

Report for: Cabinet Member Signing – 14 July 2025

Title: **Determination of the statutory notice proposing the closure of St Peter in Chains RC Infant school and St Gildas' Junior school**

Report authorised by: Ann Graham, Director of Children's Services

Lead Officers: Jane Edwards, Director for Schools and Learning
Carlo Kodsi, Head of Admissions and School Organisation

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

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

1. Describe the issue under consideration

- 1.1 This report sets out the result of the statutory representation period on the proposal to close St Peter in Chains RC Infant school and St Gildas' Junior school.
- 1.2 The purpose of this report is to provide the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools & Families with a factual summary of the proposal and any representations received, to enable the Cabinet Member to make a final decision on the proposal to close St Peter in Chains RC Infant school and St Gildas' Junior school.
- 1.3 The Leader of the Council has delegated this key decision to the Cabinet Member in keeping with the Constitution at Part Three Section C - Paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2, and this item is listed as a key decision in the Forward Plan.

Statutory guidance

- 1.4 The ['Opening and closing maintained schools' statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers' \(October 2024\)](#) provides a clear framework for local authorities and governing bodies wishing to propose the discontinuance of a maintained school.
- 1.5 There are a number of reasons under which proposers are permitted to pursue the closure of a voluntary aided school. Two of the four reasons set out on page 23 of the DfE guidance are relevant to this proposal:

- There are surplus places elsewhere in the local area which can accommodate displaced pupils and there is no predicted demand for the school in the medium to long term;
- it is no longer considered viable;

Need for decision

- 1.6 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.
- 1.7 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.
- 1.8 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 year-on-year decline to their roll resulting in smaller one-form entry schools such as St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools falling into financial deficit. This has not just been felt by Haringey schools - many primary schools across London and England ended 2023-24 in financial deficit.²
- 1.9 The Council has a duty of care to ensure children in its schools are able to receive a good education and access the full curriculum. A school with a declining roll will be challenged to do this effectively because of inevitable financial pressures from reduced funding. Reduced funding can impact on the efficient running of schools, financial stability and education standards.
- 1.10 It is a principle of the Council to protect Haringey's high quality of education, and this may be compromised where the cost of teaching staff, equipment

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](#).

² Expenditure data [published by the Department of Education \(Dfe\)](#) shows almost 15 per cent of local authority-maintained primary schools ended 2023-24 in deficit, an increase of 2.7 percent (12.3%) from the previous year.

and enrichment activities become unaffordable. The link between pupil numbers and school funding means that it is not always feasible to keep a school operating to guarantee the standard of education families and pupils deserve.

- 1.11 We know that schools in the local area and across Haringey have a significant surplus of places, including equivalent Catholic schools. Furthermore, current school roll projections across planning area 2 where St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are located do not indicate any future demographic growth.
- 1.12 Full consultation has been undertaken over a period of several months including meetings with staff, governors, and parents, along with other interested stakeholders. The four-week pre-publication consultation ran from 24 February to 24 March 2025 and gathered views from stakeholders on options for the future of the school. A summary of the representations received from the pre-publication consultation was reported to Cabinet at the 11 February Cabinet meeting [Agenda item - St Peter in Chains Catholic Infant and St Gildas Catholic Junior School | Haringey Council](#)
- 1.13 On 22 April 2025, Council's Cabinet agreed to publish a statutory notice commencing the statutory representation period, which was the last opportunity for people and organisations to comment on the proposal. The Cabinet report to this and the minutes of the meeting can be found here: [Items at meetings – The future of St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools](#). There was only one objection received during the 28 day representation period and this can be viewed together with the local authority officer response at Appendix 1.

2 Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member:

Note

- only one objection was received during the 4-week representation period despite consulting widely with all relevant stakeholders
- the federated schools are currently in deficit and the revenue budget to operate successfully in future whilst maintaining the delivery of a good quality of education for pupils is severely diminished by very low pupil numbers.
- Many families have already transferred their children to other local schools; St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools has 27 pupils on roll (as of week ending 30 May 2025), 17 of which are year 6 pupils that will be transferring to secondary school in September 2025.

Agree

- for the local authority to cease to maintain St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools from 31 August 2025 in order for transition planning to commence for any remaining pupils so they can be supported in securing another local school rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted.

