

Consultation Document

**Proposal to close Blackheath Bluecoat Church of
England Secondary School**

Old Dover Road, London SE3 8SY

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Greenwich Council

Consultation Document

Proposal to Close Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School

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Responses on this proposal should be sent in writing to: Sonal Mistry, Greenwich Children's Services, Strategic Projects, 3rd Floor, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London SE18 6HQ or by email to: sonal.mistry@greenwich.gov.uk by 2nd November 2011. To facilitate the consultation a questionnaire is attached to this document for those individuals wishing to respond, but we will accept any written response.

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Reporting to: Mike Bright, AD Strategic Projects

Directorate: Greenwich Council's Children's Services

Division: Strategic Projects

Date: 28th September 2011

Intended target group: All interested parties

Review date: Post consultation period, after 2nd November 2011

Part I Summary of proposals

Greenwich Council is consulting on the proposal to close Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England (CE) Secondary School. The proposal is for a phased closure with no Year 7 entry in September 2012 and the school closing finally with effect from 31st August 2013.

Blackheath Bluecoat CE School has not recruited to its planned admission number over an extended period. As a result the school has accumulated a very substantial financial deficit with a high risk that it cannot be recovered within a reasonable timeframe.

There will be sufficient capacity in other Greenwich secondary schools to allow all the pupils currently on the roll of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School to be offered alternative places.

No final decision has been made about this.

Under section 29 (1) (a) of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, the Council wishes to consult on the following proposal:

The proposal is that Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School is closed. It is proposed that the closure is phased as follows:

- **No recruitment to Year 7 or Year 12 in September 2012;**
- **Pupils now in Years 7, 8, 9 would transfer to alternative schools at the end of the current school year in July 2012;**
- **Pupils in Year 11 would move into Post 16 provision elsewhere;**
- **Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 will stay on for a further year to complete their Key Stage and leave the school in July 2013.**

The Council will take into account the views of all those likely to be affected before making a decision on whether to close the school. This consultation is the first step in the process before a final decision can be made. Following this stage of the consultation the Council will publish a Public Notice on the proposals and all interested parties will have the opportunity to make further representations before a final decision is made. The process and timetable for making the final decision are set out on pages 10 and 11.

Consultation meetings will be organised for parents/carers, staff and governors and other interested parties (**see Part 2**) and a note will be made of what is said at the meetings. The period of consultation will last until 2nd November 2011 and Greenwich Council will consider carefully any comments made at meetings and all written responses received by this date.

Any individual wishing to comment on the proposal may do so by completing the attached questionnaire (**see Part 4**), by sending a separate written statement or by attending one of the consultation meetings (**see Part 2**). Responses should be sent to: Sonal Mistry, Greenwich Children's Services, Strategic Projects, 3rd Floor, The Woolwich Centre, 35 Wellington Street, London SE18 6HQ or by email to: sonal.mistry@greenwich.gov.uk by 2nd November 2011. An electronic version of the questionnaire is available on request.

Part 2 Dates, times & venue of consultation meetings

Meetings will be held at Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School for; parents/carers, staff and trades union representatives, the school's governing body and other interested parties. A note will be made of what is said at the meetings and any comments made as well as all responses made in writing received by 2nd November 2011, will be considered carefully in coming to a final decision.

Date & Time	Meeting	Venue
Day – Tuesday Date – 4 th October Time – 6.00 p.m.	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School governing body	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Old Dover Road London SE3 8SY
Day – Monday Date – 10 th October Time – 3.00 p.m.	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School staff & trade union representatives	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Old Dover Road London SE3 8SY
Day – Tuesday Date – 11 th October Time – 7.00 p.m.	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School parents and carers	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Old Dover Road London SE3 8SY
Day – Monday Date – 17 th October Time – 7.00 p.m.	Public Meeting	Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Old Dover Road London SE3 8SY

Part 3 Detailed proposals

Introduction

Greenwich Council is consulting on the proposal to close Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School with effect from 31st August 2011.

In line with section 29 (1) (a) of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, the Council is consulting with all interested parties before publishing statutory notices.

Background

The pattern of recruitment to Blackheath Bluecoat CE School has been of concern for some years. Despite being the only Church of England secondary school in Greenwich, and the efforts made by the school to promote itself to parents of children attending local Church of England primary schools, it has not succeeded in securing a significant share of pupils transferring into Year 7. This contrasts with the demand for places in Church of England primary schools in Greenwich which offer eight forms of entry in total and which are consistently full.

