

# Consultation Analysis

on the proposed amalgamation of  
St Michael's C of E Infant School and  
Newdigate C of E Infant School

February 2026



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## Proposal to amalgamate St Michael's CE Infant School and Newdigate CE Infant School

### Introduction

Surrey County Council published a consultation from 2 February 2026 to 6 March 2026.

This report is an analysis of responses gathered on the proposal to amalgamate St Michael's CE Infant School and Newdigate CE Infant School during this 5-week period.

### Consultation Summary

The aim of the consultation was to seek views on the proposal from all interested parties, particularly from pupils and their families who attend St Michael's CE Infant School, pupils and their families who may attend the school in the future, staff members at either St Michael's CE Infant School or Newdigate CE Infant School, pupils and their families who attend Newdigate CE Infant School, local schools and the local community.

The consultation was open from 2 February 2026 to 6 March 2026. The associated documentation was published on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website, circulated by the schools to the school communities and circulated to stakeholders, including dioceses, councillors and MPs. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or by email or post.

Three public meetings were held on 10 February 2026, as follows:

<b>9.30am</b>	Newdigate C of E Infant School
<b>2pm</b>	St Michael's C of E Infant School
<b>7pm</b>	St Michael's C of E Infant School

A summary of the meetings, along with questions and answers, is available on the Surrey County Council 'Surrey Says' website.

### Key points from the consultation responses:

- There were **188** responses to the consultation.
- In response to the question 'Do you support the proposal to amalgamate St Michael's CofE Aided Infant School and Newdigate CofE Endowed Aided Infant School?' **89%** do not support the proposal.
- **36%** of online respondents indicated they are a resident living close/adjacent to St Michael's CE Infant School.

# Consultation Analysis

## Quantitative Analysis

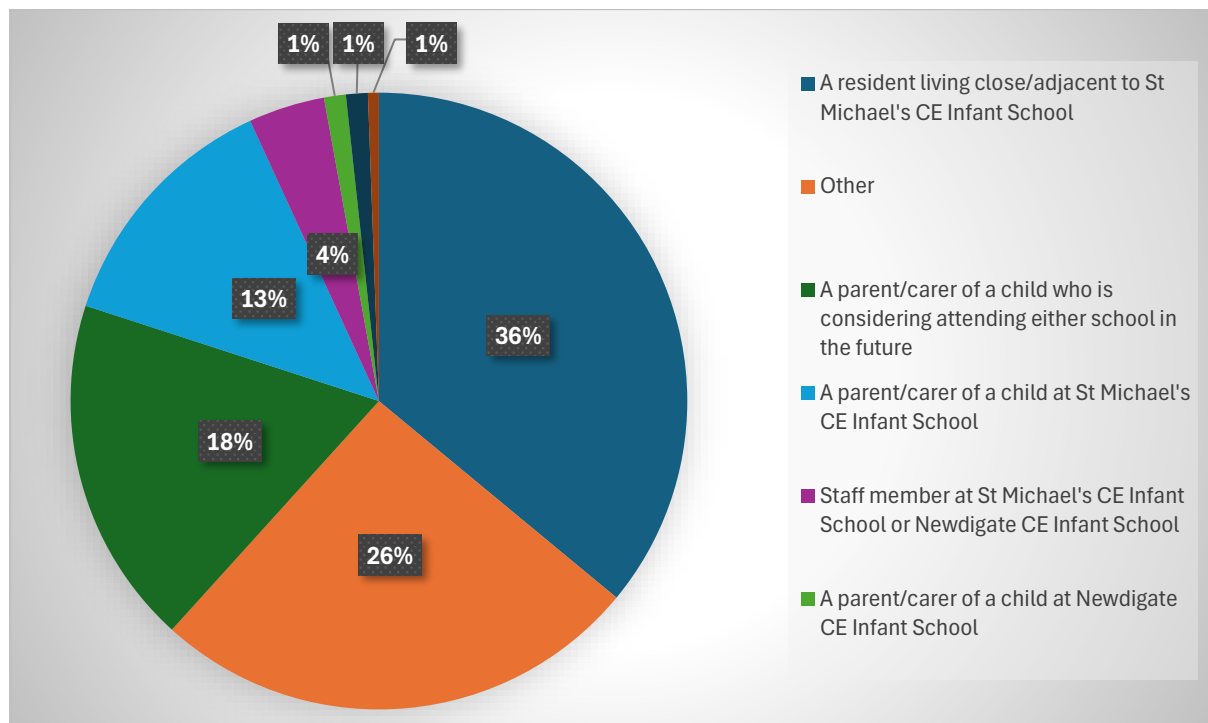
In total, there were **188** responses to the consultation, 175 were provided online via 'Surrey Says' and 13 were submitted separately to Education Place Planning. The responses to the consultation are:

