



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

February 2026



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Local authority details

Local Authority	Surrey County Council
Address	Woodhatch Place 11 Cockshot Hill Reigate Surrey RH2 8EF

School details

Name of School	St Michael's C of E Infant School
Category of School	Infant
Type of School	Voluntary Aided
URN	125170
Address	School Lane, Mickleham, Dorking
Postcode	RH5 6EW

Name of School	Newdigate C of E Infant School
Category of School	Infant
Type of School	Voluntary Aided
URN	125192
Address	Village Street, Newdigate, Dorking
Postcode	RH5 5DJ

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

We are consulting you about a proposal to amalgamate St Michael's C of E Infant School (St Michael's CE) and Newdigate C of E Infant School (Newdigate CE). If the proposal was agreed it would mean that St Michael's CE would close on 31 August 2026 and its pupils would automatically transfer to Newdigate CE, which would remain on its current site.

Background context

In recent years, most local authorities across England, including Surrey, have been experiencing a significant fall in pupil numbers. At the height of Surrey's pupil population in October 2016, there were 13,374 children who had just started in Reception classes at Surrey primary phase schools. By October 2025, this number had fallen to 11,950 children, which is a decrease of 1,424 or 10.6% - equivalent to 47 fewer Reception classes. The reasons behind this include the lower birth rate and families leaving Surrey because of the pandemic, Brexit and the cost of living.

Schools receive money from central government based on the number of pupils they have on their roll. This means that schools with a high number of vacant places have less money for staff, resources, equipment, extracurricular activities, to pay bills and to carry out maintenance work.

While Surrey schools are recognised for their high performance and excellent results, the fall in the number of children has meant a higher number of surplus primary school places and the subsequent reduced funding from central government has meant that our schools are facing difficult challenges. For some schools, these challenges have now reached a significant level and are beginning to affect their ability to fully support their pupils, especially those with the greatest needs. Surrey County Council (the Council) has a responsibility to protect the high-quality education that Surrey is known for and to ensure it is financially sustainable.

We know that our schools have close ties to the local area and communities, sometimes over many generations. This makes proposals of this nature very difficult, and not something we would advocate for if we felt there was a better option.

Why are we consulting you?

In Surrey, our goal is to ensure that no one is left behind and that every child has access to enriched educational opportunities. This is only achievable when schools can admit as many children within their Published Admission Number (PAN) as possible and maximise the funding they receive. Sadly, for some Surrey schools, the number of children attending remains too low and this jeopardises the sustainability of the school, not only financially but also educationally.

This is the case for St Michael's CE which has significant vulnerabilities. The school already works with Newdigate CE in a Federation partnership with a shared ethos and shared resources, and by association this vulnerability therefore also directly impacts Newdigate CE. This amalgamation to a single school would consolidate this partnership working whilst contributing to stabilising pupil numbers and securing the continued provision of high-quality school places by consolidating pupil funding which has previously

needed to sustain two schools into a single entity. This proposal would effectively mean that the existing Federation across the two schools would be dissolved.

We now want to hear your comments on the proposal to amalgamate St Michael's CE and Newdigate CE. Your input and feedback are important in helping us to further understand the views of the children, parents/carers, staff and local community.

St Michael's C of E Infant School

St Michael's CE is a one form entry infant school, with a PAN of 28 and an overall capacity of 84 places. It is recognised by the Department for Education as a "Rural Primary School". It was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2022 but despite this, the school has been affected by falling rolls over recent years.

Pupil numbers at St Michael's CE have historically always fluctuated, with the school having vacancies each year. The highest number of pupils on roll was 78 pupils in October 2015. Typically, the school has relied on pupils attending from other areas, rather than local children, to bolster numbers, but this trend has diminished in the last three years as demand for school places at other schools has fallen.

In October 2015, the school had 78 pupils on roll and by October 2025 that had fallen to 21, with a further decrease to 18 pupils by January 2026. This is a decrease of 77% overall to January 2026.

	Reception	Year 1	Year 2
October 2015	29 <i>0 vacancy</i>	26 <i>2 vacancies</i>	23 <i>5 vacancies</i>
January 2026	4 <i>24 vacancies</i>	5 <i>23 vacancies</i>	9 <i>19 vacancies</i>

For Reception entry in September 2026, the school has received five applications naming it as a first preference. Furthermore, long term pupil projections for the area suggest that, based on current trends, this level of surplus places will remain throughout the next decade, which is unsustainable.