The total number of pupils on the roll of the school has decreased by a third over the past five years: from 980 (including sixth form) in January 2006 to 631 in September 2011 (the most recent school census data). The fall in pupil numbers has contributed to the school ending four of the last six years in financial deficit. The Local Authority has been flexible in working with the school's governing body and new management, under the federated arrangements with St. Cecilia's CE School, Wandsworth, to deliver change. In the last three years, the school has revised its medium term budget recovery plans as pupil numbers each September have failed to live up to predictions. The school has an accumulated deficit of £1.184m as at 31 March 2011, representing 32% of the school's total delegated resources and is projecting a deficit of £1.521m for the 2011/12 financial year. Under the school financing regulations, the maximum period for deficit recovery is three years. The size of the predicted deficit as a proportion of the school's overall resourcing means that there is a high risk that this is both irrecoverable and likely to increase further.

The school was judged satisfactory by Ofsted in June 2010 but the inspection noted that progress since the previous inspection (May 2007) had been limited. The school was federated with St. Cecilia's Church of England Secondary School in Wandsworth in February 2009 and has benefited substantially from the leadership provided by the executive headteacher and the head of school. Academic standards have improved though they are still below the national and borough average (see **Appendix I**).

Although the school's performance has improved, this has not been translated into an improvement in the perceptions of the school in the wider community or the pattern of recruitment. On current trends, there is no sign that the school's position is likely to improve substantially in the foreseeable future.

Proposal for consultation

In line with section 29 (1) (a) of the School Standards & Framework Act 1998, Greenwich Council now wishes to consult all those likely to be affected on the following proposal:

“The proposals is that Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England Secondary School is closed. It is proposed that the closure is phased as follows:

- **No recruitment to Year 7 or Year 12 in September 2012;**
- **Pupils now in Years 7, 8, 9 would transfer to alternative schools at the end of the current school year in July 2012;**
- **Pupils in Year 11 would move into Post 16 provision elsewhere;**
- **Pupils in Year 10 and Year 12 will stay on for a further year to complete their Key Stage and leave the school in July 2013.”**

This is the first stage in the statutory process for consulting on the closure of a voluntary aided school. The next steps will include:

1. Publication of a statutory notice of its proposal to close the school.
2. A six week period for formal representation by interested parties.
3. A formal decision by the Council’s Cabinet which will take account of all the views expressed during the consultation and representation process.

Details of the process and timetable are set out on page 11

If the decision is made by the Council to close the school, Blackheath Bluecoat CE School will close on 31st August 2013 and there will be no further intake of pupils to the school.

Need for school places

Any proposal to close a school must take into account the current and expected future demand for school places in the area.

Towards the end of the current decade, the total demand for secondary school places (ages 11-15) in the borough is forecast to increase as the higher numbers entering the primary phase transfer to secondary. Additional capacity, including the replacement of the places that will be lost by the proposed closure of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, will need to be added to the borough’s total provision. This requirement will not arise before 2016 on current projections. Plans to respond to this demand include the opening of the proposed University Technical College in 2013 and the scope to develop the Greenwich Peninsula site for a new secondary school. These additions, plus the extra form of entry at Thomas Tallis School that will be available from 2012, will provide additional capacity significantly in excess of the capacity removed at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, if the school is closed.

In the specific case of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, the number of pupils on roll has been declining for several years. As a six form of entry school, it has the capacity for 900 pupils aged 11-15 (i.e. Year 7 through to Year 11) but the total number of pupils in

these age cohorts has fallen from 767 in May 2005 to 481 (September 2011), taking up just 53% of the school's capacity. The level of admissions to Year 7 has been persistently well below the Planned Admission Number (180) and 81 pupils have enrolled in Year 7 in September 2011. **Appendix 2** shows the number on roll for Years 7 to 11 and the discrepancy with the school's capacity over several years. The number of pupils in Years 9, 10 and Year 11 is higher than those in Years 7 and 8. Thus, as these year groups move on the total school roll will decline further.

Of the pupils on roll at the school (as at May 2011) 71% live in Greenwich. The 29% of pupils who live out of the borough travel mainly from Lewisham, Southwark and Bexley. The map attached as **Appendix 3** indicates the home addresses of pupils.

The number of places available in other Greenwich secondary schools, in each year group, exceeds the total number of pupils currently attending Blackheath Bluecoat CE School (see **Appendix 4**). If a decision is made to close Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, it would therefore be possible to make alternative provision and allow parents to express preferences. There would be sufficient capacity to accommodate all the pupils, irrespective of their home address, in other Greenwich schools. There is also spare capacity across all year groups in secondary schools in Lewisham. Although Southwark schools have very little spare capacity, Bexley has some spare capacity in the current Years 7 and 8 and there also some vacancies in Year 9.

