 May census recorded the schools as having 396 pupils on roll (94% of 2fe 420) and the schools now have 61 children on roll (30% of 1fe 210) as of January 2025. This is the difference in pupil rolls between a sustainable 2fe primary school and an unsustainable 1fe primary school.
- 3.5 As previously mentioned, school funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll, and falling rolls equate to reduced funding. It is extremely difficult for a school to remain financially viable when pupil numbers are falling as most school funding is pupil-based in line with the National Funding Formula. Unused or vacant school places create an immediate cost pressure for a school through a reduced budget, which in turn can affect the overall sustainability and quality of education standards.
- 3.6 The purpose of this report is to seek agreement from Cabinet to consult on the closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. We will be seeking the views of the governing body as well as other local schools and also gathering feedback on the proposals from parents and staff and other stakeholders that may be impacted by any of options that may be progressed. Further detail on which groups and stakeholders we will be consulting with is set out at para. 5.49. We are not consulting on the options of federation or amalgamation as we do not deem these to be viable options.
- 3.7 In proposing the option of closure set out in this report, careful consideration and weight has been given to:
 - a) the financial viability of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools if they were to remain open;
 - b) the risk to the quality of provision if they were to remain open
 - c) the lack of resilience for the schools and their ability to retain and recruit staff at all levels;
 - d) the opportunity for another primary school to federate with St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and whether this could lead to a sustainable solution;
 - e) whether or not there would be sufficient primary school places in the local area and in other Roman Catholic schools that could provide a suitable alternative for displaced pupils.
- 3.8 Whilst the option of closure for the schools is being considered, the Council remains firmly committed to ensuring that all pupils on roll are receiving an excellent education that supports them in reaching their potential.

- 3.9 A consultation on the proposed closure of the schools has been triggered by a lack of demand for places at the school against a backdrop of falling demand in PA2 coupled with concerns about the long-term financial viability and resilience of the school.

4 Alternative options considered

- 4.1 The following options have been considered:

- No change
- Conversion to academy
- Federation
- Amalgamation resulting in the closure of St Peter's in Chains Catholic Infant and St Gildas' Catholic Junior School with the displaced pupils being accommodated by another Catholic primary school
- Closure

- 4.2 **No change and continuation of current strategy** - This is a highly cost-inefficient option and is not sustainable. The Infant school already has a deficit budget and there is a significant risk that the deficit balance will increase at a greater rate due to falling rolls. The Infant school is predicting a deficit closing balance of £121,440 by the end of March 2025. The Junior school has a projected outturn at 31 March 25 of £45,324 compared to £87,096 in 31 March 2024, a percentage reduction of –48%. The Council has a responsibility to ensure the efficient use of public money. In April 2025 the budget will be further reduced as it will be based on the number of children on roll as of October 2024.

A school with falling rolls will have significantly less funding and this directly affects staffing numbers (both teaching and support staff), resources, equipment, expenditure, maintenance work and extracurricular activities for children. In time, a school affected by income loss will almost inevitably see performance and standards fall. It is the duty of the Council to ensure that the quality of education for children, and stability for teaching and support staff, take priority. The operational challenges affecting schools with falling rolls will continue to increase with a negative impact on pupils and no systemic solution.

This option is not recommended as it does not provide a long-term sustainable solution to falling local and faith demand. Taking no action to the issues affecting a school with falling rolls is not an acceptable option available to the Council.

- 4.3 **Conversion to Academy** - The Governing Body consulted on the option of converting to an academy and joining a Multi Academy Trust, but this application was withdrawn by the Diocese following discussion with the DfE about the school's ongoing viability.

- 4.4 **Federation** – Federated schools operate in collaboration with each other, sharing senior staff and possibly governing bodies, which allows them to maximise good educational practice, while achieving economies of scale. St Peter in Chains Infant School is already federated with St Gildas' Junior School. Both schools exist as separate organisations but have the same headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body.

The current federation model is not achieving its desired impact due to the significant drop in pupil numbers and worsening financial position. Federation is therefore no longer a viable option and not achieving any of the benefits that would normally be associated with this partnership.

It is also possible for more than two maintained schools to operate under the governance of a single governing body, however, there has been no appetite expressed from any other school to be part of the St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' federation. This would also not address the decline in numbers on roll or the financial risk.

- 4.5 **Amalgamation** - An amalgamation can only be achieved by closing one or more schools and providing spaces for displaced children in another 'host' school. This option would involve the host school retaining its original DfE school number as it is not technically considered a new school. However, following the amalgamation process, governors have the option to rename the school to create a new identity for the merged schools.

This option is not recommended due to the current financial position of both schools and reduction in pupil numbers which makes this option very risky and unaffordable. Furthermore, opportunities for a potential amalgamation between St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and another local Catholic primary school have not yielded any interest from partners.

- 4.6 **Closure** - The local authority has a statutory duty to ensure the efficient use of resources. Maintaining a school with a declining roll could not be considered efficient given that there are surplus places in other local schools. The DfE advises that school closure decisions should be taken when there is no demand for the school in the medium to long term and there are sufficient places elsewhere to accommodate displaced children.