3 Background information

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 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)³ 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.
- 3.3 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. The reception vacancy rate in Haringey for entry to September 2024 following national offer day in March 2024 was 10.3% overall with some school planning areas⁴ carrying a higher surplus rate.
- 3.4 As shown in Table 1 below, planning area 3 (PA2) where St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools are located has seen a significant reduction in pupil numbers.

³ A primary school's PAN (published admission number) is the number of school places that must be offered in Reception each year. PAN's must be included in a school's admission arrangements. The PAN is normally derived from the net capacity assessment for the school. Net capacity assessments (NCA) are a DfE tool used by local authorities to assess the physical accommodation of an individual school. The NCA considers all the space in the school and then uses a calculation to determine how many pupils, across all year groups, the school can reasonably and safely accommodate. The assessment generates an indicative admission number (IAN) which is established by dividing by 7 for a primary school (7 year groups). When demand is high a school's PAN is normally set in line with the indicative admissions number so that maximum use is made of the teaching space available at the school. When demand is low the PAN can be reduced to manage the financial impact on the school e.g. if a school with 60 places is only educating 30 or fewer children in each year group the school might reduce the PAN so that only one teacher needs to be employed for each year group.

⁴ 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).

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

School	School Net Capacity (Mid 2025)	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024**	Jan. 2025
St Peter-In-Chains RC Infants (R–Yr 2)	180 / 90*	119	89	75	73	64	43	16
St Gildas' Catholic Junior (Yr 3- Yr 6)	240 / 120*	205	194	173	146	121	92	44
All schools in PA2	4,170	4,234	4,076	3,998	3,917	3,811	3,693	3,616

*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 2fe to 1fe from September 2019

**October 2024 census

3.5 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.

3.6 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.

Declining demand

3.7 Demand for reception places depends upon a range of factors including parental perception of schools in each area, parental choice, birth rates, migration and the ability to afford to live in an area.

3.8 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.

- 3.9 A report on [Managing school places and admissions in London \(February 2025\)](#) published by London Councils in February 2025 provides some wider context and independent analysis of the issue.

St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools

- 3.10 There are currently vacancies across all year groups at St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools with 27 pupils on roll as of weekend ending 30 May 2025 (Wonde DfE data return): 2 in Reception, 2 in Year 1, 1 in Year 2, 1 in Year 3, 4 in Year 4, 0 in Year 5, and 17 in Year 6. As a substantive two form entry school, St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools had the capacity to admit up to 420 pupils (Reception– Year 6). The school reduced to 1FE in September 2029 and is currently operating at 13% of its total capacity as a 1FE.
- 3.11 The future viability of the school has been further weakened by a high number of parental requests to transfer to other local schools rather than wait to move in a managed cohort as described in the transition proposal set out below at para 6.12.
- 3.12 During the consultation periods, the Council and school leaders emphasized to all parents the benefits of pupils transferring as part of a managed transfer and a co-ordinated admissions process run by the Haringay School Admission Service. Despite this, families still had the right to express a preference to other Haringey local schools as part of the Council's in-year admissions process. 105 pupils (132 on the May 2024 school census minus the 27 remaining as of May 2025) have transferred to other schools since May 2024.
- 3.13 The Council is the admission authority for community and voluntary controlled schools. Both the Council and own admission authority schools (Academy, voluntary aided or foundation) cannot lawfully refuse to admit a pupil to a school where the admitting school has available places. There has been and continues to be a significant number of vacancies across the whole school estate, and in neighbouring boroughs such as Islington and Hackney. Please see para. 4.13 below for school vacancy information.
- 3.14 It is important to note that the resulting and significant decrease in numbers on roll will further compromise the financial viability of the school and its ability to offer a broad and balanced curriculum.

St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools – financial position and future viability

- 3.15 Under legislation, schools retain a high degree of autonomy when setting budgets unless they are in a deficit position. Schools are reminded of the need to forecast as accurately as possible so that decisions are taken in the

light of accurate budget projections. Schools in deficit are required to complete deficit recovery plans to bring their budget back into balance by elimination of the deficit within three years.

