

De Beauvoir Primary School

Hackney Council has made the very difficult decision to **consider consulting on closing the De Beauvoir Primary School in September 2024**. This is predominantly due to the significant decrease in pupil numbers which has meant the school is under serious and irreversible financial pressure, which is at no fault of the school.

In May, the Council's Cabinet will make a decision on whether to consult on the proposed closure. If the decision is to proceed, an informal consultation will begin in June, potentially followed by formal consultation, in autumn 2023. The final decision to proceed or not with the proposed closure will be made in December 2023.

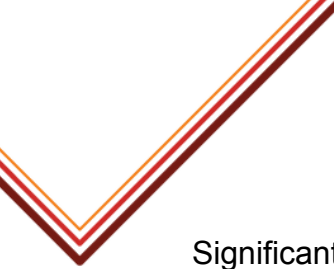
We know schools have very close - sometimes multigenerational - ties to the local area and its communities, and that this will be an upsetting process for many. This makes this proposal very difficult, and not one we would ever choose to make unless we had no other choice. The Council and the school leadership will work together to limit periods of anxiety and uncertainty for children, families, staff and communities, and provide support for the education, choices and wellbeing of all those affected.

Why is this being proposed?

There are falling numbers of school-age children in many parts of London. The reasons behind this are thought to include falling birth rates, families relocating outside London (as a result of the pandemic and other factors including housing costs, the return to Europe of families as a result of Brexit), and competition from free schools.

De Beauvoir Primary School has been severely affected. In 2014 there were 5% unfilled Reception places (3 places out of 60) and 13% unfilled places across all year groups (56 places out of 420). By 2022 the surplus had increased to 53% unfilled Reception places (16 places out of 30) and 61% unfilled places (183 places out of 300, or more than 6 classes) across all year groups. The number of reception places was reduced from 60 to 30 for the last 4 years. The downward trend in pupil numbers is forecast to continue.





Significantly smaller class sizes might sound like good news, but the opposite is true, because this reduces the amount of money the school receives from central government.

A state-maintained school, like **De Beauvoir Primary School**, will lose £6,484 for each empty school place this year. This school year alone, based on the latest census data, the school is set to receive around £1.18m less in funding compared to what it would be entitled to if running with all classrooms full.

A school with less funding will have:

- less money for staff;
- less money for resources and equipment;
- less money to pay bills and to carry out maintenance work;
- less money for extracurricular activities.

While our schools have achieved excellent results for their students, this income loss will make it increasingly challenging to maintain them in the long run. In time, a school affected by income loss will almost inevitably see performance and standards fall. It is our duty, as a Council, to ensure the quality of education for children, and stability for teaching and support staff, take priority.

School leaders and the Council have been doing everything they can to manage the situation, including by combining different year groups in some schools and reducing reception places. But this hasn't solved the problem as rolls have continued to fall.

It is the legal duty of the Council to manage school places and ensure that schools provide high quality places for the children. And more than that, we are ambitious for our children: we want to ensure our schools remain among the very best in the country.

We asked the government for help - by giving schools additional funding to manage the situation while numbers stabilise. We also asked for greater powers to manage school places in free schools and academies - which are independent of the Council - in order to combine how we plan places.

The government, in response, increased funding per pupil nationally - by around 2 per cent per pupil - but that is simply not enough to sustain schools with large vacancy rates, especially now, with the rising costs of energy and materials putting even more pressure on budgets.

The Council has been looking at which schools have been hardest-hit by falling pupil numbers and budget pressures.

Factors considered by the Council:

- Schools most financially at-risk
- Number of vacant places
- Physical size of schools and suitability of sites to host a merger
- Geographic partnership options
- Whether new neighbourhoods and new-build estates will create significantly more need for school places in the future
- Current Ofsted grading and projected outcomes of pupils
- Community impact.

What school will my child go to if De Beauvoir Primary School closes, when would they start, and how will that process be managed?

If the proposal to close the school is taken forward the Council will work closely to support families to make a planned transition to a new school for the start of the new academic year in September 2024.

Families may decide to secure a place at an alternative school via the in-year admissions process at any time. More information can be found by searching [‘Hackney in year admissions’](#).

Currently there are 11 good or outstanding primary schools with vacancies within walking distance of De Beauvoir Primary School. There are a further eight good or outstanding schools within walking distance which do not currently have spaces, and families may wish to consider and apply for these schools as well. You can find out more about these schools by searching [‘Hackney schools directory’](#).

If a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, their SEND key worker will work with the family directly to consult and determine another school that can meet their needs.

Children with SEND but without a plan will be supported to ensure special transition arrangements that are needed to help the move go smoothly are in place.

How will you ensure standards of teaching are maintained between now and any potential closure?

The school will receive regular support from our experienced school improvement team, all of whom are former or serving headteachers or school leaders as well including any additional support where needed. Staff will continue to access training and development in the same way.



What will happen to staff?

The Council will do everything it can to help staff find alternative roles in schools throughout Hackney. However, as a last resort, some staff will be offered redundancy.

Can you ensure siblings and friendship groups are kept together?

Hackney Education will work closely with affected families to ensure all children are offered a suitable alternative school place. We will ensure that siblings can move to the same school, unless families decide otherwise.

We will also do our best to keep friendship groups together but sadly we can not guarantee this.

Will there be funding to pay for a new uniform and other costs?

We will provide more specific information and support ahead of any consultation.

What will happen next?

The Council will arrange meetings with the school community starting in April, to talk to you directly about the plans.

We will seek to engage with parents / carers, teaching and support staff, leaders, and governors, before any decision is made. We will also seek to speak to the children and young people affected by the potential changes.

Proposed timeline

NOTE: This timeline may be subject to changes.

Date	Event
January-May 2023	The Council talks to school leaders and governors to discuss plans and decide on next steps.
April 2023	Public meetings are held with the school community.
May 2023	The Council's Cabinet will make a decision on whether to consult on the proposed closure.
June 2023	Informal consultation (subject to Cabinet decision) begins with parents, staff and governors, and those living and working in the area.
September-October 2023	Results of the informal consultation are considered by the Cabinet who will decide whether to progress to formal consultation. Formal consultation involves the Council publishing a statutory notice of their intention to close the school. There will be a 28-day 'objection period' for those who object to the proposal to send their objections to the council.
December 2023	The outcome of the statutory notice period and any objections are considered by the Cabinet, who makes the final decision to proceed or not.
January-August 2024	School closure arrangements are made (subject to Cabinet's decision in December 2023).
September 2024	School closes. Children begin at alternative schools.