



Cabinet

Report Title: St Anne's School Closure Proposal

Cabinet Member for Children: Cllr Judi Gasser

Executive Director: Ana Popovici, Executive Director of Children's Services

Recommendation

1. The Cabinet is recommended to approve the discontinuance (closure) of St Anne's Wandsworth School with effect from 31 August 2025.

Reference to Council Priorities

2. Aligned with the Council's priorities, through the undertaking of this consultation, the Governors of St Anne's Church of England Primary School have actively and compassionately listened to those most impacted by the proposal to close and given due consideration to all feedback received before determining next steps in the statutory process. Their decision is primarily driven by the ambition to ensure the pupils at St Anne's receive the highest quality education.

Executive Summary:

3. This paper sets out recommendations following formal consultations on proposals to close St. Anne's, Church of England, Primary School in Wandsworth with effect from 31 August 2025.

4. Statutory Notice was published on 10 March on the school's website and thereafter in a local newspaper and communication was also shared with the school community and local schools. The process included a statutory element of pre-publication consultation that lasted for 6 weeks followed by a 4-week formal consultation, to allow the widest possible opportunity for views/comments to be made by parents, carers, local residents and other stakeholders.

5. The purpose of the consultation was for governors to seek the views of and engage with those that could potentially be affected by the proposed closure of St. Annes Wandsworth Primary School. It was also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration regarding the proposed closure. A range of alternatives were suggested, which are outlined in the report, however, these had previously been investigated by governors and ruled out as possible solutions. In total there were 5 responses to the formal consultation. Three of these responses were in support of the proposal to close the school.

6. The governors' decision to propose closure is primarily driven by the ambition to ensure the pupils at St. Annes receive the highest quality education. With falling pupil numbers impacting on reception intake, the forecast for the long-term sustainability of St. Anne's is a major concern for the governors at the school. Governors feel certain that the children will thrive and prosper in alternative schools who will be able to adequately provide the support and educational development they deserve sustainably for the remainder of their school years.

Details:

7. This paper reports on the outcome of formal consultation, which was undertaken following a decision by the governing body on 4 March 2025. This decision was taken after careful consideration of responses to a statutory pre-publication consultation from the 6 January 2025 to 14 February 2025 on the proposal to discontinue St. Anne's Wandsworth from 31 August 2025.

8. Formal consultations on the proposal to discontinue the school ran for four weeks from the 10 March 2025 to 6 April 2025.

9. At the end of the formal consultation 5 responses were received via the online portal. Of these, 3 responses supported the proposal.

10. Alongside the responses to the formal consultation referred to above, the governors actively engaged with pupils, parents and carers, and staff, as well as consulting with local schools, trade unions, other local groups, the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE), the Local Authority and the wider local community to ensure that all interested parties had the opportunity to have their say on the proposal through the pre-publication consultation stage (6 Jan – 14 Feb 2025). This included an in-person consultation meeting which was held at the school on the 15 January 2025, attended by the headteacher, governors, and representatives from the SDBE and local authority, giving all interested parties the

opportunity to discuss the proposal and ask any questions they may have about the proposal or the consultation.

11. To ensure maximum levels of awareness and encourage participation, the pre-publication consultation was promoted in a range of ways throughout the consultation period including:

- Regular correspondence from governors to St. Anne's Primary School staff and parents.
- Regularly updated FAQs on the school's website.
- Consultation documents emailed to local schools.
- Consultation documents and response portal links displayed around the school building.

12. Careful consideration was given to views and suggestions collected during the pre-publication consultation period and detailed responses to these were given through updated FAQs and the formal consultation paperwork. There were 28 responses to the pre-publication consultation. 25% (7) of responses agreed with the proposal to close the school. Of those who supported the proposal there were, 2 local residents, 2 parents of children at a different local school, 1 governor at another local school, 1 staff member at St. Anne's School and 1 other. Responses not in agreement with the proposal were asked for alternative suggestions. These are outlined in the governors' responses below.

Context and background

13. St Anne's, Church of England Primary School, is a voluntary aided, one-form entry, co-educational primary school, located in the London Borough of Wandsworth.