**169 (90%)** respondents do not support the proposal

**10 (5%)** respondents support the proposal

**9 (5%)** respondents stated they were unsure.

The **175** online respondents indicated their relationship with the school. The chart below shows the distribution of those respondents to the consultation.



## Percentage who supported/did not support/were unsure by individual groups

Relationship to School	Do not support	Support	Unsure	% of Respondents
A resident living close/adjacent to St Michael's CE Infant School	59	1	3	36%
Other	39	3	3	26%
A parent/carer of a child who is considering attending either school in the future	28	3	1	18%
A parent/carer of a child at St Michael's CE Infant School	22	1	0	13%
Staff member at St Michael's CE Infant School or Newdigate CE Infant School	4	2	1	4%
A parent/carer of a child at Newdigate CE Infant School	2	0	0	1%
A Governor at Mole Valley Gateway CofE Schools Federation	1	0	0	1%
Any local government elected member or partner agencies	1	0	1	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>175</b>

## Qualitative Analysis

Respondents had the opportunity to add comments at the end of the survey. Out of the 189 responses received, 147 comments were made on the proposal. These comments were broadly themed and separated into 15 possible tags. Each response could have more than one tag attached. The overall frequency of each of the tags provides an indicator of respondent's main concerns regarding the proposal.

Sub theme	Tag	Number of responses	Prevalence (% out of 147 responses)
Negative	Reputation of the school	55	37%
	Importance of the school to the community	54	37%
	Displeased with Newdigate as the offered school	37	25%
	Benefits of a smaller school	31	21%
	Feeling of premature closure	29	20%
	Forthcoming housing developments/higher demand in future	25	17%
	Failure to raise awareness and profile of the school in the wider area	19	13%
	Benefits to children with SEN	17	12%
	Loss of a flexi-schooling option	12	8%
	Importance of a CofE school/lack of alternative local faith-based schools	7	5%
	Unsettling for the children on roll	7	5%
	Concern regarding the future of the building	4	3%
Positive	Fewer children on roll/living in the local area	20	14%
	Lack of viability of the school	5	3%
Questions, Ideas & Innovations		4	3%

## Key themes from the consultation

### Negative

Respondents identified several potentially negative impacts of the proposals, many expressed sadness and disappointment at the proposal, describing the school as *“the lifeblood of the village”* and a *“pocket of pure joy”*.

### Reputation of the school

37% of responses praised the school reputationally, with many drawing from their own experiences attending, one highlighting the *“ethos and history of the school”* and another describing it as a *“wonderful school”*. One respondent stated the *“the quality of what is being offered at St Michael’s is outstanding”*, with another praising it for being a *“perfect school for nurturing children”*. A respondent referenced the school’s *“educational foundation and work ethic”*, and another stated it provides a *“wonderful start for children with its nurturing and caring environment”*.

