

Consultation to reduce primary school places in the Abram area

Background

All local authorities have a statutory duty to make sure there are enough quality school places in their area. We want our schools across Wigan to provide our children with the best educational opportunities to enjoy and achieve.

School places are funded by the number of children on roll. Therefore, low numbers can impact on the staff a school can employ and limits resources for teaching and learning which in turn can impact on educational standards and outcomes for children.

The number of places needed in the Abram area is currently lower than the number of school places available and the information we have indicates the number is going to continue to fall.

Measures have already been taken to support schools with reduced budgets to maintain the current school places. This has included schools working together sharing management arrangements so that efficiencies have been made. However, these arrangements are not enough to reduce the current deficit that will grow year on year.

On 2nd September Wigan's Cabinet gave approval for officers to undertake a review of school place provision in the Abram area. This has now taken place and Cabinet has given permission to consult all stakeholders on options to reduce the number of surplus places.

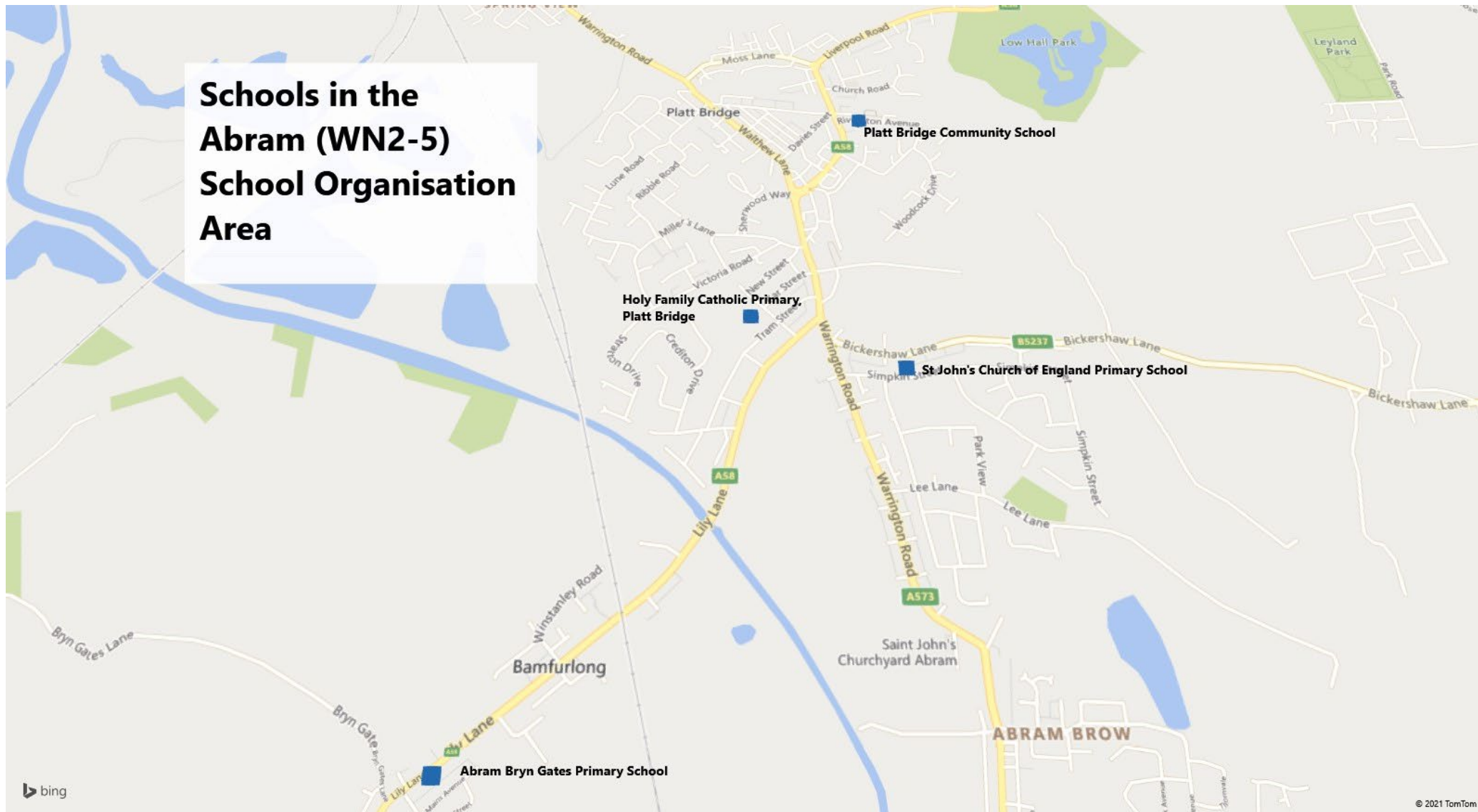
What is this consultation about?

This consultation is about seeking your views on options to reduce surplus places in the Abram area.

This booklet sets out the factors we have taken into account and a number of options for consideration.

