



Statutory notice for the proposed closure of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and The School Organisation (Establishment and Discontinuance of schools) Regulations 2013 that Wigan Council intends to discontinue the following maintained community school with effect from 31 August 2023:

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School
Lily Lane
Bamfurlong
Wigan
WN2 5JT

At the start of the spring term 2022, Abram Bryn Gates Primary School had 132 children on roll and caters for children aged 4-11 years old.

The main factors leading to the closure proposal are low and falling pupil numbers in the Abram School Organisation Area which are impacting on the school's financial viability and consequent ability to sustain a high-quality education for pupils.

This Notice is an extract from the complete proposal, which can be viewed at:
www.wigan.gov.uk/consultations

Copies of the complete proposal can also be obtained by requesting a copy by post to Wigan Council, School Organisation Team, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN, by email to consultation@wigan.gov.uk or by phone to 01942 489013.

Any person may object to or make comments on the proposal online at www.wigan.gov.uk/consultations or by sending their representations to Wigan Council, School Organisation Team, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN or by email consultation@wigan.gov.uk

The closing date for comments is 5pm 19th April 2022.

Signed: Catherine Pealing, Assistant Director Education

Publication Date: 8th March 2022

Explanatory note:

Wigan Council will determine the statutory notice within 2 months of the end of the representation period. If the Council fail to determine the notice within this time, it will pass all relevant material to the Schools' Adjudicator who will determine the notice.

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Contact details

By post: Wigan Council, School Organisation Team, Town Hall, Library Street,
Wigan, WN1 1YN

By email: consultation@wigan.gov.uk

Implementation

It is proposed to close the school on 31 August 2023.

Reason for closure

The main factors leading to the closure proposal are continuing low and falling pupil numbers in the Abram School Organisation Area which are impacting on the school's financial viability and consequently impacting on the ability to sustain a high-quality education for pupils.

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School has a high number of surplus places which has been increasing year-on-year. Projected demand shows that this will continue for the foreseeable future.

Schools are mainly funded by an amount of money for each child attending the school. Low pupil numbers make it challenging for schools to operate within budget. Managing a school and maintaining high-quality provision with quality teaching and learning can be difficult when budgets are insufficient to need.

As a result of falling roles, Abram Bryn Gates Primary School has and continues to accumulate a deficit budget. Despite mitigations in place (see below), the cumulative deficit is forecast to reach over £288,000 by the 2023/24 financial year.

Continued low pupil numbers mean the school will be unable to return to a balanced budget and while it may be possible to identify some cost savings through further efficiencies, the school would not be able to achieve the scale of saving necessary without also cutting back on staff, which would be unacceptable in terms of the impact on education quality.

Class sizes, as is the general national picture for mainstream schools, are based on multiples of 30 children. Classes of less than 20 children are difficult for a school to resource with the budget it has available, especially where the overheads for the school buildings are high.

The overheads associated with heating, lighting and maintaining the school buildings and other infrastructure costs, whilst being at less than 70% capacity, creates difficulties in ensuring financial sustainability over the longer term. Projections of pupil numbers indicates that the school will be at less than 60% capacity by 2025/26, however, these overheads will not reduce proportionately.

Should Abram Bryn Gates Primary close, the buildings would become part of the Council's estate. There are no current plans for this land. Any changes would be consulted on as part of a planning process.

Investment into the Abram Bryn Gates Primary buildings was made to ensure the school was safe and able to deliver the best possible environment for the children attending the school. The buildings are old and are costly to keep in good repair and maintain. These costs have an additional impact on the school's budget.

Further consideration was given to the current Ofsted outcomes of schools in the Abram school place planning area. Whilst Abram Bryn Gates has made significant improvements, it is currently a school judged by Ofsted as 'Requires Improvement'; others in the area (including those schools to which pupils will be displaced) are judged by Ofsted as 'Good' or 'Outstanding' schools.

Based on these factors and despite the best efforts of governors, staff and the support of the local authority, Wigan Council is publishing this statutory proposal for closure of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School effective from 31 August 2023.