Newdigate C of E Infant School

Newdigate CE is a one form entry infant school, with a PAN of 30 and an overall capacity of 90 places. It is recognised by the Department for Education as a "Rural Primary School" and it was judged 'Good' by Ofsted in 2023.

Historically, pupil numbers at Newdigate CE have fluctuated and the number of pupils joining Reception at the school changes year on year, varying between 17 and 30. This fluctuation is common in small village-based schools and has already impacted other schools in this planning area as the falling birth rate means that there are simply fewer children requiring school places in the area.

These fluctuations in pupil cohort numbers are challenging both in planning financially but also in strategically deciding how to deliver the relevant curriculum effectively to provide the best education possible for pupils. Thus far, Newdigate has navigated these challenges well.

What does an amalgamation mean?

An amalgamation, or merger, is where two or more schools join to form one school. In legal terms, this would mean the closure of one or more of the schools and the accommodation of the displaced pupils at the remaining school. The remaining school would retain its original school number, as it is not a new school.

In legal terms in this proposal, St Michael's CE would close on 31 August 2026 and all pupils who are on roll or have been offered a place at St Michael's on 1 September 2026 would automatically transfer to Newdigate CE on that date.

As St Michael's is designated by the government as a rural primary school, the council must consider specific factors when considering the future of the school. These factors include the likely effect of closure on the local community and any alternatives to the closure of the school. School leaders and stakeholders agree that all possible alternative options have been explored at St Michael's CE, but these have not generated sufficient pupil numbers because there are simply not enough pupils living in the area to sustain all local schools.

In proposing a closure, Section 16 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that the local authority or governing body must consult certain persons, including parents, dioceses and, where the local authority is a county council, any district and parish councils.

Why propose an amalgamation?

School leaders, the governing body, the Council and the Diocese of Guildford have been working collaboratively together to try and secure the future of both schools as the schools are recognised as good schools with dedicated staff and committed school communities.

In 2022, St Michael's CE created a Federation with Newdigate CE. This arrangement allows the schools to operate under one governing body, share leadership and provides the economies of scale of sharing both business and teaching resources. School leaders have combined age groups and explored alternative curriculum offers to ensure that both schools remain viable and thriving. However, the reality is that the Federation can no longer sustain two schools while there are such low numbers on roll at St Michael's CE.

Whilst we recognise that there may be close historical ties to the school in the local community, the number of children living in the immediate vicinity of Mickleham is no longer able to fill or sustain the roll of the school. This position is unsustainable in the long term; and school leaders, governors, the Council and the Diocese of Guildford all agree that the number of children on roll at St Michael's CE, and therefore across the Federation, has become so low that the school, and the Federation, cannot continue without putting the quality of education for the children at risk.

As the schools share the same religious character and ethos, and they already share resources, staff and curriculum approaches, a proposal to amalgamate the schools into one school would provide continuity for the children and stability for the school's future.

What would this proposal mean for the children?

We wish to reassure families that this proposal would not change the maximum class size for infant classes as they cannot exceed 30 pupils in accordance with infant class size legislation. It is anticipated that there would be sufficient vacancies at Newdigate CE to

enable the newly amalgamated school to accommodate all children without there being more than 30 children in any one class.

Children on roll at St Michael's

Should this proposal go ahead, all children on roll at St Michael's in current Reception or Year 1 would automatically transfer to the roll of the newly amalgamated Newdigate C of E Infant School on 1 September 2026.

There would be no need for parents of current St Michael's pupils to apply for a place at Newdigate CE as this transfer would be automatic. Pupils could then continue to attend Newdigate CE until the end of Year 2 when they would need to apply for junior provision in the usual way.

However, should any parent wish to apply for a place for their child at a school other than Newdigate CE, they are able to submit an in-year application. If a place is available, it would be offered or your child could be placed on a waiting list if the year group is currently full. There is more information about making an in-year application via www.surreycc.gov.uk/admissions.

Submitting an in-year application for another school would not prevent your child from automatically gaining a place at Newdigate CE, unless you chose to accept the offer of a place elsewhere. Any child who is removed from the roll of St Michael's CE before the end of the summer term in July 2026 would not be eligible for an automatic transfer of their place to Newdigate CE for September 2026.