We want to know your views before we decide to consult on any school organisation proposals to reduce surplus places. In this booklet we explain how you can make your views known. The booklet also sets out a timeframe as to how long we expect this process will take. However, things in this timeframe could change and we will let you know if this happens.

The Abram School Place Planning Area: This map shows the location of the schools in the Abram area WN2-5



Current school place provision in the Abram area

There are 4 schools that are situated in the Abram school place planning area. These are as follows:

Schools in the Abram School place Planning area										
	OFSTED Grading	Published admission number	Current pupil numbers by year group							
School			R	1	2	3	4	5	6	Total
St John's Church of England Primary School	Good	45	44	35	41	36	36	44	40	276
Platt Bridge Community School	Outstanding	60	58	48	54	57	58	57	50	382
Abram Bryn Gates Community Primary School	Requires Improvement	30	15	14	13	11	29	28	29	139
Holy Family Catholic Primary, Platt Bridge	Good	30	15	16	23	17	18	30	24	143
Totals		165	132	113	131	121	141	159	143	940
Surplus places			33	52	34	44	24	6	22	215

Projected reception pupil first preference for each school	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
St John's Church of England Primary School	40	35	37	38
Platt Bridge Community School	57	50	52	53
Abram Bryn Gates Community Primary School	17	15	15	16
Holy Family Catholic Primary, Platt Bridge	18	16	17	17
Projected surplus places	33	49	44	41

Across the Abram area each reception intake shows that there is more than a form of entry (30 children) surplus places year on year.

Context about the schools in the area

St John's Church of England Primary School is an Academy. It is currently almost at capacity in most year groups and whilst future intakes are projected to reduce slightly, the school is expected to have more than 30 children per year group from 2022 onwards. The school has a Good Ofsted judgement. The school serves the community with priority of places being offered to those children with a Church of England faith commitment. The trust manages the budget for the school.

Platt Bridge Community School is an Academy. It has healthy pupil numbers and primarily provides school places for those who live in the Platt Bridge area. The school is full in almost every year group and projections indicate these places are needed for the future. The school has an Outstanding Ofsted judgement. The trust manages the budget for the school.

Holy Family Catholic Primary School, Platt Bridge is a faith school that serves Catholic children who live in the area and other children who live in the community also attend the school. This school has surplus places in Reception class to year 4. The number of children projected to need places is less than 20 per year group. This will mean that as each new reception class is admitted to the school, the levels of surplus places across the school will grow. This will negatively impact on the school's budget. An executive Headteacher manages this and another Catholic primary school to provide efficiency savings. But the continued trend in falling pupil numbers means that this is no longer sustainable.

Abram Bryn Gates Primary School is a Community School that has a rural school status. Children who attend this school live primarily in the Abram area. This school has the highest level of surplus places in the area and these low pupil numbers are projected to continue with each future reception class intake. An executive headteacher manages both this school and St Mary's CE Primary School that is within 2 walking miles of this school. This management arrangement has been put in place to provide efficiency savings. However, the growing surplus place issue will continue to have a negative impact on the school's budget and will not be sustainable in the future.

Other local factors

Demographics of the Abram area show that the projected population is falling.

The birth rate in the Abram area has been low for a number of years and this has had a negative impact on pupil numbers. There are some housing developments taking place in the area and any additional children have been factored into our projections. Our projections show that for the foreseeable future numbers are expected to remain low.

Year of Birth	Total Number of Births	Reception Intake Year	Projected pupil numbers	Projected surplus places
2017/18	148	22/23	132	33
2018/19	130	23/24	116	49
2019/20	135	24/25	121	44
2020/21	138	25/26	124	41

Reducing the number of school places available by 30 will still allow sufficient school places for future demands.

Numbers are also falling in neighbouring primary schools in the Ashton, Hindley and Ince areas.

Options to reduce surplus places

Reducing school places for the 2023 academic year could be achieved as follows:

Option 1

- Amalgamate Abram Bryn Gates and Holy Family Catholic Primary School. This option would involve the closure of **one** of these schools and the displacement of children to the school that remained open. Temporary accommodation would need to be put in place at the school that remains open to accommodate the children currently in year 4.

Option 2

- Close Abram Bryn Gates Community Primary School. Children could be displaced to schools in the Abram area or in neighbouring areas. This option would mean temporary additional accommodation on a school site would not be required.

Option 3

- Close Holy Family Catholic Primary School. Children could be displaced to schools in the Abram area or in neighbouring areas. This option would mean temporary additional accommodation on a school site would not be required.

The local authority is open to considering other options. Therefore, as part of this consultation process we are asking you to say what you think any other options may be.

We are mindful that any disruption to a child's education is of concern and we consider this very seriously when making any changes to school provision. However, we are in a position where it is not viable to continue to maintain all schools in the Abram area. If it is decided that a school is to close, we will support the transition of any children to other schools.

Early Years Provision

We have a statutory duty to ensure there is sufficient early years provision available and we carefully monitor changes in demand. There is nursery provision available on 2 school sites Holy Family and Abram Bryn Gates School sites. Should either Holy Family or Abram Bryn Gates Primary Schools close, there are sufficient school places within the area to ensure that all children can be accommodated.