Based on the current roll and projected roll figures in the medium term, the overall conclusion is that there is capacity within the secondary schools within Greenwich and neighbouring boroughs without the need for places at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School.

Implications for pupils currently attending Blackheath Bluecoat CE School

If the Council decides at the end of the process of consultation and representation to close Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, on the 31 August 2013, the implications for pupils is as follows:

- There would be no recruitment to Year 7 or Year 12 in September 2012.
- In September 2012 the pupils starting Year 8 (i.e. those recruited to Year 7 in September 2011), Year 9 (i.e. those recruited to Year 7 in September 2010) and Year 10 (i.e. those recruited to the Year 7 in September 2009) would transfer to other schools.
- The pupils who started Year 10 in September 2011 would stay at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School for the following year (when they would be in Year 11) to complete their Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- The pupils who started Year 11 in September 2011 would transfer to other post 16 provision in September 2012.
- The pupils who started Year 12 in September 2011 would remain at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School for the following year to complete their sixth form studies.
- The school would close at the end of the 2012-13 academic year, i.e. 31 August 2013 and, during the final school year would provide pupils who will then be in Years 11 and 13

The following table illustrates how each of the current year groups at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School (BBCS) would be affected by the phased closure that is being proposed:

Year	Start of Sept 2011	Start of Sept 2012
Y7	On roll at BBCS	No recruitment to BBCS
Y8	On roll at BBCS	2011 Y7 transfer to another school for Y8
Y9	On roll at BBCS	2011 Y8 transfer to another school for Y9
Y10	On roll at BBCS	2011 Y9 transfer to another school for Y10
Y11	On roll at BBCS	2011 Y10 cohort remain at Blackheath Bluecoat as Y11 to complete their Key Stage 4 curriculum
Y12	On roll at BBCS	No Recruitment to BBCS 2011 Y11 cohort transfer to other post 16 provision
Y13	Present at BBCS (leave school in July 2012)	2011 Y12 remain at Blackheath Bluecoat as Y13 to complete their sixth form studies.
The school would close at the end of the 2012-13 academic year i.e. 31 August 2013 and, during the final school year, would provide only for Years 11 and 13.		

If the closure proposal were agreed, parents of pupils who are in Years 7, 8 and 9 would be invited to express preferences for alternative secondary schools with vacancies in the relevant year groups. The Council will, as far as possible, match offers to preferences expressed. This would be done in liaison with the relevant home local authorities in accordance with the co-ordinated admissions process.

If the final decision is to close the school, the parents and carers of children who would need to transfer to other schools will be invited, during the spring term, to express preferences for alternative schools. Parents and carers of children with special needs or who otherwise need support with this process will be assisted as appropriate.

Whilst the consultation is being carried out, every effort will be made to maintain the stability of the pupil roll and the funding of the curriculum, in the interests of all concerned.

If it is decided to confirm the proposed closure, it will be necessary to consider the financial implications for schools receiving pupils transferring from Blackheath Bluecoat CE School. This will include provision to meet the additional and special educational needs of individual pupils.

Consideration will also be given, where appropriate, to providing financial support to parents and carers with uniform costs in relation to transfers to an alternative school.

New applications for Blackheath Bluecoat CE School

Those families who have identified Blackheath Bluecoat CE School as one of their preference schools in the current secondary admissions process for entry from September 2012 will be able to amend their applications as appropriate, (the deadline for receipt of applications for secondary school Year 7 places is 31st October 2011). All applicants will be given the option of adding a supplementary preference school, to be used in place of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School if the proposal to close the school is confirmed.

The final decision on the future of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School will be made in January 2012, before offers are made in March 2012.

Implications for staff

The Council wishes to ensure that the education of the pupils on roll at the school is as secure as possible throughout the consultation and proposed closure. Therefore, following precedents set in other school reorganisations, the Council will consider offering financial incentives to teaching staff and support staff to remain at the school to provide stability and ensure that the breadth of the curriculum will continue to be provided.

Efforts will also be made to facilitate the redeployment for staff displaced by the closure. Staff will be offered individual support.

The trades unions and professional associations will be included in the consultation process, and regular liaison will be maintained with them throughout the closure process if this is agreed.

