

Statutory proposal for the closure of Cowes Primary School

Contact details

Name and address of Local authority publishing the proposal:

Isle of Wight Council, County Hall, Newport, Isle of Wight PO30 1UD

Name, address and category of school proposed to be closed:

Cowes Primary School, Edinburgh Close, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 8HF
(Community School)

Introduction

On Thursday 12 December 2024 the Cabinet of Isle of Wight Council approved the publication of a statutory proposal to close Cowes 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 the Isle of Wight Council proposes to discontinue Cowes Primary School with effect from 31 August 2025.

Implementation

Date on which it is proposed to close the school:

Sunday 31 August 2025.

It is proposed to implement the closure as follows:

Following the closure of Cowes Primary School, it is proposed for the remaining pupils on roll at that time to transfer to Gurnard Primary School or other primary schools in the local area. Gurnard Primary School is 1.12 miles by road from Cowes Primary School.

There are also vacancies at other schools in the Cowes school place planning area, providing Cowes Primary families with a range of options to secure a suitable school

for their child. The local authority will endeavour to meet parental preferences for school places, where possible.

The local authority is already undertaking preliminary work on planning the transition for children and families.

Reason for Closure

The council has a statutory duty to ensure there are a sufficient number of school places for pupils and that places are planned effectively. The council monitors surplus Reception places, a key measure of demand, and aims to maintain a 10% surplus across the primary school phase to allow for parental preference and for movers across or onto the Isle of Wight.

The council's own projection of pupil numbers starting Reception in the coming years forecasts that across the Isle of Wight there will be 2506 surplus primary school places in 2025 and 2828 surplus places in 2026. The earliest indication for 2027 suggests that number will rise to 3049 unfilled places.

The planning and provision of school places is a complex task that must take account of changing populations, parental preference, migration and new housing. Individual schools, subject to status, now have greater autonomy regarding admission numbers and decisions surrounding school expansion/reduction, adding further complexity to the statutory role the Council has in relation to ensuring a sufficiency of school places. The geography and rural nature of the Isle of Wight creates further challenges in relation to small schools. A main principle of current and future provision is that the LA will seek to provide schools which deliver high quality education standards and are financially sustainable in the longer term. As part of the school place planning review a number of key areas for consideration are identified below, along with more detailed information contained within this proposal:

- Quality of provision.
- Where the children who attend the school live.
- Childrens health and wellbeing.
- Whether the children that attend a faith school do so because of its denomination.
- Financial viability.
- Transport implications.
- Environment implications.
- Number of pupils choosing to attend the school.
- Fabric of the building and ongoing maintenance costs.
- Legal legislation restrictions.
- Department for Education guidance about rural schools.
- Pupil movement.
- Local housing building.
- Factors that arise during a consultation process.
- Restrictions outside of the local authority's control.

Table 1 below provides updated forecast data for the number of children due to start Reception each year in the Cowes school place planning area. This demonstrates a

sustained increase in surplus school places with Cowes Primary School forecast to have the greatest percentage of surplus by 2028/29:

Table 1:

School	PAN	Year R Numbers					Surplus	
		24/25	25/26	26/27	27/28	28/29	%24/25	%28/29
Cowes Primary	30	10	14	14	12	12	67%	60%
Gurnard Primary	60	48	51	50	43	45	20%	25%
Northwood Primary School	30	21	21	21	18	19	30%	37%
Lanesend Primary	60	47	42	42	36	38	22%	37%
Area Total	180	126	128	127	109	114	30%	37%
NHS Data - Overall number of children living in area		107	113	111	96	100		

Data source: Summer census 2024

As a result of this significant decline in births the council has reluctantly determined to propose that Cowes Primary School should now close. This decline has been sustained over an extended period and the main factors leading to the closure proposal are low and falling pupil numbers impacting on the School's financial viability and consequent concerns around the ability to sustain a high quality education for pupils.

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 on a low budget.

The School is currently only around half full, with 121 pupils on roll as of October 2024. Pupil numbers in schools on the Island are declining and more significantly currently in the Cowes planning area, where Cowes Primary School is situated. This means that Cowes Primary, along with other schools, has not had enough pupil numbers to fill its classes.