14. The Pupil Admission Number (PAN) for each year group is 30. The school is part of the educational provision of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education and the London Borough of Wandsworth. The school is situated in St Ann's Hill, Wandsworth, SW18 2RU.

15. In recent years, the school has not filled the 30 places it is able to admit each year. This academic year, starting September 2024, only 8 children took up Reception class places, whilst only 19 joined Reception the previous year. St Anne's has a capacity of 210 across all year groups of the school. Only 78 places are currently taken. The school has 132 places empty. This equates to 63% surplus places across Years Reception to 6, which is substantially above the Council's average vacancy level of 15%.

16. On 26 November 2024, after significant consideration, the governing body of St Anne's Primary School reluctantly took the decision to propose to close the school at the end of the academic year. This decision was taken with the support of the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) and based on information provided by Wandsworth Local Authority (LA) Education Service. Several reasons contributed to this position including:

- The pupil roll has fallen over the past five years but with a recent substantive reduction following an essential restructure resulting in reduced (pupil led) funding. Falling birth rates indicate that the roll is highly unlikely to recover at least until 2031 based on GLA projections. The more pupils a school has, the more funding it receives. Unused school places have an immediate cost for schools through reduced budgets.
- This reduced funding has created significant strains on the school's budget forcing the school to spend all its reserves to manage in year, essential expenditure. With all reserves exhausted, the school is now facing a deficit moving forward of Circa £300,000 and even if a further restructure is undertaken the school will have a growing deficit which is unsustainable. The combined circumstances outlined above have made it inevitable that the school will rapidly incur further debt if it remains open and not be able to balance its budget in year, or reverse the predicted growing debt without significant, additional funding.
- The school has already undertaken class re-organisation to ensure the best education for its pupils. This included merging of classes in KS1 and KS2. Any further reorganisation will certainly reduce the broad and balanced curriculum that it would be reasonable to expect of a primary school.
- The current number of Pupils in Year 6 is 26, when these children leave the school at the end of the year, our roll number will further decrease significantly.

Pupil numbers

17. Over the last 12 years, across London, the school age pupil population has grown by over 10%. At its peak in 2018, the primary school population had grown by over 20%, from circa 15,600 in 2010 to 18,800. However, since 2018, early years and primary school numbers have decreased by over 14%.

18. During the same period school capacity has increased by almost 40%. Capacity peaked in 2021, 3 years later than the population peak. There are many reasons for this:

- The birth rate has been consistently falling since 2011.
- Previous forecasting of demand was affected by Brexit and the Covid-19 pandemic, which resulted in families moving out of London.
- An increasing number of families have moved out of inner London due to the cost-of-living crisis.
- Where regeneration has replaced estate housing with private housing, there has been relocation of communities out of London.
- New housing is not attracting families in with school aged children.
- The academy and free school agenda and diversity of choice added school places into a system that was already sufficient.

19. As a result, Wandsworth now has 15% surplus capacity across its primary schools. St. Anne's however has been particularly affected with a surplus capacity of 63%.

20. St Anne's CofE Primary School is situated in the Council's Planning Area 8 (Wandsworth Town Ward). There are 4 other local schools situated within this planning area. In September 2024, these schools admitted a total of 149 pupils into their reception classes with a combined PAN (capacity) of 210. Overall, Reception aged pupil numbers in this area are projected to decrease to 135 by 2028. In total there are 13 other primary schools situated within one mile of St Anne's. Based on most recent vacancy returns, there are currently 453 vacancies across Reception to Year 5.

21. School funding is dependent on pupil numbers. Vacant school places have an immediate impact for schools through reduced budgets, which in turn can affect the overall sustainability and quality of education standards at the school. The local authority confirmed at the beginning of this year that the school received another low number of applicants for September 2025. The school received a total of 33 applications of which only 2 were first preferences for places in Reception for September 2025.

Financial Position

22. The governing body has reluctantly reached the view that St Anne's CofE Primary School can no longer continue to provide a high quality of education for all children attending the school in a way that is financially sustainable going forwards. It is recognised by all, that over the years, St Anne's has successfully provided a high quality of education to the whole community. However, once numbers of pupils attending start to fall and consequently budgets shrink, the opportunities and choices offered to pupils and parents are reduced, and a sufficiently wider and enriched curriculum offer becomes unsustainable.

