



THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF
ARUNDEL & BRIGHTON
EDUCATION SERVICE

Consultation on the proposal to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Brighton



**The consultation runs from
13 November 2024- 17 January 2025**

PART ONE

Introduction

The Diocese of Arundel & Brighton and the Governing Body of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School are seeking the views of parents/carers, staff and other stakeholders on a proposal to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Schools can face challenges in meeting pupils' needs, particularly where pupil numbers are falling. Surplus places have been prevalent for some time in Brighton & Hove, and this has particularly affected St Joseph's Catholic Primary School.

Brighton & Hove City Council has a statutory duty to ensure there are sufficient primary and secondary school places and works in partnership with schools, dioceses, and key partners to ensure that the supply of school places across the Local Authority is in the right location, is of sufficient size, is viable and of good quality.

Alongside Brighton & Hove City Council, the Diocese of Arundel & Brighton has been dedicated in ensuring strong school provision across its area, maintaining and improving sites, including those at St Joseph's. However, despite this investment and a focus on providing support for families, there has been a significant decline in the birth rate in many places, including Brighton & Hove, and the Diocese has seen a consequent reduction in demand for Catholic education.

This document is part of a seven-week public consultation and provides information on the reasons for this proposal as well as asking for your views about it. This consultation document is for pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors, the local community and other interested parties. Your views on the proposal are welcomed.

Please read the document and respond to the short questionnaire at the end, before the closing date of 17th January 2025.

As part of the process, there will be a consultation evening for parents and carers on Thursday December 5th at 6pm in the school hall.

At the end of the consultation period, views will be considered by the Diocesan Education Service, Diocesan Trustees and the Governing Board, and a decision taken whether to proceed and make a formal application to close the school through a Statutory Notice.

Background

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School is a one form entry primary school. The Department for Education (DfE) recommends, for viability purposes, that new primary schools are at least of two-form entry size i.e. admitting 60 children each year with capacity for 420. Against this context, St Joseph's has a published admission number of 30 and capacity for 210 pupils.

The school has been consistently under-subscribed in recent years with pupil numbers falling short of the school's published admission number each year. This means it will become increasingly difficult for the school to remain financially viable and to provide good outcomes for pupils. The consultation document outlines the data for the school and the reasons for proposing closure.

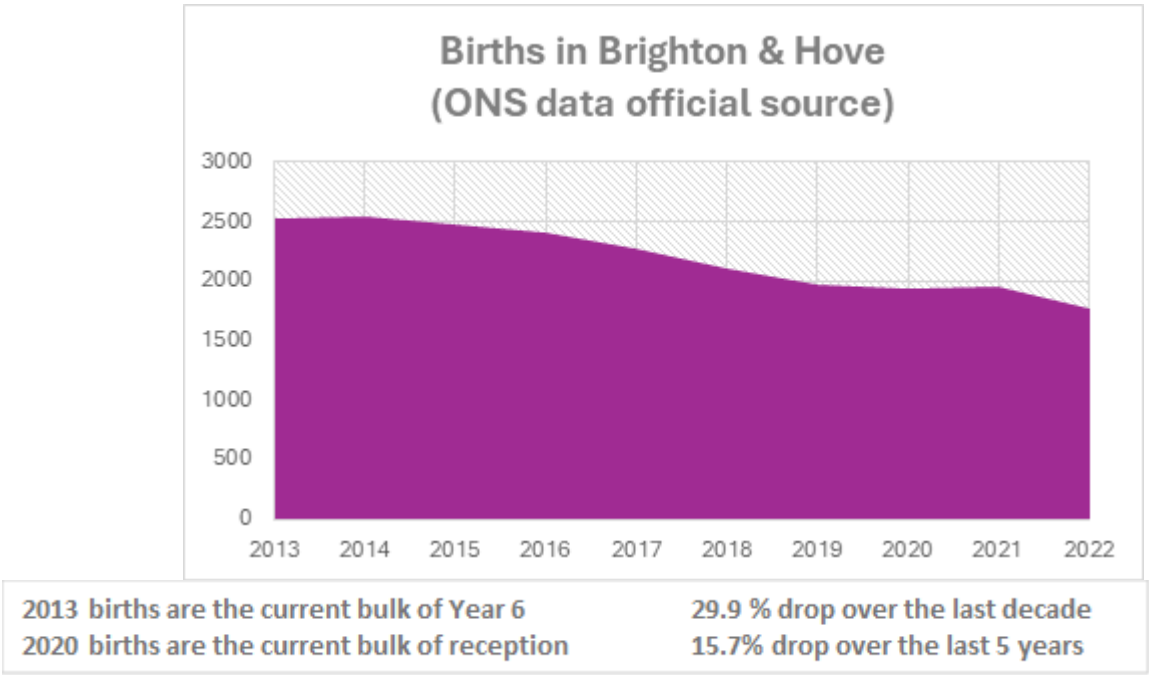
This situation is not unique to Brighton & Hove. Neighbouring areas have also seen some significant reductions in the number of pupils entering the primary schools.