A school closure would see a school cease to exist as a statutory entity with all displaced children taking places in other local schools. School closures can take the form of a full and immediate closure, whereby all children on roll are supported to find places in other local schools, or the closure can be 'staggered'. A full and immediate closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools is a viable option but would require all pupils on roll to join the roll of another school. There are sufficient primary

school places in the local area and in other Roman Catholic schools in the borough that can provide a suitable alternative for displaced pupils.

A staggered closure option would cease the admission of children into reception each year until all remaining children have worked their way through to year 6, at which time the school would close. While this may be a less disruptive option for some families, it significantly increases the financial burden and further damages the quality of education at the school as pupils do not benefit from the mixing of year groups they would usually experience. A staggered closure option would therefore not be recommended in this case.

5 Background information

Summary

- 5.1 Following many years of borough-wide rising demand as a result of the growth in Haringey's population, the number of primary aged children joining Haringey primary schools has been in steady decline since 2014/15, a trend observed across London. School funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll, and falling rolls equates to reduced funding to deliver education across the borough.
- 5.2 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient number of school places for pupils and that places are planned effectively. Published Admission Numbers (PANs) reflect the maximum number of pupils schools can accommodate in each year group: this is derived from dividing the whole school PAN by the number of year groups within the school. Reductions to PANs have been implemented in recent years in schools across both the East and the West of the borough, however, they have not kept pace with falling numbers, leaving the surplus still above viable levels.

Demand for places

- 5.3 The Council monitors surplus reception places, a key measure of demand, and aims to maintain between 5 and 10% surplus across all Haringey primary schools. In June 2024, the reception vacancy rate in Haringey for entry to September 2024 was 10.3% overall with some school planning areas carrying a higher surplus rate. Without taking further action, surplus reception places are forecast to rise above 15% by 2027/28 as shown in our projections in Table 2 at para. 5.10 below.
- 5.4 Allowing surplus places to remain above 10% through inaction would directly and negatively impact the financial viability of Haringey schools, which will have an impact on education standards. This is because schools with less income have less money for staff salaries, for extracurricular activities, for equipment, to pay bills and carry out maintenance work. The quality of education and classroom support offered for children in these schools would deteriorate in time, as the affected schools would have to deplete surplus

funds or go into deficit to maintain their current education offer.

- 5.5 Paragraph 2.5 above provides additional detail about how fall in demand for Catholic places in Haringey has fallen considerably since 2012 and 2024, First place preferences for these schools have fallen from 437 (2012) to 182 (2024).
- 5.6 The Council is continuing to work collaboratively with all schools to review and adjust future plans to bring surplus places to within a sustainable range, but further action is now required with regards to St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and the impact on schools in PA2 which carries one of the highest surplus of places in the borough.

Planning Area 2 (PA2)

- 5.7 The proposals outlined in this report will help to address the issue of falling rolls in planning area 2 (PA2) which has seen a significant decline since 2019 as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Total number of pupils on roll in schools in PA2 (reception to year 6)

Schools in PA2	School Capacity (Mid 2024)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Total Capacity	4,230	4,590	4,560	4,440	4,380	4,286	4,230
Percentage of Surplus capacity		4.3%	7.8%	10.0%	10.6%	11.1%	12.7%

Source: 2019-2024 January school census (PLASC) data

- 5.8 The Department for Education has previously recommended that local authorities maintain no more than 5% surplus capacity to ensure that pupils arriving in-year can be offered a school place and to allow for mobility. Surplus rolls at too high a level can affect the viability and sustainability of our schools.

Projected demand for reception places

- 5.9 Haringey commissions the Greater London Authority³ to provide an annual school rolls projection output based on January school census data in the year that the projections are produced.⁴

³ The Greater London Authority's (GLA) school roll projections service is commissioned by Haringey and the majority of London LAs. The GLA's model is extensive and utilises a range of data sets such as population, births, migration, fertility rates, GP registrations, school rolls and housing data to generate annual school roll projections.

⁴ Every school in England has a statutory duty to complete the DfE School Census every term.

- 5.10 Table 2 below sets out the actual and projected numbers for the corresponding reception year and shows the number of places available and the actual/projected surplus or deficit for that year.

Table 2 – Reception places borough wide

Intake year	Reception aged pupils	Number of school places across borough	% of reception surplus	Deficit/surplus No. of places	Equivalent Form of Entry (fe)
2018/19	3,029 (actual)	3,290	7.9%	261	9
2019/20	2,952 (actual)	3,296	10.4%	344	12
2020/21	2,934 (actual)	3,236	9.3%	302	10
2021/22	2,683 (actual)	3,088	13.1%	405	13
2022/23	2,720 (actual)	3,026	10.1%	306	10
2023/24	2,652 (actual Jan 2024)	3,056	13.2%	404	13
2024/25	2,558	2,910	12.1%	352	12
2025/26	2,471	2,880	14.2%	409	14
2026/27	2,484	2,880	13.8%	396	13
2027/28	2,395	2,880	16.8%	485	16
2028/29	2,442	2,880	15.2%	438	15
2029/30	2,447	2,880	15.0%	433	14
2030/31	2,447	2,880	15.0%	433	14

Source: 2018-2024 January school census (PLASC) and GLA 2024 School roll projections – 10 year constrained 3/4 model. Please note that the “Equivalent form of Entry” column have been rounded to the nearest form of entry (30 places) for planning purposes.