23. As detailed above, pupil numbers are falling dramatically resulting in reduced funding which the school receives based on pupil numbers. Between FY 2021-2022 and current year, FY 2024-5, the school's pupil led funding has reduced by £87,927. This fall in income worsens with a further fall of £465,000 over the next two years projected. The school has reacted quickly to these reductions up to now and has made necessary cuts however, it is not possible to make further cuts to mitigate the further drop in income going forward.

Year	Brought Forward Revenue Reserves	Income (I01-I05)	In year change in Revenue Reserves	Closing Revenue Reserves
2021-2022	£7,334	£1,313,958	£3,981	£11,315
2022-2023	£11,315	£1,121,764	£26,527	£37,842
2023-2024	£37,842	£1,222,817	£30,496	£68,338
2024-2025	£68,338	£1,226,031	£28,253	£96,591
2025-2026	£96,591	£862,093	£-96,414	£177
2026-2027	£177	£756,726	£-215,245	£-215,068

24. Reduced funding will 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.

25. The school budget has been able to remain in surplus until this financial year due to excellent financial management. However, an in-year deficit is now unavoidable in FY 2025-26 and FY 2026-27 due to the forecast drop in income as a result of the fall in pupil numbers. There is no scope for further cuts in expenditure to match this fall in income. As such, the school forecasts a cumulative deficit of £215,068, 245 by the end of FY 2026-27, a position which will get worse as the years progress. The circumstances have made it inevitable that the school will incur further debt if it remains open and would not be able to repay it.

Alternative options considered and rejected

26. A number of alternative options were considered before governors decided to consult on the proposed closure of St Anne's Primary School. These included:

- I. No change: Doing nothing is not a realistic option in the current climate. If no change is made the school is likely to see a continual decline in pupil numbers, placing further pressure on its financial position. Further staff restructures are not a possibility due to the resulting impact on the ability to provide an effective curriculum and maintain the safety of pupils with such limited resources.
- II. Reorganise provision over 3 classes: Governors explored combining classes within school to operate with 3 mixed aged classes across the school. This would involve combining Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 as class 1, Year 3 and Year 4 as class 2, and Year 5 and Year 6 as class 3. This model would require further staff reductions and modelling suggests the school would still fall into deficit. It was also acknowledged that parents would be unlikely to choose a school with this model, further reducing pupil numbers.
- III. Amalgamation: Consideration was given to merging St Anne's with another primary school. This option was discounted for a number of reasons; including the practical process which would mean the wider impact on two sets of pupils, families, staff groups and overall school communities. There was no viable amalgamation option with another Church of England primary school.

Statutory process for formal consultations

27. Between 10 March 2025 and 6 April 2025, the Governors carried out a formal public consultation regarding a proposal to close (discontinue) St. Annes Wandsworth Primary School.

Statutory guidance for discontinuance of a school

28. There is a defined statutory process in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and 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. The legislation is supported by statutory guidance, which the proposer (the governors) must have regard to.

29. There are five stages to the statutory process and the formal consultations marked the third stage of the process. The five stages are as follows:

Stage	Purpose / process
Consultation	The views of interested parties are sought and considered by the proposer.
Publication	Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, the proposer decides whether or not to publish statutory notices regarding the proposed closure.
Representation	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 the proposer, to be taken into account before a final decision is taken.
Decision	Within two months of the end of the representation period the local authority must make a decision on the proposal.
Implementation	If the proposal is approved, the governors must implement the proposal in the form approved, including any modifications agreed at the decision stage.

