

# Key findings from Economy, Culture & Skills Committee FOI request responses

December 2025

# Information requested by the Committee

---

The following requests were sent to London boroughs:

- The number of primary schools and the number of secondary schools in your local authority that have closed or merged. Please provide this information for each year from academic year 2019-20 to the most recent year available.
  - Where possible, please also provide a list of these schools and the reasons recorded for the closure or merger.
- The number of primary schools and the number of secondary schools in your local authority that are currently planned or formally proposed for closure or merger for the current academic year (2025-26) or later.
  - Where possible, please also provide a list of these schools and the reasons recorded for the planned or proposed closure or merger.

# Background and key summary

---

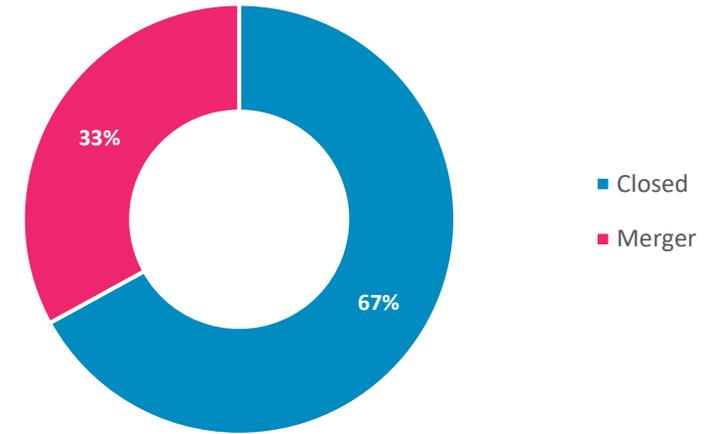
- The FOI requests were sent out on the 7-8 October 2025 via email. Questions were designed by Research Unit staff in consultation with the Economy, Culture and Skills Committee project team.
- The primary purpose of the FOI request was to gather the reasons behind school closures and mergers across London boroughs.
- All 33 London boroughs, including the City of London, were contacted and 31 boroughs responded. Several boroughs provided lists of schools that had closed or merged but did not supply the requested information on the reasons for these changes.
- In total, 100 schools were identified as having either closed or merged since 2018-19 or being proposed for closure or merger from 2025–26 onwards.
- Of the 100 affected schools, 84 were classified as primary or secondary schools, while 16 were classified as “not applicable”.
- Only 5 of the 31 responding boroughs reported no school closures or mergers since 2018–19.

# Key findings

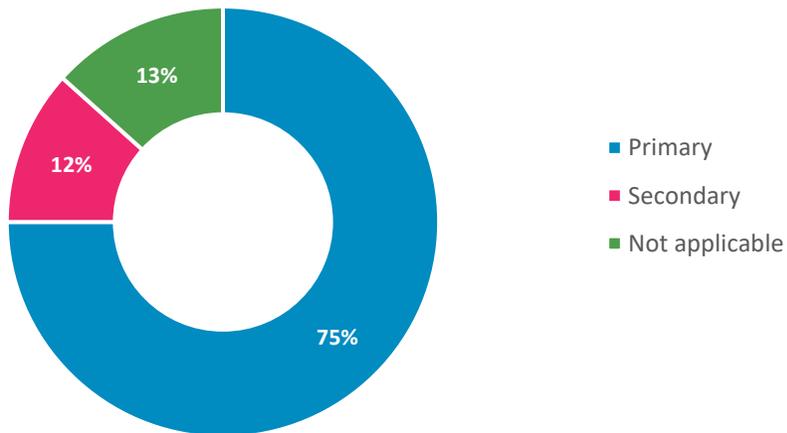
Two thirds (67 per cent) of school changes were full school closures while one third (33 per cent) were mergers. The majority of these changes involved primary schools (75 per cent) with a smaller proportion affecting secondary schools (12 per cent).

There was a fairly even distribution across years, although slightly more school closures or mergers occurred in 2023-24. A total of 13 schools (12%) have closed, merged, or are proposed to close or merge in the current academic year (2025-26).

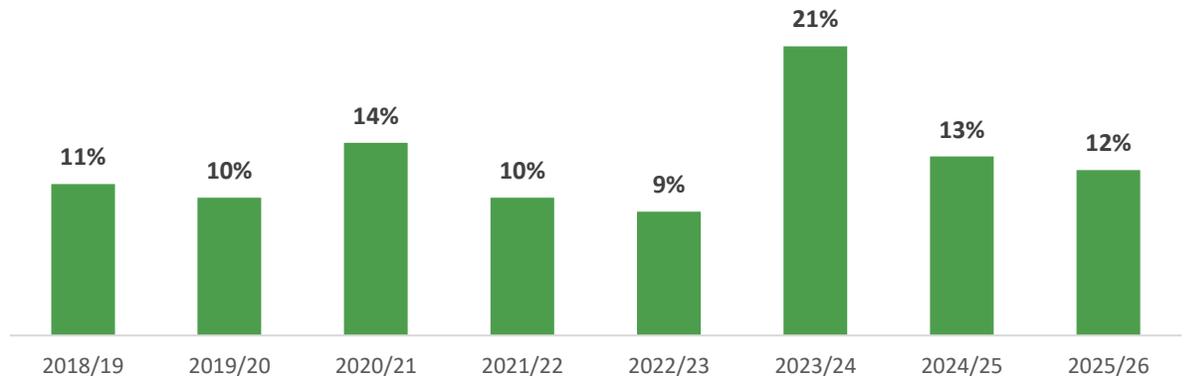
## Event type



## Establishment type



## Year of school closure or merger



These figures are based on 100 schools.

# London borough variation

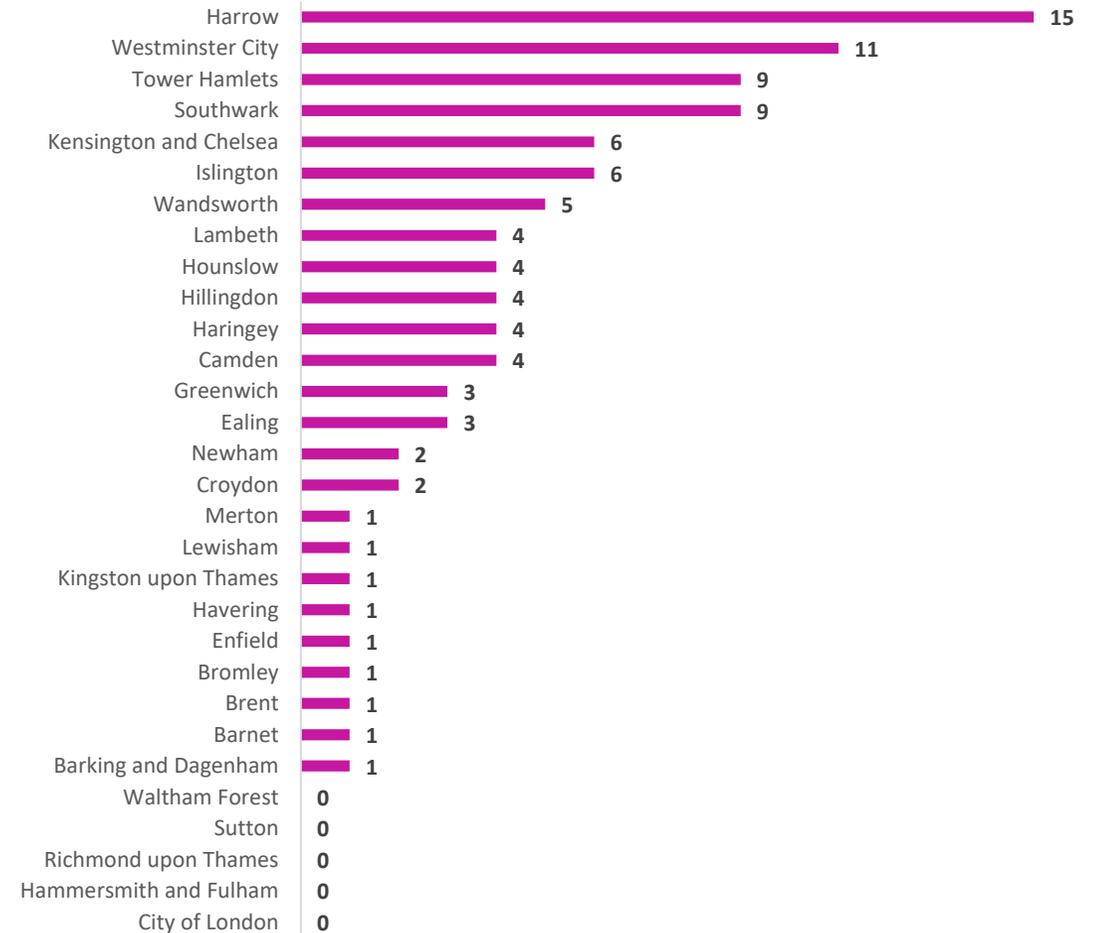
Two thirds (63 per cent) of current or proposed school closures and mergers occurred within Inner London boroughs. The remaining 37 per cent were within Outer London boroughs.

