



# Investing in the future for Wallingford families

## Consultation information:

Changes to St Nicholas CE Infants' and  
Fir Tree Junior schools from 2026

SEPTEMBER 2024

OXFORD DIOCESAN SCHOOLS TRUST  
ST MARY'S CONVENT, DENCHWORTH ROAD,  
WANTAGE, OXFORDSHIRE, OX12 9AU

REGISTERED NUMBER: 08143249

## Investing in the future for Wallingford families

**The Wallingford schools expansion plan is designed to provide high-quality education for the future, meeting the needs of local families as new housing contributes to the the town growing and developing.**

St Nicholas CE Infants' School and Fir Tree Junior School have a long history of providing excellent education in the town. From September 2026, both will undergo a change of phase to become all-through primary schools, bringing them in line with other Oxfordshire schools. They will both provide high-quality education to children of 3-11 years, with nursery provision at each school to ensure children get off to the best start.

St Nicholas school will move to a brand new building, located on a new site as part of the Highcroft housing development. Fir Tree school will remain on its current site, and benefit from new and upgraded facilities.

Site plans for the new schools can be found at <https://www.odst.org.uk/consultation>

## Wallingford schools' expansion plan: background and key information

### **What is happening to St Nicholas CE Infants' School?**

St Nicholas CE Infants' School will become St Nicholas CE Primary School, scheduled to open in September 2026, with age range 3-11 including nursery. It will be located in a brand new school building, on a new site, within the Highcroft housing development.

### **What is happening to Fir Tree Junior School?**

Fir Tree Junior School will become Fir Tree Primary School, scheduled to open in September 2026, with age range 3-11 including nursery. It will be located on the existing Fir Tree site, with upgraded facilities and a new, purpose-built nursery.

### **Why are the schools both becoming all-through primary schools?**

St Nicholas and Fir Tree already offer extremely high-quality education and this plan enables both schools to provide this to a wider age range. It brings the schools in line with virtually all other primary-phase schools in Oxfordshire, and enables families in this growing town to have more choice in the future – of school location, ethos, education, and a choice of Church of England (St Nicholas) or non-religious designation (Fir Tree).

### **How is the project being funded?**

We are extremely fortunate to have a major, £12 million capital investment from the Highcroft housing estate developers and Oxfordshire County Council. This investment has been ring-fenced specifically for education and must be directed towards meeting needs arising from new housing developments.

### **Which organisations are involved in this project?**

- Oxford Diocesan Schools Trust (ODST) – the multi-academy trust responsible for running St Nicholas and Fir Tree schools.
- Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) – the Local Authority responsible for education provision, pupil place planning, admissions, and planning permission.
- Oxford Diocesan Board of Education (ODBE) – a trusted partner of ODST, delivering capital building work for the project.

All of these organisations have significant experience of education planning and managing school change.

### **What is the building timeline?**

For the new St Nicholas site, works are expected to begin in Spring 2025, for completion by Summer 2026. For the new Fir Tree facilities, works are expected to begin in Summer 2025, for completion by Spring 2026.

### **How will a smooth transition be ensured for current children, and those joining next year?**

The needs of children are at the heart of all decisions made by ODST, and the Trust will work closely with the school leaders and local governing bodies to ensure smooth transition to either Fir Tree or the new St Nicholas site. We are very aware of the close-knit communities within each school and between the schools. The schools already work very closely together and, over the coming months and years, will continue to build strong relationships ensuring that, whichever school children transfer to in 2026, they will feel at ease and have familiar faces as well as the highest quality education. The current infant-junior arrangements mean that staff are very experienced in supporting children through new school transition.

More detailed information about transition to the new schools in September 2026 will be discussed with parents and carers at the consultation meeting planned for 17 September 2024, and subsequently as plans progress.

### **What will the application and admissions process look like for the new schools?**

***For children due to start Reception in September 2026 onwards:*** Families will make their school application in the normal way during the admissions window of Autumn 2025, indicating preferences for a Reception place at either Fir Tree or St Nicholas. We are planning that schools will have an overlapping catchment area, to give parents the maximum flexibility in making their choice.

## Have your say

ODST and OCC are committed to ensuring that the next steps in this exciting project are taken with the needs of our school communities at the forefront of decision making. We would like as many of you as possible to contribute and are therefore seeking feedback from current families, families interested in joining either school in the future, and wider stakeholders.

### **Consultation period**

The consultation period will run from 6 September 2024 – 11 October 2024.

This consultation information and new school site plans can be found at [www.odst.org.uk/consultation](http://www.odst.org.uk/consultation)

## How do I make my views known?

### **Email us your thoughts**

During the consultation period we would welcome feedback and questions via email, to

[ODST.consultations@oxford.anglican.org](mailto:ODST.consultations@oxford.anglican.org)

Alternatively, if you are happy with these proposals, you can also let us know at

[www.odst.org.uk/consultation](http://www.odst.org.uk/consultation)

### **Attend the consultation meeting**

**17 September 2024, Wallingford Sports Park Main Hall, Hithercroft Rd, OX10 9RB**

**7pm-8pm** Meeting for Parents and carers with children currently at either school, or who are interested in joining either school from 2025 onwards.

**8pm-9pm** Other interested parties from the wider community are welcome to join the meeting for a Q&A. Please note priority will be given first to questions from school families, and wider community questions will be covered towards the end of the meeting.

**Please register at [www.odst.org.uk/consultation](http://www.odst.org.uk/consultation) so that we have an idea of numbers for the meeting.**

Follow-up information will be shared with parents and carers who are not able to attend.

## What happens next?

Feedback and questions received during the consultation period will be compiled, and responses and further information published after the consultation period closes.

The plans will be submitted to the relevant DfE authority for scrutiny and formal approval.

Parents and carers will be updated on the progress of plans and transition arrangements as needed, throughout the 2024-25 and 2025-26 academic years.