Pupil numbers and admissions

At the start of the Spring Term 2022, there were 132 pupils on roll at Abram Bryn Gates Primary.

Year Group	R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
Number on roll	14	12	13	11	25	28	29	132

The school's age range is 4-11 years, and provision is available for boys and girls. There is no boarding provision. The October 2021 census showed that the school has 44 children on roll with special educational needs which includes 8 with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). Total pupil numbers are significantly lower than the capacity of the school, which is 210, based on the current Published Admission Number (PAN) of 30.

The admission of children to reception class in September 2022 will proceed in line with the Primary Coordinated Admission Scheme. If the proposal goes ahead, these children will form part of transition arrangements.

Displaced pupils

Should the decision be taken to close the school, parents and carers of children at the school would be able to express a preference for a place at an alternative school. Parents and carers would be asked to complete an in-year application form and to name up to three schools they would prefer their child/ren to attend. Parents and carers would be offered a school place either at one of their preferred schools named on the application form or, if this is not possible, at the nearest school to the child's home where a place is available. The local authority would try to meet parents and carers preferences wherever possible but cannot guarantee to do so. Parents who do not receive an offer at a preferred school would have the statutory right of appeal as set out in the Schools Admission Code.

Based on the proposed closure date of 31 August 2023, the children in current Year 5 and Year 6 will continue at the school until they transfer to secondary school.

For other year groups, admission to alternative schools will depend upon vacancies at that time. There are sufficient vacancies across the Abram and neighbouring Ashton-in-Makerfield and Ince School Organisation Areas to accommodate the children from Abram Bryn Gates Primary School. These vacancies are within 2 walking miles of the children's home address.

The children in current Reception Class to Year 4 live in the following School Organisation Areas –

School Organisation Area	Year Group					Total
	R	1	2	3	4	
Abram WN2-5	10	11	10	7	14	52
Ince WN2-2 & WN3-4	1				1	2
Hindley WN2-3			2	1		3
Ashton-in-Makerfield WN4	3	1	1	3	10	18
Total	14	12	13	11	25	75

The 2 most significant populations of pupils live in the Abram and Ashton-in-Makerfield School Organisation Areas. The tables below give an indication of the number of vacancies across these 2 areas and how there are available places to offer to children displaced from Abram Bryn Gates Primary School.

Vacancies in the Abram (WN2-5) School Organisation Area –

	Year Group					Total
	R	1	2	3	4	
Children on roll at Abram Bryn Gates Primary who live in the Abram WN2-5 School Organisation Area	10	11	10	7	14	52
Vacancies in Abram School Organisation Area	19	36	15	24	22	116
Remaining capacity if children from Abram Bryn Gates Primary accommodated	9	25	5	17	8	64

Vacancies in the Ashton-in-Makerfield (WN4) School Organisation Area –

	Year Group					Total
	R	1	2	3	4	
Children on roll at Abram Bryn Gates Primary who live in the A-in-M WN4 School Organisation Area	3	1	1	3	10	18
Vacancies in A-in-M School Organisation Area	51	45	14	30	26	166
Remaining capacity if children from Abram Bryn Gates Primary accommodated	48	44	13	27	16	148

In addition to these 2 areas, St Mary's CE Primary School in the Ince School Organisation Area is 1.777 walking miles from Abram Bryn Gates Primary School and has a large number of surplus places in some year groups –

	Year Group					Total
	R	1	2	3	4	
Vacancies at St Mary's CE Primary School	12	31	0	11	10	64

There are 5 children who live in the Ince and Hindley School Organisation Areas who will be easily accommodated within local schools.

Any change to school place provision is one that must be carefully managed. It is recognised that should Abram Bryn Gates Primary School close, children, especially those with special educational need and who are vulnerable would be fully supported. Transition plans would be put into place to minimise disruption to education, learning and well-being.

Places will be allocated in advance to ensure a managed and successful transition to the allocated school.