30. As statutorily required, a notice for the consultation was published in the South London Press.

31. In accordance with the guidance, within one week of publication of the formal consultation, the governors notified the following:

- the Secretary of State for Education
- the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education for the Church of England
- the Roman Catholic Church in Wandsworth

St. Anne's Primary School Consultation Questions

32. The Consultation asked 4 main questions as follows:

Stage	Purpose / process
Consultation	The views of interested parties are sought and considered by the proposer.
Publication	Dependent upon the outcome of the consultation, the proposer decides whether or not to publish statutory notices regarding the proposed closure.
Representation	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 the proposer, to be taken into account before a final decision is taken.
Decision	Within two months of the end of the representation period the local authority must make a decision on the proposal.
Implementation	If the proposal is approved, the governors must implement the proposal in the form approved, including any modifications agreed at the decision stage.

Methodology and Engagement

33. The St. Anne's Wandsworth formal consultation was hosted on the school's website from 10 March 2025 to 6 April 2025. Responses could be returned via an online survey, as well as by email and post.

34. The consultation was open to all interested parties. Alongside pupils, parents and carers, and staff, the governors also consulted with

- Local schools/admission authorities in Wandsworth, governing bodies and academy trusts (via the Headteacher and the Chair of Governors)
- Wandsworth Councillors and MPs
- The Southwark Diocesan Board of Education
- The Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark
- Appropriate Trade Unions

35. During the process governors have been committed to an approach which is transparent, maintains opens lines of communication, and has a demonstrable focus on listening to the views of the whole school community.

36. The governors recognised that the proposals and the consultation process would be distressing for parents, pupils, and staff at St. Anne's School and for this reason made the decision to notify the community of the consultation opening prior to the launch date. Since that communication governors have worked closely with the school leadership team, the LA and the SDBE, on an ongoing basis to provide support as needed.

37. Governors acknowledge and appreciate the ongoing dedication of the St. Anne's School staff team to the education and well-being of the pupils, as well as to the well-being of parents, staff colleagues, and the wider community. The senior team has continued to provide visible and resilient leadership.

38. The process included a statutory element of pre-publication consultation that lasted for 6 weeks to allow the widest possible opportunity for views/comments to be made by parents, carers, local residents and other stakeholders. The purpose of the consultation was for governors to seek the views of and engage with those that could potentially be affected by the proposed closure of St. Anne's Primary School. It was also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration on the proposed closure.

39. Throughout the process governors have listened to and reviewed alternative suggestions for viability.

40. It is important to reiterate that these proposals are in no way a reflection of the quality of the current leadership and education provided by St. Anne's School, but a difficult decision made by the governors in response to the falling pupil numbers in the school.

Consultation documentation

41. Consultation was undertaken by:
- Placing a page on the school website containing the consultation documents.
 - Setting up a dedicated platform that allowed people to answer the consultation questions.
 - Setting up an email address to allow parents, carers and stakeholders to feed back on the consultation proposal.
 - A consultation meeting for staff, parents/carers, the community and stakeholders was held in person at the school.
42. Three documents were published as part of the consultation documents:
- Consultation Proposal
 - Frequently Asked Questions (updated based on feedback to pre-publication consultation)
 - Equalities Impact Needs Assessment
43. To ensure the consultation material was accessible to everyone, the documents were available in both electronic and paper form. Translations and other accessible formats were also available on request.
44. An Equality Impact Assessment was undertaken to identify the potential impacts of the closure proposal on groups with protected characteristics, and any appropriate mitigation. Views on the Equality Impact and Needs Assessment (EINA) were sought as part of this consultation so that any appropriate modifications could be considered. The consultation material and EINA are included in Appendices 1 and 2 of this report.
45. In addition to the public meeting held during the pre-publication consultation the governors held another meeting on Wednesday 19 March. This meeting was attended by governors, the headteacher, SDBE representatives, LA representatives (including a member from the admissions team) and HR advisors. Feedback from the meeting was included in the consultation documents.
46. The governors are thankful for the support, time and valuable expertise provided by colleagues from the SDBE and LA. At every point throughout the process the governors sought to find solutions and alternatives to closure. Governors appreciate the anxiety created by this proposal and maintain that every suggestion and alternative option was explored, however, with the absence of an increase in future pupil numbers the only viable option was closure. There will always be learning to take away and governors know that the approach taken will not suit everyone. However, we will continue to manage the impact on those affected as compassionately as possible.