*“St. Michael's, Mickleham has retained a high reputation over many years”*

*“The school has been standing since 1922 and is very much part of the village of Mickleham and the community”*

*“St Michael's is a fantastic local asset”*

### **Importance of the school to the community**

37% of responses stressed how vital the school is to the community of Mickleham, one described it as *“a staple of the community”* and another hailing it as *“an anchor of the community”*. One respondent stated *“the community will never recover”* should the school be closed, with another placing the school *“at the centre of the next generation of Mickleham”*. Some respondents highlighted the well-established link between the school, community, and local church, with one stating the school *“contributes to so many aspects of a small rural community”* and another pointing to the school's contributions *“to community events including Village Fetes, Shoe Boxes for Eastern Europe and singing at community lunches arranged by the church”*.

*“It is so important for a young child to go to school in their own community”*

*“Destroying a sense of community and taking away children's right to be educated [...] locally”*

*“We loved how connected St Michael's was to the community in and around Mickleham”*

### **Displeased with Newdigate CE as the offered school**

25% of responses voiced frustration at the offer of a place at Newdigate CE, should the proposal be agreed, with one stating *“an amalgamation between these 2 schools makes no sense”* and another describing the situation as *“unthinkable”*. The distance between the two schools was a recurring comment, with many arguing *“no direct public transport”* therefore makes Newdigate *“impractical in terms of distance and time spent for our children to have to travel”*. Several comments referenced the environmental impact of children travelling further to attend Newdigate CE, and that doing so is *“not environmentally friendly”*.

*“Newdigate is over 8 miles away”*

*“Newdigate is not something I would consider”*

*“Consideration should also be given to parent travel time to add the care of the child”*

### **Benefits of a smaller school**

21% of responses highlighted benefits to a smaller school environment, especially at Key Stage 1, with one respondent referencing the *“wonderful start”* their child had made, *“academically but also personally”* and confidently asserting that the *“smaller size of the school has contributed”*. Respondents felt *“Small classes should be encouraged”* and St Michael's is *“great for kids who don't like busy urban noisy”*

*schools*". Many comments stated they chose St Michael's "because it was small and nurturing" and that a larger, more conventional class size "doesn't work for a lot of children". Similarly, one respondent felt St Michael's is "ground breaking when it comes to provision for those children who may struggle in an ordinary school setting".

*"A small nurturing school [...] can prevent these children needing more expensive specialist provisions"*

*"Smaller classes will mean better progress for more children"*

*"Putting our children in larger and crammed schools is a significant risk to their learning, health and wellbeing"*

### **Feeling of premature closure**

20% of responses felt the proposed closure felt too premature, that the school needed "a little more time", and decision-making had been "rushed through". One respondent is confident that there is "there is a bright future for St. Michaels if it is just given more time to secure additional children" and another stated "all other options must be considered first". Several responses referenced the advertising and marketing conducted by the school, claiming the school has not been "given enough time to see the results of increased awareness from the surrounding areas" while another felt "the consultation period should be extended to allow parents and the community to look at all possible options".

*"A community that has previously supported The School feels that it has not being given adequate time to act"*

*"We can direct children and families towards our wonderful school"*

*"If promoted well and if they drop the part time offering which I think puts people off then they could increase take up"*

### **Forthcoming housing developments and potential future demand**

17% of responses made reference to "an influx of housing" in the Mickleham area, along with the possibility of increased birth rates due to "more young families moving to the area". One respondent stated we must consider "a low birth rate because of Covid" and another that "there has been a local generational shift" and "many young families now moving to the area" will see heightened demand in the future. One respondent mentioned "large numbers of family homes being built in Headley [...] plus other developments in Langley Vale, Boxhill, Leatherhead and Ashted" and asserted that in light of this, any decision regarding the future of the school would be "short-sighted".

*"There is a new housing development in Headley Court and surely these children will need a school to attend"*

*"The current low level of entrants may well be only temporary"*

*"There are houses being built locally and birth rate is rising"*

## **Failure to raise awareness and profile of the school in the wider area**

13% of responses felt there had been a failure to raise awareness both in terms of the profile of the school, with one respondent asserting *“there has been a lack of effective advertising for the school”*, and in alerting the wider community to the plight, with one stating *“I was unaware of the dire straits the school was in”*. Respondents felt *“SCC and St Michaels school should have reached out to the community”* and one claimed *“it was easier and more economic to let it fail”*. One felt the school needed to be more proactive and vocal, asking *“why weren’t the school shouting louder about it 5 yrs ago”*.

*“I believe that more creative options can be identified”*

*“More could be made of the facilities in a commercial context”*

*“The school is hidden and the website needs updating”*

## **Benefits to children with SEN**

12% of responses raised concerns for children with additional needs, feeling there would be detrimental impact to those on roll at St Michael’s CE, one respondent stated *“this is how children get lost in the system”*. Respondents referenced the smaller class sizes at St Michael’s CE as *“some children benefit from a very small and calm environment”*, one specifically expressed their concern that *“if the school closed my child will likely not go to school”* and, due to their inability to *“cope in a full class of children”* they would *“suffer day in day out because support for send families are next to none”*. One respondent praised St Michael’s CE as a *“lovely, nurturing school, particularly in their SEN provision”*, and another stated *“students with SEN are currently supported wonderfully in this school”*.

*“Another blow to the already dire level of SEND support in the area”*

*“Smaller classes, ensure that needs can be met to also allow the children to be educated in a mainstream setting”*

## **Loss of a flexi-schooling option**

8% of responses referenced the flexi-schooling provided by the school, a hybrid form of learning, whereby pupils are Electively Home Educated for part of the week but also attend St Michael’s CE on other days. One respondent felt the flexi-schooling option *“puts people off”* but many other respondents were very complimentary, one describing it as a *“brilliant idea”* and another stating *“the possibility of flexi-schooling [...] would allow me to tailor my child’s education so they can more fully flourish”*. One respondent referenced the flexi-schooling as one of many factors which provide the school with *“a unique offer”*, and another believes it is a *“revolutionary way of schooling”*.

*“Flexi-schooling [...] for us as a family has been the perfect solution”*

*“As a prospective parent the removal of a flexi-school option [...] means we are most likely going to opt for home education”*

## **Importance of a CofE school/lack of alternative local faith-based schools**

4% of responses stressed the importance of faith schools, and expressed concern at the lack of alternative local options. One respondent stated *“a rural Church of England school offers unique opportunities”*, and that St Michael’s CE’s *“Christian ethos has enabled a nurturing, caring and inclusive learning environment”*. Other respondents described the proposal as an *“assault on Christian schools”*, and claimed *“parental choice regarding faith-based education is being removed”*. Respondents also pointed to St Michael’s CE being *“the only Church of England school covering Leatherhead, Headley, Fetcham, Boxhill & Effingham”*.

*“Being faith based and its location are important considerations”*

*“Are SCC aware that this school is the only CofE infant school in the area?”*

## **Unsettling for the children on roll**

5% of responses expressed concern for those children on roll at St Michael’s CE, with one stating *“it’s a terrible idea to uproot them”* and another that any closure would *“have a detrimental effect on young children at the start of their learning”*. With regards to Newdigate CE as the offered school, one respondent stated it is *“not a practical proposition”* and would be *“a significant change for pupils used to St Michaels”*. Similarly, respondents felt it would not be prudent to move children to an alternative infant school only to then *“have to move at age 7”*.

*“These children have just started their school life and are at a critical stage in their development”*

*“There is no consideration for the impact that a school move will have on the current cohort of children”*

## **Concern regarding the future of the building**

3% of responses related to the future of the school site, were St Michael’s CE to close. Several respondents were particularly concerned the building would be *“turned into flats or housing”* and asked if those responsible are *“planning to convert this school into flats”*. One respondent requested that, in the event of a closure, *“the buildings are thoroughly maintained until a new use is found”*.

## **Positive**

Respondents also identified some potentially positive impacts on the proposal, with one describing it as *“a brave and sensible action to take given the demographic decrease”*.

### **Fewer children on roll/living in the local area**

14% of comments made reference to the falling birth rate, and lack of children in the local area, with one expressing their belief that *“the school struggles because of a lack of young families in the immediate area”*. Respondents stated they *“have seen numbers dwindle”* and that such challenges are *“not only happening in our location but countrywide”*.

*“I understand the challenges of the declining birthrate”*

*“We have been greatly saddened at the drop in numbers”*

### **Lack of viability of the school**

3% of comments centred around the school’s viability, one respondent asserted *“such a small amount of pupils doesn’t provide a good educational experience”*, another gave their opinion stating *“I don’t feel that children get the best education and opportunities in such a small school”* with the low numbers meaning *“their social interactions are limited”*.

*“Want Infant School to remain if at all possible but recognise it needs to be viable”*

*“It hasn’t been viable to keep the school open for several years”*

## Questions, Ideas & Innovations

3% of responses were a mixture of questions and proposals regarding the sustainment of the school's viability. These are detailed below, along with responses:

	<b>Submission</b>	<b>Answer</b>
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Newdigate CE also has low numbers, if St Michael's CE is closed, they will no longer be federated – what is being put in place to ensure their long-term future?</b></p>	<p>Newdigate CE is also a 1FE infant school. Despite not being full, Newdigate CE has significantly fewer vacancies and school leadership are implementing strategies for them specifically, regardless of whether the amalgamation was to proceed.</p> <p>The respondent also pointed to Newdigate CE's ability to enable the newly amalgamated school to accommodate all children without there being more than 30 in any one class, whilst there are sufficient vacancies, this is more reflective of the falling numbers on roll at St Michael's CE.</p>
<p><b>Proposals submitted on behalf of the Parents and Community Action Group</b></p>		
<b>2</b>	<p><b>Proposal for improved school transport access</b>  <i>This document set out a community-led proposal to improve access to school transport for pupils attending St Michael's CE. It proposes that Surrey County Council formally recognise transport access as a material factor in attendance, SEND inclusion, and child wellbeing when considering the sustainability of the school.</i></p>	<p>Surrey County Council recognises that safe and reliable travel to school can play an important role in enabling pupils to access education, particularly for those with additional needs or where families live further from their chosen setting. However, the provision of home-to-school transport is governed by statutory duties and local transport policies, which set out clear eligibility criteria. These arrangements are designed to ensure fairness and consistency across all schools and families within the area.</p>
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Supporting Evidence Paper: Class Size, SEND, and Child Wellbeing –</b>  <i>This presented evidence why an average class size of approximately 22 pupils is educationally justified when considering SEND prevalence and child wellbeing</i></p>	<p>Surrey County Council notes the evidence presented. While research can suggest that moderate class sizes may support peer interaction, collaborative learning, and efficient use of teaching resources there is not universal agreement. In the case St Michael's CE, current enrolment levels are significantly below this range and present challenges in the delivery of a broad, balanced curriculum and ensuring appropriate social and educational experiences for pupils. There are currently fewer than 22 pupils in the entire school. Decisions should be grounded in the viability and sustainability of the school, the breadth of curriculum that can be delivered, and the quality of</p>