- 5.11 The table illustrates that demand for reception places is projected to continue to fall up until 2027 with only a very small rebound (1-2fe) subsequently. Surplus reception places are forecast to rise above 15% by 2027/28. It is clear from our projections that further action must be taken to reduce surplus places.
- 5.12 Whilst projections become less robust the further forward the data projects, this risk is mitigated by ensuring that the number of reception applications are routinely monitored against current projection data.

Factors driving the reduction in reception demand

- 5.13 Demand for reception places depends upon a range of factors including parental perceptions of schools in a given area, parental choice, birth rates, migration and the ability to afford to live in an area.
- 5.14 The reasons for Haringey’s declining numbers are multifaceted, but include a combination of falling birth rates, changes to welfare benefits, the housing crisis, increases in the cost of living, the withdrawal of the right of entry and freedom of movement from EU nationals (Brexit) and as a result of families

leaving London during the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of these factors remain outside the Council's control and are at no fault of the schools or their current leadership.

- 5.15 A report on [Managing falling school rolls in London](#) published by London Councils in January 2024 provides some wider context and independent analysis of the issue.

Reducing the surplus through managing published admission numbers (PANs)

- 5.16 For the reception intakes in 2023, 2024 and 2025 a total of 300 reception places have been removed through reducing PANs at various schools across the borough, with the intended result that the projected surplus would reduce to 10% for the 2025/26 academic year. However, as previously mentioned reductions to PANs have not kept pace with falling numbers, which risks leaving the surplus still above viable levels in future years.
- 5.17 Haringey Council has the authority to reduce school PANs at all community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools (i.e. 36 out of 64 primary schools), and to recommend PAN reductions at the remaining 28 academies, foundation or faith schools. The final decision to reduce PAN at these schools rests with their governing body or academy trust. Reducing a school's PAN (e.g. from 90 to 60 or 60 to 30) allows governors and school leaders to plan for and employ fewer staff knowing they will only need one teacher for each year group.
- 5.18 The Council continues to consider reducing PANs wherever possible at schools significantly affected by falling rolls. However, while PAN reductions directly reduce the number of surplus places, they are not a long-term solution because the size of the school building remains unchanged. The unused space (e.g. empty classrooms) that PAN reductions create in schools must still be maintained, heated etc, and this draws on resources that could be more directly used to educate and support children.

Diocesan partners (Catholic and Church of England)

- 5.19 Of the 64 primary schools in Haringey, 19 are faith based Roman Catholic or Church of England voluntary aided or academy primaries (30%).
- 5.20 A recent analysis on first place preferences for Faith vs. Non-Faith schools was developed by the Haringey School Place Planning team looking at comparing levels of demand since the high point of Reception demand (2012) to the latest available data for 2024. The data demonstrates that demand for non-faith settings has fallen only slightly in this period (by 7%) compared to 30% for Church of England settings and 58% for Catholic settings.
- 5.21 A considerable number of our faith schools have already taken steps to reduce their published admission numbers to reflect changes in Haringey's

population and their governing bodies have in recent years delegated this responsibility to the local authority as part of the Council's annual consultation and determination of admission arrangements. Haringey's Education Services and School Place Planning teams will continue to work within a collaborative process and take a graduated approach in partnership with both dioceses. However, the continuing reduction in demand for primary school places along with both growing school surpluses and worsening finances require additional action to reduce existing capacity.

School income and deficit

- 5.22 School funding is primarily determined by the number of children on roll and falling rolls equates to reduced funding to deliver education across the borough. In accordance with DfE funding regulations, the majority of school funding must be allocated on the basis of pupil numbers. The impact of surplus places can be significant to a school's overall budget and financial viability. In the 2024/25 academic year, for every surplus place that a maintained primary school carries, there is a loss on average of £4,025 AWPUP (Age Weighted Pupil Unit) funding per pupil.⁵
- 5.23 Primary pupil rolls in Haringey reduced by 2,200 in the last 5 years (21,300 in 2019 to 19,100 in 2024). This reduced borough-wide roll means that in 2023/24, Haringey received circa £8.85m less Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG)⁶ Schools Block funding based on 2023/24 per pupil funding rates, compared with 2018/19.
- 5.24 High levels of surplus places results directly in a reduction in income, which can lead to deficit budgets. Falling rolls is a major theme that runs through the budget planning considerations of many schools in financial difficulty. Several schools are currently managing small year group sizes that prove to be uneconomical and require adopting a more flexible approach to resourcing i.e. vertical grouping (children from different years groups taught together) and capping of in-year classes (Years 1 - 6).
- 5.25 To manage and balance budgets, many Haringey school leaders have had to make efficiencies and innovations, which include reducing costs and exploring opportunities to increase income, for example, by hiring out facilities. However, in many cases these options have already been taken and budgets

⁵ AWPUP (Age Weighted Pupil Unit) is an amount of funding attributed to each pupil at the school. There are three rates payable, one each for Primary, Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils. The pupil numbers used to calculate the AWPUP allocation is based on the October pupil census.

