# Consultation on the future organisation of Downe Manor Primary School and Viking Primary School: Questions and Answer Document

**Update issued Wednesday 4 November 2026**

Ealing Council is consulting about a range of options for the future organisation of Downe Manor Primary School and Viking Primary School. No decisions have been made about the future of either school. Following the consultation, the council's cabinet will consider the responses before deciding whether to publish a statutory proposal for any changes.

This question and answer document is organised into the following sections:


- Rationale – why is this being considered?
- The process
- Supporting children through change
- Potential implications for pupils at Viking
- Potential implications for pupils at Downe Manor
- Potential implications for the Viking site
- Well-being support and services


## 1. Rationale - why is this being considered?

### 1.1. What is being considered?

The council is considering reducing primary school capacity in Northolt West End ward. This is in response to pupil numbers reducing and being forecast to remain lower than the capacity of the schools. The aim of the process is to give schools the best chance to be educationally and financially sustainable and so serve the community as effectively as possible.

There are several options that the council is considering. The council's current preferred option is to close Viking Primary School and merge with nearby Downe Manor Primary School. This would mean that Viking Primary School would close and its pupils would transfer to Downe Manor Primary School (at its current site on Down Way) at the start of September 2027, and Downe Manor would return to admitting up to 60 pupils in each year group from September 2027.

The preferred option would mean:

- All Downe Manor pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 who are on roll at the end of this academic year would continue to attend Downe Manor;
- All Viking pupils currently in Reception to Year 5 who are on roll at the end of this academic year would automatically transfer to Downe Manor Primary School on 1 September 2027;
- Viking Primary School would close on 31 August 2027; and
- Downe Manor Primary School would remain at its current site on Down Way. It would return to admitting up to 60 pupils a year from September 2027, which the site and building are designed for.

**1.2. Why does the council believe that this is necessary? Why is the preferred option the most suitable?**

- Pupil numbers have reduced and are expected to remain lower – the community does not need as many school places. Viking and Downe Manor have capacity for three classes of pupils each year between them, but only two classes are forecast to be needed.
- Downe Manor has reduced to 1 class a year (from 2) and Viking is also 1 class a year. Both schools are forecasting financial deficits in all future years – over time this impacts the quality of education.

- Most of the funding that schools receive is based on the number of pupils that they have. This means that schools that have reduced in size, or which have empty places, receive less funding. Over time this negatively impacts the quality of education that they can offer – they have less money for staff, resources, equipment, extracurricular activities and to invest in their buildings. In Ealing there are now 13 council-maintained primary schools in overall financial deficit, compared with 6 schools three years ago.
- All current Viking and Downe Manor pupils could fit in the Downe Manor building, which is newer, has better facilities, and is in better condition than the Viking one. The Downe Manor site and building were designed for two classes a year (60 pupils). The Downe Manor building is part of a Private Finance Initiative contract which means that the school has to pay a fixed amount every year towards its maintenance irrespective of how many pupils the school has.
- A single school with up to 60 pupils in each year group is more educationally and financially sustainable than two separate schools each of up to 30 pupils a year (especially when one of those schools can accommodate all of the pupils).
- From October 2026, Downe Manor will be part of a federation (The Northala Federation) with Gifford Primary School. Being part of a federation enables the school to share resources and expertise with another local, popular and larger primary school.

### 1.3. What are the pupil numbers and forecasts?

- There are falling numbers of children in many parts of London. Within Ealing, fewer children being born and living in the local area has resulted in fewer children seeking places in our primary schools. The number of children starting Reception in Ealing has reduced from over 4,600 ten years ago to around 3,700 – a decline of

over 900 pupils (20%). Forecasts suggest that Reception cohorts will remain below 3,900 until at least the end of the 2020s.