PART TWO

Births

Births in Brighton & Hove have been falling as indicated in the chart below. Some 2,099 live births were reported in Brighton and Hove in 2022 - a fall from 2,304 the year before and the fewest of any year since at least 2013.

Chart 1: Brighton & Hove Births (up to 2022)



Source: Office for National Statistics

Pupil numbers and surplus places

Brighton & Hove has seen a significant and sustained fall in the number of primary age pupils. Reception (Year R) intakes have fallen as indicated in the chart below, showing data from 2014-2024

Chart 2: Brighton & Hove Year R numbers

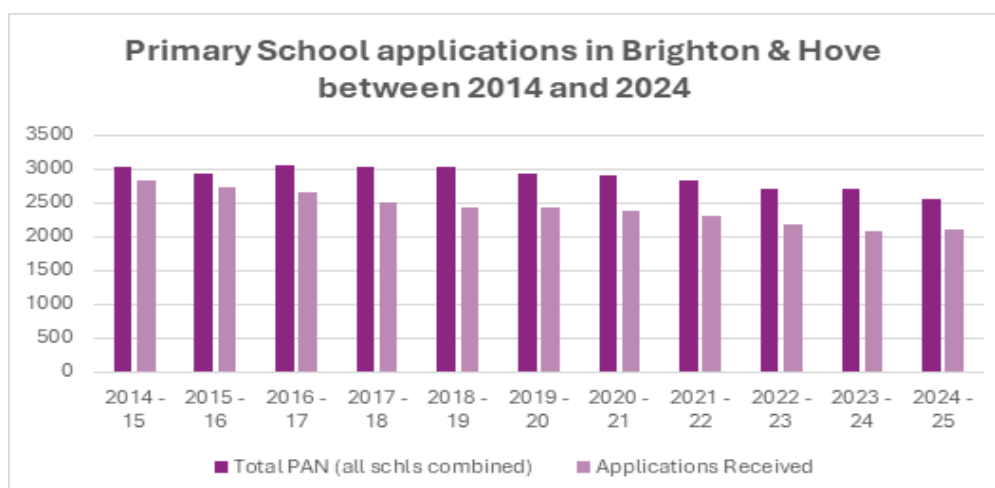


Chart 3: Brighton & Hove Year R numbers

Year of admission		Number of admission places available	Number of applications received
2014/15	R	3,030	2,838
2015/16	R	2,940	2,731
2016/17	R	3,060	2,666
2017/18	R	3,030	2,502
2018/19	R	3,030	2,434
2019/20	R	2,940	2,417
2020/21	R	2,910	2,377
2021/22	R	2,820	2,300
2022/23	R	2,700	2,172
2023/24	R	2,700	2,073
2024/25	R	2,550	2,114

As a result of the falling Year R numbers in the city, Brighton & Hove City Council approved the closure of two Primary schools and the reduction in PAN of six schools in January 2024, although 3 schools successfully overturned the decision to reduce their PAN on appeal to the Schools Adjudicator. However, even with these reductions, Year R intakes are projected to remain low.