Responses to consultation (See Appendix 2)

47. The governors received five responses to the online consultation. Three responses were in support of the proposal to close the school and two were not in support of the proposal.
48. Responses were received by a member of staff at another school, one Governor from another school, one local resident and two preferred not to say.
49. Respondents in support (3) of the proposal suggested that the closure of St. Anne’s School would help to improve the sustainability of the school system in the area (2) and help to support with recruitment challenges being faced by other local schools (1). Those not in support (2) felt the closure would have a negative impact on local community.
50. The additional comments section gave some opinions in favour and against the closure.
51. The governors addressed alternative suggestions raised throughout the consultation process as follows:

SUGGESTION	RESPONSE
<p>How many pupils are applied to St. Anne’s for Reception places in September 2025?</p> <p>Can the Local Authority be more proactive in sending pupils to St. Annes?</p>	<p>St. Anne’s received only 3 first choice applications for Reception Class beginning in September 2025. Since the announcement of the decision to begin consultation regarding closure, 12 more pupils have moved school as at the January school census.</p> <p>While governors appreciate an increased advertising drive may increase numbers on roll by a small amount, the lack of overall pupil numbers across the borough have led to a surplus in many schools, which means additional advertising is unlikely to have a significant impact on pupil numbers.</p>
<p>Can the school be used as a SEND provision?</p>	<p>The governors recognise there may be a need for additional SEND provision across some areas in Wandsworth, however, the school does not have a specialist Resource Base or Unit in place. The local authority undertakes SEND sufficiency planning underpinned by primary need and locality, which consider both current and future demand, and hence St Anne’s was not considered for specialist provision.</p> <p>While an increased number of SEND pupils in a school does attract some additional funding it also requires additional resources and staffing. After extensive financial modelling any financial benefit was limited, and financial projections still saw the school unable to achieve financial sustainability.</p>

	<p>If the school was considered as a complete SEND provision, this would still result in the closure of the current St. Anne’s School in order to repurpose the site as a new SEND provision. The decision to open a new SEND provision falls outside the governors’ powers.</p>
<p>Why can’t the school be merged with another school?</p>	<p>This option was extensively explored. The only potentially viable merger was rejected by the Governors of the target school.</p> <p>St. Anne’s does not satisfy the criteria to join any Multi-Academy Trust (MAT)</p>

52. Prior to and during the formal consultation there were a range of concerns and questions raised. Governors addressed these points throughout the consultation process as follows:

CONCERNS	GOVERNORS' RESPONSE
Effect on children's education	<p>We appreciate these proposals will raise concerns and create anxiety regarding the effect on the education of St. Anne's School children and therefore we have planned support to minimise this impact. It should be noted that the key driver for governors has been the education of our pupils. Ensuring the pupils secure a strong education, in a local school, is paramount, and the current challenges facing the school means the capacity for St. Anne's School to deliver this is limited. Governors are confident that Wandsworth has many good schools, and is a mobile borough, which means schools are used to pupils transitioning between them from year to year. All headteachers have been made aware of this proposal and local leaders have been asked to give careful consideration to how admissions of any child from St. Anne's School is managed, in order to lessen the impact on staff and class members and to prepare in advance for a smooth transition.</p> <p>Governors have worked with the LA to ensure local school vacancies have been confirmed and communicated to parents/carers.</p> <p>If a decision is made to close St. Anne's School, a separate admissions process will be administered by the Council's Admissions Team allowing families of affected pupils to apply for other local schools. The Admissions Team will review new school applications for all existing pupils and ensure, wherever possible, they meet one of the parental preferences.</p> <p>The Admissions Team will make every endeavour to offer family sibling groups a place at the same school. Places will be allocated in accordance with schools' individual admissions policies. Parents will have a right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if it is not possible to offer a place at one of their preferred schools.</p>
Effect on children's wellbeing	<p>Governors are sensitive to the impact of these proposals on children's well-being and the school has worked closely with the LA and the SDBE to develop a package of support. The school and community psychology service has, and will, continue to work with the school to collectively plan the support offered or how information is shared, and this will be informed by the needs of children and their families. Families and children will also be supported through any transitions to new schools.</p> <p>Governors are confident that leaders and staff at St. Anne's School know every child in the school and are very sensitive to the individual needs of each. Work has already begun and helping children to understand how the proposal may impact them. Given the local vacancies in schools, we expect that many pupils will transition to a new school with other pupils already known to them, making the transition smoother.</p>