The reduction in its pupil numbers has severely affected the school's budget. Protecting the quality of education has now led to Cowes Primary having financial difficulties. Cowes Primary School is in financial difficulty and currently has a cumulative forecast deficit for the end of the 2024/25 year of just over £300,000. With the average level of funding/expenditure across the Isle of Wight for a primary aged pupil being £4,520; the financial situation at the School means that the forecast deficit is set to increase year on 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 efficiency, the School have identified it would not be able to achieve the scale of saving

necessary without also cutting back even further on staff, which would be unacceptable in terms of the impact on education quality or increasing the school to a 2-form entry school (420 pupils).

With the School's low pupil numbers, it currently organises its pupils in 6 classes, with one mixed aged class with Year 3 and Year 4 combined. Future class structures are not known but it is likely with low numbers further combining of year groups would be required.

In addition, the options for leadership to consistently improve and maintain the quality of education are reduced, which in turn limits opportunities for staff professional development. This further impacts on the educational standards and quality of education for the pupils at the School.

Within the local area there are a total of 369 significant housing developments (20 or more) in area either with planning permission, a resolution to grant planning permission, or under construction (as of 1 November 2024) which could yield approximately 93 primary aged children (aged to 11 years old). This demand for places has been assessed against capacity of school places in the area and at present this number of children could be accommodated within the other three local schools (Gurnard Primary School, Lanesend Primary School and Northwood Primary School).

The local authority has a statutory duty to manage the sufficiency of school places and is not allowed to continue to fund schools that are not financially viable and, after considering the alternative options available, it was determined that it would be necessary to propose for the school to close. This notice should be read in conjunction with the full report and findings presented to Cabinet: [Report.pdf](#); the consultation process and summary of responses are outlined in [Appendix 3 – Proposed closure of Cowes Primary School](#).

Paper copies of this report and appendix can be made available upon request.

Pupil numbers and admissions

The numbers for whom provision is currently made at the school:

Cowes Primary School is a mainstream primary school for pupils aged 4 to 11 years old. Gender of Entry – Mixed. This is not a special school that is reserved for providing to pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND).

The school has a published admission number (PAN) of 30 for each year group, giving a total of 210 places.

There were 121 pupils on roll at the school as of the autumn term in October 2024 (data source: autumn 2024 School Census), all of whom are pupils of mainstream school age with no nursery-aged pupils (see Table 2 below).

Table 2:

Reception	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Total
10	17	21	16	15	28	14	121

Data source: autumn 2024 School Census

Displaced pupils

It is expected that pupils in Year 6 will continue to attend the school until its proposed closure at the end of the academic year 2024-25.

From 1 September 2025, the pupils remaining on roll at Cowes Primary School would be offered a place at Gurnard Primary School. Gurnard is the next nearest primary school and is 1.12 miles away by road. It has capacity to accommodate some of the pupils currently on roll at Cowes Primary School, and working in collaboration with Gurnard Primary School, the LA are exploring various ways to accommodate additional pupils should this be required. This includes considering the provision of temporary accommodation at the Gurnard site and/or utilising the existing Cowes Primary School site. The final decision will be made by the Local Authority in consultation with the Chair of Governors and the Headteacher.

Alternatively, parents/carers who do not wish to take up the offer of a place at Gurnard Primary School will be able to apply for a place at another school with a vacancy, via the Council's in-year application process. Although admission to alternative schools will depend upon vacancies at that time, it is proposed to support families through the process by holding surgeries at the School in April 2025 with admissions officers available to support families in completing in-year applications.

This is a mainstream school, and not a special school that is reserved for providing to pupils with special educational needs and disability (SEND). However, SEND specialists will work with the school to ensure that those children with an education health and care plan (EHCP) will have that EHCP reviewed, and a new school named.

Where a pupil has an EHCP a SEND Officer will liaise with the parent/carer to discuss amending the plan, if it is determined minor or specific changes are required these will be made without the need for a full review. If it is deemed that a review is

required, the SEND Officer will work with the school to arrange this and follow the statutory process in both circumstances parental preference will be secured and consultation with the EHCP will be made.

Table 3 below identifies the number of current vacant spaces within the schools in the planning area. As outlined above should parents wish for their child to have a school place at Gurnard Primary School additional accommodation would be required:

Table 3:

School Name	Direct distance from Cowes Primary School (Miles)**	Reception Spaces	Year 1 Spaces	Year 2 Spaces	Year 3 Spaces	Year 4 Spaces	Year 5 Spaces	Year 6 Spaces*
Gurnard Primary	0.567	12	0	0	0	0	0	0
Northwood Primary	1.666	10	1	5	0	4	0	4
Lanesend Primary	0.627	14	22	8	1	0	0	0
Area Total Spaces		36	23	22	1	4	0	4

Data source: The number on roll was provided from schools on 3/12/2024. Up to date information is reliant upon schools updating School Admissions.

