

# Pre-Publication Consultation on the Proposed Closure of St John's Walworth C of E Primary School

Consultation Period: March 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 to May 14<sup>th</sup> 2021

## About the school

St John's Walworth Church of England Primary School (SJW) is a 1 form of entry (1FE) primary school near the site of the former Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre. The school is situated in Southwark's School Planning Area 1 (PA1) - Borough, Bankside and Walworth. The school's current Ofsted rating is "Requires Improvement".



In recent years, the school has struggled to fill the 30 places it is able to admit each year. This academic year, starting September 2020, 18 children took up Reception class places, 11 joined Reception the previous year. SJW has a capacity of 210 across all year groups of the school, 144 places are currently filled with 66 places empty - 33% of Years Reception to 6, which is some way above the Southwark average vacancy level of 19%. This low level of admissions has had a considerable financial effect on the school over the years, which has led to a substantial and growing in year financial deficit. School funding is driven by pupil numbers, the more pupils a school has, the more funding it receives. Unused school places have an immediate cost for schools through reduced budgets, as well as affecting the overall viability and quality of education standards at the school. The local authority has confirmed that the school has received another low number of applicants for September 2021, and this, along with an identified drop in births in the immediate locality, make it unlikely that pupil numbers will recover. Table 1 below shows the falling number of application to reception class that SJW has received each year since 2016.

*Table 1: Applicants by preference and total, 2016-2021*

< Preferences 1 to 6 >

<b>Year</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>PAN</b>	<b>Total</b>
2021	10	4	8	5	3	1	30	31
2020	17	10	1	3	4	2	30	37
2019	6	14	8	6	9	6	30	49
2018	18	7	8	8	6	5	30	52
2017	18	6	15	8	8	4	30	59
2016	24	18	10	11	11	8	30	82

("PAN" in the table above means the pupil admission number that SJW can accept into its Reception intake each year).

## **The Proposal**

The Governing Body of SJW proposes closure of the school by September 2021 and has resolved to commence the statutory process that closure involves. Southwark Council and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) support this action. This consultation document and the attached Q&A document have been published by the Governing Body.

## **Reason for the proposed closure**

The Governing Body has reached the view that the school can no longer remain financially viable. There are several reasons contributing to this position:

- *the pupil roll has fallen consistently over the past five years resulting in reduced funding which the school receives based on pupil numbers*
- *the reduced funding has moved the school budget has been in deficit over recent years with the school now in significant debt, it is unlikely the school will be able to pay off this debt*
- *The current circumstances have made it inevitable that the school will incur further debt if it remains open*
- *Reduced funding will have impact on staffing and resources, which will limit the school's ability to continue to provide the high quality of education that the children in the school community need and deserve.*

Because of the above, the school will be hampered in its capacity to deliver the broad and balanced curriculum that it would be reasonable to expect of a primary school now and in the immediate and longer-term future.

It should also be noted that there are 14 schools within 0.6 miles of SJW; all are within a reasonable walking distance. These 14 schools have 1,100 vacant school places across Reception to Year 6 to accommodate St John's pupils, were the school to close.

## **Statutory requirements**

In line with the Department for Education's (DFE) guidance: *Opening and closing maintained schools, Statutory guidance for proposers and decision-makers, November 2019*, Part 2 and Schedule 2 of the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 as amended by the Education Act 2011 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 the Governing Body will be following the statutory process for closing a maintained school which consists of 5 stages:

**Stage one: consultation** - it is a statutory requirement for Governors to consult any parties they think are appropriate before publishing concrete proposals. The consultation will last for 6 weeks to allow the widest possible canvassing of views. The purpose of the consultation is to seek the views of and engage with those that will be directly affected by the proposed closure. It is also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration on the proposed closure of St John's Walworth Primary Church of England School by September 2021.

**Stage two: Publication** – After the Consultation outlined above, the Council will analyse the results and decide whether to proceed with publication of formal proposals (known as statutory proposals) to close the school. If they do decide to proceed, statutory notices alerting stakeholders to the proposals will be published in the Southwark News, on the Council's website and will be displayed at the entrances to the school. The proposals will invite further comment on the Governing Body's plans, and such comments would be made during the next phase, the "representation" period

**Stage three: Representation** – If it is decided to proceed with the publication of statutory proposals, the "representation" period will begin on the date of publication of the statutory proposals and will last for four weeks. This period would be during June

and July 2021. Any person would be able to send objections or comments on the proposal to Southwark Council.

**Stage four: decision** – Within 2 months of the end of the representation period, the Council's Cabinet will meet to discuss and make a decision on whether or not to close the school. Please note that although the initial consultation and the statutory proposals are put forward by the school's Governing Body, the decision on whether or not to close the school must be made by the Council. The Council would make its decision on 13<sup>th</sup> July 2021.

**Stage five: implementation** – If the Council's Cabinet decides to close the school, this must be undertaken within 2 months of the decision date. This would in effect be by the 31<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

### **Impact of the closure on pupils, parents and carers**

If the closure is approved for September 2021, the local authority has confirmed that there is sufficient capacity at alternative schools across the borough and within a 0.6 mile distance of SJW for families to be able to secure an alternative place for their child from September onwards. While the local authority is not pre-empting the outcome of the process, it has developed a coordinated admissions process to run alongside this consultation process to ensure that families are able to make alternative school preferences and for places at alternative schools to be allocated fairly to all children by September 2021.

### **Impact of the closure on Staff**

Southwark Council and the SDBE will work collaboratively to seek to redeploy as many staff as possible, into alternative positions in other schools within Southwark. Alternatively, staff will be supported through a programme of redundancy.

### **Community**

Local residents will have the opportunity to express their views during this consultation and the following, representation period.

### **School Places**

School roll projections indicate sufficiency of primary school places across the Borough and specifically, within the Walworth and Borough Bankside areas for the next eight years, even if SJW closes. This will continue to be reviewed and monitored by the local authority.

### **We are consulting with...**

We are consulting with staff, parents/carers, the local authority, and the local community on the proposed closure of the school. In addition, we would welcome the views of

- *All schools/admission authorities in Southwark, governing bodies and academy trusts*
- *Neighbouring Councils*
- *Southwark Councillors*
- *The SDBE and the Catholic Diocese*
- *Trade Unions*

### **Consultation period**

This consultation will run from **15<sup>th</sup> March 2021 to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021**, during this time you are invited to respond to the Governing Body on its proposal to close the school.

## Consultation Timetable

Stage	Dates
Stage 1: Pre-Publication Consultation with interested parties	15th March 2021 to 14th May 2021
Stage 2: Publication of statutory proposals (If agreed by the Governing Body following consideration of responses to the pre-publication consultation in Stage1)	7th June 2021
Stage 3: Representation	7 <sup>th</sup> June 2021 to 5th July 2021
Stage 4: Cabinet decision	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2021
Stage 5: Implementation	1 <sup>st</sup> September 2021

### How to give your views:

This consultation allows anyone with an interest to comment or raise any concerns about the proposal to close SJW C of E Primary by September 2021. We welcome you to join a consultation meeting and/or, complete the questionnaire as detailed below.

### Join a statutory consultation meeting

Consultation meetings	Date	Location
1	Tuesday 16 <sup>th</sup> March 2021 at 5.30pm	Join Zoom Meeting <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87140263645?pwd=aTZ0OEhnREVuTUQwL3Q1Q3BLU21DQT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87140263645?pwd=aTZ0OEhnREVuTUQwL3Q1Q3BLU21DQT09</a> Meeting ID: 871 4026 3645 Passcode: V53x2p
2	Tuesday 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2021 at 5.30pm	Join Zoom Meeting <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85338934664?pwd=MUpXTjdSa1d3RHNwWWNpWmk2eXJVUT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85338934664?pwd=MUpXTjdSa1d3RHNwWWNpWmk2eXJVUT09</a> Meeting ID: 853 3893 4664 Passcode: y7UBL0
3	Tuesday 11th May 2021 At 5.30pm	Join Zoom Meeting <a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84934241990?pwd=b09CZThockt4M3BQQ1hiaXR0WUpnUT09">https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84934241990?pwd=b09CZThockt4M3BQQ1hiaXR0WUpnUT09</a> Meeting ID: 849 3424 1990 Passcode: nL5X04

Complete the questionnaire online click here: [Consultation on the proposed closure of St John's Walworth C of E Primary School](#)

### Responses must be submitted or, completed and returned by 5pm on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021

- In Writing to: Consultation response  
St John's Walworth Church of England primary school,  
Larcom Street  
Walworth  
London SE17 1NQ

By Email: [consultancy@stjohnswalworth.southwark.sch.uk](mailto:consultancy@stjohnswalworth.southwark.sch.uk)

**We strongly encourage responses to be submitted electronically either via the online questionnaire or by email where possible. Please request a paper copy of the questionnaire if you are unable to respond online.**

### **What happens next?**

After the consultation closing date of **Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021**, responses will be analysed and a consultation report produced. The report will be presented to the full Governing body to consider the outcome of the consultation on Monday 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021. A decision will be taken by the Governing Body at that meeting to determine whether to publish a statutory notice and proposals and start the publication and representation stages to propose closure of the school.

The outcomes report will be shared with Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and Southwark Council, Education Department. The results of this consultation will also be published on the school's webpage: [www.stjohnswalworthprimary.co.uk](http://www.stjohnswalworthprimary.co.uk)

# Consultation on the proposed closure of St John's Walworth C of E Primary School

## Questionnaire

### Proposed closure of St John's Walworth C of E Primary School

**1) Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposed closure of St John's Walworth Primary School (please tick)**

- I support the proposed school closure
- I do not support the proposed school closure
- I am unsure
- I am not affected by the proposed closure

**2) If you do not support the proposed closure, please tell us why.**

**3) We are keen to understand how the proposed school closure may affect you. Please use this space to tell us if you are impacted by the proposed school closure and how. What can we do to address any impacts you have mentioned?**

**4) Do you have any alternative suggestions to any part of the proposal?**

## About You

We want to receive comments from the broadest range of people possible to reflect the opinion of our community. In order to enable us to assess the degree to which this has been successful, it would be helpful if you could take a moment to complete the section below. The Governing Body will ensure that any data provided will be protected against loss or misuse. Your information will not be retained or shared with any other parties and will be destroyed in line with relevant destruction policies and processes.

### 5) Please tell us who you are (please tick)

- Member of staff at St John's Walworth Primary School
- Member of staff at another school
- School Governor at St John's Walworth Primary School
- School Governor at another school
- Parent/carer of a child/children at St John's Walworth
- Parent/carer of child/children at another school
- Local resident
- Prefer not to say
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### 6) Gender (please tick)

- Male  Female  Transgender
- Prefer to self-describe  Non-binary  Prefer not to say

### 7) Age (please tick)

- Under 19  19-25  26-34  35-44  45-54
- 55-64  65+  Prefer not to say

### 8) Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (please tick)

- White British  White Irish  White European
- Other white  Mixed white and black Caribbean
- Mixed white and black African  Mixed white and Asian
- Other mixed background  Asian or Asian British: Indian
- Asian or Asian British: Pakistani  Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi
- Asian or Asian British: Chinese  Other Asian or Asian British Background
- Black or Black British: Caribbean  Black or Black British: African
- Other Black/Black British  Arabic
- Prefer not to say
- Other Please specify \_\_\_\_\_

### 9) Do you consider yourself to have a disability? (please tick)

- No  Yes

### 10) If 9 is "yes" please specify your disability (please tick)

- Mobility  Visual impairment  Hearing impairment
- Mental Health  Learning disability  Prefer not to say
- Other (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please return by email or by post to the school address above.