<p>Effect on employment</p>	<p>Governors recognise this is a distressing time for staff and have worked with the leadership team at the school to provide ongoing support to staff regarding employment throughout this process.</p> <p>This support is being provided by the school’s HR provider and the SDBE and includes one-to-one meetings with staff upon request, workshops on CV writing and interviewing, and redundancy and redeployment options if appropriate. Governors are committed to working alongside trade union representatives to ensure the best outcome for all staff.</p>
<p>Effect on local community</p>	<p>Whilst we understand that this proposal will inevitably impact on the local community, it has been put forward in the wider interest of all children and families in Wandsworth.</p> <p>Governors recognise the need to have ‘due regard’ to the duties set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 (the Public Sector Equality Duty, ‘PSED’) in determining these proposals. An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken as part of the consultation process to identify the equality implications of this proposal and any appropriate mitigation, which we are seeking views on as part of this consultation.</p>

NEXT STEPS

Statutory Requirements

53. The Education and Inspections Act and associated regulations require that a decision on statutory proposals is made by the local authority within two months after the closure of the second ‘formal’ consultation. Therefore, with the formal consultation having closed on 6 April, the Council’s Cabinet will make a decision on the proposal on 12 May 2025 with the call in period expiring 16 May.

Timetable

54. Subject to approval of the proposals, the timetable for the next steps are as follows:

Activity	Timeline
Cabinet – decision on the proposals following the formal consultations.	Cabinet – 12 May 2025 Call in period expires 16 May 2025
St Anne’s School HR staff consultation	April 2025 – 31 May 2025
School Admissions – places agreed for displaced pupils for Sept 2025.	Monday 2 June - Issue of forms and guidance Monday 16 June – Closing date for applications Friday 27 June – Offer of places

Children and families

55. Governors are committed to working closely with the leadership team of the school to ensure children and families are supported throughout this process, to address issues as they emerge and to manage any change efficiently and sensitively. Through the staff team, governors are seeking the views, wishes and feelings of pupils on an ongoing basis to inform the support package that is being provided.

56. The Schools and Community Psychology (SCPS) service has been in close contact with the school with regards to planning support for specific cohorts or vulnerable pupils. This work will be ongoing, as needed and highlighted by the school and will aim to identify areas where teachers may need extra support.

57. Governors are committed to ensuring children and families are kept informed through regular correspondence and meetings where appropriate.

58. Following the decision, if the closure goes ahead, the school will seek further support from SCPS to develop and offer any relevant transition support that receiving schools will require. Although governors are confident all local schools are experienced in welcoming new children into their schools it is important that

receiving schools reflect on the factors that promote and facilitate belonging, which is a prerequisite to emotional wellbeing and academic progress.

59. The schools SENDCo will continue to work with Wandsworth SEND and Inclusion team to ensure pupils with SEND and EHCP's receive a tailored transition programme.

Admissions

60. Governors are fully aware that the greatest anxiety for parents associated with this proposal is likely to be the need to secure an alternative suitable school place for their child should St Anne's close, as well as the impact of any changes. In the event that proposals are agreed governors will work closely with the Local Authority and SDBE to support the school community. There will be a separate co-ordinated admissions process, and governors seek to reassure parents that there is no need to, act alone, or to take any immediate action in response to the notification of this consultation.

61. If a decision is made to close St Anne's Primary School, a separate admissions process will be administered by the Council's Admissions Team allowing families of affected pupils to apply for other local schools. The Admissions Team will consider new school applications for all existing pupils and ensure, wherever possible, they meet one of the parental preferences.

62. Wandsworth Admissions Team will make every endeavour to offer family sibling groups a place at the same school. Places will be allocated in accordance with schools' individual admissions policies. Parents will have a right of appeal to an Independent Appeal Panel if it is not possible to offer a place at one of their preferred schools.