- The number of Reception places in the borough has already been reduced by over 600 places, across 18 schools by schools reducing in size. However, the sustained decline in pupil numbers, together with the resulting financial pressures on schools, means that the council may now need to consider a broader range of options to ensure a financially sustainable education system.
- Viking and Downe Manor are part of Greenford, Northolt Perivale (GNP) West primary planning area, which also includes 2 academies (St Raphael's and Alec Reed). The council is not the decision maker for school organisation changes for academies.
- Within this planning area, the number of Reception pupils have reduced by nearly 40%, from a peak of 285 in 2014/15 to 175 in 2025/26. In response, Downe Manor reduced from 60 places a year (2 classes) to 30 places a year (1 class), and St Raphael has reduced from 90 places a year to 60 places a year. Viking offers 30 places a year (1 class). Alec Reed Academy offers 90 places a year in the primary phase (3 classes).
- In total, currently there are 210 Reception places available within the GNP West planning area, with physical capacity for 240+ places. Reception cohorts are forecast to remain below 180 until at least the end of the 2020s.

**1.4. Can the Downe Manor building fit in all of the pupils who attend Downe Manor and Viking?**

- Yes. The Downe Manor building has accommodation for 2 classes per year, and classes must be limited to 30 pupils each until the end of Year 2. The following table shows the number of pupils on roll at each school on 1 October 2026 for the year groups that would still be in primary school in 2027/28.

| Year in 2026/27 | YR | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Year in 2027/28 | Y1 | Y2 | Y3 | Y4 | Y5 | Y6 |
| Downe Manor | 27 | 20 | 26 | 29 | 24 | 43 * |
| Viking | 22 | 29 | 24 | 27 | 19 | 22 |
| Total | 49 | 49 | 50 | 56 | 43 | 65 |

** NB. Downe Manor has 3 classes across year 5 and year 6 currently*

- If the decision was taken to proceed with the preferred option, parents would continue to have the option to apply for their children to attend a different school through the usual in year admission process. There are vacancies at other local primary schools within reasonable walking distance.

### 1.5. What other options are there?

Alternative options are set out in the consultation document, these include:

- **Do nothing:** This would leave both schools in financial difficulty and offers a less secure educational provision for the future.
- **Close Viking Primary School without an amalgamation:** This option would remove one form of entry primary capacity but would not provide the benefits for pupils and families of amalgamation whereby every pupil has certainty of progression to Downe Manor. In this option every family would need to apply for a place at a local school, most probably through the council running a specific admissions process. The potential transfer of pupils to several successor schools would also make pupil transition more complicated and may impact the opportunities for Viking staff to transfer to other local schools. Amalgamation with Downe Manor is expected to provide a more effective transition process and result in a more educationally and financially sustainable school.

- **Close the Downe Manor site:** This would remove the capacity for two classes a year and so removes too many places. This option would also result in financial challenges for the council due to the larger deficit at Downe Manor (which would need to be paid if the school closed) and the contractual requirement to continue paying the Private Finance Initiative costs into the future even if the site was not used as a school. The Viking building would require investment in the future to address some of its aging infrastructure and this would be a financial pressure for the school and council. This option is not considered to be the best use of public funds.
- **Move Viking into Downe Manor and close Downe Manor:** This would result in a single school of up to 60 pupils a year (like the preferred option), but through a more complicated process which does not seem justified. This would also require the council to pay off the Downe Manor deficit which would create a financial challenge for the council.
- **Close both Viking and Downe Manor and establish a new school**: This option would involve establishing a completely new institution, including new governance, admissions and organisational arrangements. The council believes that retaining one school as the continuing school provides greater stability for pupils, families and staff, reduces disruption, and enables the benefits of amalgamation to be achieved through a simpler and more efficient process. This option would also require the council to pay off both the Downe Manor and Viking deficits which would create a financial challenge for the council and is not considered to be the best use of public funds.

**1.6. Does this affect the partnership that Downe Manor has with Gifford Primary School?**

No. Downe Manor is part of a formal partnership with Gifford Primary School, with an Executive Headteacher over both schools. Gifford is a popular, successful large primary school less than 2km from Downe Manor and approximately 1km from Viking. In summer 2026 the governing bodies of Downe Manor and Gifford decided to form a federation (to be called The Northala Federation). The Northala Federation will be formed in October 2026. The formation of the federation would not be affected if the preferred option was implemented. If the preferred option was implemented, Ms Wilson would remain the Executive Headteacher of Gifford and Downe Manor.

**1.7. Are other London boroughs also merging or closing schools?**

Yes. 31 primary schools in 11 boroughs have closed in the last 3 years (September 2024 to September 2026). It is anticipated there will be further mergers or closures across London in the next year or two.