Timescale and the consultation process

This document marks the start of a period of consultation. This enables all interested parties to give their views on the proposal before statutory notices are published. This period of consultation will last until 2nd November 2011. Meetings will be organised for parents/carers, staff, governors and the public.

The Council will consider carefully any comments made at meetings and all written responses received by this date.

Following this stage of the consultation, a formal proposals will be published in the form of a public statutory notice. There will then follow a statutory six week period during which further representations and formal objections can be made.

A final decision on the future of the school will be made by the Cabinet of the Council in January 2012. The Council may decide not to proceed any further with the proposal or to modify the proposal. Since Blackheath Bluecoat Church of England School is voluntary aided, a right of appeal against a determination is available to the governing

body of the school and the Church of England and Catholic Diocesan Authorities. If the right of appeal is exercised, this would lead to the final decision being made by the Schools Adjudicator.

Action	Timescale/Deadline
Consultation period begins	28 th September
Meetings with governors, staff, parents/carers, & the public	4 th to 17 th October 2011
End of consultation period	2 nd November 2011
Statutory notices are published	8 th November 2011
Period for representations (six weeks)	8 th November to 20 th December 2011
Final decision by the Council	17 th January 2012

Consultees include:

- The governing body of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School.
- Parents and carers of pupils on the roll of Blackheath Bluecoat CE School.
- Teachers and other staff at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School.
- Other local authorities likely to be affected by the proposal.
- Governing bodies, teachers and other staff at any other school that may be affected.
- Parents and carers of pupils at any other school that may be affected.
- Trades Unions representing staff at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, and at other potentially affected schools.
- Appropriate diocesan authorities.
- Young People’s Learning Agency.
- Local Members of Parliament.

Further details on the process for closing schools can be found on the Department for Education’s (DfE) website:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/leadership/schoolorganisation

Appendix I

Attainment at Key Stage 4: % gaining 5+ A*-C grades, including English and mathematics at GCSE

School						
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
Blackheath Bluecoat	19.0%	31.0%	31.0%	31.0%	41.0%	48%*
Greenwich LA	31.4%	34.0%	40.4%	43.4%	50.1%	54%*
National	45.6%	46.3%	47.6%	49.8%	53.5%	n/a