⁶ The dedicated schools grant (DSG) is payable to local authorities under section 14 of the Education Act 2002. Local authorities are responsible for determining the split of the grant between central expenditure and the individual schools budget (ISB) in conjunction with local schools forums. Local authorities are responsible for allocating the ISB to individual schools in accordance with the local schools' funding formula.

are still under pressure before they must deal with the financial impact of surplus school places.

- 5.26 Whilst school federations can provide some financial support through economies of scale, our current data in relation to budget deficits suggests that it does not protect schools sufficiently. It is key that schools experiencing falling rolls produce realistic 3-year budget plans (in accordance with DfE requirements for all schools) and deficit recovery plans (if necessary) and consider their options regarding future financial viability. These options could include staffing restructures, reducing costs, amalgamating with (an)other school(s) and potentially closure.

School performance and Ofsted

- 5.27 While school performance and Ofsted grading often helps to strengthen demand and protects a school from falling rolls, this isn't the case for Haringey, as 98% of primary schools in the borough were rated by Ofsted as good or outstanding.
- 5.28 Managing school performance in the context of falling rolls requires governors and school leaders to make difficult decisions affecting changes to provision for existing pupils. e.g. around restructuring the staffing complement and reducing support for pupils with additional needs or the removal of important enrichment provision or wrap-around provision such as after school clubs to balance reducing budgets.

What has been done already?

- 5.29 To summarise, the Council and school leaders have already taken the following actions:
- reduced the planned admission number (PANs) at schools that don't fill.
 - combined different year groups to keep schools financially viable.
 - reduced the number of teaching and/or support posts to balance budgets
 - introduced mixed age teaching (i.e. mixing two year groups into one class)
 - reduced expenditure on other support staff, ICT and teaching resources
 - offered fewer enrichment activities for pupils
 - reviewed contracts and other expenditure to maximise efficiency
- 5.30 The Council has no control over the factors causing a reduction in school aged children. The Council is now in a position to start looking at schools such as St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools that have been impacted the most by falling pupil numbers and budget pressures and consider the options outlined in this report.

Quality of education offer

- 5.31 Schools with reduced budgets have less income for support staff such as teaching assistants and learning mentors, who provide important support for pupils through academic and pastoral interventions. Specialist teachers with expertise in physical education, languages or art become too expensive, meaning primary class teachers who may not be skilled or trained in these areas have to teach these subjects themselves. It is also common in small schools to see leaders double up on roles, such as headteachers taking on the SENCo (Special Educational needs Coordinator) DSL (Designated Safeguarding Lead) or School Business Manager responsibilities.
- 5.32 As budget pressure becomes greater, and class sizes drop below 50%, schools must also consider the option of vertically grouped classes to avoid going into deficit. This involves a sufficiently experienced and able teacher being employed to teach children from across two year groups in the same classroom. Vertical grouping brings increased complexity in day-to-day management and organisation and increased workload for the teacher. The challenges of recruiting and retaining skilled and experienced teachers in London can make schools under financial pressure less attractive.

Housing development across the borough

- 5.33 At this stage it is unclear how much additional demand for school places will come from planned housing development. Our projections use data from the GLA (Greater London Authority) which make assumptions about the “child yield” from new developments, essentially the number of children that you might expect from the mix of proposed new housing. In recent years and across most London boroughs these child yields have been considerably lower than anticipated. This may be in part related to the character of new properties, many of which are 1–2-bedroom apartments and which are not necessarily optimal for family living.
- 5.34 Further factors also include the affordability of larger housing in Haringey and across London and the additional impacts of Brexit and Covid-19, both of which have been linked to lower levels of demand for future school places as both factors have impacted birth rates across London and led to out-migration from Haringey and London.
- 5.35 Data from the most recent GLA report on [Housing in London](#) shows that there has been a huge increase in the size of deposit required for a London property purchase in recent years. In 1993 the average required deposit was £13,000, in 2008 around £50,000 and by 2023 around £143,000. The GLA also state that “London rents are so much higher than those of other regions that the median monthly rent for a one-bedroom home in the capital (£1,276) is higher than the median rent for a home with four or more bedrooms across all of the North and Midlands”.
- 5.36 In PA2 where St Peter in Chains and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are located additional housing development appears to have had no

discernible impact on demand for local primary school places. In fact, primary pupil rolls in PA2 have fallen from 4,234 in 2019 to 3,693 by 2024 (January school census data), a fall of around 13%.

- 5.37 Irrespective of whether new housing or some other dynamic creates additional demand for Reception places in future years the priority now is to ensure the sustainability and resilience of our primary schools. This will ensure their continued success today and ability to absorb of potential additional pupils in future years.

Potential for amalgamation partners for St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools

- 5.38 St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are substantive 2fe primary schools located in N8 within planning area (PA2). St Peter in Chains Catholic Infant is currently graded "Good" by Ofsted (July 2024) and St Gildas' Catholic Junior School also "Good" (June 2024).
- 5.39 Opportunities for a potential amalgamation between St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and another local Catholic primary school have not yielded any interest from partners.
- 5.40 Table 3 below shows there has been a gradual decline in pupils on roll at both schools since 2019.

