

## St Mary's Church of England Primary School

Working together with the London Diocesan Board of Schools (the Diocese), Hackney Council is **considering consulting on closing St Mary's Primary School on 31 August 2025**. This is because the significant fall in pupil numbers has caused its financial position to worsen to the point that it is no longer possible for the Council to maintain the school.

### Why is this being proposed?

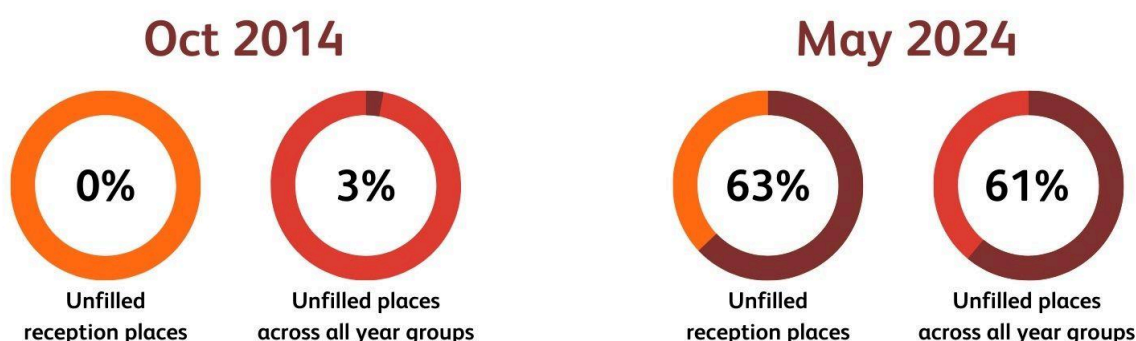
There are falling numbers of children in many parts of London. The reasons behind this are thought to include lower birth rates, the cap on housing benefits, and families leaving London (as a result of the housing crisis, the cost of living, Brexit, and the pandemic).

Similarly to other boroughs, there are not enough children in Hackney and neighbouring areas seeking places in our primary schools. This is expected to remain a problem in following years, despite Hackney building new homes, as the likely number of additional school-aged children will not be enough to solve these issues.

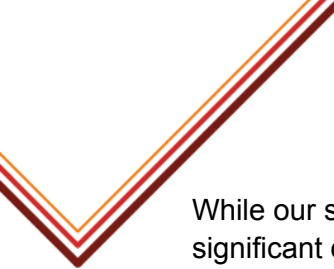
Schools receive money from the central government based on the number of pupils. This means that schools that have many empty places receive less funding, which in the long run negatively impacts the quality of education they can offer. They have less money for staff, resources, equipment, extracurricular activities, to pay bills and to carry out maintenance work.

**St Mary's Church of England Primary School** is recognised as a high performing school, with excellent results for its pupils, but it has been seriously affected by falling rolls. This has increased the risk that in the long run it would be unable to maintain the high quality education for our community.

In October 2014 there were no unfilled reception places and 3% unfilled places across all year groups (6 out of 210). In May 2024, the school had 63% unfilled reception places (19 out of 30) and 61% unfilled places across all year groups (129 out of 210).



In April 2022, the school had reserves of £14,825. By April 2024, the school had a deficit balance of £7,191 - an overspend of £22,016 over the last two years.



While our schools are recognised for their high performance and excellent results, they face significant challenges due to the reduced government funding caused by the falling rolls. Many schools have already told us that this is affecting their ability to fully support their pupils, especially those with the greatest needs.

School leaders, the Council and the Diocese have been doing everything they can to manage the situation, including reducing the number of reception places to 15, combining age groups, restructuring staff, and trying to supplement the school's budget by leasing space to a social enterprise nursery. But this hasn't solved the problem as rolls and funding continue to fall.

Like many other local authorities, Hackney Council is facing enormous financial challenges, and needs to make substantial savings to be able to continue to protect the borough's most vulnerable residents. The Council cannot afford to financially support schools that are not sustainable, and must continue to make difficult decisions to make sure our schools are fit for the future, and to protect the high quality education that Hackney is known for.

We know St Mary's Primary School has close ties to the local area and community, sometimes over many generations. This makes this proposal very difficult, and not one we would choose if we felt there was a better option.

We will work together with school leaders and the Diocese to support children, families, staff and communities through the next steps. We will do all we can to protect the education and wellbeing of all those affected.

### **What will happen next?**

The Council's Cabinet will meet on 30 September to decide whether to consult on these proposals. If the decision is to proceed, we will launch a consultation by mid-October to gather views on the proposals. No final decision will be made until April 2025.

### **Proposed timeline**

NOTE: This timeline may be subject to changes.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Event</b>
<b>30 Sept 2024</b>	The Council's Cabinet decides on whether to consult on the proposed closure of St Mary's CoE Primary School.
<b>Oct-Nov 2024</b>	Consultation (subject to Cabinet decision) takes place with families, staff and governors, and others affected by the proposals.
<b>Jan 2025</b>	Results of the consultation are analysed and specific recommendations are made to Cabinet, who decides on next steps. If the decision is to proceed, the Council publishes specific proposals.

<b>Feb-Mar 2025</b>	Specific proposals are published. A 28-day statutory representation period begins on the date of publication, during which any person can object to or make comments on proposals.
<b>April 2025</b>	The Cabinet considers all the views received during the statutory representation period and makes the final decision to proceed or not.
<b>Starting May 2025</b>	If the decision is to proceed, arrangements are made to implement the Cabinet's decision.
<b>31 August 2025</b>	If the decision is to proceed, the proposed changes take effect. St Mary's Primary School closes.

### **What would happen to my child if St Mary's closes?**

If the proposal to close the school is taken forward, the admissions team in Hackney will work with the school and the Diocese to support families to make a planned transition to a new school for the start of the new academic year in September 2025.

There are enough places at other schools within walking distance for all pupils currently on roll at St Mary's. Hackney Council and the Diocese will work closely with affected families to ensure all children are offered a suitable alternative school place, including a Church of England school if that is what the parents prefer.

Families may also seek 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](#)'.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), with or without an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), will receive additional support to ensure a smooth transition.

### **When will I be able to find more information, and have my say?**

More details about the proposals can be found in the Cabinet report, which will be published on 20 September on the [Hackney Council website](#).

If the Cabinet's decision is to go to the next step, a consultation should begin by mid-October. Consultation documents will then be shared with you through your school. Further information (including frequently asked questions and answers) will also be available on the [Hackney Education website](#). The Council and the school leaders will organise meetings with parents and carers as part of the consultation process.