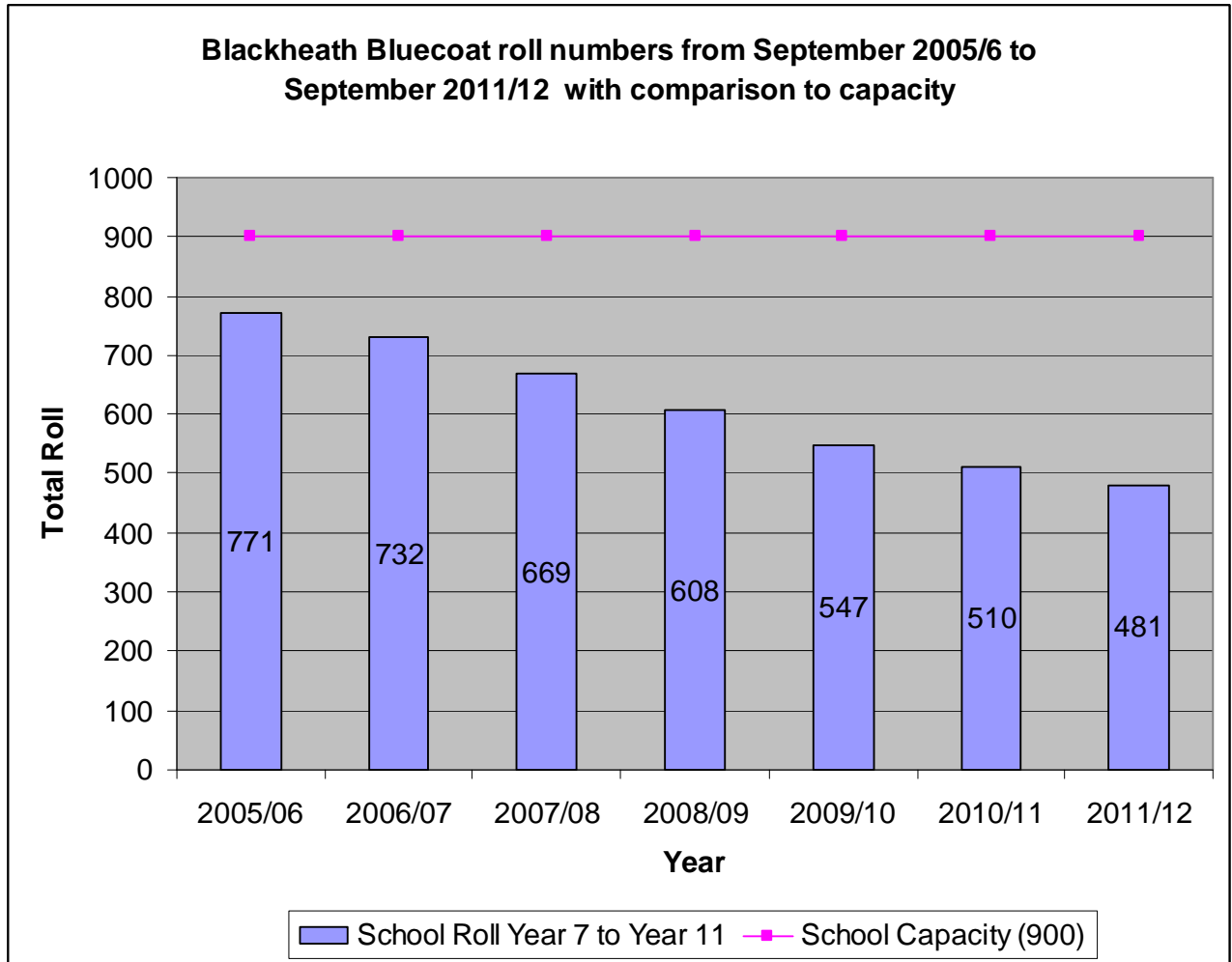
*Provisional

Attainment at Key Stage 5: % gaining A*-C grades at A level

School						
	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011*
Blackheath Bluecoat	42.9%	47.3%	39.3%	37.8%	46.9%	53%*
Greenwich LA	64.5%	65.1%	65.6%	63.6%	66.9%	63%*
National	71.3%	72.8%	73.4%	74.6%	75.1%	76%*