*Year 6 would be entering secondary schools upon 1st September 2025

**The distance between schools is measured direct by the local authority's geographical information system (GIS) from the centre of the building to the centre of the building. Other distance measuring tools will not give exactly the same measurement as they all measure slightly differently.

Mapping of children by postcode demonstrates that 35% of the current Year R to Year 5 cohort have an alternative school closer to their home address. This means that some families are very likely to have several alternative schools within statutory walking distance of their homes (i.e. two miles for children under eight years of age, three miles for pupils aged 8–16).

Current projections for school places indicate that there are enough places for future cohorts in the event of the closure of Cowes Primary School. The local authority would continue to monitor the projected need for future school places and propose changes, if required, to ensure sufficient places are available.

Impact on the community

While the impact on the wider community is an important consideration, the key consideration is to determine whether the proposal to reduce surplus school places and improve the quality of education across the Island is in the best interests of

children who are educated at the school. The council does not underestimate the potential impact of this proposed change on the pupils at the school, whose circumstances may already make them vulnerable. This impact could include:

- Disruption to education
- Emotional and psychological stress
- Social impact
- Logistical challenges for families

We recognise the school serves some disadvantaged families and therefore professional support, from the support services such as the Inclusion Support Service, Schools Mental Health Service and Virtual School, will be put in place to facilitate the movement of those students to local schools and minimise the impact of change upon them.

With regards to wider community services Cowes Primary School currently provides additional services or use of its facilities which are identified below. Through local research it is possible that these services could be relocated to alternative school sites through the hire of their facilities.

Services currently provided:

- Slimming World every Thursday,
- The Isle of Wight Heart Club every Friday
- Isle of Wight Keep Fit Club every Tuesday.
- The school are also the landlords of Blackberry Lane Pre-School and currently provide lunches for Pre-school and they use the hall on a weekly basis.

There is a breakfast club run at the School from 8am each morning and after-school activities for pupils.

The Isle of Wight Council own the land of which the school is located on. A decision on the disposal of the land has not been taken yet and will not be taken until a final decision on the closure is made.

The council considers that allowing surplus places to remain at current through inaction would directly and negatively impact the financial viability of many local schools, which in turn will have an impact on the quality and breadth of the education offered at those schools.

Rural Schools:

Cowes Primary School is not designated a rural school.

Impacts on other schools:

The potential closure of Cowes Primary School could have several impacts on other schools, particularly during the transition period. First, there may be an increase in

children enrolment at nearby schools. These schools will need to adapt quickly to accommodate the arrival of new children, ensuring that class sizes remain manageable and that support services are adequately staffed. Given that the arrival of new children will be accompanied by additional income for the school, because school funding is linked to the number of children there, it is reasonable to assume that these changes are viable.

Additionally, the transition may require enhanced collaboration among schools to share resources and best practices, fostering a sense of community and support. Schools may also need to implement additional programs to help new children integrate smoothly, addressing any social or emotional challenges they might face during this change.

However, as noted in Table 3 above the schools in area has significant surplus capacity within current years Reception, Year 1 and 2. Therefore by reducing surplus places in area this will assist other schools to ensure that full classes are achieved, leading to secure finances and ultimately improved quality of education.

Early Years provision

Cowes Primary School does not provide early years places. However, Blackberry Lane preschool provision is located on the same site. The provider will be offered the opportunity to remain on site.

Table 4 below provides an overview of provision within the planning area:

Table 4

Early Years Provision	Age range	Capacity	Total number of children on roll as of November 2024
Blackberry Lane Preschool	2-4	50	87
Gurnard Preschool	1-4	54	86
Little Ladybirds Nursery & Preschool	1-8	40	67
Little Love Lane Preschool & Nursery	0-3	65	108

Data source:

Early Years Headcount data or communication through email or telephone.

Summary:

- There are currently no concerns around the sufficiency of Early Years places.

- There are currently 87 children that attend Blackberry Lane Pre-school (PVI) which will remain open.
- Within the planning area there are 3 other Private Voluntary Independent providers.

Special educational needs provision

Cowes Primary School does not provide educational provision recognised by the local authority as being reserved for children with special educational needs. There are 121 pupils on roll (October 2024), and of these 19 who have been identified as having special educational needs (SEN support) and 1 pupil with an education health and care plan.

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) would receive tailored support to ensure their educational needs are addressed, especially in the event of a school closure. The local authority is committed to assisting school staff to create individualised transition plans for all children to support a suitable transition, as required.

This may include providing access to specialised resources, and trained staff to facilitate learning. Additionally, the authority would work closely with families to ensure they have the necessary support systems in place, such as counselling services and community programs, to help children transition smoothly. By prioritising these measures, the local authority aims to create an inclusive environment where all children, regardless of their needs, can thrive and succeed.

Where a child has an Education Health Care Plan, and if school closures are agreed, the local authority would listen to the parents' wishes and feelings and individually discuss the statutory process for their child.

Travel

Children would be entitled to local authority funded transport if they are eligible under the Home to School Transport Policy, to what becomes their nearest school if Cowes Primary School closes.

See link for further information: [Home to school transport](#)

Our current data indicates as of October 2024, 3 children on roll of Cowes Primary School could be eligible under the nearest school criteria.

With Gurnard Primary School being only 1.12 miles from Cowes Primary School it is anticipated that pupils will walk or use other sustainable modes of travel to alternative schools in the local area and therefore any impact on road traffic would be minimal.

The council would work with schools who receive children from Cowes Primary School to develop their school travel plans to seek to mitigate against increased car use.

Other environmental considerations have been taken and are detailed within the 'Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere section' (Pg 13) of the Cabinet report:

<https://iow.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s16540/Report.pdf>

Housing data:

Table 5 below identifies the significant housing developments (20 or more) in area either with planning permission, a resolution to grant planning permission, or under construction (as of 1 November 2024):

Table 5

Site	Number of permitted dwellings / dwellings left to construct	Type of approval / site status
Land at and rear of 44 Worsley Road	9	Under construction
Land to the rear of 391 Newport Road, Cowes	66	Outline
Former Somerton Reservoir (P/00356/18)	146	Resolution to grant pp from Planning Committee
Land fronting Place Road, Cowes	17	Under construction
Land served off Cordelia Gardens (Place Road Ph 5) (23/01955/OUT)	100	Resolution to grant pp from Planning Committee
Land to the rear of The Heritage to Shephard's Hay, Tuttons Hill	31	Full

How many School places are required if these developments are built?

To assess the long-term demand arising from a new development, Children's Services use a child yield multiplier and per eligible dwelling (dwellings with two bedrooms or more, excluding those specifically for elderly persons) for Primary Schools (ages 4 to 11) this is x 0.25.

Calculation:

The potential yield of children from these total developments is 92.25 primary aged children (aged 4 to 11 years old).

Total of 369 dwellings in planning area x 0.25 = 92.25

Note. This is calculated based on all dwellings being eligible and this number could reduce.

Within the planning area the schools do not currently have additional building capacity, however surplus places are available to accommodate additional children should the places be required in the future.

In addition, the Gurnard Primary School and Lanesend Primary School sites are large enough to accommodate additional accommodation should expansion be required.

Deprivation:

The local authority acknowledges that the potential closure of a school in the Cowes area could significantly impact some families, particularly those from deprived backgrounds. Recognising the challenges that such families face, the authority is committed to providing comprehensive support to ensure that every child has access to a quality education. This support may include access to transportation, wellbeing support, and additional assistance programs to help families navigate the transition. By prioritising the needs of these families, the local authority aims to foster an inclusive environment where every child can thrive, regardless of the circumstances surrounding school closures.

The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is a measure used in England to assess the level of income deprivation experienced by children in specific areas. It assigns scores ranging from 0 to 1, with higher scores indicating greater deprivation, based on data from sources like tax credits and benefits. IDACI scores help local authorities identify areas in need of support, guiding resource allocation and interventions aimed at improving the living conditions and opportunities for children. This index is crucial for understanding and addressing child poverty at a local level. The banding within this measure is identified under banding areas as defined below:

- **Band A:** Represents the most deprived areas, where a high percentage of children live in low-income households.
- **Band B:** Slightly less deprived than Band A, but still indicates significant income challenges for children.
- **Band C:** Shows moderate levels of deprivation, with a notable proportion of children affected.
- **Band D:** Indicates lower levels of deprivation compared to the previous bands, but still highlights some income-related issues.
- **Band E:** Represents areas with relatively low deprivation, where fewer children are impacted by income poverty.
- **Band F:** Indicates minimal deprivation, with a very small percentage of children living in low-income households.