**1.8. What is the advantage of merging Viking into Downe Manor rather than closing Viking without the merger?**

- The preferred option enables all Viking pupils to transfer to a single school (Downe Manor). This enables classmates and friendship groups (including those across school years) to move together to a new school.
- The council believes that this would help pupils and families. All pupils being able to transfer to Downe Manor would enable a managed transition through Viking and Downe Manor working closely together. If some Viking staff also transfer to Downe Manor it would help provide continuity for pupils and families and ensure the needs of pupils are understood at Downe Manor.
- If a school closes without a merger into another, all pupils have to find an alternative school. Pupils transferring to a number of new schools makes it more

difficult to plan an effective transition for those pupils so that the new schools can meet their needs, including pastoral support and understanding what they have or have not learned.

### 1.9. Is Downe Manor a good school?

- Downe Manor was inspected by Ofsted in June 2024 and judged to be 'Good' overall and also received a 'Good' judgement for each of the individual inspection categories. Viking received a 'Good' judgement in a full inspection in 2017 and a short inspection in 2023 confirmed that it continues to be a good school.
- In the 2025 Key Stage 2 assessments for Year 6 pupils of the three schools closest to Viking (in Hillingdon and Ealing borough), Downe Manor had the highest percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standard in reading, writing and maths and the joint highest percentage of pupils who achieved the higher standard in all three areas. Downe Manor also had the highest average reading, maths, and grammar, punctuation and spelling scores.
- Pupil outcomes in the Key Stage 2 assessments for Year 6 pupils at Downe Manor in summer 2026 were above the national average for the percentage of pupils who achieved the expected standard in each of reading, writing, and maths and for those who achieved the expected standard in all three areas.
- The Executive Headteacher of Downe Manor (who joined Downe Manor in September 2025) has been the Headteacher of Gifford Primary School for nearly 10 years. Gifford was judged to be 'Outstanding' in all categories in its last inspection in May 2024, and was also judged 'Outstanding' at its previous inspection in 2013. The partnership between Downe Manor and Gifford became a formal federation in October 2026, meaning that one Governing Body is now responsible for both schools.

Downe Manor, Gifford and Viking are all part of the Ealing Learning Partnership which is a collaboration between Ealing schools and the local council that promotes educational excellence and learner wellbeing through shared leadership, innovation, and school-to-school support.

**1.10. If Downe Manor is already in financial deficit, should it be the school to close? If not all Viking pupils transfer to Downe Manor, would that make Downe Manor's financial position worse?**

- Downe Manor Primary School is in a financial deficit. As a school that was built under the Private Finance Initiative (PFI), an external organisation maintains the site and buildings and employs the site, catering and cleaning staff and services. The school is required to pay a fixed cost for this, irrespective of the number of pupils it has. If Downe Manor Primary School was to close, the council would need to pay off its deficit at the point of closure. In addition, if the school site was to be shut, the council would need to keep paying for the PFI contract until it ends in 2031 even if the site was not being used. The Downe Manor site can accommodate 2 classes a year, whereas the Viking site can only accommodate one class – closing the Downe Manor site would mean that the council may not have enough school places to meet future demand.
- Merging Viking into Downe Manor provides automatic progression for Viking pupils. This is the preferred option because it provides greater certainty for families and pupils. It also enables all pupils to transfer to the same school, which keeps friendship groups together and makes the change easier for children. If most pupils transfer to Downe Manor it enables Viking and Downe Manor staff to plan the smoothest possible transition compared to if pupils transfer to a variety of schools. This applies to the curriculum as well as to personal development and support.

- If families wish their child to join a different school, then Downe Manor would develop its approach and staffing structure to reflect the number of pupils who would transfer to the school.

**1.11. Is the Viking building safe? Were works done at the school in summer 2026 to make it safe?**

The Viking building is safe. All school buildings have surveys to understand the condition of the building and indicate the likely future investment needs. The council undertakes works each year at various schools to repair, maintain, and improve the facilities based on this information – there were works undertaken at Viking in summer 2026 to improve the drainage. The latest Department for Education (DfE) national data rates the Viking site as a grade E (on a scale from A to O where A is the best and O is the worst), and Downe Manor as a B.