SEND

63. The school currently has 6% of pupils on roll with an EHCP's and 26% of pupils across the school with additional SEND needs. The SEND service in the local authority where the child resides will work closely with the St Anne's SENCo to support all children with an EHCP and their families to consider school preferences, taking into account home to school distance. They will also work together to ensure that where there are siblings, they can be placed together to avoid additional pressures on parents. They will give consideration to the wider SEND pupil cohort to manage transitions well and address any concerns parents may have.

Transition planning

64. The School and Community Psychology Service will work alongside the school's leadership team and help them to manage the impact of this proposal on staff, pupils and their families. Should this proposal progress, they will support the school leadership to develop a transition plan for children as they move to a new school. These conversations and this work will be carefully planned and managed sensitively in discussion with the head and senior leadership to ensure they best meet the needs of the school community as they emerge and if needed. The school is focused on thinking about how we can take forward positive learning from this experience for children.

65. Given the cost of living crisis, there is a commitment to work with families with children in Reception to Year 5 who require the support to provide funding for school uniform as a result of any changes.

Transport arrangements

66. Vacancy data for local schools currently suggests that 100% of the St. Anne's pupils can be placed in a local school within 1 mile. At present, 75% of St. Anne's pupils live within 1 mile of the school. Therefore, it is not anticipated that there will be a significant impact on school journeys. Of the 25% of pupils currently living more than a mile away, we anticipate these families may seek schools closer to home and we aim to support these families with being placed in Church of England schools in their local area.

Local schools

67. If the decision is taken to close St Anne's primary school, it is expected, given the surplus of places outlined in the document that local schools will be able to accommodate all affected pupils. The school will work closely with these schools and the local authority to ensure that appropriate support is provided to all pupils during this transition period.

Impact on Staff

68. We know that staff will be anxious about the implications of any decision, and their wellbeing is important to us. We offer our reassurance that governors, the SDBE, council officers and school leaders are here to support staff as we navigate this process together.

69. If this proposal is moved forward, governors can assure staff that the school will remain open for the whole academic year 2024/25.

70. Governors anticipate that staff redundancies will be minimal as affected staff will be supported to consider their options reflective of their individual circumstances. There are known local shortages for teachers, teaching assistants (TAs) and for learning support assistants (LSAs), which will provide new employment opportunities for any displaced staff. We will work with all Wandsworth school leaders and wider SDBE school leaders to identify and signpost these vacancies and support staff to apply and secure interviews. We are very clear that regardless of the decision reached, we do not want to lose the experience, skills, and talent of education staff from Wandsworth.

71. Governors will continue to offer support to all staff in collaboration with the Wandsworth School and Community Psychology Service to work through and manage the anxieties and emotions which will inevitably be felt given this proposal.

72. To supplement the support outlined above, all staff have access to the council's employee assistance programme and further support through the SDBE.

Financial Implications:

73. This paper seeks approval for the closure of St Anne's CofE Primary School with effect from 31 August 2025 following a formal consultation that ran for a 4-week period from 10 March to 6 April 2025. The outcome of the consultation is outlined in appendix 1.

74. St Anne's CofE Primary School is a voluntary aided, one-form entry, co-educational primary school with a capacity of 210 across all year groups of the school. The school currently has 78 places filled across all years and is operating with a surplus capacity of 63%, well above the council's average of 15%. As a result, pupil led funding for the school has declined by £87,927 over the last 4 years and the school has had to use up all its available reserves to meet cost pressures each year. An in-year deficit of £96,414 is projected for 2025/26.

75. School funding is strongly influenced by the number of pupils on roll, and this can be a significant challenge for the schools in terms of financial sustainability. The school is likely to see a continual decline in pupil numbers, which will place further pressure on its financial position as well as impact on the effective curriculum and its ability to maintain the safety of its pupils. The school is projecting a worsening overall deficit position of £215,065 by 2026/27; if not addressed this could mean a financial risk for both the school and Council.

Legal Implications:

76. Proposals for the discontinuance (closure) of St Anne's C of E Primary School have been published under the Education and Inspections Act 2016 and relevant regulations. The Council is the decision-maker for the proposals and is required to decide whether to approve the proposals within two months of the end of the representation period or the proposals must be referred to the Schools Adjudicator for decision.

77. In relation to the proposal to close St Anne's C of E Primary School, the proposer, in this case the governors, must have complied with the statutory requirements to consult appropriate parties and to publish statutory proposals in accordance with the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and the School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of Schools) Regulations 2013. In deciding whether to approve the proposals, the Council must conscientiously consider the responses to the consultation and all relevant issues. The Council must also comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty and have due regard to its equalities duties as set out in paragraph [currently 108] below. "Due regard" means the regard that is appropriate in the particular circumstances in which the authority is carrying out its functions. The Council must have proper regard for the goals set out in section 149 of the Equality Act. At the same time, decision makers must also pay regard to any countervailing factors, which it is proper and reasonable for them to consider. The impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability highlighted in the EINA must be considered but also the benefits of the proposals.

78. The Council as decision maker must have regard to the statutory guidance, 'Opening and closing maintained schools'.

79. The statutory guidance sets out factors to be considered by the decision maker. These include that the decision-maker should be satisfied that there are sufficient surplus places elsewhere in the local area to accommodate displaced pupils, and the likely supply and future demand for places in the medium and long term; the overall quality of alternative places in the local area, balanced with the need to reduce excessive surplus capacity in the system; and the local context in which the proposals are being made, taking into account the nature of the area, the age of the children involved and, where applicable, alternative options considered for

reducing excess surplus capacity. Where a school provides access to extended services, provision should be made for the pupils and their families to access similar services through their new schools or other means. The Council should consider whether alternative early years provision will integrate pre-school education with childcare services and/or with other services for young children and their families. The decision maker should consider the impact of the proposal on local integration and community cohesion objectives and have regard to the Integrated Communities Action Plan. They should take account of the community to be served by the school and the views of different sections within the community.

80. In relation to travel to school, the Council should be satisfied that the proposal will not adversely impact any particular group, including those with protected characteristics or who are disadvantaged (for example, those who are eligible for free school meals or pupil premium). The Council should also consider how the proposal will support the duty to promote the use of sustainable travel and transport to school. The Council should consider whether the proposal will result in unreasonably long journey times or increased travel costs for local authorities or families, as well as any increase in the use of motor vehicles which is likely to result from the discontinuance of the school, and the likely effects of any such increase.

81. Where the school has a religious character, a statement about the impact of the proposed closure on the balance of denominational provision in the area and the impact on parental choice. Reducing provision in this area could mean that the remaining Voluntary Church of England schools will potentially stay viable and ensure numbers remain stable.

82. The Council is required to publish its decision and the reasons for it within one week and sent notification of the decision to the Secretary of State, the Schools Adjudicator, and relevant Church of England and Roman Catholic dioceses.

83. There are no specific legal risks or implications arising out of this report.

Equalities Implications:

84. The Equality Act 2010 requires that the governors must have "due regard" to the need to eliminate discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it and to foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. An Equality Impact Needs Analysis (EINA) for the closure of St Anne's Primary School was included as part of the pre-publication consultation on the proposals, and was updated to ensure accuracy, which can be found at Appendix 4.

85. Given the nature of the proposals, there will be an impact on the protected characteristics of age and disability, with the EINA highlighting the nature of these impacts in detail.

Other Implications:

Comments of the Assistant Director of Resources (Corporate Services) in respect of HR implications

86. The proposal to close St Anne's, Church of England Primary School from 31 August 2025 will effectively delete all established posts within the school. Staff who

will be impacted by these proposals will be supported and managed in line with statutory procedures and the school's managing reorganisations policy in terms of communication and consultation with staff (Teaching and Non-Teaching) and professional associations.

Background papers:

87. There are no background papers to this report.

Reference to any accompanying papers:

- I. Appendix 1 – Pre-publication/Formal consultation Questions
- II. Appendix 2 – Responses from Formal consultation
- III. Appendix 3 – Responses from Pre-publication consultation
- IV. Appendix 4 – EINA

This is a key decision and has been taken following 28 days' notice on the Forward Plan.