Table 3: Total number of pupils on roll (Reception to year 2 and Year 3 to Year 6)

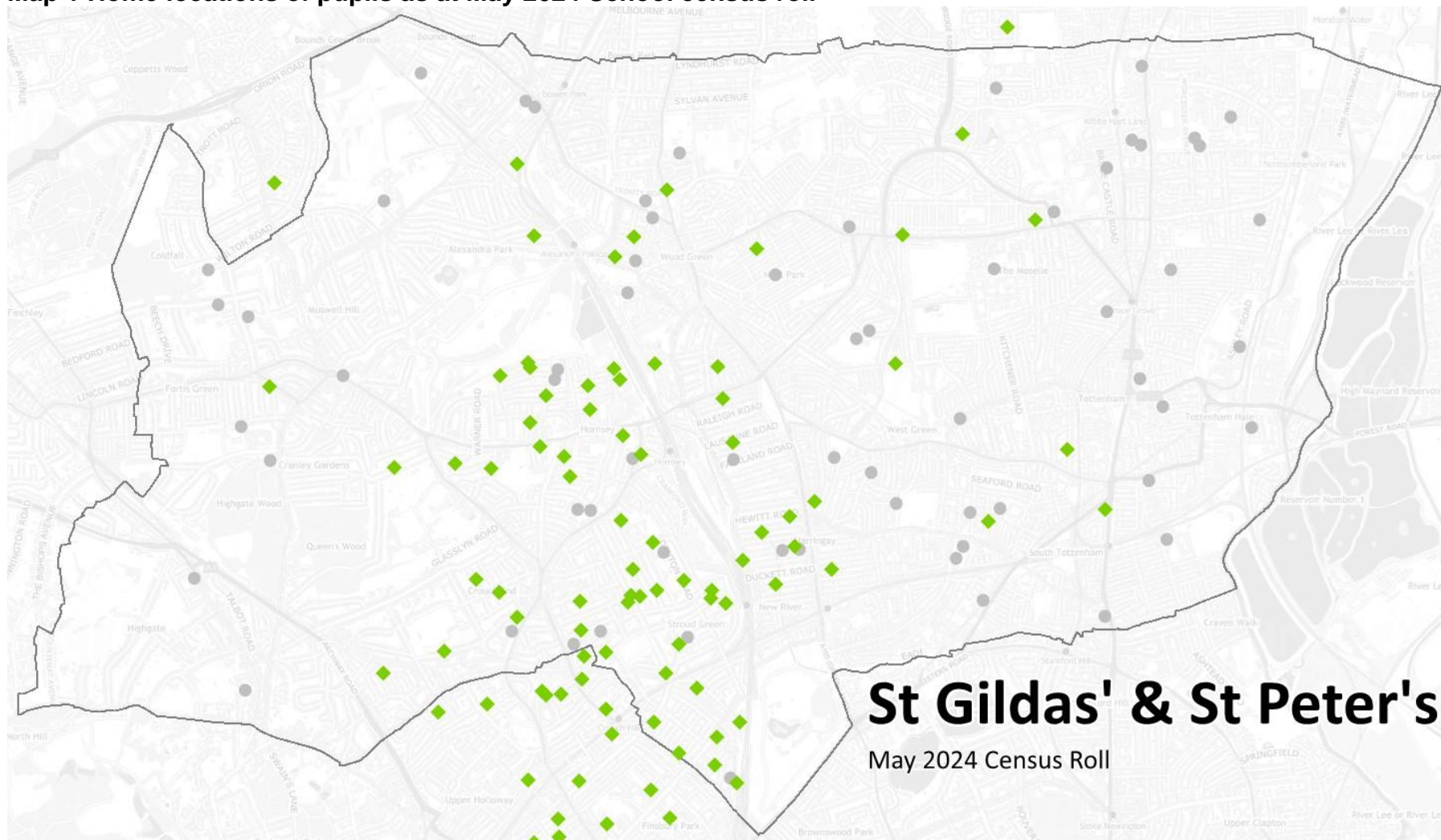
School	School Net Capacity	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Oct 2024 **
St Peter in Chains RC Infants (R – Yr 2)	180 / 90*	119	89	75	73	64	43	19
St Gildas' RC Junior (Yr 3- Yr 6)	240 / 120*	205	194	173	146	121	92	46

Source: 2019-2024 January school census (PLASC) data

*Total capacity is shown in line with the determined PANs – a lower figure for both schools is shown to indicate the reduction in PAN implemented from September 2019

**October 2024 census

Map 1 Home locations of pupils as at May 2024 School census roll



- 5.41 **Vulnerable groups - St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools.** There is a high incidence of need at St Peter in Chains, with pupils with an EHCP at 5 (13%). EHCP rates are far lower at St Gildas' 2 (2%). The percentage of pupils on FSM is 7 (44%) at St Peter in Chains and 9 (20%) at St Gildas' Junior. Additional support to enable a smooth transition will be offered to affected pupils who have EHCPs.
- 5.42 The Council has a duty of care to ensure children in its schools are able to receive a good education and to access the full curriculum. A school with a declining roll is not able to do this effectively as it is not financially viable to run. Furthermore, there is not projected to be an increase in pupil numbers in PA2 to change this situation.