**1.12. Could Viking join The Northala Federation that Downe Manor and Gifford are establishing?**

Whether to join a partnership or federation is a decision for the governing body of a school. Downe Manor and Gifford formed a partnership when the previous Downe Manor Headteacher left and so the Gifford Headteacher became Executive Headteacher of Downe Manor as well. The partnership has been in operation since September 2025 and The Northala Federation became live on 13 October 2026. There is now one Governing Body that is responsible for both Downe Manor and Gifford primary schools, and Ms Wilson is the Executive Headteacher of both schools.

**1.13. Could Viking and/or Downe Manor join an academy trust?**

The governing body of a maintained school may apply to join an academy trust (with the agreement of that trust), and the decision would be made by the Department for Education as to whether to allow the conversion.

Downe Manor has an existing financial deficit and both schools are currently forecasting budget pressures and deficits in future years. Any academy trust considering taking on a school would need to satisfy itself that the school is educationally and financially sustainable. The council has not received any proposal from an academy trust to take on either school.

Joining an academy trust would not in itself address the challenges that have led to this consultation. Both schools have surplus places and forecasts indicate that demand is not expected to increase in the medium term. This affects educational and financial sustainability regardless of whether a school is maintained by the local authority or operated by an academy trust. The council's consultation is therefore focused on how best to secure sustainable, high-quality education provision for local children.

## 2. The process

### 2.1. What is the overall process?

The council has to follow a Department for Education process. This involves a consultation about options (which is the current stage). The council would then decide whether to proceed to a legal statutory proposal. The following table sets out the potential overall timetable, but it is subject to change.

| Date | Activity |
|---|---|
| 5 Oct to 13 Nov | **Consultation** (subject to Cabinet Member decision) takes place with families, staff and others affected by the options. |
| 2 Dec | **Decision**: Ealing Council's Cabinet consider the consultation responses and decide upon the next steps. |

| Date | Activity |
|---|---|
| | • If the decision is to proceed (including any modifications that are considered appropriate after the consultation), the next stage would be to publish a statutory proposal.<br>• If the decision is not to proceed, the process would stop. |
| 8 Feb to 8 March | **Statutory Proposal** – this is the publication of specific proposals. Any individual can provide comments on the proposals for a 28-day statutory representation period. |
| 24 March | **Decision**: Ealing Council's Cabinet consider the responses to the statutory proposal and decide whether to implement the proposals or not.<br>• If the decision is to proceed (including any modifications to the proposal that are considered appropriate after the representation period), the proposal would be implemented during April to August<br>• If the decision is not to proceed, the process would stop |
| 31 Aug 2027 | If the Cabinet decision is to proceed, the proposal takes effect. |

### 2.2. Who can respond to the consultation?

Anyone with an interest can respond to the consultation, including (but not limited to) pupils, parents and carers, staff, governors, local residents, community groups, and trade unions.

### 2.3. Who makes the final decision?

Ealing Council's cabinet would make the two key decisions – whether to publish a statutory proposal, and whether to implement that proposal. The cabinet is the council's

main decision-making body, made up of elected councillors with responsibility for different areas of council services. At each stage the council's cabinet can decide to proceed, to end the process, or to change the proposal (and the next steps would then be dependent upon what the change is).

**2.4. Is this a 'done deal'?**

No. The council is following the process set out by the Department for Education. A decision to propose and then implement any changes can only be made by following this process.

**2.5 Will an equalities analysis assessment be completed?**

An initial Equality Analysis Assessment has been undertaken and was appended to the decision to consult. The assessment is necessarily preliminary at this stage and identifies potential equality impacts that will be explored through the consultation process. Consultation responses, together with further equality analysis, will inform the development of the full Equality Analysis Assessment that will be presented to decision makers in December before any decision is made whether to proceed with any statutory proposal.

**2.6 Will the consultation responses be published?**

At the end of the consultation, the council will publish a report setting out the number of responses received and a summary of the views expressed. Individual responses will not normally be published in full because they may contain personal or confidential information. However, every consultation response received will be reviewed and considered as part of the decision-making process, and the full responses will be made available to decision-makers alongside a summary report.