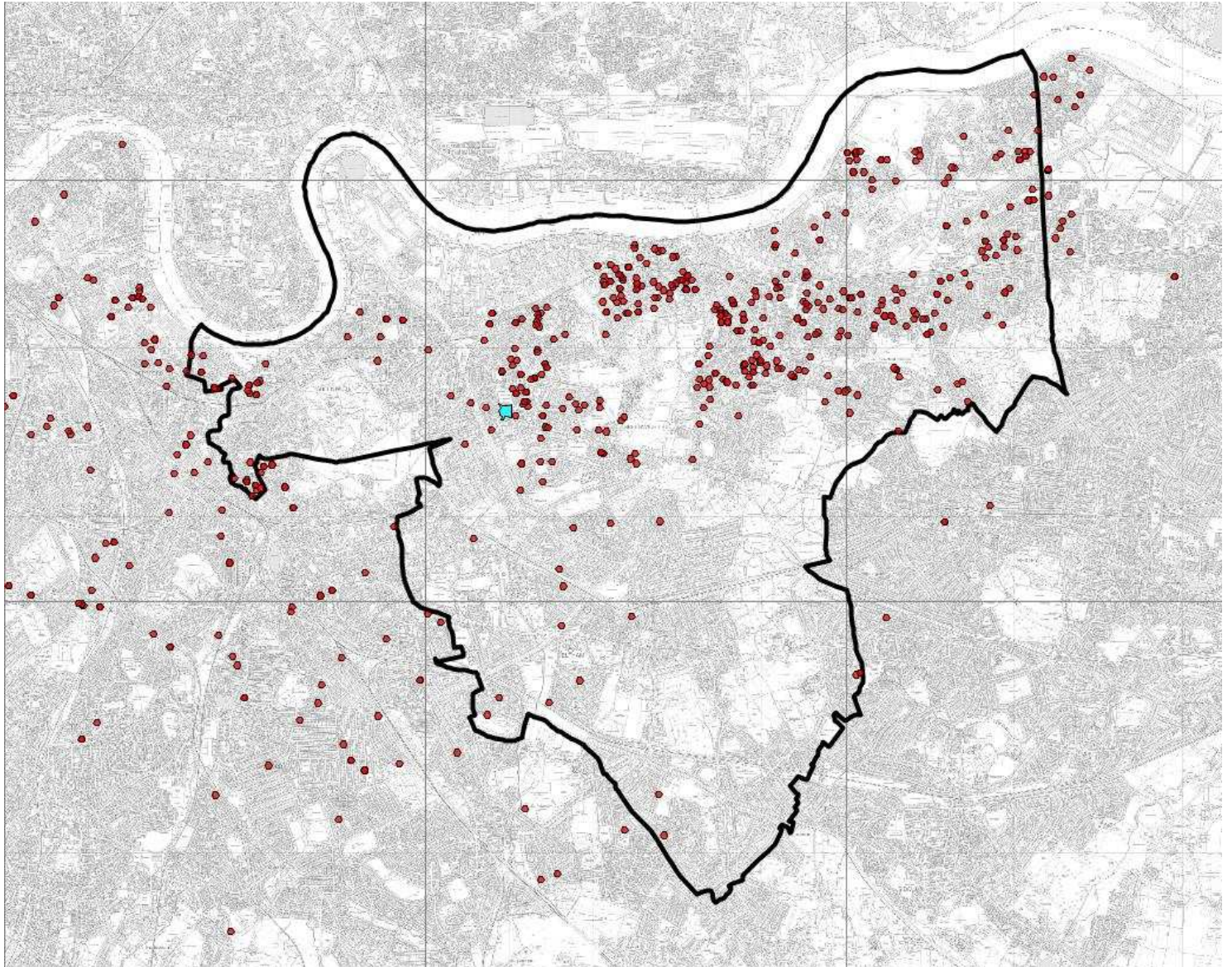
*Provisional

Appendix 2



Appendix 3

Distribution of All Blackheath Bluecoat Pupils



Appendix 4

Blackheath Bluecoat CE School roll and capacity in other secondary schools as at May 2011

School	Year Group					Total vacancies
	7	8	9	10	11	
Corelli College	81	52	20	9	20	182
Crown Woods College	0	30	43	29	9	111
Eltham Hill Technology College (Girls)	37	35	8	3	28	111
Plumstead Manor School	0	1	3	0	14	18
The Eltham Foundation School	79	109	57	79	45	369
The John Roan School	0	1	2	3	4	10
Thomas Tallis School	0	0	0	0	3	3
Woolwich Polytechnic School(Boys)	16	7	0	8	3	34
Total Vacancies by Year Group in Greenwich	213	235	133	131	126	838
Blackheath Bluecoat No. on roll in Years 7 to 11 as at Sept. 2011	81	80	111	93	116	481

Part 4 Consultation questionnaire

CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSAL TO CLOSE BLACKHEATH BLUECOAT CHURCH OF ENGLAND SECONDARY SCHOOL

Please enter comments in the appropriate boxes below:

1	Do you agree that steps must be taken to stop the financial deficit that has arisen from low pupil recruitment at Blackheath Bluecoat CE School, from escalating beyond its current projected level of £1.521m?
	<i>Tick one box only</i>
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If No , please give reasons:
2	Do you agree that Blackheath Bluecoat CE School is no longer sustainable and needs to be closed?
	<i>Tick one box only</i>
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If No , please give reasons:
3	Do you agree with the phasing proposed, with no further intake to Year 7 or Year 12 in September 2012, leading to the closure of the school in August 2013, if the final decision is to close Blackheath Bluecoat CE School?
	<i>Tick one box only</i>
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
	If No , please give reasons:

4 Do you agree with the proposals for managing the transfer of pupils to other schools, if the final decision is to close Blackheath Bluecoat CE School?

Tick one box only

Yes

No

If **No**, please give reasons:

5 Do you support the proposals designed to maintain the stability of the school during the consultation period (and, if agreed, the closure process) e.g. incentives for staff?

Tick one box only

Yes

No

If **No**, please give reasons:

6 In which area do you live?

Greenwich

Lewisham

Southwark

Bexley

Other (please specify):

7

Are you:

Name (Optional).....

Address (Optional)

Are you: Please tick the appropriate box(es)

a) A parent or carer of a pupil at:

Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Another school

If your child attends another school, please specify below:

.....

b) A member of staff at:

Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Another school

If you are employed at another school, please specify below:

.....

c) A member of the governing body at:

Blackheath Bluecoat CE School Another school

If you are a governor at another school, please specify below:

.....

d) Other interested party (please specify below):

.....

8 Do you have any other comments about these proposals?

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Please return it to: Sonal Mistry,
Greenwich Children's Services, Strategic Projects, 3rd Floor, The Woolwich Centre, 35
Wellington Street, London SE18 6HQ by 2nd November 2011. If you have completed
this form electronically, please email: sonal.mistry@greenwich.gov.uk