- 3.16 The Council is financially liable for maintained schools affected by falling rolls and they must act in a timely way to minimise the risk of schools going into or increasing deficits. The Council has a responsibility to deliver best value, and continuous improvement through the efficient, effective and economic management of our school estate, whilst also ensuring that secure, sustainable and high-quality education is in place for the children and young people of Haringey now and into the future.
- 3.17 It became increasingly clear that both St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools were no longer sustainable financially or organisationally, and that, after evaluation of several options, closure of the schools should be recommended and consulted on.
- 3.18 Amongst the considerations for recommending closure were:
- 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 19 pupils in October 2024 census which will reduce the school's DSG funding by a further £153,954 for 2025/26.
 - 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.
 - This funding position would have a detrimental impact on staffing and resources, which would limit the school's ability to continue to provide the high quality of education that the children in the school community need and deserve.
 - The school would be hampered in its capacity to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that it would be reasonable to expect of a primary school.
 - Haringey has capacity in neighbouring schools to meet the needs of all displaced pupils transitioning from St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior to alternative schools.
- 3.19 In considering the closure of a school, Haringey is required to follow the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance: "[Opening and closing maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers \(October 2024\)](#)."
- 3.20 Council's Cabinet agreed on 11 February 2025 to start a pre-publication consultation on the options for the future of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. The Cabinet report to this and the minutes

of the meeting can be found here: [Agenda item - St Peter in Chains Catholic Infant and St Gildas Catholic Junior School | Haringey Council](#)

- 3.21 On 22 April 2025, Council's Cabinet subsequently agreed to the publication of a statutory notice to close the school. The Cabinet report to this and the minutes of the meeting can be found here: [Items at meetings – The future of St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools](#)
- 3.22 The 28-day representation period ended on 4 June 2025 with only one objection recorded shown in full at Appendix 1. The final decision on whether to proceed with the closure of the school will now need to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families.

4 Alternative options considered and not favoured

- 4.1 The following alternative options were previously considered by decision makers at the 11 February 2025 Cabinet meeting and not favoured:
- no change i.e. continuation of current strategy for school improvement without any further action to address falling local rolls
 - Conversion to academy
 - Federation
 - Amalgamation resulting in the closure of St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools with the displaced pupils being accommodated by another Catholic Primary school
 - Closure

No change and continuation of current strategy

- 4.2 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 surplus outturn at 31 March 25 of £45,324 compared to £87,098 at 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.
- 4.3 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.

- 4.4 This option was 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.
- 4.5 **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.

Federation

- 4.6 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 and governing body.
- 4.7 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.
- 4.8 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 as part of this consultation from any other school to be part of the St Peter in Chains and St Gildas' federation. This would also not address the decline in numbers on roll or the financial risk.
- 4.9 **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.
- 4.10 This option was 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.

Full and immediate closure

- 4.11 **Closure** - This is the option recommended. 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.
- 4.12 There are sufficient primary school places in the local area that can provide a suitable alternative for displaced pupils. A high surplus of primary school places in the local area means that other alternatives can be offered for pupils at St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools that wish to go elsewhere.
- 4.13 Tables 2 and 3 show plenty of surplus places available at local and Catholic primary schools within Haringey.

Table 2 - Local school vacancies in Haringey schools within a 1-mile walking distance to St Peter-In-Chains RC Infant School and St Gildas' Catholic Junior School from school roll return data as of June 2025

School	Planning area	Yr 0	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
Coleridge (120 PAN)	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	7
North Harringay (60 PAN)	5	1	16	3	0	10	9	4
Rokesly Infant (R PAN = 60 Y1-6 = 90)	2	4	37	1	-	-	-	-
Rokesly Junior (90)	2	-	-	-	-	10	15	6
South Harringay Infant (60 PAN)	3	0	8	0	-	-	-	-
South Harringay Junior (60 PAN)	3	-	-	-	2	0	0	19
St Aidan's VC (30 PAN)	2	0	1	2	0	1	0	2
St Mary's CofE (60 PAN)	2	17	21	17	19	14	18	6
Stroud Green (60 PAN)	2	0	1	0	1	4	9	1
Weston Park (30 PAN)	2	0	0	2	0	0	3	6
		22	84	25	22	39	54	51
St Peter-In-Chains RC Infant School and St		2	2	1	1	4	0	17

Gildas' Catholic Junior School (PA2) Pupils on roll								
	Remainder	20	82	24	21	35	54	34

BALANCE OF DENOMINATIONAL PROVISION

Table 3 below shows the current number of vacancies at other Catholic schools in Haringey.