Harrow had the highest number of reported school closures and mergers since 2018-19 at 15, followed by Westminster City at 11. City of London, Hammersmith and Fulham, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton and Waltham Forest all reported having no closures or mergers during this period.

## Proportion of school mergers and closures by area



## Number of school closures and mergers by borough



# Reasons for school closures and mergers

---

Of the reasons provided, the most common cited for the closure or merger of schools within a local authority was “declining pupil numbers” or “unsustainable levels of surplus places”, often leading to financial unsustainability. This reflects a broader trend of demographic shifts in local areas. Two local authorities also linked reduced pupil numbers to schools being unable to deliver a full and balanced curriculum.

There were a considerable number of mergers between infant and junior schools. One local authority explained that this was to follow best practice, utilise economies of scale and to provide better opportunities for staff training and career progression.

Other cases cited issues such as the building being in poor repair, significant capital investment requirements, planning constraints or an unrecoverable budget deficit.

“ The merger was driven by the desire to operate as a single school under one roof, saving resources and improving educational focus by eliminating the drawbacks of running two separate buildings. ”

“ [Closure caused by] 1) Unsuccessful attempts to secure planning permission for a permanent school site.  
2) DfE assessment that there was not a compelling need for a new free school in the local area. ”

“ [Changes are the result of] Falling school enrolment caused by changing local demographics. ”

# Reasons for school closures and mergers cont.

---

“ In 2025 St Bede's Catholic Infant School and St Bernadette's Catholic Junior School amalgamated [...] following best practice of bringing together infant and junior schools to utilise economies of scale, provide a wider curriculum offer and better opportunities for staff training and promotional opportunities. ”

“ The school was no longer seen as viable. There are several reasons contributing to this shared view, chiefly:

- most of the building's estate needed for a viable 11-16 secondary school was unfit for purpose and was in poor repair (these portions of the estate were out of use due to health and safety concerns)
- the pupil roll has fallen consistently over the past several years
- the school budget has been in deficit for several years with the school having significant debt. ”

“ This decision [to close the school] was taken by the Department for Education due to low roll numbers, partly caused by the school's lack of a permanent site, and the financial situation of Chapel Street, the trust which ran the school. ”

“ Clerkenwell Parochial CofE Primary School, closed end of August 2021 – this school was an academy when it closed, so the decision was made by the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Secretary of State. The school closed due to declining pupil numbers and the financial constraints this caused, as schools receive funding based on pupil numbers. ”