Consultation process

We will hold meetings to answer any questions you may have on the above options and to record your views.

Meeting	Date, time and venue	Who should attend
Meeting for staff Abram Bryn Gates School	Date: 1.11.21 Time: 3.45 pm Venue: Abram Bryn Gates Primary School	All staff of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School
Meeting for governors Abram Bryn Gates School	Date: 1.11.21 Time: 4.30 pm Venue: Abram Bryn Gates Primary School	The Governing Body of Abram Bryn Gates Primary School
Meeting for staff Holy Family Catholic Primary School	Date: 3.11.21 Time: 3.30 pm Venue: Holy Family Catholic Primary School	All staff of Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Meeting for governors Holy Family Catholic Primary School	Date: 3.11.21 Time: 4.30 pm Venue: Holy Family Catholic Primary School	The Governing Body of Holy Family Catholic Primary School
Consultation sessions virtual and face to face sessions available with local authority officers.	Virtual meetings: Thursday 11 th and 18 th November 2021 Face to face meetings at Abram Bryn Gates School Date: 16 th November	These sessions are open to everyone but especially to parents of pupils attending Abram Bryn Gates Primary or those who may have children who will attend in the future. If you would like a virtual meeting, please email schoolplaces@wigan.gov.uk and we will arrange for a time to suit you.

	Appointments at school available 9 am until 10.30 am and 3 to 6.30 pm.	If you wish to make an appointment for a face to face meeting at the school, please contact Abram Bryn Gates School on 01942 866392 and you will be allocated a time.
Consultation sessions	<p>Virtual meetings: Thursday 11th and 18th November 2021</p> <p>Face to face meetings at Holy Family Catholic Primary School Date: 15th November Appointments at school available 8.45 am until 10.30 am and 2.45 to 6.30 pm.</p>	<p>These sessions are open to everyone but especially to parents of pupils attending Holy Family Catholic Primary or those who may have children who will attend in the future.</p> <p>If you would like a virtual meeting, please email schoolplaces@wigan.gov.uk and we will arrange for a time to suit you.</p> <p>If you wish to make an appointment for a face to face meeting at the school, please contact Holy Family on 01942 704148 and you will be allocated a time.</p>

The consultation process

This current process is statutory pre-publication consultation. The information provided here and at the consultation sessions should be enough to enable people to form an initial view on the options for consideration. Information gathered via this consultation will be fed back to Cabinet who will then decide whether to proceed to the next stage of consultation, that is, publishing a school organisation proposal to make a change or close a school.

We are sorry that due to the volume of responses we receive when consulting on options we will not be able to acknowledge written responses nor enter into correspondence with interested parties during or after the consultation period.

Please note that all responses to this consultation will be made available to Elected Members (councillors) for decision making purposes.

Next steps

We must follow strict legal procedures when consulting on school organisation proposals. The timetable below shows the periods of consultation and dates when decisions are expected to be made. If you make your views known outside of these periods, or in any other way than described, they cannot be taken into account.

Event	Dates
Consultation – during this time you can make your views known by <ul style="list-style-type: none">attending the open consultation sessions (notes will be taken) for both face to face and virtual meetings;writing to or emailing the council; orcompleting the response form at the end of this bookletcompleting the online consultation available at www.wigan.gov.uk/consultations	4 th November 2021 to 13 th December 2021
Results of the consultation will go to the Cabinet of the council. Cabinet will decide whether it wishes to move on to the next stage of consultation	20 th January 2022
Representation period – Statutory notices are published. These are public notices that appear in the local newspaper, at the entrances to the school and in another public place in the area, such as a community centre or library. You can make your views known at this stage by writing to or emailing the council at the address on page 12. The address and date by which you must send written comments will also be given on the public notice.	10 th February 2022 to 10 th March 2022
The council makes the final decision on the proposal*	21 April 2022*
Proposal to be implemented by	1 September 2023

*Once a decision is made by Cabinet of Wigan Council the following can appeal to the School Adjudicator against the council's decision to close a school: The Diocesan Board of Education of any C of E diocese in the relevant area; The bishop of any Roman Catholic church in the relevant area; The governing body or any foundation of the foundation or voluntary school specified in the proposals.

Circulation list

We are consulting the following:

- Parents and prospective parents of children attending Abram Bryn Gates Primary School and Holy Family Catholic Primary school
- Pupils at Abram Bryn Gates Primary School and Holy Family Catholic Primary school
- Early years providers in the Abram area
- Governors and staff at all schools in the Abram area
- Diocesan authorities
- Other primary schools in the Abram school place planning area
- Schools in neighbouring school place planning areas
- Trade Unions and Professional Associations
- Elected Members (councillors)
- The local Member of Parliament
- The local community (via web site, placing of document in local community settings and in early years settings)
- Voluntary groups that use the school premises at the schools

Address for correspondence:

The School Organisation Team
Wigan Council
People Directorate: Children and Families
Wigan Life Centre South
College Avenue
WN1 1NJ

Email: consultation@wigan.gov.uk