School	Planning area	Yr 0	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5	Yr 6
Our Lady of Muswell Catholic (60 PAN)	1	13	6	3	0	0	0	1
St Francis de Sales Catholic Infant (60 PAN)	4	2	14	6	-	-	-	-
St Francis de Sales Catholic (60 PAN)	4	-	-	-	5	4	17	9
St Ignatius Catholic (30 from 2025)	3	34	13	38	0	0	30	8
St John Vianney Catholic (30 PAN)	3	0	0	1	1	3	2	2
St Martin of Porres Catholic (30 PAN)	1	22	15	14	13	11	14	12
St Mary's Priory Catholic Infant (30 PAN from 2025)	3	6	0	1				
St Mary's Priory Catholic Junior (30 PAN from 2025)	3				0	14	2	0
St Paul's Catholic (30 PAN)	5	9	6	2	16	0	9	3
		86	54	65	35	32	74	35

St Peter-In-Chains RC Infant School and St Gildas' Catholic Junior School (PA2)								
		2	2	1	1	4	0	17
	Remainder	84	52	64	34	28	74	18

Source: 2019-2025 January school census (PLASC) data

- 4.14 All Haringey schools in the local area are judged by Ofsted to be 'Good' or 'Outstanding.' Pupils moving to other local schools from St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools will contribute towards the improved sustainability of the receiving schools as it will lead to increased pupil numbers and, in turn, their financial income. A closure will therefore help support the sustainability and viability of other schools in PA2 by enabling neighbouring schools to increase their pupil numbers.
- 4.15 The Council is financially liable for any maintained school deficits and must decide each year whether to continue to fund a school in deficit. When a maintained school closes the Council is responsible for the debt carried by the school at the point of closure. If the Council does not take action to reduce the number of primary school places to align with the current and projected demand, it knowingly takes on increased financial burden and responsibility at a time when it is required to find substantial savings.

Resource and Risk implications

- 4.16 The Council aims to ensure that demand for school places is as closely matched to supply as possible. The closure of a school where there is considerable overcapacity supports this process.
- 4.17 Section 14 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty on local authorities to "*secure that sufficient schools for providing primary and secondary school education are available for their area*". The local authority is required to exercise these functions with a view to increasing opportunities for parental choice. The large level of existing and anticipated vacancies and the compact nature of Haringey's geography mitigate considerably against any risk of there being insufficient places to accommodate pupils affected by any closure.

Premises and use of vacant site

- 4.18 Following the complete vacation of the St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools sites, the Catholic Diocese will have control of the buildings and will consult with local stakeholders about potential future usage in accordance with the guidance and rules established by the Department for Education with regards to the disposal of educational assets.

- 4.19 No options on the future use of the school sites can be considered until the Lead Cabinet Member makes a final determination on whether to agree the proposal for closure.

5 Consultation process and next steps

- 5.1 Although the statutory timescales for consultation had been agreed at the Cabinet meeting in February 2025, Council's Cabinet had the ability to halt or delay the process at any point if a credible alternative option to closure was identified.
- 5.2 The LA carried out consultation with all relevant parties prior to the publication of the statutory proposal, in accordance with the recommendation set out in the statutory guidance issued by the DFE "[Opening and Closing Maintained Schools October 2024.](#)"
- 5.3 Details of the pre-publication consultation and the representations received from stakeholders together with the responses from Officers are included at Appendix 2.
- 5.4 The statutory notice and full proposal were published on Wednesday 7 May 2025 on Haringey's Commonplace consultation page. The notice was also published in the local paper, The Enfield and Haringey Independent. A copy of the notice and full proposal is included at Appendix 3.
- 5.5 A letter was sent to all staff and parents of registered pupils at St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools signposting them to the full proposal on the Commonplace consultation page, including details on how written representation could be submitted.
- 5.6 The statutory notice and full proposal were also emailed to all local Haringey primary and secondary schools, nurseries, children centres, MPs, trade unions, the diocese and neighbouring authorities.
- 5.7 A frequently asked questions (FAQs) document was included on the Haringey Commonplace consultation page.
- 5.8 During the pre-publication consultation period, Officers held a public meeting on the 5 February 2025 at St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools to discuss the proposal and answer questions from interested stakeholders. A member of the Diocese was also present to answer questions. A further public meeting was held during the representation period on 14 May 2025 following the publication of the statutory notice, and a member of the Diocese was also present to answer questions about the security and future use of the Diocesan owned buildings if closure was implemented.

- 5.9 A series of informal meetings were arranged with school staff and their trade union representative to address HR matters and offer support and guidance in relation to redeployment and redundancy packages. A formal HR consultation with all staff will begin when the final decision on closure has been taken.

Representation period responses

- 5.10 The statutory guidance issued by the DfE “Opening and Closing Maintained Schools October 2024,” sets out that comments/views on the statutory proposal must be submitted in free text format by individuals. This is to ensure that the representations cannot be considered to be “guided” in any way, and to ensure that those making representations can feel able to make whatever comments or suggestions they feel appropriate and necessary.
- 5.11 The Council received one objection during the four-week statutory representation period ending 4 June 2025. The objection and the local authority officer response can be found at Appendix 1.
- 5.12 It is inferred that the lack of responses is related to a growing understanding and acceptance of the main reasons for the proposal - falling local pupil rolls and long-term financial sustainability impacting on standards - along with an acceptance of the main solution to transferring pupils to other schools rated ‘Good’ or ‘Outstanding’ by Ofsted. This can be observed from families moving their child(ren) to other schools in advance of a final decision.
- 5.13 Several important points have been noted during the pre-statutory consultation periods and several questions were asked during the public meeting held on 5 February 2025. Cabinet have already considered these points sensitively, considering all issues and implications of a decision to publish a notice to close the school. They have already considered at length the views of parents, children and staff and the Council’s view remains that there are sufficient places in the local area and the need for an urgent and cost-effective solution.

6 Overall decision making and risk implications

- 6.1 As the main driver of school funding is pupil numbers there continues to be a significant concern about the long-term sustainability of St Peter in Chain’s and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools in terms of the risks to its financial stability and its ability to attract pupils to the school against a backdrop of falling demand which is projected to remain broadly static until 2030.
- 6.2 For this reason, The Cabinet Member for Children Schools and Families is asked to approve the proposal to discontinue St Peter in Chain’s and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools from 31 August 2025. This would mean the closure of the schools with displaced pupils transferring to other schools with available places.

- 6.3 It is important to ensure an effective transition of pupils to minimise any impact and the Council will continue working with the school and families to support them in mitigating this risk, especially during the interim transition period outlined in para 6.12 should the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families decide to approve the proposal on behalf of Council's Cabinet.
- 6.4 Any delay to a decision on the future of the school is likely to have a detrimental impact on the school in the future, its pupils and staff. Ongoing reduction in pupil numbers leads to financial challenges impacting on staffing and the school's ability to deliver a full and balanced curriculum. The timetable and phasing proposal set out at para. 6.12 is proposed to mitigate this risk.

Factors to be considered by Decision Maker

- 6.5 The Cabinet Member for Children Schools and families with delegated authority from the Leader in keeping with Part Three Section C Paragraph 3 of the Constitution is the decision maker for this proposal and must decide on the proposal within two months of the end of the representation period, otherwise the local authority must forward the proposal, and any representations received to the Schools Adjudicator for a decision to be made.
- 6.6 The Secretary of State has issued statutory guidance to assist decision makers, and Cabinet must have regard to the statutory guidance when it takes a decision on statutory proposals. "Opening and Closing Maintained Schools, October 2024."
- 6.7 Before considering the merits of the proposal, the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families must be satisfied that the following elements have been complied with:
- that comprehensive information has been supplied and that all information required is available to make a decision.
 - that the published statutory notice complies with statutory requirements.
 - that the statutory consultation has been carried out prior to the publication of the Notice; and
 - whether the proposal is related to any other proposals.
- 6.8 The decision maker must have regard to the following
- cost effective provision of education and the removal of surplus school places;
 - how the proposal will impact upon local diversity.
 - the effect on standards and school improvement;
 - types of schools available within the borough;
 - the impact on community cohesion and race equality;
 - the impact on the provision of extended services and travel;

- the impact of the proposal on Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision; the views of interested parties: Cabinet should consider the views of all those affected by the proposal or who have an interest in them, including but not limited to pupils, families of pupils, staff, governors, local residents, and local Diocesan bodies.
- 6.9 In developing the proposal, a detailed case has been made about the future viability of St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools and the unsustainability of maintaining a school with such significant numbers of surplus places against a backdrop of falling demand across schools in the wider area.
- 6.10 With regard to diversity of provision, whilst the proposal will result in parents being able to express a preference for one less Catholic school, the low numbers of admission in recent years would suggest that St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools has not been a first preference for many families living in the wider local area. Should the proposal be approved, there will still many other primary schools within PA2 and further schools in adjacent planning areas with vacancies.
- 6.11 The full statutory proposal is set out at Appendix 3 and provides more detailed information in relation to the types of schools available within the borough, the impact on the provision of extended services and travel and the impact of the proposal on Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision. The community impact statement did not identify any risks to the impact of the proposal on community cohesion or race equality.

Timescale for Implementation

- 6.12 The local authority, as the proposer intends for the decision to be implemented in a phased manner and for it to cease to maintain St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools with effect from 31 August 2025. The proposed phased implementation is:
- April 2025 to July 2025: no changes – Pupils remaining in Reception, Years 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 are able to continue at St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools. Families have a right to express a preference for other schools via the Council's in-year admissions process.
 - June 2025 to July 2025: a co-ordinated in-year admissions process will be run by the School Admissions Service to enable families to apply elsewhere for September 2025. Families will be awarded priority under the Council's social/medical criterion for community and voluntary controlled (VC) schools. The Council will also approach own admission authority schools to request their consideration in prioritising displaced

pupils under any existing social or medical criteria outlined in their admissions policies.

- 31 August 2025 – St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools closure.
- September 2025 –displaced pupils start at alternative schools

6.13 There is no legal basis on which the Council can mandate and enforce that the cohorts of pupils remain at the school. The Council acknowledges that parental preference to move children to a school at a time of their choice remains, irrespective of the transition plan outlined. As previously stated, many parents have already transferred their child(ren) to other schools with available places.

6.14 Should the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and families approve the proposal on behalf of Council's Cabinet, transition planning for remaining pupils enrolled at the schools would begin straight away, involving pupils, parents and staff. Individual transition plans would be developed for pupils based upon their need to ensure any vulnerable groups of children are identified and well supported during this process. Some pupils with EHCPs have already received support and been offered places at an alternative provision.

Decision Options Available

6.15 Having regard to the statutory guidance issued by the DFE on 'the Opening and Closing maintained schools in October 2024, the Cabinet Member must consider the available evidence, including any comments and objections generated during the representation period. The Cabinet Member must then decide, having considered the merits of the proposal, whether to:

- 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

Officer Recommendation

6.16 As set out in para 3.1 of this report, the Cabinet Member for Children, Schools and Families is recommended to approve the proposed closure of St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools from 31 August 2025.

Reasons for Recommendation

6.17 The considerations for recommending closure are set out in para. 3.18 and restated below:

- The pupil roll has fallen over the past five years resulting in reduced (per pupil) funding. 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 19 pupils in October 2024 census which will reduce the school's DSG funding by a further £153,954 for 2025/26.
- 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.
- This funding position would have a detrimental impact on staffing and resources, which would limit the school's ability to continue to provide the high quality of education that the children in the school community need and deserve.
- The school would be hampered in its capacity to deliver a broad and balanced curriculum that it would be reasonable to expect of a primary school.
- Haringey has capacity in neighbouring schools to meet the needs of all displaced pupils transitioning from St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools to alternative schools.

7 Contribution to the Corporate Delivery Plan 2024-2026

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.

8 Carbon and Climate Change

- 8.1 The proposal 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 within the school estate 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.

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

Below are financial, governance and legal and equality comments.

Finance

- 9.1 Below, we offer brief financial comments on the current financial status of the schools and the options previously considered by Council's Cabinet:
- i. The current federation model has not been achieving its desired impact, and this is evidenced from the financial returns to the council which has a combined deficit forecast for St Peter's Infant & St Gildas' Junior of £76,116 for 2024/25. The further reduction in DSG funding due to lower pupil numbers makes this no longer a viable option.
 - ii. 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 is unlikely to make the schools financially viable.
 - iii. Educational Impact: federation/amalgamation often require shared staffing and resources, which would likely lead to the merging of classes or vertical integration of age groups. This could adversely affect the quality of education provided, particularly for younger pupils and those with specific educational needs.
- 9.2 Below, we offer brief comments on the financial impact of closure:

Recommendation for School Closure

- i. School closure has been determined to be the only financially sustainable option that ensures the effective allocation of resources across the local education system. 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.

- ii. This decision will have financial consequences for the Council; however, it represents the most appropriate option to consider. The local authority will need to cover the schools' financial shortfall as well as manage the additional expenses linked to the closure. These expenses will encompass redundancy payments for employees, settlement costs for leased equipment, and costs associated with early contracts termination.

Director of Legal and Governance

- 9.3 The Director of Legal and Governance has been consulted in the preparation of this Report.
- 9.4 The relevant legislation and statutory guidance that the Council must have regard to when closing St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools: Section 15 and 16 of the Education and Inspection Act 2006, Regulations 11 and 12 of The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013, and the guidance issued by the DFE "Opening and Closing Maintained Schools 2024" which provides guidance on the statutory process for school closure, including the steps to be taken such as consultation, publication of proposals for consultation, representation period and the factors that the decision makers must have regard to when approving such proposals. When considering whether to approve the recommendations the Cabinet Member will need to be satisfied that the consultation and representation periods were appropriate, fair and open, and that the Council has given full consideration to all the responses.
- 9.5 The closure of St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' Catholic Infant and Junior Schools will have a direct impact on the staffing resources at the schools. The schools and Council must ensure that displaced staff are treated fairly in accordance with agreed processes to manage redeployment opportunities and redundancies where this is not possible.
- 9.6 The recommendations are within the legal powers of the Council as detailed above.
- 9.7 Under Part Three Section C Paragraph 3 of the Constitution the Leader has delegated the decision-making power for this matter to the Cabinet Member.

Equalities Comment

- 9.8 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/fait, 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.

- 9.9 The report recommends that Cabinet agree to discontinue St Peter in Chain’s and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools following the outcome of the 4-week representation period (formal consultation) which yielded only one objection at Appendix 1.
- 9.10 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) is attached at Appendix 5. This is an assessment of the potential impact of closure based on consideration of all the relevant available data. The EqIA has been updated following the pre-statutory consultation and representation periods to address the issues raised.
- 9.11 Service users (children at St Peter in Chain’s 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.
- 9.12 In terms of pupil composition St Peter in Chain’s 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. Older St Peter in Chain’s and St Gildas’ Catholic Infant and Junior Schools (especially Year 6) are overrepresented within the service user base, simply

because the numbers of younger pupils (in Reception, Years 1, 2 and 3) at the school are low and many of those have left the school in recent months. 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.

- 9.13 Children with Special Education Needs (SEN) or disabled children – St Peter in Chain's Infant and St Gildas' Junior Schools currently has 6 pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) who are a vulnerable group that 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 come into force as well as giving priority to children with social and medical considerations that meet the criterion for an exceptional medical or social need. Based on parental preference, suitable alternative placements have already been identified for the majority of remaining pupils at the school with an EHCP, and arrangements are currently underway for the rest.
- 9.14 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.
- 9.15 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.

10 Use of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Response to consultation objection

Appendix 2 - Analysis of pre-publication consultation responses

Appendix 3 – St Peter in Chain's and St Gildas' statutory notice and full proposal

Appendix 4 – Notes from the public meeting held on 05 February 2025

Appendix 5 – EqIA

11 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 Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2012.
13. School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013
14. School roll projections sourced from the GLA
15. School roll information, including admission information from data held within Education Services
16. Department for Education “Opening and Closing maintained schools “(October 2024)
17. Department for Education “Making significant changes (‘prescribed alterations’) to maintained schools” (January 2023).