In its most recent forecast, Brighton & Hove City Council forecast that in September 2025, 1970, pupils will need a Reception school place. In 2026 that number falls to 1953 and in 2027 just 1787 are forecast to need a school place.

With 2460 places available in September 2025 that leaves 20% unfilled and in 2026 the figure is 21% and in 2027 the figure is 27%.

St Joseph's

As of the end of October 2024, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School had 149 pupils on roll against a capacity of 210 places. There were 61 (29%) surplus places. This is shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Pupil numbers 2024-2025

2024-25 pupil numbers and surplus places	PAN	Capacity	2022/23 NOR								Surplus places	% surplus places
			Year R	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total		
St Joseph's School	30	210	15	22	17	24	22	27	22	149	61	29%

Source: October 2024 School data

Preferences for the school have fallen in the last few years. The school has been under-subscribed in each of the last seven years with pupil numbers falling short of the school's published admission number each year.

St Joseph's currently has the highest number of surplus places, the lowest numbers of first preference and the lowest numbers of Catholic pupils of the 7 Catholic primary schools in the city.

Forecasts suggest Year R intakes in 2025-26 will be at a similar or lower level to this year, meaning surplus places in the school could be as high as 35% within the next three years.

Declining pupil numbers are difficult to manage and can lead to irregular class sizes and inefficient staff to pupil ratios. Smaller schools tend to have a higher proportion of fixed costs than larger schools and, as such, have less flexibility to respond to cost pressures, unexpected events, and deficit recovery. A small and declining school roll has an increasing effect on finance, making the school less viable.

The Diocesan Education Service acknowledges that statutory consultation around school closure will cause uncertainty within the school community, which can contribute to a reduction in pupil numbers.

It is proposed that the school would formally close from 31 August 2025. The school would be kept open until that point. Brighton & Hove City Council and the Diocese would work with all families to look at the available options for school places, including local Catholic provision.

Quality of Education

St Joseph's Catholic Primary School was rated as 'good' by Ofsted in December 2022 and 'good' by the Catholic School Inspection in February 2022.

The reports can be found at:

[St Joseph's Catholic Primary, Brighton - Reports](#)

How will the proposed changes be managed?

The Diocesan Education Service will manage the consultation alongside the Governing Board.

The final decision on closure would be taken by Brighton & Hove City Council as the local authority responsible for school organisation.

If the proposal is agreed, the leadership and governing body of St Joseph's Catholic Primary School have committed to working with Brighton & Hove Council and the Diocese to help ensure a smooth transition for all pupils to their new schools.

Parents and carers would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an admissions application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. Brighton & Hove City Council would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. The allocation of places would be made in line with the admissions policy as set out in the school admissions booklet which is available on the Brighton & Hove City Council website at:

[Apply for a school place](#)

Brighton & Hove City Council would work to identify the additional needs of all the children that may result if closure is approved. The initial focus would be on those pupils with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and ensuring that the right levels of support continue to be in place for those pupils who require it. More detailed information around the transition will be communicated if the closure proposal is agreed.

Families applying for a school place in September 2025 have until 15 January 2025 to apply. School places are offered on National Offer Day 16 April 2025. The School Admission Team at Brighton & Hove City Council will work directly with families who state a preference for St Joseph's Catholic Primary School to consider their options, should a decision be taken to close the school.

PART THREE

Closure of schools and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013

There is a defined statutory process in the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013 which must be followed before making a decision on the closure of a maintained school. This is supplemented by further guidance on the process published by the Department for Education.

Closing maintained schools

There are five stages to the statutory process which must be followed:

Consultation

The publication of this consultation document marks the start of a period of consultation during which the views of interested parties are sought and which will be considered by the Diocese / Governing Body.

Publication

Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, the Diocese / Governing Body will decide whether or not to publish a statutory notice regarding the proposed closure.

Representation

The Diocese / Governing Body will consult organisations, groups and individuals in accordance with Regulations. The representation period starts on the date of publication of the statutory notice and must last for a period of four weeks. During this period, any person or organisation can submit comments on the proposal to Brighton & Hove City Council, to be taken into account before a final decision is taken.

Decision

Within two months of the end of the representation period Brighton & Hove City Council must make a decision on the proposal.

Implementation

If the proposal is approved, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School would close on 31 August 2025.

PART FOUR

The consultation and decision-making process

Timescale

13 November 2024 to 17 January 2025

Stage one – consultation

To include a meeting with parents / carers on 5 December 2024

20-31 January 2025

The Diocese and school's Governing Body will consider the results of the consultation and decide whether to publish a statutory notice on a proposal to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School

If required:

3 February 2025

Stage two – publication of statutory notice

10 February – 14 March 2025

Stage three – representation period (four weeks)

April/May 2025 (date to be confirmed)

Stage four – final decision by Brighton & Hove City Council

31 August 2025

Stage five – implementation (closure), if approved

Summary of the proposals

- The current number of primary school children in Brighton & Hove is below what is needed to fill the schools.
- St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has a high number of unused places.
- The proposal is to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School from 31 August 2025.
- Existing St Joseph's pupils would be offered a place at an alternative school.
- Brighton & Hove City Council, the Diocese, governors and staff at the school would support parents throughout the transition.

Who we will consult

The Diocese / Governing Body is consulting with parents and carers, pupils and staff and a wide range of other stakeholders. These will include St Joseph's Nursery, local schools and nurseries.

How to share your views **(Please submit only one response per person to this consultation)**

The consultation runs from 13 November 2024 to 17 January 2025. You can share your views by:

- Reading the consultation document which is on the school website <https://www.st-josephs.brighton-hove.sch.uk/home/consultation-documents>
- If you are a current parent/carer of a child at St Josephs, attending a consultation event at: St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Davey Drive, Hollingdean, Brighton, BN1 7BF on December 5th, 2024, from 6.00pm to 7.30pm.

- Returning your response in one of three ways:
 1. Completing the online questionnaire. <https://forms.office.com/e/ke3pubZnLW>
 2. Emailing your response to the questions to stjosephsbrightonconsultation@abdiocese.org.uk
 3. Completing a paper copy (available from the school office) and returning it by hand to the school office

Should you have any difficulty accessing or completing any of the consultation documents please email stjosephsbrightonconsultation@abdiocese.org.uk

This consultation forms stage one of the process required when a school closure is proposed. The information provided in this document, and at the consultation event, is intended to be sufficient for people to form a view on the proposal. The Diocese / Governing Body will consider views raised during the consultation period before making a decision on whether to proceed with the proposal and publish a statutory notice.

The Diocese / Governing Body will not be able to acknowledge written responses or enter into correspondence with interested parties during or after the consultation period. A list of frequently asked questions will be made available to view online after the consultation event on December 5th and will be updated during and at the end of the consultation period.

Have your say

We want to hear your views on this proposal. The views of parents, pupils and the wider community will be considered by the Diocese / Governing Body when determining whether to issue a Statutory Notice stating their intent to close the school.

The consultation questions are:

Question 1.

Do you understand why the proposal to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School has been made?

Question 2.

Do you agree with the proposal to close St Joseph's Catholic Primary School?

Question 3.

Please explain your reasons for the answer to Q2

Question 3.

What additional support do you need in this process? (e.g. My child has an EHCP)

Question 4.

Are there any further points or questions you would wish to raise?

There will also be a series of voluntary equalities monitoring questions

The school's address is St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, Davey Drive, Hollingdean, Brighton, BN1 7BF