**2.7. Why does the process take so long? It creates a long period of uncertainty for the school, for staff and for families?**

The council has to follow a process that is set out by the Department for Education, which requires a public consultation about options (including a preferred option if there is one), and then – if the council decides to proceed with formally proposing a change – a statutory representation period. These two periods of consultation are expected to take place during term time. Ealing Council's governance processes require that the decision to publish proposals about closure of a school and then make the decision about whether to close the school after the statutory representation period are made by the Cabinet of senior politicians. When all of this is timetabled together, it means that it takes at least a term and a half to go through the process from start to finish.

It is recognised that this process creates a long period of uncertainty, and the council regrets the anxiety that this causes. London Council's (which represents all London boroughs) recently published a report that recommended that the Department for Education reviews this process to have one stage of consultation so that decisions can be made sooner and the period of uncertainty be shorter (the report is available here).

**2.8. Is there any scenario in which the council could seek to close Viking earlier than summer 2027?**

No.

## 3. Supporting children through change

**3.1. How can parents and carers support children through uncertainty and change?**

Periods of uncertainty can be unsettling for children as they often thrive on routine and predictability. Guidance and reassurance from parents and carers helps children feel

secure and supported. Here are some suggestions for supporting children through this process.

- There are no 'good' or 'bad' feelings: Encourage children to share their feelings. Reassure them that their emotions are valid.
- Give honest and age-appropriate advice: Explain the situation simply, focus on the present and avoid assumptions about the future. Highlight that change can be uncertain and challenging, but it can also bring new opportunities and experiences.
- Keep routines and stability: A consistent schedule, like family meals and bedtime routines, help provide stability during times of uncertainty.
- Encourage healthy emotional outlets: Activities like drawing or storytelling can help children process their feelings, and reading together can provide an opportunity for children to express emotions and understand change through characters in the book.

### 3.2. How can parents and carers be prepared for the potential change?

As well as supporting your child or children, the options may represent a change for parents and carers. To help yourself and your child or children, you may find the following helpful:

- Stay informed: Keep up to date with the communications about the options and the process and, if changes proceed, about transition arrangements. Understand how the schools are working together to support pupils through the changes.
- Engage in events: Take part in the activities and events that are part of the consultation and transition so we can hear your views, including Viking parents and carers taking the opportunities to visit Downe Manor.
- Encourage kindness and empathy: Everyone at both school communities is going through an uncertain period, and empathy and kindness help pupils, parents and

carers, and staff support each other. Small gestures of friendliness can make a big difference.

- Talk about / read books about transition with your child or children: age-appropriate books about change or starting something new can be a good way to start conversations with your child.

## 4. Potential implications – for pupils at Viking

### 4.1. Where would pupils go to school if Viking does close and merge into Downe Manor?

- Year 6 pupils would apply for a Year 7 place at high schools by 31 October 2026 as usual. They would then receive their offer on 1 March 2027 and transfer to high school in September 2027.
- All Reception to Y5 pupils on roll at Viking at the end of the 2026-27 academic year would automatically transfer to Downe Manor in September 2027.
- The Headteachers, supported by Ealing Council, would work together to make transition as smooth as possible.

### 4.2. We have a child due to start Reception in September 2027 – what happens to them? Which schools should we apply to?

- For children due to join Reception in September 2027
    a. Applications have to be submitted by 15 January 2027;
    b. Families would be able to state a preference for Viking and Downe Manor as one of their choices because at that stage there would have been no decision about the future;
    c. If the decision is to proceed with the preferred option and the decision is made at the Ealing Council Cabinet meeting in March 2027:

