

Statutory Notices

Proposal to close St Mary's C of E
Infant School and transfer its pupils
to Puttenham C of E Infant School

June 2025

School Organisation Statutory Notice

Notice is given in accordance with section 15 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, as amended by the Education Act 2011, that Surrey County Council, is proposing to close St Mary's C of E Infant School and transfer its pupils to Puttenham C of E Infant School.

In proposing a closure of a rural primary school, 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.

Local Authority Details:

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

School Details:

Name of School	St Mary's C of E Voluntary Controlled Infant School
Category of School	Infant
Type of School	Voluntary Controlled
URN	125149
Address	Shackleford Road, Shackleford, Godalming, Surrey
Postcode	GU8 6AE

Name of School	Puttenham C of E Infant School
Category of School	Infant
Type of School	Academy
URN	125195
Address	School Lane, Puttenham, Guildford, Surrey
Postcode	GU3 1AS

Introduction

This paper outlines a proposal by Surrey County Council, to close St Mary's C of E Voluntary Controlled Infant School (St Mary's CE Infant) and offer places for its pupils at Puttenham C of E Infant School (Puttenham CE Infant) from September 2025. St Mary's CE Infant would close on 31 August 2025 and its pupils would be offered a place to transfer to Puttenham CE Infant from September 2025. Puttenham CE Infant is an academy school within a multi academy trust called The Good Shepherd Trust. The Good Shepherd Trust would temporarily expand the operating capacity at Puttenham CE Infant from September 2025 to accommodate the children from St Mary's CE Infant. The statutory process and timescales for the proposal are detailed below.

Proposal

Surrey County Council are proposing to close St Mary's CE Infant School on 31 August 2025 and offer places for its pupils at Puttenham CE Infant School from September 2025.

Proposed timeline

The proposed closure of St Mary's CE Infant would come into effect from 31 August 2025 and pupils would start at Puttenham CE Infant School from September 2025.

Phase	Date
Statutory notices	03/06/25 – 01/07/25
Lead Cabinet Member Decision	July 2025
Implementation	September 2025

It is proposed that:

1. St Mary's CE Infant would close, and its pupils would transfer to Puttenham CE Infant.

Making Representations, Objections and Comments

2. This is a four-week consultation which starts on Tuesday 3 June 2025 and concludes on Tuesday 1 July 2025.
3. Any person can make comments, agree, or object to the proposal by sending representations to the Local Authority through the following channels:

Website	www.surreysays.co.uk
Email	schoolorg@surreycc.gov.uk
Post	Sarah Jeffery Education Place Planning Surrey County Council Woodhatch Place 11 Cockshot Hill Reigate Surrey RH2 8EF

Background

4. St Mary's CE Infant is a Voluntary Controlled school. The school is situated in Shackleford, within the borough of Guildford. It is recognised by the Department of Education as a "rural primary school". The school is rated as "Good" by Ofsted in its last full inspection in February 2023.
5. St Mary's CE Infant is a one-form entry infant school for pupils aged 4-7 years and has a published admissions number (PAN) of 30 and an overall capacity of 90 places.
6. Despite the schools "Good" Ofsted rating, it has been affected by falling rolls over recent years. In October 2021, the school had 81 pupils on roll and by October 2024 that had fallen to 44 – a decrease of 46%. As a result, the number of unfilled places has risen from 9 places in October 2021 to 46 places in October 2024.
7. Furthermore, for Reception entry in September 2025, the school is only expecting a maximum of 6 pupils. 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.

8. In September 2023, St Mary's CE Infant entered into a federation with St James C of E VA Primary School. This allows the school to operate under one governing body and share leadership and business resources. School leaders have combined age groups and restructured staff, but this has not solved the problem as the number of children on roll, and subsequent funding, continue to fall.
9. Additionally, at present only 2% of children educated at St Mary's CE Infant live in Shackleford itself. It is clear that the number of children living in the immediate vicinity of the school is no longer able to fill or sustain the rolls of the school.
10. The Council is proposing to close St Mary's CE Infant because of the low number of children on roll at the school. The Council and the Diocese of Guildford agree that the number of children on roll will be so low that the school cannot continue without putting the quality of education for the children at risk.

Rationale

11. In recent years, the majority of 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 2024, this number had fallen to 11,687 children, which is a decrease of 1,687 or 12.5% - equivalent to 56 fewer classes. The reasons behind this are thought to include the lower birth rate and families leaving Surrey as a result of the pandemic, Brexit and the cost-of-living crisis.
12. 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.
13. 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. The Council has a responsibility to protect the high-quality education that Surrey is known for and to ensure it is financially sustainable.
14. 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 choose if we felt there was a better option.

