

## Pupil Place Planning Consultation FAQs

### **When are any potential changes planned to take place?**

Should they be agreed, all options in the consultation would be planned to be implemented by September 2026, with some potentially beginning sooner and others more gradually. However, no changes will be made for the school year starting in September 2024.

### **What is an amalgamation (merger)?**

An amalgamation would bring together two (or more) schools as one single school. They will both be located in one place and have the same leaders and governors.

### **What happens to pupils at a school that is proposed to amalgamate/merge?**

All impacted pupils will be guaranteed a place at a local school (of the same type).

For those schools impacted by amalgamation, years 4-6 should have left school by September 2026 and it is hoped this should help minimise the impact on those age cohorts.

There will be no changes to schools in September 2024, so pupils can continue as normal. If two schools are amalgamated, they will merge to form one new school and should this happen, students from both schools can attend the new school in September 2026.

Should they wish to send their child to another school, parents and guardians can apply for a place at another school through the usual in year admissions process. Lambeth guidance [How to apply for a school place | Lambeth Council](#)

### **What happens to pupils at a school that is proposed to close?**

These pupils will be offered a place at another local school of the same school type.

They will be supported through the change to their new school.

### **What happens to pupils due to start at one of the 8 schools in September 2024?**

There will be no changes to schools in September 2024, so pupils will continue as normal. If two schools are to be amalgamated, they will merge to form one new school at a date no later than September 2026. Students from both schools will go to the new school and the two merged schools will not have applications open for 2026.

### **What about school names, ethos and uniforms for schools that will amalgamate?**

Discussions will take place following the consultation on these details as part of the amalgamation process. Each school in Lambeth makes their own decisions on things like ethos and uniform arrangements for their school.

### **Who is paying for these changes?**

The Council and Schools are required to operate under a “scheme for financing schools” (based on legislative provisions in sections 45-53 of the School Standards and Framework Act, (SSAF) 1998). The Council would expect to follow this with regards to these changes and being mindful of the need to minimise the overall cost to the taxpayer, including consideration and balance of an earlier and smaller cost under these proposals versus a potential higher and later cost from “doing nothing” now.

Where responsible, the council will be liable to cover any required redundancy costs from its own resources, as well as absorbing any budget deficits of individual schools that are amalgamated or closed.

We will discuss the coverage of relevant costs with schools prior to their agreement.

### **I am employed at a school that is proposed to close/amalgamate. What happens now?**

The government guidance [Opening and closing maintained schools](#) outlines the statutory procedure for opening or closing a maintained school.

If the decision is made to close or amalgamate a school/s, the School's Redundancy and Redeployment/Organisational Change/Policy will be followed. The Chair of the Governing Body and its Governors will support and lead the staff, parents, pupils and the community during the consultation/implementation phase.

The Schools Redundancy and Redeployment/Organisational Change Policy explains how the school needs to consult and support staff affected by a closure or amalgamation.

If proposals to close or amalgamate any schools in Lambeth go ahead, there will be an implementation phase, where staff can hold a consultation period. More details of this can be found in the Organisational Change Policy.

If a suitable post can be found, Lambeth Council will support staff to move to a different role. This option does depend on who the employer is. We want to avoid as many redundancies as possible, so will work with schools, their staff and trade unions to minimise the impact and try to find roles for those who want to move school.

### **I am a governor at a school that is proposed to amalgamate/close. What happens now?**

Governors will need to support staff, parents, pupils and the community with this change. Lambeth Council will communicate with Governors throughout the consultation and decision making process-making process. We will then undertake further engagement to support schools once decisions have been made.

For schools that amalgamate, one new governing body will be formed at the new school.

### **When a school is amalgamated (merged), how soon can the new school operate from one site?**

As soon as numbers of pupils can fit on one site the empty building can be handed over to the Council or diocese. The time taken for the second building to no longer be needed will differ in each case.

### **What will happen to school buildings if amalgamation (merger) or closure happens?**

The consultation will allow communities to feedback about any ideas for future decisions the council will make regarding buildings. In the case of an amalgamation, the Council will recommend that one of the school sites is closed.

For Church of England schools, the Council, the school governors and the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education will agree the timetable for closure of the building and will decide who will be responsible for the building.

For community schools, the Council will take responsibility for the property as soon as school governors' hand back the building to the Council.

### **How will the Council decide which school building will be used after an amalgamation (merger)?**

The Council will recommend which school building will become the building for the new school after a merger. This will not be a final decision. The final decision will be agreed between the boards of governors, the Council and, in the case of Church of England schools, the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education.

The Council's recommendation will be based on things such as running costs of buildings and the condition of the buildings.

### **What will happen if a school building is empty?**

Some buildings are owned by the Council, and some are the responsibility of the Church of England. Where the building is owned by the Council, the Council will secure the property until the site's future is decided.

### **What will happen to any empty school buildings and assets?**

The future use of empty school buildings will not be decided immediately.

Where the Council is the freeholder of a school site that is no longer used as a result of these proposals, we will seek to protect that site for alternative education provision or services for children, families and young people. Where we are not the owner of a school building we strongly encourage other owners to also make the same commitment.

### **Why has the consultation been extended?**

As this consultation is about schools, guidance recommends that it is best practice for it to be carried out in term time, which is why we initially launched it in May.

The results of this consultation may lead to a further consultation on formal proposals, which originally had been scheduled for late June.

As the general election has been announced, we are now in the pre-election period.

During the pre-election period, councils face restrictions on publicity which means we are unable to comment as a council on issues that could be deemed political, engage with sensitive topics, share council communications from Councillors and highlight policy areas that are of concern as we would usually. This severely restricts council communications and engagement during this period.

At this time, any new consultations must be considered very carefully due to heightened sensitivity and the government's consultation principles recommend that they should generally be avoided during an election period.

We therefore believe it is fair and reasonable to extend the current consultation until August 18, to give stakeholders as much time as possible to respond, with any potential future consultation to be launched in the autumn, during school term time.