

4<sup>th</sup> September 2024

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Dear Parent/Carers,

You may be aware that on the Island we have too many primary school places and with a declining birth rate the situation is not due to change. This means we must take action to address this situation as otherwise our school system won't be financially viable and most importantly education standards will not be improved.

The council believes that for far too long the oversupply of places in primary schools has had a negative impact on the standard of education children receive on the Island, preventing them from having the best opportunity for the highest quality teaching and learning within well-equipped schools.

While almost 1,900 classroom seats go unfilled in mainstream schools, there is growing demand for Special Educational Needs (SEND) provision across the Island with hundreds of new specialist places desperately needed to support some of our most vulnerable children and young people.

The council believes things must change.

Island children deserve the best and therefore we need to take the necessary steps to enable this to become a reality, while also recognising that schools are much more than places where children and young people go to get an education — they are a core part of the local community.

### **What happens next?**

The Isle of Wight Councils Cabinet have been asked to consider a report on the 12 September which proposes several school closures across the Island, alongside a programme to invest and expand the number of SEND places and reutilise school sites where possible. Your school has not been identified at this stage as a school for potential closure.

The paper due to be considered has been published today, along with further information on what the proposals are. We understand that this may be a very difficult period for parents/carers, school staff, and children but it must be emphasised that Cabinet are only being asked to approve a consultation period and **not** to make a decision around closure at this stage.

Subject to Cabinet providing approval to proceed, the consultation and decision-making process is outlined below:

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- This initial consultation will run from the 20 September until the 1 November 2024, and further information on this process will be shared after a decision is taken on the 12 September.
- Consultation meetings will take place in all schools identified for closure.
- A report outlining the consultation responses received will then be taken to Cabinet in December 2024 to decide if the proposals should continue to the formal statutory consultation stage.
- If approved, a statutory Public Notice would be published. This is a four-week period in which any representations can be made to the local authority.
- A final report would then be taken to the Cabinet in March 2025 who will decide whether to proceed with the proposal or not.
- Any proposed closures or changes would be implemented for 31 August 2025.

### **How can I find out more information?**

A copy of the report, along with the proposed consultation information can be found in the link below.

<https://iow.moderngov.co.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=145&MId=1884&Ver=4>

This explains why the IWC has reached its decision to propose the schools for closure and what the wider plans would be. The consultation process will not commence until approval is in place and the decision taken by Cabinet has been ratified. A consultation form will then be shared with all parents/carers.

We will be supporting schools and families during this time with regular communication, and if required, eventually transition plans for the affected schools and children. We want to ensure children retain their friendship groups as much as possible and realise this will be a period of uncertainty. However, we are working closely with headteachers and urge all families to join us at some of the events and make your views understood.

We hope this reassures you that we are planning the process out and are listening to all stakeholders. We look forward to meeting you and discussing the future of our education on the Island.

Yours sincerely



Naomi Carter  
Service Director – Education, Inclusion and Access