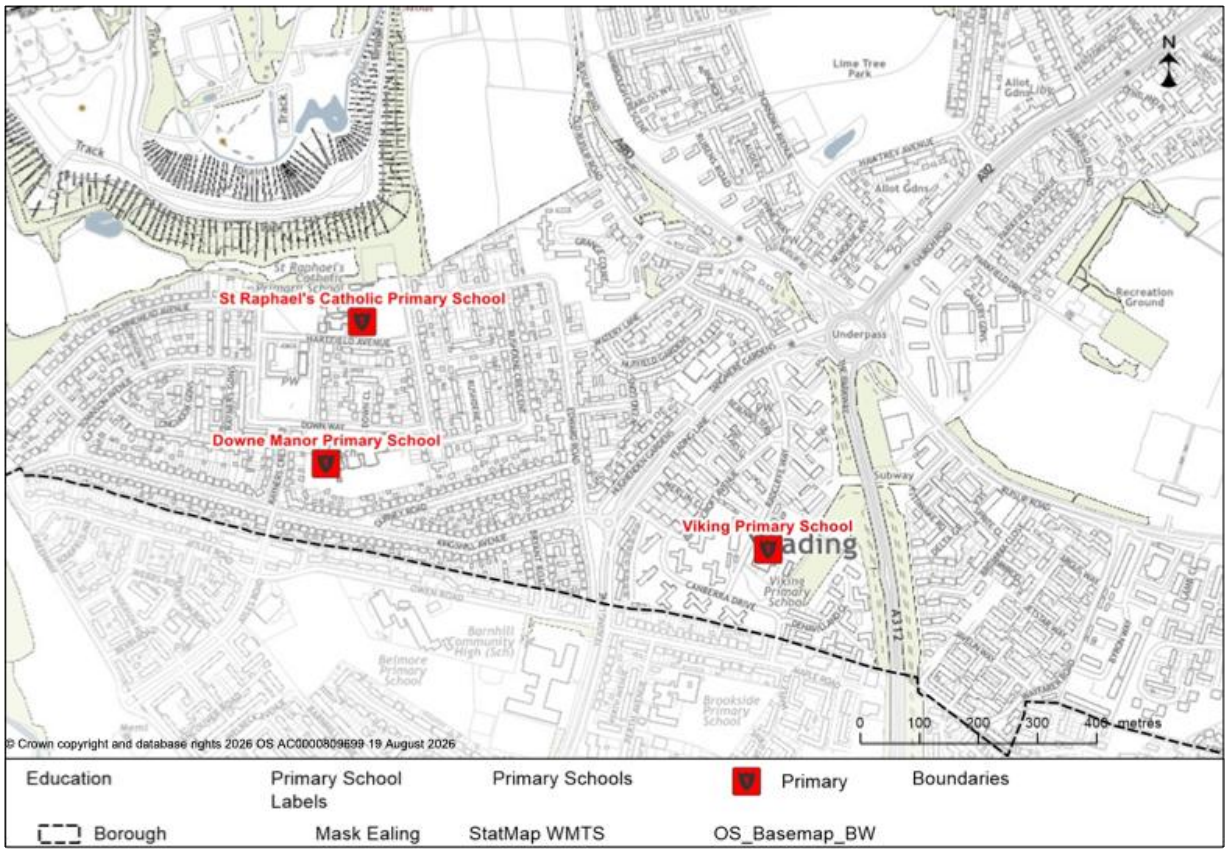
i. All 2027 reception applicants with a sibling at Viking would receive a sibling link for Downe Manor. A sibling link is an admissions oversubscription criterion that gives higher priority to a child if they have a sibling already attending the school.

ii. All preferences for Viking in the applications for September 2027 entry would be withdrawn as the decision would have been taken to close the school.

- For children due to join Nursery in September 2027, families would be able to seek a place at Downe Manor or another provider.
- If you have any questions about September 2027 reception admissions please contact the school admissions service by email (mainroundadmissions@ealing.gov.uk) or telephone 020 8825 5511 (opening hours: 9am to midday).

**4.3. If the preferred option was implemented, would Viking pupils be expected to walk to Downe Manor given that it's further and involves crossing Yeading Lane?**

- It is less than a mile by road from Viking to Downe Manor (700m in a straight line), with crossings over Yeading Lane. Around 85% of current pupils at Viking live within a mile of the Downe Manor site. If there are suggestions for improvements to the walking route then the council's transport team can investigate those.
- Downe Manor would be able to establish a walking bus from close to Viking if the preferred option was implemented to enable children to be escorted on their walk to Downe Manor.




### 4.4. Do I need to move my child or children to another school?

- Every child in Reception to Year 5 at Viking who is on roll at the end of this academic year would automatically transfer to Downe Manor in September 2027 if the preferred option is implemented. There is no need to move children to another school.
- As now, parents are able to apply in-year for places at other schools if there are vacancies. A small number of families have done this since the decision to consult was taken, although the vast majority of children remain on roll at Viking.
- If the decision in spring 2027 is to proceed with the preferred option and you did not want your child to attend Downe Manor you would be able to apply for a place at a different school.

- If you have any questions about in year admissions please contact the school admissions service by email (in-yearadmissions@ealing.gov.uk) or telephone 020 8825 5511 (opening hours: 9am to midday). For pupils with an Education Health and care Plan (EHCP), the contact details would be SENAS@ealing.gov.uk 020 8825 6910 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 1pm).

**4.5. Would we have to buy a Downe Manor uniform?**

- The Viking and Downe Manor school uniforms are similar – grey trousers / skirt, white polo shirt, school jumper. For pupils who transfer from Viking (i.e. currently in Reception to Year 5) to Downe Manor, there would be support available to ensure that they have the branded parts of the Downe Manor uniform.
- All pupils who join Downe Manor in Reception in September 2027 would need to have Downe Manor uniform, provided by their families.

**4.6. What time does Downe Manor start and finish each day?**

Class doors open at 8:45am, with Registration at 8:55 by which time all pupils must be in the classroom. The school day ends at 3:15.

**4.7. Does Downe Manor have breakfast and afterschool provision? And a forest school?**

- Breakfast club is available from 7:30am each day.
- There are after school activity clubs.
- Downe Manor does have a forest school.

**4.8. Can the Downe Manor building fit all of the pupils from Downe Manor and Viking in?**

Yes. The Downe Manor building has sufficient space for 2 classes in each year group – which is the current size of Downe Manor and Viking combined.

**4.9. Who would teach Viking pupils if staff leave during this year?**

- If the preferred option was implemented, Downe Manor would require additional staff to teach and support the pupils who move from Viking. If Viking staff transfer to Downe Manor that would provide continuity for pupils and families and bring Viking expertise into Downe Manor.
- Downe Manor would seek to provide conditional offers of employment as early as possible so that staff know that they have future roles and so do not need to apply for other jobs. The council and schools share a desire to get to this point as soon as possible to give certainty for families and for staff.
- If staff do leave mid-year (and this does happen in schools), Downe Manor would work as closely as possible with Viking to support staff arrangements for the rest of the academic year.

**4.10. If children transfer to Downe Manor, would they still be in a class with their friends? Would we have the same teacher?**

Downe Manor would ask for information about who your child would particularly like to be with to ensure that children are with some of their friends, but the classes and their teachers would not be confirmed until towards the end of 2026/27 academic year (as is normal in schools with more than one class in each year group where classes are sometimes changed before a new school year).

**4.11. How would Downe Manor know what our children have or have not learned so far?**

- There would be close collaboration this year between Viking and Downe Manor staff, and also careful planning for next year.
- If Viking staff join Downe Manor there would be a pooling of knowledge and expertise to support pupils from both current schools.

**4.12. My child has additional needs – how would Downe Manor be able to support them effectively?**

- Both schools successfully support pupils with a range of additional needs, as all mainstream schools do.
- There would be a carefully planned transition for pupils moving to Downe Manor, which would include sharing information regarding any additional needs that pupils have. This applies regarding any pupil, including (but not limited to) those with Education, Health and Care Plans.
- This would be enhanced by the knowledge brought by those Viking staff who join Downe Manor.

**4.13. Can we visit Downe Manor?**

Visits for Viking parents and carers to Downe Manor have already taken place. Further visits will be arranged. Parents and carers are also welcome to contact Downe Manor directly if they wish to visit.

**4.14. If I live nearer to another school than I do to Downe Manor, but this nearer school is over-subscribed, would I get priority over pupils on the waiting list if I needed a new school place because Viking closed?**

No. School admissions law requires that if a space becomes available at a school that has a waiting list for that year group, places are prioritised according to the over-subscription criteria. There is no ability to give priority to a pupil as a result of a school closure, the pupil would need to apply and join on the waiting list and would only be offered a place if one became available and they were at the top of the waiting list.

**4.15. My child is in Year 5 at Viking. If the school closed, it would mean that my child would move to another school for Year 6, and then move again for Year 7. How would transition be managed to minimise the impact of this 'double change'?**

If Viking was to close, all Viking pupils would be able to transfer to Downe Manor. The more pupils that transfer to Downe Manor, the greater the potential for friendship and class groups to transfer together, and the greater the potential for Viking staff to secure roles at Downe Manor, all of which would help an effective pupil transition.

The transition process into Year 7 at high school would then be managed in the normal way, and each secondary school has its own process for engaging with primary schools and for preparing pupils for joining the school.

**4.16. Have pupils left Viking since the preferred option became public?**

The preferred option includes a guaranteed place at Downe Manor, and so families do not need to seek alternative school places. All parents at all schools, however, have an ongoing right to apply for a place at another school, and if that school has spaces it is legally required to admit the child. Some families have chosen to transfer their children to other schools since it became public that the council was considering the closure of Viking (approximately 25 pupils by mid October).

**4.17. Could my child end up without a school place?**

No, all children on roll at Viking would be guaranteed a place at Downe Manor.

## 5. Potential Implications – for pupils at Downe Manor

### 5.1. If there is a second class, would pupils from both schools be mixed together? Or would it be a Viking class and a Downe Manor class at least to begin with?

It is too early to say how classes would be arranged for 2027/28. It would be affected by how many pupils transfer from Viking in each year group. If there are changes to classes, staff know the pupils well and would ensure that children are with some of their friends.

### 5.2. If only some Viking pupils come, could a class have two year groups in it (i.e. some Year 2 pupils and some Year 3 pupils) rather than just being for one year group?

If a significant number of Viking pupils were to choose to go to different schools rather than Downe Manor, it may mean that Downe Manor would need to consider whether to have some mixed age classes. Such classes are standard in schools that admit 15 or 45 pupils a year and are increasingly common in London as pupil numbers drop and schools now have, for example, 45 children per year when they previously had 60.

## 6. Potential Implications – for the Viking site

### 6.1. What would happen to the Viking site if the school closes?

The council would need to determine a future use for the site. As the site has been used as a school, Department for Education permission would be required for any change of usage. The council would welcome views about what the site could be used for.

### 6.2. Would the community centre on the Viking site remain open?

Any decisions about the future management of the community centre would be considered separately from decisions about Viking Primary School. The council's intention is that community activities and services continue.

### 6.3. What happens to the community centre if Viking closes?

The community centre is not part of this consultation. The council's intention is that community activities and services continue, and any decisions about the future management of the centre will be considered separately.

### 6.4. What's going on at the community centre? Why isn't the community centre open?

Following a recent marketing exercise, a preferred tenant has been identified. The proposed tenant has a proven track record in managing and maintaining community centres, operating hireable spaces, and supporting the use of facilities by third-party organisations. The council are hopeful that the new tenant will be in place shortly. Any updates regarding the community centre will be communicated separately from the school consultation.

### 6.5. Have you taken into account of the impact on general community safety issues in the area if the school closes?

If a decision was taken to close the school, the council would work with relevant services to ensure that the site is managed responsibly. This would include considering measures to maintain site security and minimise the risk of anti-social behaviour or unauthorised access.

### 6.6. Why are you still spending money on Viking site?

- The council and the school have a responsibility to ensure that the site remains safe, operational and compliant with statutory requirements while it continues to be in use. At this stage no decision has been made about the future of the school.
- Delaying essential maintenance could create health and safety risks, lead to higher costs in the future and / or disrupt the school's day-to-day activities.
- Undertaking such works does not predetermine the outcome of the consultation or any future decision regarding the school.

### 6.7. If Viking closed, could equipment from Viking be reused? For instance, could playground equipment be moved to the adjacent park that local families use?

If a decision was taken to close the school, the equipment within the school could potentially become available for reuse. Schools would generally have first option to retain its use within education, but other uses could then be investigated.

## 7. Wellbeing support and services

### 7.1. Who should I contact if I have concerns about my child's well-being?

If you have concerns about your child's emotional well-being through this process, reach out to their school for support. Schools can provide guidance or direct you to appropriate services.

External services that provide information and support that parents could contact include:

- ParentKind – offers information and webinars about a wide range of topics: www.parentkind.org.uk
- Young Minds – expert advice for parents concerned about their child's mental health. Phone: 0808 802 5544 (Mon to Fri, 8:30am to 4pm); www.youngminds.org.uk/parent

### 7.2. What support is available to parents and carers?

It is important to take care of your emotional health during this process. When parents and carers feel supported, it helps you provide stability and reassurance for your children.

You can:

- Recognise your own emotions and give yourself time to process them;
- Seek support from trusted friends, family or professionals if needed;
- Take part in activities that help you to relax.