Children on roll at Newdigate CE

There would be no change for children currently on roll at Newdigate CE.

Children applying for Reception places in September 2026 at Newdigate CE

All children who have applied for a place at Newdigate for Reception in September 2026 would have their applications for school considered in the normal way and this would be unaffected by this proposal. The Published Admissions Number at Newdigate CE would remain at 30, and places allocated according to the school's admissions criteria.

Children applying for Reception places in September 2026 at St Michael's CE

All children who have applied for a place at St Michael's CE for Reception in September 2026 would have their applications for school considered in the normal way. This is because there will not be a decision on this proposal until after the primary offer day on 16 April 2026.

Should this proposal go ahead, all Reception offers for St Michael's CE would then automatically transfer to an offer for a Reception place at Newdigate CE for September 2026.

However, should families wish to amend their preferences or order of preferences in view of this proposal, they must contact Surrey's Admissions Team by 23 February 2026 to do so. The team can be contacted at: schooladmissions@surreycc.gov.uk and please title your email "St Michael's CE Infants application" so that we can make sure it is prioritised.

What would it mean for the staff?

The amalgamation of St Michael's CE and Newdigate CE would affect all staff who work at St Michael's.

Our priority would be to ensure that staff at risk of redundancy are supported fully throughout this transition, just as we would be supporting our children and families. Staff will be consulted with separately and offered redeployment support with priority access to any vacancies at Newdigate CE and Surrey County Council vacancies.

Would there be any changes to the school buildings?

The St Michael's buildings and site are not owned by the Council. The site trustees and the Guildford Diocesan Board for Education would work with the Department for Education and the Charity Commission to decide what happens to the building and site in the future.

There would not be any changes proposed to the buildings or site at Newdigate CE as the school currently has sufficient capacity to accommodate all children on roll across both schools.

It is Surrey County Council's commitment to work together with school leaders and the Diocese to support children, families, staff and communities through the next steps. We will do all we can to protect the education and wellbeing of all those potentially affected.

What happens next?

This paper is part of a five-week public consultation on the proposal to amalgamate St Michael's C of E Infant School and Newdigate C of E Infant School, by closing St Michael's C of E Infant School and transferring its pupils to Newdigate C of E Infant School.

The consultation begins on Monday 2nd February 2026 and closes on Friday 6th March 2026.

There are several ways you can respond to the consultation, and these are set out below. We will also hold public meetings for families, local communities and any other interested parties to discuss the proposals and get your input and feedback. This is important in helping us to further understand the views of parents/carers, staff and the local communities. Anyone who wishes to come is welcome at either meeting and you do not have to have a child at either school to attend.

These meetings will take place on:

Tuesday 10th February

9.30am	Newdigate C of E Infant School
2pm	St Michael's C of E Infant School
7pm	St Michael's C of E Infant School

The Council will consider all the views put forward during this consultation period before deciding 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 in which the council will publish '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 amalgamate St Michael's C of E Infant School and Newdigate C of E Infant School by closing St Michael's C of E Infant School. The timeline for this proposal is shown in the table below (dates may be subject to change).

Timeline

Date	Event
2 nd February – 6 th March 2026	Consultation
10 th February 2026	Public meetings are held
March 2026	Results of the consultation are considered by the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning. A decision is made whether to publish a statutory notice for the proposal.
20 th April 2026	A statutory notice is published for a 4-week representation period
June 2026	The outcome of the representation period and any objections are considered by the Leader of the Council and a final decision on the proposal is made
31 st August 2026	St Michael's C of E Infant School would close
1 st September 2026	Pupils from both schools would be on roll at the amalgamated Newdigate C of E Infant School.

How do I respond to this consultation?

You can respond:

- online at [Have Your Say Today - Surrey Says Engagement Hub - Commonplace](#) and by searching for the school's consultation (school name or post code) or using the following link: [Amalgamation Consultation](#)

or

- by completing the consultation response form that is available alongside this document. You can either:
 - email the form to schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk
 - print it, complete it and send it back to:

St Michael's and Newdigate amalgamation
Education Place Planning
Woodhatch Place
11 Cockshot Hill
Reigate
RH2 8EF

All responses must be received by 5pm on 6th March 2026.

If you have any questions about this proposal, please email schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk.