



Consultation on the proposed closure of Townsend Primary School in September 2022

**Statutory consultation period:
10th January 2022 to 25th February 2022**

About the school

Townsend Primary School 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. In recent years, the school has not been able to fill the 30 places it is able to admit each year. This academic year, starting September 2021, 21 children took up Reception class places, 20 joined Reception the previous year. Townsend has a capacity of 210 across all year groups of the school, 164 places are currently filled with 46 places empty - 22% of Years Reception to 6, which is above the Southwark average vacancy level of 17%. 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. Looking at the number of applicants the school has received since 2016, there has been a considerable drop in expressed preferences overall (-34%) and in preferences 1 to 3 (-36%). This, along with 12% drop in births in the immediate locality, make it unlikely that pupil numbers will ever recover at Townsend. Table 1 below shows the falling number of applications that Townsend has received each year since 2016.

Table 1: Applicants by preference and total, 2016-2021 - Preferences 1 to 6

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total	PAN	Preferences 1-3
2021/22	11	7	11	5	8	3	45	30	29
2020/21	12	9	11	5	3	3	43	30	32
2019/20	17	13	4	9	3	6	52	30	34
2018/19	19	8	8	4	4	3	46	30	35
2017/18	19	10	11	7	6	4	57	30	40
2016/17	21	13	11	13	6	4	68	30	45

("PAN" in the table above means the pupil admission number. In the table, it is a reference to the number of pupils that a school can accept into its Reception intake each year). Pupil Numbers at the school have fallen since 2016 as well by 30 pupils overall (15%).

Table 2: Pupils by year group 2016-2021

Year	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
2021/22	21	20	24	21	27	26	25	164
2020/21	20	26	24	25	27	24	29	175
2019/20	22	21	20	24	23	27	25	162
2018/19	21	20	24	26	28	23	25	167
2017/18	21	24	28	27	24	25	30	179
2016/17	27	30	27	26	29	30	25	194

The Proposal

Southwark Council, as the Admissions Authority for Townsend Primary School is proposing closure of the school by September 2022 and has resolved to commence the statutory process that closure involves. The Governing Body support this action. This consultation document and the attached Q&A document have been published by the Council.

Reason for the proposed closure

Southwark Council has reluctantly reached the view that Townsend 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. It is recognised by all, that over the years, the school 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 then the opportunities and choices offered to pupils and parents is reduced, and the wider and enriched curricular offer becomes unsustainable. 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*
- *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*
- *The school budget has been in deficit over the past five years, largely due to the reduced pupil numbers, and it is unlikely that the school will be able to pay off this debt*
- *The circumstances have made it inevitable that the school will incur further debt if it remains open.*

Due to 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 **nine** schools within 0.6 miles of Townsend Primary School; all are within a reasonable walking distance. These nine schools have 560 vacant school places from Reception to Year 6 to accommodate Townsend pupils, were the school to close (there are presently 164 children at Townsend).

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 the Local Authority (LA) and 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 of Townsend Primary School. It is also an opportunity for interested parties to suggest other options for consideration on the proposed closure of Townsend Primary School in September 2022. This will be from January 2022 to February 2022.

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 proposed closure plans, and such comments would be made during the next phase, the "representation" period. This would likely be in June 2022.

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 2022. 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 Council and/or the governing body, the decision on whether or not to close the school *must* be made by the Council’s Cabinet. The Cabinet would make its decision in July 2022.

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 31st August 2022.

Potential Impact of proposed closure on pupils, parents and carers

If the closure is approved for September 2022, the local authority has confirmed that there is sufficient capacity at alternative schools across the borough and within a 0.6 mile distance of Townsend Primary School 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 2022.

Potential Impact of the proposed closure on staff

If the closure is approved for September 2022, Southwark Council would 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.

Potential impact of the proposed closure on the Community

Local residents will have the opportunity to express their views during this consultation and any 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 Townsend Primary School closes. This will continue to be reviewed and monitored by the local authority.

We are consulting with...

Staff, parents/carers, 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*
- *Councillors*
- *The SDBE and the Catholic Diocese*
- *Trade Unions*

Consultation period

This consultation will run from **10th January 2022 to the 25th February 2022**, during this time you are invited to respond to the Council on its proposal to close the school. There will be 3 meetings online for you to feed back your views to the school and the local authority.

The meetings are scheduled to be online on the following dates via Zoom – links included below.

- **17th January 2022 at 5pm**
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81089370163?pwd=ZGtmM3JqcS8vMVNkcGJpQ293b3p4UT09>
Meeting ID: 810 8937 0163
Passcode: 737837
- **18th January 2022 at 5pm**
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89230346997?pwd=YS9NUytmcWo3SkZUNEJpcEJ2MFo3Zz09>
Meeting ID: 892 3034 6997
Passcode: 377037
- **19th January 2022 at 10.30am**
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87317637604?pwd=UENqRVpXb0t5NFYwZXE5QllwOVNIQT09>
Meeting ID: 873 1763 7604
Passcode: 967546

Consultation Timetable

Stage	Dates
Stage 1: Statutory Consultation with interested parties	10 th January 2022 to 25 th February 2022
Stage 2: (<i>If agreement to proceed is reached, following consideration of responses to the consultation in Stage 1</i>) Publication of statutory proposals	May to June 2022
Stage 3: Representation	May to June 2022
Stage 4: Cabinet decision	July 2022
Stage 5: Implementation	31 st August 2022

How to give your views:

This consultation allows anyone with an interest to comment or raise any concerns about the proposal to close Townsend Primary School in September 2022. We welcome you to complete the questionnaire as detailed below, and to join a statutory consultation meeting that will be held in January 2022,

- Complete the online form at <https://forms.office.com/r/yvNvrQUV5N>
OR
- Complete the form attached and email a response to: vilma.edwards@southwark.gov.uk
OR
- The above is also available for mobile phones at the following QR code
- OR write to Headteacher, Townsend Primary School, Townsend Street, Walworth, London, SE17 1HJ

Responses must be completed and returned by 5pm on the 25th February 2022.

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 **25th February 2022**, responses will be analysed and a consultation report produced.

The outcomes report will be shared with the Governing Body and the results of this consultation will also be published on the school's webpage and Southwark Council's website.



Consultation on the proposed closure of Townsend Primary School

Questionnaire

Proposed closure of Townsend Primary School

1) Please tell us whether you support/do not support the proposed closure of Townsend 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 Townsend Primary School
- Member of staff at another school
- School Governor at Townsend Primary School
- School Governor at another school
- Parent/carer of a child/children at Townsend
- 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 Prefer not to say

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) _____