Full and immediate closure and sufficient places at alternative schools

- 5.43 **School places in the local area within 1 mile of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools -** There are sufficient primary school places in the local area that can provide a suitable alternative for displaced pupils. Table 4 below shows the current pupil roll at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. It shows there is a high surplus of primary school places in the local area which means that other alternatives can be offered for pupils at the schools that wish to go elsewhere. A full and immediate closure is a viable option in this regard.

Table 4: School vacancies and capacity within 1 mile of St Peter in Chains & St Gildas' RC versus pupils on roll, as at Jan 2025

School	PA	Metric	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Campsbourne Infant School	PA2	Vacancies	3	0	5				
Campsbourne Junior School	PA2	Vacancies				0	2	2	19
Coleridge Primary School	PA2	Vacancies	0	2	2	0	0	1	6
North Haringay Primary School	PA5	Vacancies	0	15	2	0	8	11	3
Rokesly Infant School	PA2	Vacancies	4	35	0				
Rokesly Junior School	PA2	Vacancies				0	11	15	7
South Haringay Infant School	PA3	Vacancies	0	5	0				
South Haringay Junior School	PA3	Vacancies				1	0	1	17
St Aidan's VC Primary School	PA2	Vacancies	2	2	4	0	1	0	3
St Mary's CE Primary School	PA2	Vacancies	21	24	13	24	10	17	4
Stroud Green Primary School	PA2	Vacancies	0	1	0	0	4	9	0
Weston Park Primary School	PA2	Vacancies	0	1	0	4	0	3	6
Total Vacancies			30	85	26	29	36	59	65
St Peter in Chains & St Gildas' RC	PA2	Pupils On Roll	6	6	4	11	18	0	16
Vacancies Remaining			24	79	22	18	18	59	49

- 5.44 **School places in Haringey Catholic schools** Table 5 below shows the current pupil roll at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. It shows that there are sufficient Catholic school places at Haringey Catholic schools should pupils attending St Peter's in Chains or St Gildas' require one.

Table 4: School vacancies and capacity within Haringey Catholic schools versus pupils on roll, as at Jan 2025

School	PA	Metric	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6
Our Lady of Muswell Catholic Primary School	PA1	Vacancies	11	9	5	0	1	0	2
St Francis de Sales Catholic Infant School	PA4	Vacancies	0	14	5				
St Francis de Sales Catholic Junior School	PA4	Vacancies				0	5	16	4
St Ignatius Catholic Primary School	PA3	Vacancies	34	13	37	30	30	30	9
St John Vianney Catholic Primary School	PA3	Vacancies	0	0	0	0	2	1	2
St Martin of Porres Catholic Primary School	PA1	Vacancies	21	12	12	13	9	14	12
St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant School	PA3	Vacancies	7	30	2				
St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior School	PA3	Vacancies				24	16	32	26
St Paul's Catholic Primary School	PA5	Vacancies	9	7	2	17	0	9	4
Total Vacancies			82	85	63	84	63	102	59
St Peter in Chains & St Gildas' RC	PA2	Pupils On Roll	6	6	4	11	18	0	16
Vacancies Remaining			76	79	59	73	45	102	43

- 5.45 A closure may help support the sustainability and viability of other schools in Planning Area 2 (PA2) and beyond by enabling neighbouring schools to increase their pupil numbers. It may also help sustain other Catholic primary schools in Haringey. If a decision is made to progress with closure, further information and support for families affected will be provided from the admissions team throughout the process.
- 5.46 There are 5 main stages summarised in the table below, with indicative timescales:

Stage	Description	Timescale
1	Informal consultation on the proposals set out in this report	4-week consultation (24 February 2025 – 21 March 2025)

2	Gathering stakeholder representation and drafting a report with recommendations to Cabinet	March 2025 – April 2025
3	Decision on whether to progress to formal consultation which involves publishing a statutory notice of intention to amalgamate or close. This triggers a 28-day representation period during which any person could object to or make comments on the proposal.	22 April 2025 Cabinet meeting (Representation period from 05 May – 2 June 2025)
4	Final decision to proceed or not with closure	June 2025 Cabinet meeting
5	Implementation	Decision made in Stage 4 is implemented on the 31 August 2025

Approximate dates subject to change depending on the progress and decisions by Council's Cabinet

5.47 There are three key decision points where members will decide on how to proceed:

- **Cabinet Decision 1** - Council's Cabinet will make a decision on whether to informally consult on the options proposed in this paper.
- **Cabinet Decision 2** – Results of the informal consultation are considered by Cabinet who will decide whether to progress to formal consultation. Formal consultation involves the Council publishing a statutory notice of their intention to close St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. There will be a 28-day 'objection period' for those who object to the proposal to send their objections to the Council.
- **Cabinet Decision 3** - The outcome of the statutory notice period and any objections are considered by the Cabinet, who makes the final decision to proceed or not with a full and immediate closure.

5.48 To ensure as wide a consultation as possible, a range of modes and methods of communication can be used to inform and facilitate feedback from stakeholders regarding the proposal -

- through the Schools Newsletter which is distributed to the head teacher and chair of governors of every school in the borough;
- letter to all Haringey primary and secondary schools
- email to all Children's Centres in the borough;
- email to all registered nurseries and child minders and any other early years providers;

- published on the Council's online admissions pages; / dedicated consultation page
- via information in all libraries across the borough (posters/ digital screens);
- email to all councillors from the Lead Cabinet Member;
- email MPs whose constituencies are affected;
- email to the diocesan authorities.
- email to all residents' groups that the Council hold information for
- email to the branch secretaries of all trade unions recognised by the Council for collective bargaining in respect of its employees at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools.
- email to neighbouring authorities
- email to other groups, bodies, parents and carers as appropriate
- social media and digital billboards

5.49 Stakeholders will be given the opportunity to express their views in writing, via a questionnaire – both electronically and via a hard copy, by email and post.

Consultation process and next steps

Early engagement and information sharing events

- 5.50 An early information engagement session took place with the St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' parent/carers community on Wednesday 5 February 2025, hosted by the schools and attended by Haringey Education representatives. The purpose of the event was to share key information about the changes to the borough's population in recent years and the declining pupil numbers in planning area 2 (PA2).
- 5.51 If a decision to move to informal consultation is made, a further in-depth engagement meeting may be held during the pre-publication consultation period to provide more detailed background information on proposals and a chance for Q&A. There will also be a separate consultation meeting for parents/carers with children with SEND at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools.

Equality and Diversity Monitoring

- 5.52 As part of the consultation process, respondents will be asked to complete an equality and diversity questionnaire, looking at Gender, Age, Ethnicity and Disability. The information collected will help identify any special requirements; promote equality; and improve choice and diversity. This information will only be retained and used for as long as is necessary. Where data is no longer required, it will be destroyed in line with relevant destruction policies and processes.

6 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026

- 6.1 Ensuring that Haringey schools are educationally and financially viable to provide pupils with a rounded education that meets their academic, social and emotional needs, underpins theme 3 within the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-26 which seeks to enable every child to have the best start in life with access to high quality education.
- 6.2 The Council has a statutory duty to ensure there is a sufficient number of school places for pupils and that places are planned effectively, taking action where appropriate to mitigate the risks of too many or too few places. Ensuring that we prioritise forms of school organisation that will remain financially viable under a range of different funding scenarios i.e., organisational structures within and between schools that provide flexibility to address population change.
- 6.3 Haringey's aims are to create a fairer, more inclusive borough, which supports children and young people to thrive. We want to optimise schools' roles as an anchor system in the borough and ensure that developments and changes are sustainable.

7 Carbon and Climate Change

- 7.1 The proposals in this report will lead to a more efficient use of school buildings. Running a higher number of school sites with fewer pupils is inefficient in terms of energy usage, as the buildings still need to be heated and lit. Reducing the number of buildings with surplus places will mean that the retained buildings will start working to their designed capacity in terms of number of occupants, both pupils and staff, leading to more efficient energy use instead of running a higher number of schools with fewer pupils.

8 Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)

- 8.1 Below are financial, governance and legal and equality comments.

Finance

- 8.2 The St Peter in Chains Infant budget forecast for the 2024-25 financial year anticipates a deficit of £121,440, an increase of 57% deficit compared to the last financial year. There is a further impact from the reduction in pupil numbers by 27 pupils in October 2024 census which will reduce the school's DSG funding by a further £153,954 for 2025/26.
- 8.3 The St Gildas' Junior budget forecast for the 2024-25 financial year anticipates a surplus of £45,324, a reduction of 48% compared to £87,096 in the last financial year 2023-24. There is a further impact from the reduction in pupil numbers by 46 pupils in October 2024 census which will reduce the school's DSG funding by a further £255,222 for 2025/26.

8.4 The combined impact of the federated schools is a deficit closing balance of £76,116 and a combined reduction in DSG income is £409,177.

8.5 Below, we offer brief comments on the financial impact of each option considered in this report on both the council and the schools.

- No change i.e. continuation of current strategy for school improvement without any further action to address falling local rolls

The schools should be restructured as soon as possible based on findings from the Integrated Curriculum Financial Planning (ICFP) tool to ensure a viable three-year plan is in place. Without action, the risk of a growing financial deficit will increase each year, significantly impacting the schools' ability to meet their financial commitments. The combined lower pupil numbers enrolled at the federated schools makes this a very risky option for the council.

- Federation and Amalgamation

The current federation model is not achieving its desired impact, and this is evidenced from their financial returns to the council which shows a combined deficit forecast of £76,116 for 2024/25. The further reduction in DSG funding due to lower pupil numbers makes this no longer a viable option.

Amalgamation can reduce operational costs by streamlining administrative functions, consolidating staff roles, and optimising facility use. This creates economies of scale, enabling the combined entity to operate more efficiently on a single site compared to individual schools in federated model. While the long-term financial outlook may improve in an amalgamation model through greater efficiency and resource allocation, the current financial projections and reductions in pupil numbers makes this option risky and unaffordable.

- Closure

The financial implications are substantial. The local authority will have to absorb the school's financial deficit including licensed deficit and bear associated additional costs related to the closure, including redundancy payments for staff, settlement costs for leased equipment and contract early closure costs.

A closure may help support the sustainability and viability of other Haringey schools and beyond by enabling them to increase their pupil numbers from the displaced children.