Why was Puttenham C of E Infant School chosen as a destination for pupils to be offered a place?

15. Working together with school leaders and the Diocese, several local schools were considered as potential options for pupils transferring from St Mary's CE Infant. At the forefront of discussions was trying to ensure continuity and certainty for pupils and their families, allowing them to move together as a cohort of peers and maintain friendship groups.
16. Puttenham CE Infant is preferred because it:

- shares the same ethos and characteristics, both religious and educational, as St Mary's CE Infant
- shares the same junior pathway as St Mary's CE Infant because it is also a feeder school for Waverley Abbey C of E Junior School. This means the children can continue on the same educational pathway for junior provision as expected when they started at St Mary's.
- is a similar sized school and similar environment to that at St Mary's, providing continuity and familiarity for the children.
- has a spare classroom so there would be no delay necessary to allow for building works to be completed. The Good Shepherd Trust would temporarily expand the capacity at Puttenham CE Infant to accommodate St Mary's pupils, but the PAN will remain at 30.

Admissions

17. All children on roll at St Mary's CE Infant, or those who have been offered a place at St Mary's CE Infant to start Reception in September 2025, would automatically be given a place at Puttenham CE Infant. This means that children would be removed from the roll at St Mary's CE Infant and transferred to the roll of Puttenham CE Infant for September 2025.
18. Should any parent wish to apply for a place for their child at another school, they are able to submit an in-year application listing that school as a preference. If a place is available, it will be offered or the child can be placed on a waiting list if the year group is currently full.

Impact on the community and travel

19. It is recognised that for the local community currently accessing St Mary's C of E Infant School, the journey to Puttenham C of E Infant School may be longer for a small number of pupils. In the event of St Mary's CE Infant closing on 31 August 2025, children on roll may be eligible for assistance with travel costs, in line with the Home to School Transport policy.

Staffing and HR

20. The closure of St Mary's CE Infant would affect all staff who are employed by Surrey County Council at the school.
21. 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 support in the form of Employee Assistance (if available in this school), and redeployment support with priority access to Surrey County Council vacancies.

Capital planning and buildings

22. The St Mary's building and site are not owned by the Council. 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.
23. There are no changes required to the building at Puttenham CE Infant as the school has enough spare capacity to accommodate all of the St Mary's CE Infant pupils. The operating capacity at Puttenham CE Infant may temporarily increase to accommodate St Mary's CE Infant pupils, but this would not require a statutory process as it would be a temporary

increase lasting for no longer than three years. Puttenham CE Infant would revert to its intended capacity of 30 per year group for all pupil intakes from September 2026.

Equality Impact Assessment

24. An Equality Impact Assessment is being completed throughout the consultation process and will be published as part of the Leader Decision meeting.

Consultations, approvals, and overall timescales

25. It is proposed that the changes commence from September 2025. The proposed changes require a period of consultation and the agreement of Surrey County Council's Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning if the proposal is to proceed to the publication of Statutory Notices.
26. The first stage of consultation was open from Friday 25 April 2025 and concluded on Friday 23 May 2025. During this period, Surrey County Council shared its proposal with the wider professional network, schools including headteachers and chairs of governors, with unions, parent representatives, partner agencies and with the staff and parents of the schools subject to the proposals. The associated documentation was published on Surrey County Council's 'Surrey Says' website and circulated to local stakeholders. Interested parties were invited to return responses to the consultation via an online form or alternatively by email or post.
27. The consultation analysis is published at www.surreysays.co.uk on the statutory notice webpage alongside this document.
28. The Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Lifelong Learning approved the decision to proceed to statutory notices on the 27 May 2025.
29. The final decision on the proposals will be made by the Leader of the Council in July 2025.

Key points from the consultation responses:

- In total, there were **115** responses to the consultation.
 - The responses to the consultation regarding the proposal to close St Mary's CofE Infant School had **20 (17%)** respondents support the proposal, **76 (66%)** respondents do not support the proposal, and **19 (17%)** respondents stated they were unsure.
 - Meanwhile, concerning the proposal to offer a place for St Mary's CofE Infant School pupils at Puttenham CofE Infant School, **27 (23%)** respondents support the proposal, **56 (49%)** do not support the proposal and **32 (28%)** stated they were unsure.
30. Statutory Notice is now open for a four-week period from Tuesday 3 June 2025 to Tuesday 1 July 2025. The publication of Notices is when the local authority formally states its proposals. This will be the final opportunity for consultees to make their views known before a final decision is taken. Following the consultation periods officers will summarise the feedback and will report to the Leader of Surrey County Council.

What happens next?

You can make representations, objections and comments using the online form at www.surreysays.co.uk. Alternatively, you can respond by email or post at the addresses given in the section [Making Representations, Objections and Comments](#).