		<p>teaching and support available. They must also consider pupils' peer interaction opportunities and the specific needs of the cohort, including the complexity of SEND.</p> <p>Schools with extremely small cohorts can face practical and educational limitations, including restricted opportunities for group learning, peer interaction, and age-appropriate collaboration. In addition, maintaining the full breadth of staffing, facilities, and curriculum provision required for high-quality education can become increasingly difficult when pupil numbers fall well below typical class size benchmarks. The local authority must therefore consider not only theoretical benefits associated with certain class sizes, but also the operational viability and educational sustainability of the provision.</p> <p>While Surrey County Council acknowledges the arguments relating to optimal class sizes, the current circumstances, particularly the very low number of pupils on roll, mean that the evidence regarding average class sizes of 22 does not directly apply to this setting. Any decision regarding the future of the school must consider the long-term educational interests of pupils, including access to a wider peer group, a full curriculum offer, and the sustainable use of public resources. The evidence paper addresses educational benefit of class size but does not resolve the fundamental viability.</p>
4	<p><b>Proposal for the strategic SEND Repositioning &amp; Sustainability of St Michael's CE –</b>  <i>This proposed St Michael's CE be redesignated as a literacy rich, dyslexia and SEN-informed CofE infant school specialising in early identification and intervention</i></p>	<p>Surrey County Council recognises the importance of high-quality provision and effective support for pupils with special educational needs.</p> <p>There is no legal mechanism for a maintained school to adopt a new specialist designation (e.g. "literacy-rich, dyslexia- and SEN-informed infant school") unless it becomes a formal SEN Unit, resourced provision, or special school — all of which require DfE statutory processes, capacity, and viability. Prior to the consultation these options were examined and deemed unviable due to confines of the site.</p> <p>Even if legally possible, St Michael's cannot deliver a specialist identity because it does not meet the minimum conditions for sustainability. The proposal would require a sustainable level of pupil demand, specialist staffing, and appropriate infrastructure to operate effectively. Given the current low number of pupils on roll, it is not clear that St Michael's CE would be able to</p>

		<p>maintain the breadth of expertise, resources, and peer cohort necessary to deliver the suggested model in a viable and consistent way. Establishing and maintaining such a designation would also require clear evidence of sufficient long-term demand.</p> <p>Surrey County Council must therefore consider whether this proposal represents a realistic and sustainable option in the context of current and projected pupil numbers. While we support and acknowledge the growing need for effective SEN support, it is not evident that redesignation of the school in this way would address the underlying challenges facing the provision or ensure a stable and high-quality educational environment for pupils over the longer term.</p>
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<p><b>5 Proposal for the formalisation and expansion of flexi-schooling provision at St Michael's CE –</b>  <i>This proposed an increase of the school's PAN to 44, achieved via flexi-schooling, with approximately 4-6 flexi-schooled pupils attending on any given day, alongside full-time mainstream and SEN pupils</i></p>	<p>While flexi-schooling can be an appropriate arrangement for some individual pupils, where agreed between parents and a school, it is typically considered on a case-by-case basis and is not designed to function as a core model for sustaining pupil numbers or determining the overall capacity of a school. Increasing the PAN on the basis of projected flexi-schooling attendance would present practical and regulatory challenges. PAN reflects the number of pupils a school can admit to a year group on a full-time basis, and it is intended to support transparent and consistent admissions arrangements. Flexi-schooling, by its nature, involves variable attendance and does not provide the same level of certainty regarding numbers on roll, funding, or long-term sustainability. As such, it would be difficult for St Michael's CE to rely on this approach as a mechanism for establishing or maintaining viable pupil numbers.</p> <p>In addition, with the school currently having a very small number of pupils across multiple year groups, with minimal current take up of the flexi-schooling offer, the proposal does not demonstrate how a stable, predictable cohort of learners would be secured over time. Surrey County Council must consider the long-term viability of the provision and the need to ensure that pupils have access to a consistent peer group, a broad curriculum, and sustainable staffing arrangements. In addition, the school would be unable to limit flexi-school attendance to 4-6 pupils per day as a flexi-schooler remains a registered full-time pupil, just with a part-time attendance pattern. Therefore, if a parent asks to move to full-time attendance, they are not seeking a new place just reverting to the default expectation.</p>
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## **What happens next?**

The Council will consider all the views put forward during this consultation period before making a decision on whether to publish proposals required by law. These formal proposals may be altered, amended or different from this consultation. If proposals are published, there will be a further period for comments, called the representation period or 'Statutory Notices'. This would last for 28 days, and a final decision would then be taken by Surrey County Council's Leader as to whether to close St Michael's CofE Aided Infant School.