



A Public Consultation

Proposed Change of Character of Leopold Primary School from September 2025: Closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site

**Consultation period:
1 November 2023 to 13 December 2023**

Introduction

Brent Council is consulting on the proposed closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School. This would mean admissions to Leopold Primary School reducing from 120 to 60 and no children starting in Reception at the Gwenneth Rickus site (NW10 8HE) from September 2025. Leopold Primary School's Hawkshead Road site (NW10 9UR) would remain open and the school would revert back to the status it had prior to 2015 - a primary school located on one site with 60 pupils (2 forms of entry) in Reception to Year 6.

The closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School is being proposed due to falling pupil numbers in primary schools across Brent, as detailed in the Brent School Place Planning Strategy 2024-28. Demand for primary places in Brent peaked in 2017 and has been reducing since. The latest forecasts indicate that the primary school population in Brent will continue to fall. This reflects the picture across London. As school budgets are linked to pupil numbers, falling rolls means less government funding for local schools. Over time this can create financial pressures for schools, which, if not managed effectively, can impact on the quality of education pupils receive.

This informal consultation provides an opportunity to discuss this proposal with governors, staff, parents, carers and the public. This consultation document sets out the reasons for the proposal and seeks your views and comments. There are a number of ways you can respond to the consultation – by attending a consultation meeting, by sending the Council a written response or through Brent Council's consultation portal. Further information can be found at the end of this document.

The consultation period is 6 weeks long and the closing date for responses is Wednesday 13 December 2023. Following the consultation period, the Council will review the responses received and take a decision on whether to progress to formal consultation through the publication of a statutory notice that details the proposal and how it would be implemented.

Why does the Council want to reduce primary school places?

There has been a significant fall in the number of primary aged children in Brent over the past 6 years, linked to falling birth rates, the cost of living in London and the impact of Brexit and the Covid pandemic. Over this period, the local authority has been working closely with schools across the borough to manage the impacts of falling demand. A range of different strategies have been deployed including reducing Published Admission Numbers (PANs), schools coming together in federation arrangements and considering alternative use for spare capacity, for example establishing Additionally Resourced Provisions (ARPs) for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). However, these have not proved sufficient to manage the continued impact of falling rolls with many schools facing ongoing challenges linked to reduced funding. The Council is of the view therefore that a reduction in capacity is required to support the long-term sustainability of local primary schools.

Why is the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School being proposed?

Leopold Primary School is one of 12 schools in the area known as Primary Place Planning Area 4 which covers the wards of Stonebridge, Roundwood, and Harlesden and Kensal Green: Brentfield Primary School, Donnington Primary School, Furness Primary School, Harlesden Primary School, John Keble CE Primary School, Leopold Primary School, Mitchell Brook Primary School, Newfield Primary School, Our Lady of Lourdes RC Primary School, St Joseph's RC Primary School, St Mary's CE Primary School and The Stonebridge School.

This area benefited from substantial expansion of school capacity between 2005 and 2017 in response to increasing demand for school places. However, demand for places in the area has been reducing over the past six years and the area currently has the highest number and percentage of spare places of Brent's six primary place planning areas. There are a total of 5,985 places available in the 12 schools in the area, but the number of pupils on roll has reduced from 5,249 in 2017 to 4,120 in 2023. As a result, there are high levels of spare places in each year group (as set out in the table below) and the forecasts suggest this will not change over the next five years.

Forecast and capacity of Primary schools in Primary Planning Area 4

PA4	Dataset	Rec	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
2023/2024	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	519	515	577	573	621	580	629
	Spare places	336	340	278	282	234	275	226
	Percentage	39%	40%	33%	33%	27%	32%	26%
2024/2025	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	498	502	504	582	581	617	603
	Spare places	357	353	351	273	274	238	252
	Percentage	42%	41%	41%	32%	32%	28%	29%
2025/2026	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	477	482	492	507	590	575	638
	Spare places	378	373	363	348	265	280	217
	Percentage	44%	44%	42%	41%	31%	33%	25%
2026/2027	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	485	462	472	494	514	585	592
	Spare places	370	393	383	361	341	270	263
	Percentage	43%	46%	45%	42%	40%	32%	31%
2027/2028	Capacity	855	855	855	855	855	855	855
	Projection	479	473	455	479	504	513	607
	Spare places	376	382	400	376	351	342	248
	Percentage	44%	45%	47%	44%	41%	40%	29%

The Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School was opened in 2013 in response to increasing demand for primary places in the area. However, demand for Leopold Primary School has been falling since 2018 and the Gwenneth Rickus site currently operates as one form of entry in some year groups, including Reception, Year 1 and Year 2. There are also spare places at the Hawkshead Road site in all year groups. The tables below show the number of children reported on roll at each site following each October pupil census return.