Impact on the community

The impact on all stakeholders was considered as part of the consultation to reduce primary school places in the Abram area. This allowed all to come forward with their views on options to reduce provision. We appreciate that closing a school can be a great loss to a community and this proposal is being put forward after giving due consideration to this.

There will be an impact on children at the school having to transfer to other local schools. The local authority and schools will work together to minimise disruption arising from transition.

Some consultees raised concerns at not being able to access the same category of school. It is likely that some children will be offered places at faith schools. Schools have a duty to accept pupils of all faiths, and non. There is a commitment from faith schools in the area to do this. Parents can opt their children out of collective worship in any school.

There will be a potential impact on the community from the loss of the services provided by Twinkle Toes (a private nursery setting who also run the school's breakfast and after school club) who operate a private enterprise on the site of Abram Bryn Gates Primary, if it is unable to find alternative premises. From an Early Years provision perspective there is sufficient alternative capacity in the area.

Other than the services provided by Twinkle Toes, Abram Bryn Gates Primary School does not currently provide additional services or use of its facilities for the wider community. There will therefore be no further loss of any clubs or activities for local families in the community.

Rural primary schools

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School is designated as a rural school under the Designation of Rural Primary Schools (England) Order 2021.

The local authority has considered section 15(4) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 in creating this proposal.

Further details are available in the Cabinet report from 17 February 2022, School Organisation: Abram School Place Planning Area by [following this link](#).

Balance of denominational provision

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School is a community school and does not have a religious character.

Maintained nursery schools

The proposal does not relate to the discontinuance of a maintained nursery school.

Sixth form provision

The proposal does not relate to the discontinuance of sixth form provision.

Special educational needs provision

The school does not have reserved provision for children with special educational needs.

Travel

The amalgamation of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School and Holy Family Catholic Primary School would have been a solution to limit the distance children would need to travel to school but this was not a preferred option for consultees.

Families will instead apply for vacancies at other local schools. An analysis of capacity at other schools indicates that children can be accommodated at a school within 2 walking miles of their home address.

The following primary schools are within 2 walking miles of the school –

School	Walking distance (miles)	PAN	R	1	2	3	4	Total
Holy Family Catholic Primary, Platt Bridge	1.247	30	16	15	23	18	18	90
St John's Church of England Primary	1.339	45	43	35	41	36	37	192
Platt Bridge Community School	1.559	60	57	49	56	57	58	277
St Wilfrid's Catholic Primary	1.497	30	20	25	30	30	26	131
St Mary's CE Primary	1.777	45	33	14	45	34	35	161
Total		210	169	138	195	175	174	851
Vacancies			41	72	15	35	36	199
Children on roll at Abram Bryn Gates Primary School (all areas)			14	12	13	11	25	75
Remaining capacity if children accommodated at these schools			27	60	2	24	11	124

Around (63%) of the children in current Reception class to Year 4 are currently travelling to the school from outside of the village of Bamfurlong. Based on walking routes to schools, the majority of these children live near to other schools that are either closer to their home address than Abram Bryn Gates Primary or a similar distance to what they currently travel.

Where families currently commute by car, attending a school more local to their home address could reduce the distance needed to travel or even remove the need to rely on a car as means of transport. The potential reduction of car journeys, combined with families that can walk or cycle, would therefore have a positive impact on sustainability and the environment.

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For the children living in the village of Bamfurlong, there will be a need to travel further to an alternative school. This could cause an increase in car use or reliance on public transport for some families. This will affect approximately one third of the school population. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that the impact of the closure is balanced more positively in regard to transport related issues.

For the children who live in Bamfurlong, although Abram Bryn Gates Primary School is a rural school, the table above exemplifies that it is within 2 walking miles of 5 other primary schools that have sufficient vacancies. There is a regular peak-time bus service (every 30 minutes) that stops outside Abram Bryn Gates and is scheduled to reach the areas of Ashton and Platt Bridge (where pupils will be redistributed) in under 10 minutes. Transport policy would only give funding to qualifying families whose school place is beyond 2 walking miles. It is anticipated that due to the available local capacity at other schools, there will be limited claims to the local authority for transport costs.

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