Assistant Director of Legal & Governance

- 8.6 This report sets out proposals for the proposed closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, voluntary aided Catholic primary schools maintained by the governing body and Catholic Dioceses.
- 8.7 The Education and Inspections Act 2006 ("the Act"), as well as secondary legislation in the form of the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 ("the Regulations") contains a detailed process to be followed by an authority if it proposes to close discontinue or cease to maintain a school. In addition, the authority must adhere to statutory Guidance; the current Guidance issued in January 2023 is entitled "Opening and closing maintained schools" ("the Guidance"). The purpose of the legislation and guidance in the context of school closures is to ensure that surplus capacity is removed where necessary. All proposals to close a school must be made with regard to the factors outlined in the Guidance and follow the statutory process.
- 8.8 The Guidance provides illustrative reasons for closing a maintained school that include i. where there are surplus places elsewhere in the local area that can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term; ii. it is to be amalgamated with another school or iii. where it is no longer considered viable. This report alludes to reasons i. and iii. being the reasons for the proposal to close the infants and junior schools.
- 8.9 The statutory framework sets out a two-stage consultation process. At stage one the proposer is required to consult any parties it thinks appropriate before publishing formal proposals to a close a maintained school i.e. initial/informal consultation. Stage 2 is the formal stage of entailing publication of the statutory proposal; this must be done within 12 months of the initial consultation. It is for the proposer – in this case the Council- to determine the nature and length of initial consultation. The guidance advises that it is best practice for consultations to be carried out in term time to allow the maximum number of people to respond and further the proposer should have regard to the Cabinet Office guidance on consultation principles when deciding how to carry out the consultation exercise. Officers must ensure that the consultation principles are adhered to.
- 8.10 It is permissible for the Council to propose in the initial consultation the options that are outlined in this report.

Equalities

- 8.11 The Council has a public sector equality duty under the Equalities Act 2010 ('the 2010 Act') to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by or under the Act. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a “relevant protected characteristic” and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share those a “relevant protected characteristic” and people who do not share it.
- A “relevant protected characteristic” is age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (formerly gender) and sexual orientation.

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

- 8.12 The report recommends that Cabinet agree to commence consultation on the options for the future of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools, including the options of ‘no change’ or closure.
- 8.13 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been initiated and is attached at Appendix 1.
- 8.14 **Service users (children at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools)** – A comprehensive EqIA has identified some potential negative impacts on some children – aged 0 to 11 years old. This decision may particularly impact children who are of White Irish background as they are overrepresented in St Peter in Chains and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools primary school. Additionally, students at both schools who may live in higher areas of deprivation and face particular socioeconomic disadvantages of the specified Equality characteristics / protected groups which includes Sex, Gender Reassignment, Age, Disability, Race & Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief (or No Belief), Pregnancy & Maternity and Marriage and Civil Partnership. In terms of pupil composition St Peter in Chains and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools shares many similar characteristics with other Haringey primary schools located in Planning Area 2 and any negative impact can be mitigated with careful planning and the offer of alternative school places. There are sufficient places that exist at neighbouring schools to absorb displaced pupils. All surrounding schools are judged by Ofsted to be ‘good’ or ‘outstanding.’ There are also sufficient spaces available at other Catholic schools within Haringey, should parents wish to keep their children within a Catholic school.

- 8.15 **Children with Special Education Needs (SEN) or disabled children** – St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools have a slightly higher proportion of pupils with SEN than other primary schools in the borough – 5 pupils across both schools have an EHCP. They are a vulnerable group who could be particularly affected by this proposal, although this could be mitigated by good transition planning. The admission arrangements prioritise children with an EHCP or SEND needs before oversubscription criteria comes into force as well as also giving priority to children with social and medical considerations that meet the criterion for an exceptional medical or social need.
- 8.16 **Teaching and non-teaching staff** – The closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools will inevitably negatively impact on teaching and support staff working at the school. Due to the predominance of female staff over male staff in St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools (and indeed in primary schools across the borough and the country), they are likely to be affected in greater numbers.

Additionally, St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools have an overrepresentation of White staff compared to the Haringey average, and an older staff population. Therefore, staff who have these protected characteristics are more likely to be negatively impacted by the decision. Linked to this equality characteristic is another, Pregnancy & Maternity. In terms of mitigating the impact on both of these equality characteristics staff, including those who have particular protected characteristics, the Council will endeavour to ensure all staff affected by any proposal to close. St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools will receive individualised support which considers protected characteristics, including access to the redeployment pool and the Employee Assistance Programme, including CV/statement writing/ interview technique training and support to find alternative roles within Haringey.

9 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

10 Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

This report contains no exempt information.

Background papers

1. The Schools Standards and Framework Act 1998.
2. The Education Act 2002.
3. The Education and Inspections Act 2006.
4. Education and Skills Act 2008.
5. The School Admissions Code (September 2021).

6. The School Admissions (Admission Arrangements and Co-ordination of Admission Arrangements) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014.
7. The School Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012.
8. The School Admissions (Appeals Arrangements) (England) Regulations 2012.
9. The Education Act 2011
10. The School Admissions Appeals Code (October 2022).
11. The School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.
12. The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013
13. School roll projections sourced from the GLA
14. School roll information, including admission information from data held within Education Services
15. Department for Education "Opening and Closing maintained schools" (January 2023)
16. Department for Education "Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools" (January 2023).