

Change of phase consultation

St Nicholas CE Infant School & Fir Tree Junior School

Consultation to change 1 Infant/ 1 Junior to 2 x Primary phase with Nursery, from September 2026.

No overall change to the number of places available.

Consultation summary

Feedback received

Emails sent to odst.consultations@oxford.anglican.org.uk: 19

Consultation form completions: 27

Questions taken at parent/carer meeting: 18

Attendee count at parent/carer meeting: 40 (Plus trust staff, headteachers & LGB members)

Outcome & key themes

It is clear that overall, there is significant support for changing the age range of the two schools, with a number of key considerations as to how the plan is implemented over the coming years. Outlined below are the main questions raised across the online form, email address and parent/carer meeting, with our mitigations.

Transition in 2026

Transition structure and consideration of opening Key Stage 1 (year 1 and 2) provision at Fir Tree in September 2026 was the most common concern.

- 19 email/form responses included requests for Y1/2 provision at Fir Tree in Sept 2026, reflecting the same queries at the parent meeting. Reasons are generally because of siblings that will be attending Fir Tree, or families that live closer to Fir Tree.

Mitigation

- We are keen to make transition plans with families' needs in mind as much as possible. Following this consultation period we do intend to ask families of children who will be in years 1-3 in September 2026 to indicate their preference of school. This will allow us to gauge demand and plan accordingly.
- It may be beneficial to ask preferences soon given that this is the biggest concern noted in the consultation. However preferences may change and will therefore be non-binding. We would need to adapt plans accordingly should they change at a later date.
- **For 2025 prospective parents:** We are unable to systematically ask preferences of all those who will enter Reception in Sept 2025, until they take up a place at the school. We would encourage them to base their choice on their child being at St Nicholas from YR-Y6, including the move to the new site in Sept 2026. There is a reasonable chance that there may be an option to move to Fir Tree in Sept 2026 instead, if we do open Y1/2 provision there. This is not certain at the moment and therefore they should choose on the basis of St Nicholas only.

School planning and education

Admissions policies and catchment areas for September 2026

- Two queries at the meeting regarding the admissions consultation and how this is different to the change of phase consultation, and what catchment areas would be.

Mitigation

- Ensure clear communication for both to avoid confusion and aid the smooth running of the admissions consultation. Note to parents accompanying the admissions consultation, to explain that this is intended for Sept 2026 admissions policies and does not relate to transition arrangements.
- The existing joint catchment area will remain for both schools, and St Nicholas will also add the Highcroft estate
- Explain that the admissions consultation is a process which all schools are required to undertake on a regular basis, whether there are changes to admissions or not. It determines the admissions policies and criteria for Reception starters in the new schools from September 2026 onwards. It sits independently from this change of phase consultation.

Capacity in the new schools for Reception starters in September 2026 onwards

- Three queries at the meeting regarding the capacity of the schools once they reduce PAN.

Mitigation

- Capacity is not changing across the schools in 2026 and can be increased in future years if needed. This has been addressed in the parent comms post-meeting.
- Currently, between the two schools, there are 60 Reception places available each year and all of these are at St Nicholas. In September 2026, the number of Reception places available is expected to remain at 60, with the key difference being that 30 places are available at St Nicholas and 30 are at Fir Tree
- Recent birth rates do not suggest more capacity is needed, however both schools have room for expansion if needed in the future. For example, St Nicholas could offer 45 Reception places per year group in the future, if sufficient demand arises from new housing.

Timeline for the new St Nicholas building

- One meeting question plus two online queries regarding contingency for building works not being complete by Sept 2026.

Mitigation

- Planning consent and funding is already in place.
- Design and build basis, and based on an existing school building.
- Three months contingency built in
- Existing St Nicholas site will be available if needed.

Staffing arrangements

- One question at the meeting regarding how we would staff the schools, and 2 questions in online responses about SENDO capacity and teachers trained in specific key stage.

Mitigation

- As the number of school places available across the schools is expected to remain the same in 2026, the number of classes and therefore staff needed is broadly similar.
- Teachers have training and experience beyond the year group they currently teach
- ODST has significant experience ensuring high-quality staffing in schools, including SEND support.

Wraparound care

- One question submitted online regarding whether both schools will have wrap around care and what hours they will operate from Sept 2026.

Mitigation

- Wrap around care to be planned carefully by schools – plan by Sept 2025 before admissions window and to be included in marcomms for 2026 admissions (with as much info as it reasonable at that point).
- Timings and places available will be subject to staffing and space.

Nursery provision

- Letter received from OCC asking us to include 2-year-olds in nursery provision, and one question submitted online about nursery hours available.

Mitigation

- We have extended our nursery provision proposal to include 2-year-olds. This has been submitted as part of the Department for Education change of phase application.
- The number of places available for different age groups in September 2026 will be subject to staffing, space and demand, and nursery provision may open gradually.

Access and community considerations

Access to the new St Nicholas school

- Eight online responses included concerns about the footpath on the north of Highcroft not being open until 2027, and 2 online responses about overgrown footpath from Fir Tree avenue to Highcroft
- One question at the meeting regarding safe cycling access, and 3 submitted in online responses

Mitigation

- One footpath has been completed and a second is due for completion in 2027.
- We have passed on feedback to the housing developers and asked them to consider the footpath concerns, and alternative ways in which children can safely access the school from September 2026.
- There is a purpose-built car park on Highcroft near the new school.

Traffic, parking and other community-related issues

- 5 online responses concerned about increased parking on or around Fir Tree avenue
- 1 online response concerned about parking in the Highcroft estate and whether the car park is intended for school use.
- 1 online response asking whether St Nicholas will have permeable playground surfaces to avoid water run-off towards neighbouring houses, and floodlights that will impact on houses.

Mitigation

- All feedback relating to construction will be passed to the relevant parties and authorities.
- There are parking and access clauses within the plans, and past building projects have been successful.
- There is a purpose-built car park on Highcroft near the new school.

Plans for the current St Nicholas school site

- 2 responses asked what would happen to the site

Mitigation

- The site will be given back to Oxfordshire County Council and will be sold. This forms part of the funding arrangements for the new school.
- It will not be sold while still in use as a school, and therefore there are not yet any further details on the future of the site.

Plans for the Fir Tree guide hut

- 1 online response concerned about the lack of Guiding hut in new Fir Tree plans.

Mitigation

- Meetings already held with guiding leaders and we are in discussion with guide leaders about future plans.