Number on roll at Leopold Primary Gwenneth Rickus site at October each year

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	PAN	Spare places
2019/20	46	58	55	58	54	47	69	387	420	33 (8%)
2020/21	33	45	44	53	58	47	47	327	420	93 (22%)
2021/22	29	41	43	40	54	50	47	304	420	116 (28%)
2022/23	31	29	41	44	35	48	51	279	420	141 (34%)
2023/24	27	27	28	38	42	37	54	253	420	167 (40%)

Number on roll at the Leopold Primary School Hawkshead Road at October each year

Year	Rec	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Y6	Total	PAN	Spare places
2019/20	52	57	49	55	47	42	56	358	420	62 (15%)
2020/21	50	57	56	51	52	42	45	353	420	67 (16%)
2021/22	54	54	56	53	48	49	39	353	420	67 (16%)
2022/23	47	58	51	55	45	43	58	357	420	63 (15%)
2023/24	53	46	53	43	51	42	40	328	420	92 (22%)

There are sufficient spare places in other schools in Primary Planning Area 4 to accommodate future pupil demand, which means that the additional places provided by Gwenneth Rickus are no longer required.

No changes are proposed for the Hawkshead Road site. The Hawkshead Road site will continue to have a 30 place nursery and Reception to Year 6 provision for up to 60 pupils each year.

When would the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site happen?

Closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site would commence from September 2025, when there would be no pupils admitted into Reception on the site. Parents of future Reception children would have a range of local schools to choose from.

A phased closure of the Gwenneth Rickus site is proposed. We would like to know your views on two different options:

- **Option 1:** A phased closure of the provision, which would mean no Reception classes on the site from 2025 onwards and children in other year groups who are taught at the Gwenneth Rickus site remaining either on the site or moving to the Hawkshead

Road site to complete their primary education at Leopold Primary School. This could mean the Gwenneth Rickus site remaining open until 2028.

- **Option 2:** A full closure of the provision at a fixed point in time in the future when all children being educated on the site would move to either the Hawkshead site and / or alternative local schools to complete their education. This would be more disruptive for families.

Other relevant information

In November 2023, the Council is also consulting on PAN reductions at other schools for the admissions arrangements for September 2025. This includes a reduction in the PAN of Fryent Primary School from 120 to 90 and a reduction in the PAN at Mitchell Brook Primary School from 90 to 60.

If the proposal to cease provision on the Gwenneth Rickus site is implemented, then it could impact on Leopold Primary School's staffing requirements. There may be a need to consider potential redundancies for staff, which would be subject to a separate formal consultation process in line with the Managing Change Policy. Other schools in Brent would be encouraged to help any affected staff to find alternative employment.

Frequently asked questions

If the Gwenneth Rickus site closes, where will my child go to school in September 2025?

Your child will remain at the Gwenneth Rickus site until such time as the site fully closes. It may be that at some point in the future your child moves to the Hawkshead Road site.

Can I change my child's school now?

Yes – you can submit an in-year application for any school in Brent. An offer will only be made for preference schools if there have vacancies.

If I am offered a place at the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School for my child for Reception in September 2024, can I choose an alternative?

Any parents who receive an offer of a place at the school will be notified that this consultation is ongoing. If parents would prefer an alternative offer, they can let us know.

Can applications still be made for the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School?

While the site remains open, in-year applications can still be made and offers will be made if there are vacancies in a year group or class. If the decision is taken in to cease the provision, parents will not be able to apply for a Reception place at the school for September 2025.

What will happen to the Gwenneth Rickus site?

There are no formal plans for the future use of the site. The Gwenneth Rickus site would be considered for other educational use if this proposal was implemented.

Timeline

If, after this informal consultation, Brent Council is of the view the proposals should continue to be progressed, a statutory notice would be published in line with the Department for Education's guidance 'Making significant changes ('prescribed alterations') to maintained schools'. This would trigger four weeks of formal consultation, after which Brent Council's Cabinet would make a final decision on the proposal, taking into consideration consultation and statutory proposal responses.