- **Band G:** The least deprived band, where income deprivation is minimal, and most children are not affected.

The table below identifies the scores for each school within the Cowes planning area:

School Name	NOR	IDACI Proportion Band G	IDACI Proportion Band F	IDACI Proportion Band E	IDACI Proportion Band D	IDACI Proportion Band C	IDACI Proportion Band B	IDACI Proportion Band A
Cowes Primary	148.00	75%	23%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%
Gurnard Primary	419.00	82%	16%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Northwood Primary	195.00	82%	10%	4%	0%	1%	3%	0%
Lanesend Primary	419.00	57%	33%	3%	0%	4%	3%	0%

Data source: The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) authority proforma tool (APT) 2024/25

Staff

A separate staff consultation process, including a meeting for staff and their professional associations and unions, will run in parallel with this consultation on the closure proposal. Staff are also welcome to comment on the proposal as part of this consultation.

Finances

When a school closes mid financial year the budget share is paid up to the closing date to the school. The Local Authority will transfer the remaining budget to the growth fund and support the schools admitting the displaced pupils. The final balance of a closing school, surplus or deficit, reverts to the Council and cannot be transferred to any other school. The final balance of a closing school will be determined following closedown procedure shortly after the closure.

As per the schools November budget submission the school has potential deficit of £454,000 and this would transfer to the Council on the School's last business day, Sunday 31 August 2025.

Consultation

A six-week statutory consultation process under section 16 Education and Inspections Act process was followed from 20th September to 1st November 2024 (4 term-time weeks).

The consultation document was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders across the Island and was available on the Council's website throughout the consultation. Any interested individual or organisation were able to respond to the consultation through an online survey, email, letter and there were also face to face consultation meetings at each school proposed for closure.

Views and feedback on the proposal have been captured, along with alternative options that the Isle of Wight Council welcomed and made a commitment to consider as part of the process.

A public meeting was held at the school on Monday 23rd September 2024.

The responses to the consultation were summarised in the report that was considered by the Cabinet of the Isle of Wight Council on 12 December 2024. The Cabinet report is available [Report.pdf](#); the consultation process and summary of responses are outlined in [Appendix 3 – Proposed closure of Cowes Primary School](#).

Paper copies of this report and appendix can be made available upon request.

Equality Impact Assessment:

Please review the Equality Impact Assessments in the links below which thoroughly examines the impact on individuals with protected characteristics. This assessment ensures that we are compliant with the Equality Act 2010 by considering factors such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, and deprivation. The assessment identifies potential areas of discrimination, promotes equality, and ensures that our decisions do not adversely affect any particular group. It also includes recommendations for mitigating any negative impacts and enhancing positive outcomes for all protected groups.

- <https://www.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/appendix-15-equality-impact-assessment-proposed-closure-of-cowes-primary-school1>
- <https://www.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/appendix-19-equality-impact-assessment-staffing-impacts-of-proposed-primary-school-closures-1-6-1>

Paper copies of this Equality Impact Assessments can be made available upon request.

Procedure for making representations (objections and comments)

A statutory notice will be published in the IW County Press and IW Observer newspapers on 3rd January 2025. The notice will remain in force for a period of 4 weeks i.e. until Monday 3rd February 2025.

On Friday 3rd January 2025 the full proposal information will be sent to the following recipients:

- Parents/Carers of the school
- The Governing Board of the school
- The Diocese of Portsmouth
- Catholic Diocese of Portsmouth
- Local Ward Councillors

- Local Town Council
- The Members of Parliament for the Isle of Wight
- The Secretary of State (schoolorganisation.notifications@education.gov.uk)
- Other support services (Inclusion Team, Mental Health Support Teams, Children's Services employees, etc.)

The public notice and this full proposal are also available on the Isle of Wight Council website: www.iow.gov.uk/schoolplace

Copies of the public notice and this full proposal are also available from the office of the school proposed for closure or can be requested from the council using the email or postal address below.

Within four weeks from the date of publication of this statutory proposal, any person, group or organisation may object to or make comments on the proposal by email or by post.

Closing date for responses is 5pm Monday 3rd February 2025.

By email:

strategic.planning@iow.gov.uk

By post:

School Place Planning
County Hall
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1UD

We will not be able to consider any responses received after 5pm Monday 3rd February 2025.

The website address is: www.iow.gov.uk/schoolplace

Support and translations

If you require any support with the documents or require us to provide any translated copies of this or the full proposal information, send an email to:

strategic.planning@iow.gov.uk