The anticipated timetable for the full process is as follows:

Date	Action
01 November 2023	Informal Consultation begins
13 November 2023	Consultation meeting for school staff at the Hawkshead Road site
14 November 2023	Consultation meetings for the public at the Gwenneth Rickus site
15 November 2023	Consultation meetings for the public at the Hawkshead Road site
27 November 2023	Consultation meeting for school governors
13 December 2023	Informal Consultation closes – deadline for responses
January/February 2024	Cabinet decision on agreeing formal consultation
March 2024	Publication of statutory proposal notice and formal consultation*
April / May 2024	Final Decision by Cabinet*
July 2024	Variation request to reduce published admission number* to the Schools Adjudicator
September 2025	Planned closure commences*

* Subject to Cabinet agreement

How to have your say

Brent Council would welcome your views on this proposal to reduce the size of Leopold Primary School by ending provision on the school's Gwenneth Rickus site. You can let us know your views by submitting a response to this consultation document (form attached to this document) and/or attending one of the consultation meetings. **The informal consultation closes on 13 December 2023** – please ensure you have your say before then.

Please complete the attached Response Form and return it by email or post

Email: LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk

Post to: Admissions and School Organisation Team, 3rd Floor, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 0FJ

Attending a consultation meeting

The following consultation meetings are being held at the Hawkshead Road site of Leopold Primary School

Public consultation meeting	15 November 2023	9.00 – 10.00am
Public consultation meeting	15 November 2023	3.30 – 4.30pm
Public consultation meeting	15 November 2023	6.00 – 7.00pm

The following consultation meetings are being held at the Gwenneth Rickus site of Leopold Primary School

Consultation meeting for staff only	20 November 2023	4.00 – 5.00pm
Public consultation meeting	14 November 2023	9.00 – 10.00am
Public consultation meeting	14 November 2023	3.30 – 4.30pm
Public consultation meeting	14 November 2023	6.00 – 7.00pm
Consultation meeting for governors	27 November 2023	6.00 – 7.00pm

Copies of this document are available from Leopold Primary School and on request from the Admissions and School Organisation Team at LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk.

The Consultation and response form are available online at Brent Connects consultations - www.brent.gov.uk/your-community/brent-connects

If you would like to request this information in a different language or format, such as accessible PDF, large print, easy read, BSL, audio recording or braille, email LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk or call 020 8937 3110.

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Leopold Primary School Consultation Response Slip

Please return by: 13 December 2023

I agree / disagree with the proposal to change the capacity of Leopold Primary School so that it includes the closure of the Gwenneth Rickus provision.

Agree	
Disagree	

Comments: Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

I believe that, if it goes ahead, the closure should be:

Phased with all children remaining Gwenneth Rickus site/Leopold Primary School until they complete year 6	
At a fixed point in time with all children moving to alternative sites/schools	
A different approach (please provide details below)	

Comments: Please continue on a separate sheet if necessary

Part 2 – Monitoring Questions. *This section is optional*

Q1. Please tell us in what capacity you are completing this questionnaire. Please select the one option that most closely represents how you are responding to this consultation.

As a parent or carer with a child at Leopold Primary School	
As a member of staff at Leopold Primary School	
As a governor of Leopold Primary School	
As a Brent resident	
As a representative of a local community group or residents' association	
On behalf of a school or setting apart from Leopold Primary School	
As a Councillor	
On behalf of a charity, voluntary or community sector organisation (VCS)	
Other, please specify:	

Q2. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation (business, community group, residents' association, council or any other organisation), please tell us the name of your organisation here:

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Q3. If you are a parent of a child attending Leopold Primary School, or of a child who is due to start at the school, please indicate their current year group.

Nursery		Year 3	
Reception		Year 4	
Year 1		Year 5	
Year 2		Year 6	

Q4. Please tell us the first part of your postcode (this will be three or four characters). *Please do not reveal your whole postcode. We use this to help us to analyse our data responses and it will not be used to identify who you are.*

Q5. How did you find out about this consultation? *Select one option*

Leopold Primary School		Facebook	
Leaflet		Twitter	
From a friend or relative		Instagram	
Brent.gov.uk website		LinkedIn	
Councillor		Nextdoor	
Newspaper		A Voluntary or Community sector organisation	
Other, please specify			

Please return this form by post or e-mail by 13 December 2023 to:

- Post: Admissions and School Organisation Team, 3rd Floor, Brent Civic Centre, Engineers Way, Wembley, Middlesex HA9 0FJ
- Email: LeopoldConsultation@brent.gov.uk